



City of burning lakes, Bangalore will be uninhabitable by 2025

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Recently, inhabitants in the southeast part of Bangalore saw huge plumes of smoke coming from the middle of Bellandur Lake, largest lake in the city. The incident left people in shock as the lake had caught fire. The fire burned for almost 12 hours with leaving behind a sinister black patch in the center.

Scientists at Indian Institute of Science believe Bangalore will be “unliveable” in a few years’. And this incident strengthens their thought even further.

A lethal blend of elements produces an atmosphere that only requires a least of stimulus for lakes to catch fire. Raw wastes dispensed into the waters from industries and homes on its banks, illicit waste disposal happen a lot. It frequently includes rubbish which is set on fire and invasive weeds involve large swathes of the lake in a thick green canopy.

Alarmingly, this is not the first time that a lake has caught fire. A similar incident happened in May 2015 as well. The lake was in the headlines for being covered in snow-like froth. But the froth was triggered by chemical waste dumped in the lake.

Notably, it was poisonous enough to crack windshields, wear the paint off car hoods and worsen the severe respiratory problems that have plagued people in recent times. Now, people cover all their face as they cross a bridge over a frothing canal. It once carried water from Bellandur Lake to Varthur Lake, in east Bangalore in 2015.

For more than two decades, Dr TV Ramachandra, coordinator of the Energy and Wetlands Research Group at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), has been studying about the lakes in Bangalore. As per him, a projected 400-600 million litres of untreated sewage is thrown into the lake catchment every day. Thus, a poisonous environment fertile for tragedies like the fires and foam gets created.

“The city overall generates between 1,400 and 1,600m litres per day of untreated sewage,” he said as per a report in The Guardian. “20-30m litres per day is generated from the apartments in the vicinity of Bellandur Lake. There are several invasive species like water hyacinths growing in the lake, thick enough to walk on. People dump solid waste on top of it. Because of the thickness, it creates an anaerobic environment in the water below, where methane is formed. It creates an ideal environment for catching fire.”

He also stressed that there are several agencies governing the lake. So, they all blame each other for such occurrences. “The Bangalore water supply and sewerage board should be held responsible for letting the untreated sewage into the water,” he said.

The responsibility should also be placed on the Karnataka state pollution control board for not regulating industries that have been draining their untreated sewage into the lake.

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