

News » Cities » Hyderabad

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Activists lash out at government for vanishing water bodies in Hyderabad

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RAIN EFFECT: Water from Durgam Cheruvu, popularly known as Secret Lake, overflows onto the road after the recent rain. Photo: K. Ramesh Babu

The city had water bodies spread over 3,245 hectares just 12 years ago, they say

There is a direct link between the vanishing lakes and tanks and the submersion of the city every time the sky opens up. Over the years a number of water bodies have been gobbled up, exposing the residents to loss and destruction.

Just 12 years ago Hyderabad had water bodies spread over 3,245 hectares, about ten times the size of the Hussainsagar. In 1964, roughly 2.5 per cent of the geographical area was covered by water bodies and now it is reduced to just 1.5 per cent. If properly managed and rejuvenated, they can store more water than what is now being supplied from the Krishna.

Startling revelations

These startling facts are contained in the study made by the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). The two-volume book titled "Excreta matters" covering 71 cities was released by the Municipal Administration Minister, M. Maheedhar Reddy, at the Administrative Staff College of India here on Wednesday.

Through slides, Nitya Jacob of CSE explained how inter connecting channels helped the flow of water from one tank to another. But all these were blocked in Hyderabad, some by the golf course at Golconda.

Urban India, he said, was bursting at the seams with the attendant problems of growing water scarcity and pollution. The inequitable distribution of water between the urban and rural areas was causing serious conflicts. The dependence on groundwater had made India the 'tubewell capital of the world'.

Anjal Prakash and Jasveen Jairath gave a prescription for 'killing a lake'. In a hard-hitting presentation they said how the wrong policies of the government had resulted in lakes giving way to housing colonies. Even government institutions had come up plonk on lake beds!

Through a slide Dr. Jairath showed how a mud road bisects the Kapra lake.

She charged the government with succumbing to influence by corporate bodies and real estate lobbyists. She wanted protection of lakes and ponds for future water security.

However, in his speech Mr. Maheedhar Reddy cleverly put the ball into the people's court.

He blamed the people for looking the other way when there were encroachments and suddenly crying foul when affected by rain. "What can the government do. We are one among you," he remarked.

"Officials have been instructed to take stern action against encroachers. You will see the results soon," the Minister said.

Musi rejuvenation

He said a Rs. 922.97-crore project was being sanctioned for the rejuvenation of Musi river to bring relief to people

downstream. Phase III of the Krishna drinking water project would be launched soon and completed within one and half years. Efforts were also on to get 10 tmcft water to the city from Godavari, the Minister said.

He admitted failure on the part of the government in monitoring rain harvesting pits by individuals. Now the government would install the pits in colonies where people had paid for the same.

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