

# Evacuation, traffic snarls, no electricity: Bangaloreans blame poor urban planning for floods

Several IT employees and founders have taken to social media to narrate their ordeal after heavy rain pounded Bengaluru resulting in massive waterlogging and submerging of roads.



Co-founder and CEO of Unacademy Gaurav Munjal's family and pet were evacuated on a tractor as the society he lives was submerged. (Photo: Reuters)



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Entrepreneurs, IT employees and activists have urged the state government to intervene with immediate measures to reduce the flooding as the city braces for more rains in the coming days. They also asked the

government to take a holistic approach to the city's urban planning to prepare for flash floods in the future.

Several IT employees and founders have taken to social media to narrate their ordeal after heavy rain pounded the city resulting in massive waterlogging and submerging of roads.

"Left for office today which is at distance of 7 kms. 3 hrs on the road, crossed 500 mtrs and back home now. How do we call this city liveable by any standard? Absolutely no infra in the city. Still a village!" Jitendra Gupta, founder and CEO at Jupiter, tweeted on Monday.

Mohit Saxena, co-founder and former CTO of InMobi, said he missed his flight even after leaving four hours in advance. "Everytime I fall in love with #Bangalore its #traffic breaks my heart. Everything has collapsed in this rainy season, absolutely no hope. Even 4 hours aren't enough to cover 31 KM. Utterly disappointed for a city that has so much potential but its #infrastructure is failing it."

Ishaan Mittal, Managing Director at Sequoia Capital India, tweeted his family along with 300 other families had to evacuate their society. "It's horrific to experience the bottom (hopefully) of Bangalore's infrastructure. Today we had to evacuate our apartment along with 300 other families. Society (In Yemlur) has no electricity and water. 2 basements are filled with water with many cars stuck in them."

Co-founder and CEO of Unacademy Gaurav Munjal's family and pet were evacuated on a tractor as the society he lives was submerged.

"I have been under so much stress thinking of how to safely move my family out of the flooding situation. We had to cancel a couple of key meetings planned this week and several of our employees too are dealing

with it too. How do you build companies if you have to battle every single day the traffic and infrastructure woes, and now the rains are making it worse. We hope the authorities take notice and make this city a better place for everyone," a unicorn founder said.

Speaking to Rahul Kanwal on India Today's flagship prime-time broadcast Newstrack, TV Ramachandra, Associate Fellow, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, blamed the situation on the city's unplanned urbanisation and said the government should wake to the climate changes as the frequency of high intensity rainfall is expected to increase.

"When you look at the Bangalore situation, I would say the blame should be on the unplanned urbanisation. Over the last 2.5-3 decades, Bangalore has been concretised. There is no place for the water to recede. Bangalore topography is an undulating terrain. In 1800s, we had 1452 water bodies. Today we have only 193 water bodies. We had an interconnected lake ecosystem. But today the connectivity among the lakes is lost. The city is about 740 sq km, we had a 68 per cent green cover in 1973, today 85 per cent of our landscape is covered with concrete. When you choke the region with so much of concretisation, in the name of development, we are putting our people in distress. Wherever we have removed the lakes, we see they are the hotspots of flooding," Ramachandra said.

Arjun Mohan, CEO of edtech unicorn upGrad said that there has been a lot of construction happening in the areas that are flooded now, which slowed down for multiple reasons in recent times and as a result, pathways for the water to go into nearby lakes got obstructed and that caused the floods.

"I live near the area which is submerged currently, which is Bellandur Outer Ring Road, Sarjapur Road, Whitefield. This part of the area has a lot

of IT companies and start-ups. The floods were quite bad, there was no electricity, the apartment complexes were flooded. We all have moved into a world where work from home is possible, but when something like this occurs, even work from home is not possible because here is no electricity or internet.”

The Outer Ring Road Companies Associations (ORRCA) estimated that the companies it represents have suffered a loss of Rs 225 crore during the flooring of the area on August 30. The association, in a letter addressed to Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, said the city’s poor infrastructure is affecting the productivity and causing safety concerns for employees.

“It is estimated that more than half a million professionals are employed along the Outer Ring Road (ORR) between Central Silk Board and KR Puram corridor and with various support services and indirect employment, this corridor which measures about 17 kms is providing employment close to one million people,” the letter read.

“ORR IT generates revenue of \$22 Billion per annum (32% of Bengaluru’s revenue) and is the highest tax contributor, however the lack of focus on development of the infrastructure in this corridor is appalling... poor infrastructure on this corridor, however, is bringing down the efficiency and productivity of the companies and putting employee safety and well-being at risk,” it added.

Meena Girisaballa, CEO at PurpleFront Technologies, who lives in the Yemalur-Marathahalli area said the blame should be on the city’s civic body -- the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) – that failed to maintain the lakes.

"It's been terrible. We never thought it would come to this. I live in the Yemalur-Marathahalli area which is surrounded by three lakes -- Doddanekundi lake, Varthur lake, and Bellandur lake. I think the civic responsibility of maintaining these lakes has just been really poor. If they (BBMP) could spend time cleaning those lakes, de-weeding them and building the bunds, we wouldn't be facing this issue at all in the city. I wouldn't blame it on infrastructure, infrastructure has to happen, rains have been this way last year as well. BBMP has to take responsibility and maintain those lakes and improve the infrastructure," she said.

As the city braces for more rain in the coming days, several start-ups including Flipkart, Swiggy, Zomato and upGrad have advised their employees to work from home.

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