

Polluted Musi water used for irrigation affecting aquifers

Just beyond Hyderabad's outskirts near Ghatkesar lies the village of Edulabad, most noted for a massive lake that borders it. Locals say that the lake had provided for all their needs for as far back as generations can remember. But all that is now under threat. For the past few years, in an annual ritual of sorts, thousands of dead fishes wash ashore the lake, locally called the Laxminarayana cheruvu, allegedly due to pollution as it is located downstream from the city.

However, the real picture of pollution can clearly be seen a few km away, as one heads towards the village of Pillaipalli. The Musi river, once Hyderabad's lifeline, passes through here and hits one of the first out of 23 weirs (locally known as kathwas) in the state, after passing out of the city. The result? The water can be seen bubbling and spewing froth even as a pungent smell hangs in the air.

The pollution is largely attributed to industrial effluents, mainly let out by pharmaceutical and bulk drug companies, which can be found in abundance in and around Hyderabad.

But while the state government has been able to provide alternate water for surrounding villages to use for drinking and other consumption purposes, the local residents still use the polluted water for another purpose: irrigation.

"What choice do we have? While the flowing water is supposed to clean itself in principle, that is not possible when scores of chemical companies release untreated effluents into the river. Additionally, we have caught trucks coming all the way from Patancheru and Sangareddy and dumping it here in the night after locals formed patrol groups," explains Batte Shankar, the sarpanch of Edulabad.

