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“Velachery lake not cleaned for 20 years, sewage flows in unchecked”

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Velachery lake not cleaned for 20 years, sewage flows in unchecked

Govt Bldgs
Encroach
Upon Lake

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Chennai: For more than two decades now, the Velachery lake hasn't been cleaned up. The public works department (PWD) has not desilted it nor closed the garbage nor removed encroachments. Water hyacinth covers most of the surface of the 55-acre lake. S Kumararaja of Team Green Velachery told TOI that the lake used to be spread across 250 acres before several government agencies including Tamil Nadu Housing Board, Slum Clearance Board and private builders encroached upon it. The bypass road further destroyed it, he said.

“The monsoon is just a couple of months away, but the PWD and the civic body have not taken any steps to stop sewage inflow into the lake or remove the hyacinth. The civic body officials have orally asked the PWD several times to hand over the lake to them, but there has been no correspondence on it,” said Kumararaja.

The lake was once used for



TAKEN OVER: Water hyacinth covers most of the surface of the 55-acre Velachery lake

irrigation just like the other 45 tanks under the PWD's control in the city. The department cannot seek funds to beautify water bodies but only to improve the drainage capacity and other purposes which have now become redundant.

“This has become an urban lake. It is not used for irrigation anymore. We have sought Rs 25 crore to improve the lake, but we usually do not get funds. The GCC can take the lake for improvement and hand it back to us again. But these are decisions that are taken at the higher level,” said a PWD official.

Residents of Velachery have written to the GCC and PWD to improve the lake. National Green Tribunal also pulled up the PWD for high

content of coliform bacteria and high TDS of the lake water due to sewage inflow. The PWD told the tribunal that Metrowater has taken steps to identify sewage inflow points and plug them and ensure that only treated water enters the lake. The lake usually gets water from the neighbouring areas through the stormwater drains and major portion of the inflow is from the Raj Bhavan and IIT-M campus. This water then flows into the surplus channel and enters the Pallikaruna marshland.

“We have also sought enumeration of the more than 1,000 encroachments and will remove them soon. Only after that can the lake restoration be taken up,” said an official.

Pay ₹200 month to walk around Villivakkam tank

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Chennai: Walking on the banks of the rejuvenated Villivakkam tank will not be free of cost. Greater Chennai Corporation recently decided that the contractor will have to fix a charge of ₹20 a day or ₹200 a month for those who want to access the park during walking hours of 5am to 9am.

GCC has appointed a contractor who will be coming up with several entertainment and leisure facilities and also maintaining them. A suspension bridge will also be coming up, but it will not be open during the walking hours.

Additionally, GCC has also stated that ₹20 will be fixed as an entry fee for adults and ₹10 for children in the age group 5-12 and senior citizens for entering the park other than during the walking hours.

Baby strollers and wheel-

chairs for senior citizens will also be provided at a cost of Rs 20 per hour. Rates would be revised with the concurrence of GCC. These are moves taken by GCC to monetise its assets, sources said.

CK Entertainment Pvt Ltd of Hyderabad is the concessionaire to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the restored Villivakkam tank on a public-private partnership (PPP) mode for 25 years.

GCC has also introduced a new clause in the agreement that gives its officials powers to inspect the premises at regular intervals without restrictions.

The concessionaire has to develop a bowling alley, indoor game arcade, virtual gaming, an open air theatre and food court and shopping complex as part of the agreement.

A suggestion to have a separate smoker zone inside the premises was shot down by GCC earlier this year.

News Item in The Times of India newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 25th August 2021

CHENNAI: For more than two decades now, the Velachery lake hasn't been cleaned up. The public works department (PWD) has not desilted it nor cleared the garbage nor removed encroachments. Water hyacinth covers most of the surface of the 55-acre lake. S Kumararaja of Team Green Velachery told TOI that the lake used to be spread across 250 acres before several government agencies including Tamil Nadu Housing Board, Slum Clearance Board and private builders encroached upon it. The bypass road further destroyed it, he said.

"The monsoon is just a couple of months away, but the PWD and the civic body have not taken any steps to stop sewage inflow into the lake or remove the hyacinth. The civic body officials have orally asked the PWD several times to hand over the lake to them, but there has been no correspondence on it," said Kumararaja. The lake was once used for irrigation just like the other 45 tanks under the PWD's control in the city. The department cannot seek funds to beautify water bodies but only to improve the drainage capacity and other purposes which have now become redundant.

"This has become an urban lake. It is not used for irrigation anymore. We have sought Rs 25 crore to improve the lake, but we usually do not get funds. The GCC can take the lake for improvement and hand it back to us again. But these are decisions that are taken at the higher level," said a PWD official. Residents of Velachery have written to the GCC and PWD to improve the lake. National Green Tribunal also pulled up the PWD for high content of coliform bacteria and high TDS of the lake water due to sewage inflow. The PWD told the tribunal that Metrowater has taken steps to identify sewage inflow points and plug them and ensure that only treated water enters the lake. The lake usually gets water from the neighbouring areas through the stormwater drains and major portion of the inflow is from the Raj Bhavan and IIT-M campus. This water then flows into the surplus channel and enters the Pallikaranai marshland. "We have also sought enumeration of the more than 1,100 encroachments and will remove them soon. Only after that can the lake restoration be taken up," said an official.