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Bengaluru won't face any water crisis till 2030, says George

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A BBC News report had put Bengaluru on the second place in its list of places most likely to run out of drinking water. Representative image.

Dismissing reports that the city will be the second metropolis to go dry after Cape Town in South Africa, Bengaluru Development Minister K J George has insisted there will be no water crisis at least until 2030.

"Bengaluru will not face any water crisis. Even in the summer, there will be no problem of drinking water," he said, reacting to a BBC News report entitled 'The 11 cities most likely to run out of drinking water'. Bengaluru is featured second.

The minister said the BBC had not approached the state government for information. The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) would have given the "real picture" had it done so, he added.

According to George, by 2023, Bengaluru will get an additional 775 mld (million litres of water per day) from the 10 tmcft (thousand million cubic feet) allocation from the Cauvery River. The Yettinahole project will provide another 193 mld by 2021, increasing the total supply to 2,368 mld by 2023. This apart, the government is also considering drawing water from the Linganamakki dam across the Sharavathi River. Setting up desalination plants is another option.

BWSSB chairman Tushar Girinath said that even if Bengaluru's population grew to 20 million (two crores), the board's many projects would help it supply water until 2031. The freshwater supply per person will be around 88 litres per day with a water loss of 25%.

The BWSSB has reduced the leakage percentage from 49% to 39% and intends to bring down the percentage of water loss to 25% in the near future. The board is also keeping tabs on other sources of water by imposing penalties for non-installation of rainwater harvesting structures and sewage treatment plants.

The board, however, will not draw water from the Thippgondanahalli reservoir to the city as continuous supply is not guaranteed. The water will be treated and released downstream towards Magadi, he added.

On Bellandur fire

George said the fire on Bellandur Lake was caused by grass, not by the presence of methane as mentioned by T V Ramachandra, a member of the lake expert committee. He said the government hadn't authorised an individual to speak to the media. Any statement should be given only by the committee.

He went on to state that the government was planning to remove the grass around the lake area to avoid future fires.

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QUOTES

T V Ramachandra, member, lake expert committee: The report on Bellandur Lake was submitted to the government a year ago. The government took more than six months to just go through it. Government agencies are not fully implementing the recommendations. Being a member of the committee, I am losing patience. People are asking me about the lake and it is my duty to tell them.

V Balasubramanian, retired IAS officer: We can draw only 29 tmcft of water from the Cauvery River. By 2031, there will be a shortage of 72 mld in the city. The BWSSB will be able to supply water only to two-thirds of the population. If a comprehensive plan to address the water crisis is not made in the next 10 years, half % of the population will leave the city.

A R Shivakumar, rainwater harvesting expert: Funds meant for the rejuvenation of lakes and groundwater have vanished. Roads and pathways in the city have been asphalted, leaving no room for rainwater to seep in, which causes flooding. Every year, at least 23 tmcft of rainwater is going down the drain.

Prakash Javadekar, BJP election in-charge, Karnataka: The Centre provided a detailed action plan with grants amounting to Rs 890 crore to save Bengaluru's lakes, but the state government failed to put it in place. We will come out with plans to solve Bengaluru's water woes in our manifesto.

BOX

'No links with Embassy'

Bengaluru Development Minister K J George has denied having links with the Embassy group which has won several government tenders. He said there was no conflict of interest in the Embassy group getting the work orders as he was neither a partner nor had any stakes in it.