Bellandur Lake Fire

Why in news?

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Bengaluru’s Bellandur Lake has caught fire for the third time.

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Why the lake had caught fire?

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- Factories waste and general sewage have led to extreme levels of water pollution in very few lakes that are left in the city today.
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- The modern housing projects are draining their sewage into the lakes to a point where the lakes became inflammable.
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- Bellandur lake, now has a toxic foam, which is caused by allowing untreated sewage water to flow into the lakes.
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- The lake catches fire because of the **phosphorus and oil on its surface**.
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Why the lake count has started to decrease?

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- The terrain on which Bengaluru is situated allowed for the natural formation of lakes. These lakes, were at one time, the main sources of water for the city.
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- The essential nature of lakes to life has even gave rise to development of a sacred practice called **Karaga**.
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- The city has lost an estimated 79% of water bodies and 80% of its tree cover from the baseline year of 1973.

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- As the city grew, it faced a dilemma. If the additional population was to be accommodated, it would require more land.
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- If it decides to protect all its lakes, it must expand far beyond its already extensive boundaries, thereby hurting the interests of farming.
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- In this context, the city chose to hurt the lake beds instead.
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Why case-by-case approach won’t work?

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- Several civic groups went to court against encroachments into lake beds and even had occasional successes. Like, the courts have ordered the removal of encroachments.
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- But this case-by-case approach had its shortcomings.
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- The **debates inevitably moved from the larger issue** of the role of lakes to the details of specific cases.
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What did the state government do?

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- Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is currently the custodian of the water body for its rejuvenation.
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- But BDA feels that there is **no point in restoring a lake if sewage water is not stopped** entering the lake.
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- Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board is in charge of diversion of sewage water, which clearly it has not been able to do.
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- Meanwhile, the response of the state government too has been piecemeal.
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- But without addressing the question of how many lakes a modern city could sustain, they typically will end up with policies that are considered

impractical by those who see cities as engines of growth.
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Source: Business Line & Financial Express

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