

Summer of dry lakes and dry throats

While the drought-hit cities of Telangana struggle to deal with the consequences of declining groundwater availability, rural regions are grappling with severe drinking water shortages

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Urban and rural areas of Telangana have contrasting details but similar intensity of water stress during the ongoing season of drought-like conditions.

In Hyderabad, the development trajectory seems to be changing the metropolis' image from the "City of Lakes," as it was known since the erstwhile Nizam's time, to a city of encroachments. Field visits, revenue records, environmental studies and the admissions of government officials suggest that all the 170 lakes in the Greater Hyderabad region have been encroached upon.

The lakes have been exploited for illegal construction for everything from slum settlements to posh colonies and farmhouses, which raises the question of loopholes within the system.

"For the longest time, the government officials have deliberately changed the definition of a lake boundary," said Jasveen Jairath, a well-known city activist. "The Full Tank Level or the FTL only determines the depth of a water body and it can have infinite boundaries. What needs to be considered is the total water spread of a lake. Sadly, government officials confuse the media and the judiciary by considering FTL in cases leading to suppression of encroachments or delayed justice," she said.

There are also indications that the State government may not be doing enough to conserve the lakes. "The government officials are not even aware of the local names of the lakes. They have documented the same name for more than one lake. They also do not have the coordinates and complete information of every lake in the city," said Lubna Sarwath of Save Our Urban Lakes (SOUL).

The landscape of the western part of the city is almost a guide on converting lakes and stormwater drains into lucrative real estate. Many properties in Kukatpally, Miyapur, Chandanagar and surrounding areas have



Receding waters: A view of the highly polluted lake Banjara in Banjara Hills in Hyderabad is sought to be developed through the laying of a walking track around it. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

sprung up on top of lake areas. During last year's heavy rain many of these colonies were submerged.

Recently, the State government carried out a five-month survey for 173 stormwater drains, spread over a total length of 390 km. It was found that 12,182 illegal structures had come up along the drains.

"Most of the lake encroachment cases are in courts. In cases where we got a favourable verdict from courts, the local political conditions are preventing any decisive action against these structures," said a senior official of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation.

Experts concur that the concretisation of catchment area and restriction of inflow channels has resulted in plummeting groundwater levels in the city.

In Rangareddy district adjoining the

city's outskirts, a 2015 analysis by the Telangana Ground Water Department showed that the groundwater level in was 20 metres below the surface.

Drinking water crisis

In the hilly agency tract of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district in Telangana, the drought is manifested as scarcity of drinking water thanks to an unsuccessful attempt to supply water through the ambitious Kumram Bheem Drinking Water Supply Scheme (KBDWSS). The scheme envisaged supply of purified water to every household through taps by lifting water from the Kumram Bheem reservoir.

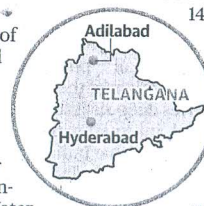
It is nearly nine years since work started on the ₹150 crore KBDWSS but only a handful of villages have

benefited, and even then, the supply is erratic due to power supply issues.

Recently, the Northern Power Distribution Company Limited disconnected three-phase power to the 14 villages between Hatti and Jodeghat as the government failed to clear electricity bill dues.

It is a great irony that the area thirsts for water every summer despite being washed by many a hill stream in monsoon and winter. "Local water harvesting is what is needed in the mandals of Asifabad, Wankidi, Kerameri, Jainoor, Sirpur (U), Lingapur and Tiryani," an official of the Rural Water Supply department said.

"We cannot afford to buy water" The same story is told about Karas-



Urban water use

In a study conducted in 2005 in seven urban cities, it was found that more than 65% of households use less than 100 litres per capita per day.

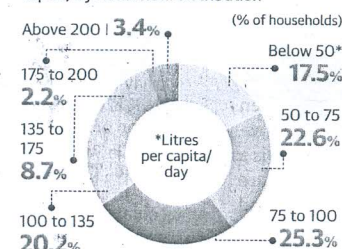
City-wise use

Water consumption per capita per day (litres)

Kanpur	74.1	Across all cities on an average one person used 91.5 litres/day
Delhi	78	
Madurai	88.2	
Mumbai	90.4	
Ahmedabad	95	
Hyderabad	96.2	
Kolkata	115.6	

Measures of use

Water consumption patterns (litres per capita) by household distribution



SOURCE: SHABAN ET AL, ECONOMIC & POLITICAL WEEKLY, 2007

gutti, located more than 100 Km from the district headquarters Sangareddy and 20 Km from the constituency headquarters Narayanakhet. Karasgutti is surrounded by 20 hamlets located one to 3 Km apart.

Many of the hamlets' revenues are limited and they cannot afford to buy water. "Those who are passing on the road in four wheelers only occasionally ask for water. Very rarely, the locals buy water," said local shop owner Banoth Santosh, adding that bottled water cost ₹20.

"They are more dependent on Manjeera water that comes once in three or four days and bore wells existing in the surrounding areas. We cannot afford to buy water," said K. Pandu Ranga Rao, resident of Sukkal Teerth of Manoor mandal.

This is the concluding part of the series

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The Hindu
Rajasthan Patrika (Hindi)
Deccan Chronicle
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M.P.Chronicle
Aaj (Hindi)
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MP all set to declare Narmada river a living entity

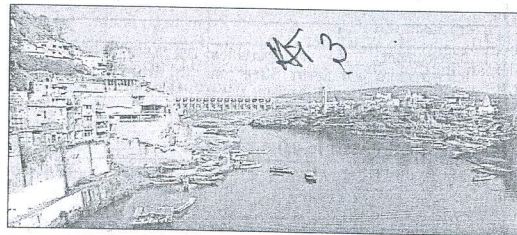
Ranjan

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BHOPAL: The Madhya Pradesh government will bring a resolution in the state assembly on Wednesday to have a regulatory framework to declare Narmada river a living entity, first state in the country to do so.

A decision to this effect was taken at a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday chaired by chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, government spokesperson and parliamentary affairs minister Narttam Mishra said.

The officials said the passage of the resolution, which is a foregone conclusion, would be fol-



■ An official said declaring a river a living entity has a flip side as anyone can sue the river for causing damage.

TARUN KANT/HT FILE

lowed by the process to enact a law to declare river a living entity. That would mean that the government will have to declare a custodian of the river, who can ensure its protection.

"Officers are deliberating on it. It's not a small issue. There are so many legal implications and complications associated with declaring a river a living entity. Hence, nothing will be done in a

**THE GOVERNMENT WILL
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CUSTODIAN FOR RIVER**

hurry", a senior officer told HT.

Uttarakhand high court in its judgment in March declared Ganga and Yamuna as living entities and gave them legal rights. The court made state chief secretary as custodian of the river in the hill state.

The official said declaring a river a living entity has a flip side as anyone can sue the river for causing damage such as during floods like the government on behalf of the river can penalise someone for causing pollution or damaging river's aquatic life.

"For instance, if a person's house is damaged in a flood or a life is lost due to it he could also move the court to seek compensation and file a criminal case against the river," the official said. That's why, he said, the government was considering what would be the rights of people and what would be the rights of Narmada river if it was declared a living entity.

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गंगा का पल्यूशन खुद जांचेगा NGT

■ **वस, नई दिल्ली :** एनजीटी ने मंगलवार को अलग तरह का कदम उठाते हुए कहा कि हम हरिद्वार और कानपुर के बीच गंगा नदी में प्रदूषण की वास्तविक स्थिति की खुद जांच करेंगे। एनजीटी के इस फैसले को इसीलिए अहम माना जा रहा है कि अमूमन ट्रिब्यूनल ऐसी किसी जांच और ग्राउंड रिपोर्ट के लिए एक्सपर्ट्स की टीम गठित करता है। एनजीटी अध्यक्ष जस्टिस स्वतंत्र कुमार ने कहा, मामले की रोजाना सुनवाई हो रही है, लेकिन अभी तक यह तय नहीं हो पाया कि गंगा में कहाँ से और कितने प्रदूषक तत्व बहाए जा रहे हैं। बेंच ने उत्तर प्रदेश और उत्तराखंड सरकारों, पर्यावरण मंत्रालय, जल संसाधन मंत्रालय, सेंट्रल पल्यूशन कंट्रोल बोर्ड, उत्तर प्रदेश पल्यूशन कंट्रोल बोर्ड और संबंधित राज्य के जल निगम को कानपुर में इंस्पेक्शन के लिए जरूरी तैयारियां करने का निर्देश दिया है।

अलग तरह
का कदम
उठाया