

Jal Mahal caught in bureaucratic hurdles

MESS Drains not cleaned properly bring in filth which kills fish

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JAIPUR: Jaipur's picturesque Jal Mahal is surrounded by shimmering water this year. However, the first rains of the season poured not only much-needed water but also woes that highlighted the inefficiencies in the system.

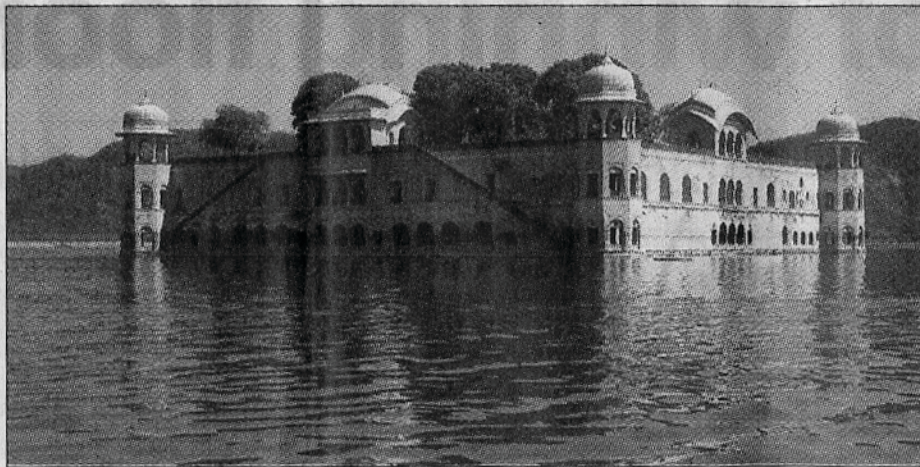
With the first rains the storm water drains that had not been cleaned properly by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation brought all the filth into the Mansagar Lake. This caused the death of hundreds of fish. That there is illegal fishing going on, is another story.

Engineers working on the project say while major drains have been diverted, the smaller ones are causing a problem.

Moreover, the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in Brahmpuri is letting untreated water into the drains.

Another issue is that ₹10 crore paid by the private developer, Jal Mahal Resorts Pvt Ltd, to Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) is caught up in a bureaucratic hurdle and lying unused.

According to officials privy to the project details, the money



■ A Sewage Treatment Plant is letting untreated water into drains, polluting Mansagar Lake.

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is lying with the RTDC that is the nodal agency for the project.

"The money is lying in an escrow account. It was to be given by RTDC to the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) but no decision has been taken," said an official.

The renovation of Jal Mahal was given by the government to Jal Mahal Resorts Pvt Ltd, on a 99-year lease. The developer took 100 acres land for which it will pay ₹2.5 crore annu-

ally to the RTDC.

Though the 300 acres of the lake and the Jal Mahal cannot be used for commercial purposes, the firm will create a tourist hub on the land around. The total project cost would be around ₹500 crore, said Rajeev Lunkad, project director at Jal Mahal Resorts.

"When we took over the lake in 2005, it was little more than a sewage tank. We brought in experts from IITs as well as German water lake restoration

expert, Harold Kraft," said Lunkad.

Pollutants had been settling on the lake bed since 50 years and the BOD was around 100. Experts told us that the water body would have to be deepened for it to 'heal'. So we dredged the lake bed," he said.

According to the agreement, 8 million litres of the water from the STP is to be given to the Tertiary Treatment Plant (TTP) where it is further treated and then left into the three wetlands.