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## The revenge of phantom lakes

Bosky Khanna. Bangalore



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The authorities may be raising a hue and cry on the need to clear encroachments every time the city is at the receiving end of the wrath of rain. But a seminar — Conservation and Management of Urban Lakes — held at the Indian Institute of Science here on Saturday, indicted the authorities for their willful laxity over the encroachment of lakes which causes flooding and water-logging in the Bangalore city during monsoon.

Experts and researchers participating in the seminar wondered how encroachment of lakes could continue despite stringent laws to protect them.

Citing an instance, Convenor, Urban Ecology, Environment and Policy Research Group, Dr TV Ramachandra, said in earlier days a feeder from Rajajinagar came up to Sankey tank. But today, the feeder has vanished due to poor planning, following which everytime it rains, low-lying areas of Rajajinagar witness heavy flooding. Also, builders raise the level of the earths surface, rendering other areas into low-lying ones, causing their flooding, he explained.

One needs to have a khata certificate and other land-related documents with maps before obtaining clearance for construction. Clearances have been given to construction on lake-beds, despite the rule that a buffer zone of 200 metres must be maintained between structures and lakes and that a distance of up to 30 metres from the lake be developed as green zones, he said.

State level expert appraisal committee chairman R Raghavendra Rao told sunday.dna, "Despite the rules, lake-beds are being occupied. How can the land be registered and clearance be obtained from BDA, BBMP and other authorities? There should be one strict enforcement agency instead of so many. All stake-holders of these agencies should come together and form a committee. As a member of the appraisal committee, I have prevented encroachment in some cases. But the files return and we are forced to give clearance. Thus there should be one committee for clearance and it should have the final say."