

Falling water table worries state govt

By Niranjana Kaggere, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Jul 9, 2015, 04.00 AM IST



DEPLETION OF GROUNDWATER LEVEL					
Taluks	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
North	20.72	23.53	30.90	39.81	40.85
South	17.03	19.21	24.43	28.62	34.32
Anekal	15.68	16.86	21.75	24.86	26.10

ALL FIGURES IN METERS

Lake rejuvenation, rainwater harvesting can't keep up with urbanisation and population that relies on groundwater

Rejuvenation of lakes, enrichment of borewells and rainwater harvesting over two years seems to have had no impact on the groundwater levels of Bengaluru urban. The levels have decreased by up to five meters in the urban district limits within the last year alone.

The plummeting groundwater levels have posed serious questions over the measures taken by the state government. Revealing the details in the Legislative Council on Wednesday, the state government attributed the trend to increased drilling of bore wells, population growth, urbanisation, large scale construction of apartment complexes and townships in the city. Shivaraj Thangadagi, minor irrigation minister, in his response to BJP's Lehar Singh Siroya's question on the issue, revealed the details.

Compared to last year's observation by the Minor Irrigation Department, groundwater levels in Bengaluru north taluk plummeted from 39.81 m (2013) to 40.85 m (2014), while in Bengaluru south taluk, these have fallen from 28.62 m (2013) to 34.32 m (2014).

Crores of rupees have been pumped into water rejuvenation programmes and now the feasibility of such programmes is being questioned. In fact, Rs 100 crore was earmarked to rejuvenate 31 lakes in Bengaluru last year.

Speaking to Bangalore Mirror, Singh Siroya, who raised the issue questioned, "Have we erred in implementing the initiatives? Have these been implemented scientifically or just for namesake? The government must introspect and conduct feasibility studies of such efforts."

The government had brought in the Karnataka Groundwater (Regulation and Control of Development and Management) Act, 2011, to keep a tab on borewells and regulate their drilling. "Despite stringent rules, so many borewells are being drilled every day in the city. Large scale townships are supposed to reveal their source of water supply before obtaining licenses from

civic authorities. All of them continue to rely on groundwater, leading to its unabated exploitation. Industrial units are mushrooming across the city. The government must focus on initiatives that will increase groundwater levels," explained an MLC from Mysuru.

Eco disaster waiting to happen

According to Dr TV Ramachandra of Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), the percentage of Bengaluru's water bodies will plummet to as low as 0.7 to 0.5 ushering in an ecological disaster by 2020. Unbridled urbanisation has reduced the city's 68% thick vegetation to a mere 20% now, and 2.60% of water bodies to just 0.9%, he said. He also expressed concern over the fast-depleting levels of water table in areas around Bangalore North where intense urbanisation activities have been observed. These areas have already been classified as overexploited regions in terms of underground water table.