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Burgeoning Bangalore City saps its lakes dry

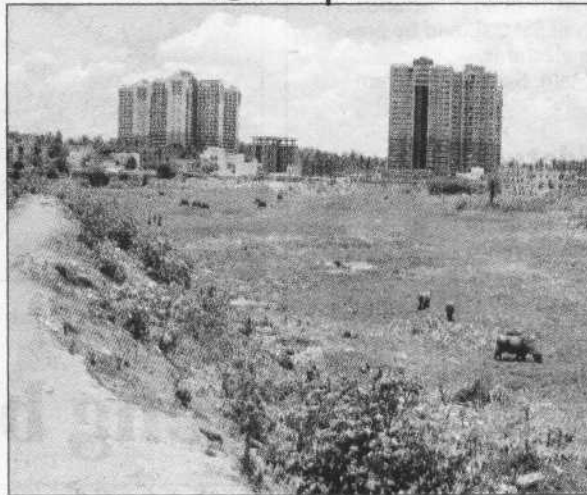
By SUBHASH CHANDRA N S
DH News Service

BANGALORE: Of the 265 water bodies in Bangalore and its surroundings, many have disappeared and just 90 remain today. Many more water bodies are gasping for survival, according to a study by the Indian Institute of Science.

Apprehensions about disappearing wetlands seem to be coming true, as indicated by the latest study by Dr T V Ramachandra, scientist, Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), IISc.

"Since 1973, we have lost 70 per cent of lakes as they have been changed into development and residential plots," he said.

"These lakes act as kidneys for the cities, but unfortunately these water bodies have paved the way for built-up areas in the City. The core City is left with just 17 good lakes as opposed to 51 healthy lakes in 1985. The problem is the same with the peripheral



A view of the dried up Puttenahalli lake.

areas too; not even hundred lakes are there today," he added.

According to the study, 3.40 per cent of the City's area comprised water bodies (2,324 hectares) in 1973, while the built-up area was 7.97 per cent (5,448 hectares). But the water bodies shrunk and in 1992 made up for about 2.60 per

cent (1,790 hectares) of the City area, while the built-up area increased to 27.30 per cent (18,650 hectares).

Since then, the depletion of the water bodies has accelerated. By 2007, the water bodies of the City was down to 1.47 per cent (1,005 hectares) of its area, while the built-up area had gone up to 45.19 per cent (30,476

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hectares), endangering the City's groundwater level, increasing the risk of life, as well as endangering aquatic and avian life.

Urbanisation

Dr Ramachandra's recent study (2007) cites rapid urbanisation is the prime reason for the loss of water bodies. Unauthorised encroachments that have eaten into the lakes in Greater Bangalore region. Sixty-six per cent of the lakes are fed with sewage, 14 per cent are surrounded by slums and 72 per cent are found with loss of catchment areas.

He said the loss of water bodies in the core of the City has led to frequent flooding and micro-climatic changes.

This will have an adverse impact on the diversity of flora and fauna, decrease in the number of migratory birds and catchment, and deplete the groundwater level. Those like the fishing community will be robbed off their livelihood.