

Frothing lakes of Bengaluru: Civic apathy government mismanagement?

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Illustration by Siddhant Gupta

The National Green Tribunal recently found that not even 1 ml water in infamous Bellandur lake of Bengaluru is clean. It has turned out to be the 'septic tank' and people have squarely blamed the government and civic

*The Print asks: **Frothing lakes of Bengaluru: Civic apathy or government mismanagement?***

Fragmented governance and land mafia responsible for frothing



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The frothing lakes of Bengaluru are a result of mismanagement by the government agencies and the political parties.

The city planners had earlier ensured that the rivers and lakes were inter connected. Bangalore has 741 square kilometres of undulating terrain. But an internal network between water bodies had been created in such a way that water from one flows into the other. In the 1800s we had close to 1452 water bodies in the city that took care of our drinking and irrigation requirements. But we now just have 193 water bodies left and most of them are sewage and industrially polluted.

This is largely because of the land mafia who have not only encroached on rivers, but also built structures over dry river beds obstructing the interlinking. A study conducted by us shows that 94 per cent of the water bodies are sewage polluted and 98 per cent have been encroached upon.

We should hold the land mafia responsible for the frothing lakes in the city. They are the ones who are taking advantage of the fragmented governance. They hope that the government agencies will not act on corrupt practices and thus they have encroached on 'rajakaluves' or stormwater drains which has led to the pollution of water.

We also found that most of the aquatic life that we tested had high levels of nutrients and metal contamination like calcium, copper and chromium. These come from the heavy industries in the area and pose a huge health hazard. We say that the people are victims here.

The Water Act of 1974 says that the person who is contaminating the lakes and water bodies should pay for it, why are they not being fined? In the last year, a number of kidney problems amongst the residents in the area has increased. It only goes to show that very soon there would be a dialysis machine in every house in Bengaluru.

But I do admit that the present government is trying to get some work done. We have to wait and watch. The present chief minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said he was keen to see our lakes rejuvenated.

Easier to pass the buck when too many govt agencies are respo