

You are here: [Home](#) » [City](#) » Move to transfer city lakes to minor irrigation dept opposed

## Move to transfer city lakes to minor irrigation dept opposed

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The cry against the state government's decision to transfer the ownership of the city lakes to the Minor Irrigation Department has grown louder.

At present, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is the custodian of the city lakes while the Bangalore Development Authority, Forest Department and the Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority (KLCDA) are the other stakeholders.

Members of the expert committee and the KLCDA have strongly objected to the transfer of the ownership.

The opposition follows the government's decision to handover the 902 acres of lake bodies, in-principle, to the minor irrigation department.

Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah is yet to sign the papers to officially handover the lakes to the minor irrigation department.

"The proposal was not discussed with the KLCDA. What is the purpose of the body if the lakes are to be given to the minor irrigation department," said a senior KLCDA official.

The official said that it remains unclear if the other custodians of the lakes will also change with the transfer.

According to the KLCDA, there are 210 lakes in the city and according to the Lakshman Rao Committee, there are 483 lakes.

The Minor Irrigation Minister, T B Jayachandra justified the decision saying that the KLCDA does not have the adequate number of engineers to handle the lakes.

But the KLCDA claims that the engineers from the BBMP and BDA are already doing the job which the department wants to take over.

T V Ramachandra, the expert committee member and a professor of the Energy and Wetlands Research Group, IISc said that all lakes should be handed over to the KLCDA. The very purpose of KLCDA will fail if lakes are handed over to the minor irrigation department, he said.

This issue was deliberated at the recent expert committee meeting, especially with regard to the Bellandur Lake, which had caught fire in January and February.

The committee decided against handing over the lakes, especially the Bellandur Lake to the Minor Irrigation Department. But the government department representatives decided otherwise.

"The BDA and BBMP have not implemented the long, medium and short-term measures in a time bound manner as directed by the expert committee. I am convinced that this will continue if the engineers are given the task of handling lakes," Ramachandra said.