

15 illegal temple structures in Sarakki lake area not cleared

- K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj



One of the temples in the Saraki lake area in Bengaluru.— Photo Bhagya Prakash K.



The temples handed over to the Endowments Department

The special encroachment clearance drive in the Sarakki lake area may not serve any purpose as the revenue authorities are refusing to clear the 15 illegal temple structures.. These places of worship spread over a three-acre area have now been handed over to the Endowments Department. Deputy Commissioner, Bengaluru (Urban), V. Shankar said the temples were not demolished as they did not want to hurt the sentiments of devotees.

Kshithij Urs of the People's Campaign for Right to Water, one of the PIL petitioners in the Karnataka High Court regarding encroachments in Sarakki lake, said that the move was in violation of a Supreme Court order. Mr. Urs added that in an earlier case, the apex court had clearly said as to what constructions can be regularised if it has come up on a tank bed. "The Supreme Court has only stated that housing for the economically weaker sections, schools and hospitals may be regularised. It does not mention any place of worship," he pointed out.

Environmentalists have cried foul that this would render the encroachment clearance drive meaningless. The rejuvenation and restoration of the Sarakki lake is impossible if these 15 structures are not removed.

T.V. Ramchandra of the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, said that no rejuvenation is possible without restoring the hydraulic integrity of the lake, which cannot be attained without removing all the illegal structures. A temple in the middle of the lake would entail a pathway for access and thus destroy the fragile ecological balance, he added.