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# Bureaucratic inertia hits plan to revive B'luru's dying lakes

Land-grabbers eye lakebeds as officials wait for govt go-ahead to act

G Manjusainath

**BENGALURU:** The state government's plan to revive lakes in Bengaluru seems to have hit stalemate.

Forget removing existing encroachments on lakes, the district administrative machinery is not even cracking down on potential land-grabbers. Officials say they can't take action until the government decides on the yet-to-be-submitted report of the legislature committee on lake encroachments headed by Speaker K B Koliwad. The inertia could prove costly as lakes on deathbed could be revived if the government and its various arms act swiftly.

Eshwarappa, who is associated with People's Campaign for Right to Water, said there were several lakes that faced fresh encroachment as the government agencies had become



Officials say they can't take action until the government decides on the yet-to-be-submitted report of the legislature committee on lake encroachments. DH FILE PHOTO

indifferent. "We are seeing fresh encroachments happening everywhere. I have personally seen new encroachments at Ele Mallappa Shetty lake on Hoskote Road near KR Puram, Horamavu Agara lake, Benniganahalli lake, Subramanyapura lake, Chikka Kallasandra

lake and Sarakki lake. We gave several representations to various agencies but to no avail. The government is not keen on lake conservation," he said.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has drawn an action plan for revival of seven lakes, including Sarak-

ki and Subramanyapura lakes. It received the government's approval and called tenders. The Palike intends to set up sewage treatment plants, lay sewage diversion pipes, de-silt lakes and beautify them.

The biggest hurdle, however, is encroachment on these lakes. BBMP chief engineer (lakes) S Somashekar said he wrote to the district authorities to clear encroachments but there was no response. "I tried to make several phone calls to the officials concerned but no one returned them. We want the tahsildars to demarcate the boundary of each lake and remove encroachments on it. But this is not happening," he said.

When contacted, Bengaluru South Tahsildar S M Shivakumar said, "The legislature committee headed by Speaker K B Koliwad was constituted to look into lake encroachments. We are waiting for the government to take a decision once

the report is submitted."

Koliwad maintained that there are no restrictions on the district authorities to crack down on lake encroachments. "The survey has been conducted and encroachments have been identified. It is the duty of the executive (bureaucrats) to clear the encroachments. Nobody has stopped them. In fact, nobody had ever stopped them. We can only submit our report, which we will do in due course," he said.

Rajajinagar MLA S Suresh Kumar, who resigned from the committee last December in protest against Koliwad continuing to head the panel despite being elected Speaker, echoed him. "These are just lame excuses. Nobody can stop the authorities from stopping fresh lake encroachments. They are empowered enough to act." He conceded that a majority of lakes were in a pathetic state but could be revived.

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## Course correction of Saraswati 'revival'

**VISHAL JOSHI**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

**KURUKSHETRA, JANUARY 30**

More than a year after work began on the ambitious Saraswati rejuvenation project, the Manohar Lal Khattar Government seems to have done a course correction. Realising that the river's revival was "impossible", the panel formed for the task has changed the project's target from "river rejuvenation" to "flowing rainwater into the conventional Saraswati drain round the year".

Haryana Saraswati Heritage Development Board Deputy Chairman Prashant Bhardwaj said, "One cannot create glaciers to rejuvenate a mighty river like the Saraswati. So, revival is

impossible. But it is possible to construct a water channel and feed it with rainwater."

Bhardwaj said the Haryana authorities had identified 150 natural depressions in various parts, which would be used to feed the Saraswati channel from Adi Badri in Yamunanagar to Sirsa. These low-lying spots, he said, were over 50 acres in area and rainwater accumulated there would be channeled into the already existing channel.

Besides, check dams in the catchment area of Somb, a rain-fed river in Yamunanagar, would be used to feed the channel, which had "religious sanctity", he said. Bhardwaj said there was also a proposal to connect the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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## नहरों से जुड़े पेयजल स्रोत भरेंगे

बीकानेर 27 मार्च से प्रस्तावित नहर बंदी से पहले जिले के सभी पेयजल स्रोत नहरी पानी से भर दिए जाएंगे। हालांकि नहर विभाग की ओर से प्रस्तावित नहरबंदी का पंजाब से स्वीकृति नहीं आई है। अभी बीकानेर नगरीय क्षेत्र के रिजर्ववायर में मात्र चार दिन का पानी शेष है। नहर विभाग के अधिकारियों का कहना है कि नए रेग्यूलेशन में जिस इलाके की नहरें चलेंगी उस इलाके के पेयजल स्रोत में पानी भर जाएगा। जल संसाधन मंत्री डॉ. रामप्रताप की ओर से रविवार को नहर विभाग एवं जन स्वास्थ्य अभियांत्रिकी विभाग के अधिकारियों की बैठक में बीकानेर में जलापूर्ति की रिपोर्ट दी गई। इस रिपोर्ट में नहरों से की जा रही जलापूर्ति में पेयजल में 40 फीसदी की कटौती की स्थिति से अवगत करवाया गया। इस पर मंत्री ने आश्चस्त किया कि पेयजल के लिए पर्याप्त पानी की शीघ्र आपूर्ति की जाएगी।

बीकानेर-31-1-17