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Single solution to protect the city's lakes

By By Our Correspondent

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Bengaluru

Sept. 26: Experts at a seminar on conserving what is left of Bengaluru's waterbodies have recommended that their management should be left to one agency, preferably the forest department, which has effective laws in place and is the custodian of the state's natural resources.

Various stakeholders, scientists, biodiversity experts, and members of NGOs, who participated in the Urban Lake Monitoring and Management seminar organised by the Centre for Infrastructure, Sustainable Transport and Urban Planning also felt that the state government should bring in regulations on the lines of the recent rules for wetland management and conservation introduced by the ministry of environment and forests to conserve the lakes.

"All the lakes must be handled by one department, more appropriately the forest department which has been the custodian of our natural resources. Most of the water bodies are fast turning into cement tanks and losing their ecological value. The birds are keeping off the lakes that are privatised, while their numbers are significant around the lakes which are untouched by development," said T.V. Ramachandra from the energy and wetland research group of the IISc.

Mr Ramachandra emphasised the need to demarcate the boundaries of wetlands more effectively to help their conservation. "Though the rules say no construction should be allowed in a 30 meter radius around the lakes, they are not followed. The demarcation of boundaries must be done from the flood plains and not from their water levels during the summer season," he explained. Director general of the Environmental Management and Policy Research Institute (EMPRI) Basappa suggested that a dedicated department with a senior level officer be constituted to manage the waterbodies.

The experts present recommended that all civic agencies must pool in resources to help the forest department restore and manage waterbodies and that ordinary people too must be involved in lake preservation issues.

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