

Bengaluru: Opposition raises a stink over city lakes

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The stench from the SWD is so strong that it compels passersby to avoid the spot.



A storm water drain near Agara Lake that is choked with plastic waste (Image: DC)

Though the city's prominent lakes - Bellandur, Agara and Varthur - have hit international headlines for dubious reasons such as frothing, debris catching fire and water pollution, these problems continue to remain unresolved. With elections barely a week away, the issue has once again gained prominence with the opposition parties taking the government to task for their inability to solve the issue

Bengaluru: With the election just a week away, polluted lakes have become a live issue with the opposition attacking Siddaramaiah government.

Though the Agara Lake was rejuvenated by Karnataka Lake Development Authority (KLCDA), it has an encroached storm water drain (SWD), which is filled with plastic bags and could undo their efforts if left unattended. The stench from the SWD is so strong that it compels passersby to avoid the spot.

"Earlier trucks used to dump construction debris at the rim of the lake. Recently, the lake has been rejuvenated. I hope the authorities clean the SWD as well," said Namit Narsimhan, a resident of HSR Layout.

He also pointed out to the inundation of the area during monsoon and quoted the IISc report blaming concretisation of SWD.

"The SWD has been concretised everywhere. How can rainwater percolate and recharge the groundwater? The Agara lake SWD has been encroached and has been reduced as well," Narsimhan pointed out.

Despite the ban on the usage of plastic and BBMP effectively implemented it on large eateries, thermocol and plastic wrappers used for the packaging of e-commerce materials find their way into the drains and choke them.

"I would also blame the people who still use plastic and insist on it in the marketplaces. The government must come out with an alternative. SWDs are meant to carry rainwater, not sewage water and certainly not the plastic and garbage-laden water," said Shrinagesh, a resident of Sarjapur.

Sewage is choking SWDs in Tavarekere, HSR and many other areas.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) suggests the width of the SWD to be a minimum of 60 metres, but at Agara it does not meet the tribunal's standards.

One of the primary reasons behind the flooding of areas of Koramangala is the concretisation of SWD and the narrowing down of its size. Moreover, when the drains are choked with garbage, the percolation of water does not happen.

"At Agara the cleaning of the SWD is happening for the past one year. I do not know why there is no time bound completion of the project. With monsoon fast approaching, we would be back to square one," said Sudhir Mishra, a local resident.