DECCAN Chronicle

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Day 2: More encroachments unearthed

■ Residents whose houses were demolished meet House committee members to air their grievances

DC CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU, MAY 20

The second day of lake inspection by K B Koliwad, chairman of house committee on lakes was no different. Lakes like Bellandur and Sankey Tank were inspected and cases of huge encroachment came to light. It was a repeat of Tuesday when residents pleaded their innocence.

Mr. Koliwad said he would look into the documents and a decision would be taken thereafter.

When the committee reached Sankey Tank, they found that 16 acres of land was encroached upon. However, the owner of that particular area, one M A Srinivas denied the allegation. Srinivas said, "This property was purchased by my grandfather from the erstwhile Maharaja of Mysore. I have all the documents in the locker to prove it."

The next point was Channasandra Lake. Residents whose houses had been demolished by the local authority in an encroachment clearance drive came up to the committee with their grievances. One Gowramma whose house was demolished said, "We want to be treated on par with BDA. If they are spared from encroachment and have been legalised, the same formula should be applied for us as well."

When the committee reached Bellandur Lake, they were shocked to see the level of contamination. Residents from Yemalur and Bellandur demanded that the tank be cleaned as soon as possible. Rafiq Ashi, a resident says, "There is always a bad odour. Our children fall sick very often." Voicing a similar concern, another resident Mithun P said.

SC stays penalty for two firms

In a relief to two Bengaluru-based firms, the Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed a penalty of ₹10.65 crore imposed on them by National Green Tribunal for "illegal and unauthorised" construction near Agara lake. A vacation bench of Justices A.K. Sikri and U.U. Lalit, besides staying the levy of fines, asked the tribunal to decide the pleas of the firms on merits. Senior advocates Gopal Subramanium and Kapil Sibal, who appeared on behalf of the companies, said that the tribunal did not hear and considered the arguments on merits.

Members of Legislative House committee appointed to study the state of lakes in Bengaluru, Suresh Kumar, K.B. Koliwad, G R Yavagal, and MLA N.A. Haris inspect Bellandur lake covered with foam which recently caught fire in Bengaluru on Wednesday —DC

> My question is why can't the authority stop delaying and first start cleaning up the lakes? They can get into the documents later and then take up clearance of the encroachment. Besides, it is quite hypocritical for the government to carry out demolition on one hand and on the other hand give permission for construction on the lake bed
> — Vivek Menon, Advisor to CISTUP, IISc

> Making the lakes livable should be the priority of the local authority. A few days back, we heard that Bellandur Lake was on fire. Yes, encroachments have to be removed but we also need to make sure that sewage is not entering our lakes. And if encroachments have to be removed, since they are illegal, and then there is no other choice
> — Meenakshi Bharath, Civic expert

> Encroachment is a humanitarian problem. There is encroachment by private builders and government agencies. Now, BDA have acquired the land after a long process. So, they cannot be touched. Then, there are private properties on government land which most of them have brought from private builders and here their cases are weak.
> — V. Ravichander, urban expert

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS OF MANY TANKS MISSING: KUMARASWAMY

SHYAM SUNDAR VATTAM | DC
BENGALURU, MAY 20

Former chief minister and a member of House Committee on lake encroachments, H.D. Kumaraswamy made a startling revelation that original revenue documents pertaining to the existence of many natural tanks in Bengaluru city were either missing or destroyed. Talking to *Deccan Chronicle* on his experience of his visit to several tanks in the city, along with the panel chairman, K.B. Koliwad, and others, he said, "Unfortunately, government documents to prove the existence of tanks have been destroyed by greedy officials who have joined hands with realtors to develop sites or construct houses on lake area. Without these documents, it will be an uphill task for the committee."

Help from honest babus

The former CM said he has been collecting old records from honest officers in departments concerned about the total number of tanks that had existed and the original maps to establish the extent of encroachment. "The Google images of tanks were available only from the year 2000 and not before that. Even the satellite images from the year 2000 to 2014 provides how land sharks have gobbled tanks. I am also collecting the survey done by the British rulers as it will throw light on tanks. Now, the officials are misguiding us by saying that they did have records of tanks. I will collect all original documents and place it before the public through an exhibition, he said.

'ALL INTERCONNECTED LAKES SHOULD BE REJUVENATED'

GUEST COLUMN

DR. T.V. RAMACHANDRA

> Rejuvenation will be meaningful only when all interconnected lakes in the series are restored, otherwise Bellandur and Varthur lake will continue to face contamination from upstream lakes
> — T.V. RAMACHANDRA

Lakes in Bengaluru are interconnected and there are three valleys and the Koramangala-Challaghatta-Bellandur-Varthur valley (consisting of Bommanahalli, Hulimavu, Kasavanahalli, Kaikondrahalli, Doddakundi, Vibhutipura, Kundalahalli, Channapannahalli, Agara, Bellandur, Varthur lakes) is one among them.

This series receives about 200 MLD (million litres per day) of untreated and partially treated sewage daily. Sustained inflow of untreated sewage (due to irresponsible BWSSB) and effluents (from industries) has contaminated the lake and pollutants have surpassed its assimilative capacity.

Froth formation at outlets, profuse growth and spread of macrophytes are all the indicators of nutrient enrichment. Nutrients in the form of nitrogen (N), carbon (C) and phosphorous (P) enters the lake through untreated sewage. Major part of nitrogen is uptaken by plants and algae, while phosphorous and carbon gets trapped in sediments.

Discharge of untreated effluents (rich in hydro carbon) had led to accidental fires in the lake.

Rejuvenation of Bellandur lake requires the following measures:

Desilting: Due to sustained inflow of sewage and effluents, lake sediments are contaminated (with heavy metals, etc.). Needs desilting and technological advancements silica wet dredging in a lake. It will help in the storage of rain water and recharging of ground water.

Waste water treatment: Treatment of waste water through constructed wetlands and algal ponds (similar to Jakkur lake). Only treated wastewater (sewage and effluents) should be allowed into the lake.

Encroachments: Re-establishing interconnectivity among lakes by removal of all encroachments (of storm water drains and Raja Kaluves).

Long term solution: Rejuvenation will be meaningful only when all interconnected lakes in the series are restored, otherwise Bellandur and Varthur lake will continue to face contamination, due to polluted lakes in the upstream.

The author is coordinator energy and wetlands research group at IISc

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