

## Terrain trouble: Saga over demolitions on lake beds continues as residents struggle

Govt order leaves 5,000 workers in quandary

**BENGALURU:** More than 5,000 employees of 35 industrial undertakings in Kadugodi plantation stand to lose their jobs with the State government issuing orders on April 23 to re-acquire the 711 acres of land for the Forest department. The order directs Bengaluru East Taluk tahsildar to mutate the land in the name of Government Forest Department.

Crying hoarse over the orders, the Federation of Karnataka Chapter of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI), the Kadugodi Industrial Association, Whitefield Industrial Association and Whitefield Area Commerce and Industries Association (WACIA) on Wednesday claimed that the order of the government was illegal.

Addressing a press meet, FKCCI president S Sampathram said that the Forest department had handed over the land to the Revenue department and later gave it to the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB). The Board developed the land and invited applications from prospective industrialists way back in the early seventies.

"The government cannot drive us out now. Its gross injustice. The High Court has held that the land under question is not a forest land," he said.

He added that since an appeal of the Forest department was pending in the High Court, any action by any government department would be in contravention of the court's Order. He said that ever since government issued orders for re-acquiring the land, the industrialists, workers and vendors were in panic. "Under these unsettling circumstances, who would want to come here and invest money", he said.

Kishore Govinde, President of Kadugodi Industrial Association, said that the land owned by the industries were the one allotted by the KIADB as industrial plots. The total area of land allotted by KIADB is 430 acres.

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### Why treat us like criminals for no fault of ours?

**BENGALURU:** There is just one question in the minds of the Banaswadi residents, with their future seeming uncertain.

"Why treat us like criminals for no fault of ours?"

This question by Rajashekar, a resident, perhaps sums up the predicament of the hundreds of house owners in the area. Rajashekar wants to know how sites were allotted to the people if they were illegal, that too in a layout formed by the BDA. "There are over 220 sites on which 110 houses have already been built. We all thought having BDA sites was a safe option. But in January, we were all served notices and were told that criminal proceedings would be initiated if we fail to vacate," he said.

The residents here do not know whether their properties would survive. With no written assurance of any sort, they are shuttling from one government office to another, hoping for some assurance.

### Uncertain future

Dr Rajini Agarwal, a retired professor, said that every minute, the residents lived under the fear that their buildings would be demolished. This anxious senior citizen said, "Each time we hear the sound of an earthmover, we rush out of our houses. We do not know if it will be our turn next".

Rajini resides in Banaswadi along with her husband, a retired official of the defence ministry. "We are all retired people. If they now ask us to vacate the place, where do we go? It took us a lot of savings from 15 years to build the house," she said.

The residents said that they had not received any formal letters. "They had pasted notices on all our houses," said Felcia Vaz, another BDA allottee.

Vaz shifted base from Goa to Bengaluru with her family. "We chose to stay here as it is convenient for my daughters who are studying. Now, we are not even able to live in peace. Recent developments have left us with a sense of insecurity," she said.

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# Isro HQ sitting on breached lake

Prashanth G N

**BENGALURU:** Sixty-one breached lakes have been handed over to public institutions for "public purpose" in Bengaluru since the late chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde's rule from 1983-84.

And on one of such lakes sits the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) headquarters, Antariksh Bhavan, at Sanjaynagar, RMV Extension, North Bengaluru.

Isro was looking for land in the early 1980s for its headquarters and one among the sites shown to it was the present piece of land, which was a lake, V Balasubramanian, former additional chief secretary, revealed to Deccan Herald.

Balasubramanian, who was the chief secretary to Hegde, recalled how the lake was handed over to Isro.

"I happened to be the chief secretary under Mr Hegde, and former chief election commissioner T N Seshan was the joint

secretary in the Space department. Those days, people were powerful and he used to call me saying, 'Subramanian, I'm the joint secretary calling from the Space department; why don't you help us with land for Isro?' Eventually, Seshan managed to prevail over the government to part with land.

But what we had then were lakes. After the government's permission, the lake was breached and the land was handed over to Isro for its headquarters. This meant that the

lake itself was handed over to Isro. Mind you, technically, it is not an encroachment because the government itself breached the lake and handed it over to Isro," Balasubramanian said.

But the former top official hastened to add: "But if you ask me whether Isro is sitting on a lake today, it is. There was a lake then. This was in 1984. All in all, 61 breached lakes have been handed over since then to a variety of public institutions for public purpose. What was given to Isro was also for

public purpose. Likewise, the city railway station today, the bus stand, the hockey and football stadiums, the Kanteerava stadium, all of these are located on lakes.

They were all breached lakes - there were so many lakes then that you had to go in for breach and then get land and build on them."

"But of course, there are lakes which have been handed over for private activities, too," Balasubramanian said. "The Challaghatta lake has been

handed over to the Golf Association. There are people who know how these things happened. What is a public and a private purpose has to be understood clearly.

But the overall conclusion I am drawing from the recent activity is that a good number of lakes in the City have been breached after a public purpose has been defined. But breached lakes by government and given away for other purposes also."

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## Citing Rau panel report, govt may be barking up wrong tree

Subhash Chandra N S

**BENGALURU:** While the government is contemplating to regularise BDA layouts on 'dead lakes', citing the Lakshman Rau committee report, a look into the report shows no such recommendation was made by the committee.

The government is taking refuge under the 1986 report, saying that it will bring in a law to regularise the layouts on 'dead lakes'. But, the report does not even mention about 'dead lakes'. Contrary to the State's stance, the committee has mentioned about 46 disused lakes, to be converted as tree parks.

The committee formed to study the status of lakes has mentioned that the City had 81 live tanks, of which 46 were in disuse. The report says, "Out of these, 10 are utilised by the

## Notice to vacate house shatters lives of forlorn couple

**BENGALURU:** K Subramaniam, a senior citizen in Banaswadi, suffered a heart attack in January this year. This after being served a notice to vacate the house.

The notice served on this 83-year-old asked him to vacate the house that he had built with hard earned money, on a site allotted by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA). Following the heart attack, Subramaniam had to be hospitalised for treatment.

Subramaniam told *Deccan Herald* on Wednesday that he was still feeling threatened, with no written assurance given to them so far by the authorities. The senior citizen said that he had none but his 71-year-old wife, Mokshalakshmi, in his family. The woman said that the duo had invested all the money they had on the BDA land.

"We have no children and it

### Conflicting interpretation

- Government plans to regularise layouts on 'dead lakes', through legislation
- Report talks of disused lakes, saying they should be turned into tree parks

Horticulture department, the Bangalore City Corporation (BCC) and BDA. The committee reviewed the details of the disused tanks. These tanks should be developed into tree parks immediately."

The report cites the example of Srinivagilu lake (at Koramangala), where the committee, during its visit, found that BDA was developing a layout.

"No layout should be allowed to be formed in the tank bed area either by BDA or by any other body. BDA should not take up formation of sites in tank bed area as in Srinivagilu,"

the report says.

Mentioning about the trend adopted by the BDA - breach the tanks, dry them up and utilise the land to form a layout in the conurbation area (area proposed to be merged into the then BCC), the committee said, "In the green belt area, there are 262 tanks. All are live tanks and cannot be breached. They should be continued as water bodies for obvious reasons".

It had also recommended to prevent discharge of effluents and industrial waste into the lakes. The report had said that the BDA and other agencies

should immediately remove encroachments on tank beds.

### 'BDA responsible'

S G Neginhal, the then DCF, Green belt division, and one of the 11 members of the Rau committee, has blamed the BDA for the present scenario. Despite stating that the lake areas should be preserved and converted into tree park, they went ahead and formed the layout illegally. He said BDA should be penalised for this.

The report mentions about how some of the lakes were used for development purpose. Nagashettyhalli and Kodihalli lakes were given to ISRO, Kadugondanahalli and Challaghatta lakes were given to Ambedkar Medical College and KSTDC respectively. Three lakes Geddalahalli, Karisandra and Kadirenahalli lakes were converted into sites by BDA.

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K Subramaniam and his wife Mokshalakshmi. DHPHOTO

is just the two of us living here. My husband worked in the ITI. We now have no proper source of income," she said.

Mokshalakshmi said that they spend close to Rs 3,000 a month only on their medication and manage to meet the

expenses through earnings from LIC and post office schemes.

"We are staying here for nearly 20 years now. All of a sudden if we are asked to vacate the place, where do we go?" Mokshalakshmi said, adding that they could not afford another property at this age. "We built this house in 1992. It took us years for completion. We wanted to have a house of our own so that we do not have to spend money on rent," she said. The elderly couple were given a different site initially. Later, the officials - who were of the belief that this plot would be easier to approach from the main road - allotted this to them.

"We had a sense of security when we were given a BDA site. Now, we live in fear and do not know what will happen to us," said Subramaniam.

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### From lakes to layouts

List of breached lakes and the purposes for which these breached lakes were given

1. Marenahalli Lake	Marenahalli Layout
2. Sarakki Agrahara Lake/Doresanipalya	JP Nagar 4th Phase
3. Chinnagara Lake	Ejipura
4. Challaghatta Lake	Karnataka Golf Association
5. Domlur Lake	Domlur Second Stage
6. Siddapura Lake	Siddapura/Jayanagar 1st Block
7. Geddalahalli Lake	RMV 2nd Stage, 1st Block
8. Nagashettyhalli Lake	RMV 2nd Stage, 2nd Block
9. Kadirenahalli Lake	Banashankari 2nd Stage
10. Tyagarajanagar Lake	Tyagarajanagar
11. Tumkur Lake	Mysore Lamps
12. Ramshetty Palya Kere	Milk Colony (Playground)
13. Agasana Lake	Gayathri Devi Park
14. Ketamaranahalli Lake	Rajajinagar (Mahalakshmpuram)
15. Gangashetty Lake	Minerva Mills & Open ground
16. Jakraya Lake	Krishna Flour Mills
17. Dharmambudhi Lake	Kempegowda Bus Terminal
18. Agrahara Hosakere	Cheluvadipalya
19. Kalasipalya Lake	Kalasipalya
20. Sampangi Lake	Kanteerava Stadium
21. Shule Tank	Ashok Nagar, Football Stadium
22. Akkittimmanahalli Tank	Sai Hockey Stadium
23. Sunkal Tank	KSRCT Regional workshop
24. Koramangala Lake	National Dairy Research Institute
25. Kodihalli Lake	New Tippasandra/ Government Buildings
26. Hosakere	Residential Railway Stockyard
27. Sonnenehalli Lake	Austin Town (RES Colony)
28. Gokula Tank	Mathikere
29. Vidyananyapura lake	Vidyananyapura/(Jalahalli East)
30. Kadugondanahalli Lake	Kadugondanahalli
31. Hennur Lake	Nagavara (HBR Layout)
32. Banaswadi Lake	Subbayapalya Extension
33. Chennasandra Lake	Pulla Reddy Layout
34. Vijinapura Lake (Kotturu)	Rajarajeshwari Layout
35. Murugeshpalya Lake	Murugeshpalya
36. Parangipalya Lake	HSR Layout
37. Mestriplaya Lake	Mestriplaya (Open Ground)
38. Timbaryard Lake	Timbaryard Layout
39. Gangodanahalli Lake	Gangodanahalli
40. Vijayanagar Chord Road Lake	Vijayanagar
41. Oddarapalya Lake	Rajajinagar (Industrial Area)
42. Saneguruvanahalli Lake	Shivanahalli (Play Ground)/KSPCB Buildings
43. Kurubarahalli Lake	Basaveshwaranagar Layout

## BDA seeks a week's time for report on Linganaahalli lake

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** After coming into scanner over allotment of sites to a few VIPs on Linganaahalli lakebed in Dollars Colony, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has started looking out for all documents pertaining to the case from 1971.

Blaming the previous governments and the officials for the sorry mess, the BDA officials have said that the layout was formed on the lake following an executive order for the same. In a meeting, the BDA officials have tried to make their stand clear to the DC and the upalokayukta. Not satisfied by the explanations provided by the BDA, the upalokayukta and the DC have sought the officials of the development authority to come up documents to substantiate their claims.

They have also asked the BDA to give a detailed account of all other layouts which were formed on lakes and details of other layouts of how they were formed among others.

For this, the BDA has sought a week's time to prepare a detailed report pertaining to Linganaahalli and other layouts. The report would be submitted to the DC and the upalokayukta for execution, a BDA official told *Deccan Herald*.

BDA had formed the Dollars Colony and had notified the homes as per the BDA Land Acquisition Act Rules. Preliminary notification for the formation of the layout was issued in 1986 and a final notification on the same was done in 1995. But the layout was formed in 1988, the BDA official said.

According to the official,

**BDA OFFICIAL: "The then government in 1986 had decided to hand over the lake bed of Linganaahalli, which belonged to the Minor Irrigation department, to BDA for layout formation. This decision was taken and executed through an executive order."**

"The then government in 1986 had decided to hand over the lake bed of Linganaahalli, which belonged to the Minor Irrigation department, to BDA for layout formation. This decision was taken and executed through an executive order. But the lake was never officially handed over to the BDA for the formation of the layout and the land was never officially acquired for the layout formation. But as per the Lakshman Rau Committee Report, since the layout has already been formed and people are residing, it should be excluded from the tank bed list. If we go by characteristics and definitions than half of Bengaluru is residing on lakes and lake beds. But all these properties have been notified and formed as layouts. So, should we demolish half the City? It is now for the DC and government to decide."

BDA commissioner T Sham Bhat refused to comment on the issue saying that he would only speak to the DC and the upalokayukta on the matter.

Asilent prayer that their house is not the next under the axe

**BENGALURU:** Anxious residents and owners of commercial complexes looked on as the demolition drive by the Revenue department continued at Banaswadi on Wednesday.

While a few stood to see their commercial structures being reduced to debris, a few others kept their fingers crossed in the hope that their houses would not be the next ones to be demolished.

With no written assurance by the officials that the houses would not be demolished, residents - who have houses on revenue and Bangalore Develop-



**SAGAI MARY: Some of us did not even get a notice. We only have oral assurance from the DC that they would see what best can be done if our houses suffer any damage. BJP leader Suresh Kumar has assured us help.**

ment Authority land - are only hopeful that they would be spared.

Julie Dominic was seen standing at the demolition spot all day long. The commercial complex that was demolished on Wednesday is adjacent to her house. The woman was praying that her house is not razed, after the demolition of the commercial complex.

"I am here, standing on the road, for three days now. We are not sure what will happen to our house. Also, we do not know if our building will be damaged in the process of bringing down the neighbouring one," Julie said.

Sagai Mary is running from pillar to post to get help. She does not know if she has to help her ailing brother or shift furniture from her house. She wants to protect the furniture as her house has suffered damages due to the impact of the demolition of the neighbouring commercial complex.

"My brother is down with fever. We are all staying in a relative's house for now. We have requested our neighbours to help us by keeping our furniture and a few other items in their houses for the time being," she said. "Some of us did not even get a notice. We only have oral assurance from the DC that they would see what best can be done if our houses suffer any damage. BJP leader Suresh Kumar has assured us help," Mary said.

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### Demolition drive: CM reassures BDA allottees

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has assured the BDA site allottees that he would speak to the BDA officials about the eviction notice served to them.

Speaking to residents after a close door meeting at his residence on Kumara Krupa Road, he said, "I will talk to BDA officials regarding this."

Tuesday evening saw over 50 residents of Banaswadi standing in front of the chief minister's residence. The BDA site allottees had gathered there to submit a memorandum requesting him to take back the notice and not demolish the structures constructed on BDA sites. Shyam Sundar, a resident who met Siddaramaiah, said, "All we need is an assurance from the chief minister that the houses constructed on BDA sites will not be demolished by the authorities."

Sundar explained that in the 220 sites that were developed, houses have been built on 120 sites. "There are so many people living in the place for over 20 to 25 years now. Where are we all supposed to go?" he grieved.