

Now, land sharks eyeing Bangalore's Hirekere lake

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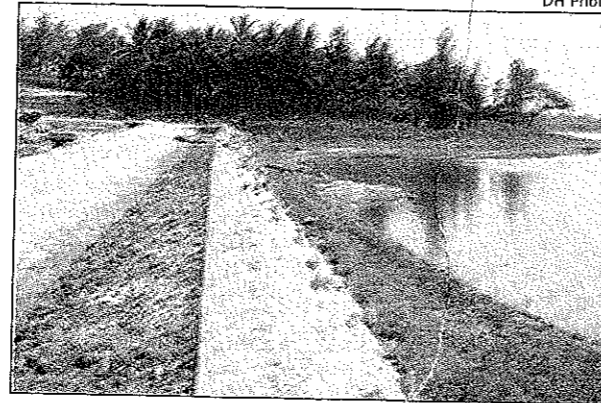
BANGALORE: Hirekere stands testimony to what might be a classic case of land mafia, and that of a potential tank bed being encroached and polluted. Like many lake bodies in and around Bangalore, this lake has also fallen victim to the rapid development alongside its belt.

Though construction activities on a layout — planned for 300 independent houses — have begun adjacent to the lake, permission has not been sought from either the BMRDA, Sulikere and Kodigehalli gram panchayats or the Karnataka

State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), according to Board officials.

Following information given to *Deccan Herald* regarding the alleged illegal layout formation, this reporter visited the spot for a reality check on Friday. A vast area, neatly segregated into plots with half-constructed roads and drains in place, was seen. However, there was no board indicating the layout or builder's name.

When contacted, Mr Lakshminarayana, environment officer, KSPCB, Bangalore North II, said that Board officials had inspected the layout recently. "We heard about the residential layout



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Rapid development on the banks of Hirekere lake near Nagarbhavi in Bangalore calls for concern as construction wastes are let into the lake directly.

being formed very close to the lake bed a month ago. KSPCB issued notices to BMRDA, Sulikere and the Kodigehalli gram panchayats — all of whom served en-

WHAT'S LEGAL ABOUT THIS?

NAME OF THE LAKE: Hirekere, **360** acres

LOCATION: **3** km from Nagarbhavi

LAKE'S JURISDICTION: Sulikere GP, Kengeri Hobli

PRESENT SCENARIO: Roads constructed to form a private layout on tank bed. Foundation for **300** houses laid, but construction activity has come to a halt. Drainage connections from the layout has been directly given to the lake. Work began six months ago, according to the KSPCB.

JURISDICTION OF LAYOUT: Kodigehalli Gram Panchayat

BUILDER/PROMOTER OF LAYOUT: No answer with Govt.

WHAT DOES KSPCB HAVE TO SAY? Permission from KSPCB is a must for a layout formation. However, it has denied granting permission for this layout in Hirekere. It states that even BMRDA & grama panchayats had not given their consent for this.

dorsements stating that nobody had sought permission from them for the layout formation," he said. As the tank bed is revenue land, construction activities here

would be considered illegal, he added.

Certificate required

"The formation of any residential area requires a Consent for Establishment (CFE) certificate by the KSPCB. Builders have to take precautions to ensure that the lake is polluted. We are yet to ascertain who the builder or builders are," he said.

When asked what was the extent of the tank bed and whether encroachment had taken place, the officer said he was yet to get information in this regard from the tahsildar of the Kengeri Hobli. "We are yet to ascertain the defined boundary, if

any, to find out the extent of encroachment," he added.

Mr Lakshminarayana said that work on the layout had stopped after the KSPCB had started inquiring into the matter, a few days ago.

Mr Satish Babu, a bird watcher residing in Vijayanagar, has been visiting the lake for over 15 years to study birds flocking to the lake.

"This lake is a rich resource to the birds that feed here, as it is still untouched to a large extent. Unfortunately, the Bar Headed Geese, a migratory species from the Himalayas, haven't been visiting the lake for five years now," he told *Deccan Herald*.