

# Climate Change: You ain't seen nothin' yet!

DH [deccanherald.com/opinion/climate-change-you-ain-t-seen-nothin-yet-1109328.html](https://deccanherald.com/opinion/climate-change-you-ain-t-seen-nothin-yet-1109328.html)

May 15, 2022



Harini Nagendra,

- MAY 15 2022, 00:32 IST
- UPDATED: MAY 15 2022, 03:30 IST

As the world heats up, ice caps and glaciers are fast meltings, releasing large volumes of water. If this is not checked, the resultant increase in sea levels will lead to flooding in most coastal cities. But it's not only the coast that will suffer. The heating of the oceans interferes with existing ocean currents, destabilising weather patterns globally. As we saw just a couple of weeks ago across India, extreme events such as heatwaves are now becoming common features. Heat, combined with humidity – a regular feature across South India, and certainly so in Bengaluru – is a lethal combination.

People reported birds falling from the sky because of heatstroke, and children and the elderly, and people working outdoors, such as construction workers, and daily commuters faced the brunt of the harsh weather conditions – extreme sun, followed by extreme rainfall. The Indian Meteorological Department warns us that the number of thunderstorm days are also increasing in this region, and we can expect many more days of intense rains and strong winds in the coming years.

Many climate scientists believe that the changes we are witnessing, and their impacts, are just a fraction of what we can expect in the future, unless we quickly take steps to arrest climate change. There has been no shortage of international meetings to address the situation – beginning with 1992, when a number of countries met at the Rio Earth Summit, recognising that climate change was taking place. Thirty years on, despite the well-funded climate change-denial propaganda that continues to be spun out, most countries have agreed to combat climate change. Yet, the outcome of these agreements and meetings, targets, programmes and policies has been spectacularly unsuccessful. Instead of decreasing, the level of greenhouse gas emissions continues to increase, faster than ever before.

The reluctance of nations to act is not always without reason. Countries like India have been hesitant to commit to limiting their greenhouse gas emissions for fear that this will reduce their progress towards industrialisation, urbanisation and economic growth. Yet, now, the evidence from climate catastrophes, droughts, heat waves and flooding events is mounting. It should be obvious to most of us that we cannot expect progress and development unless we can deal with climate change – if we do not, the future of the world as we know it is at stake.

For instance, over 160 million children live in areas that will experience drought due to climate change. Even in cities like Bengaluru, the high-risk areas are those of high poverty, such as slums, where people live in plastic tents and sheet-roof houses that are unbearably hot during heat waves, and flood during even a short spell of rain because of inadequate drainage. As always, the people experiencing the greatest damage have had the smallest role to play in causing the problem – and they will have the least resources to deal with it.

Unless we act now, we are committing ourselves and our future generations to lifetimes of future climate shocks. At this point, and in the weeks, months and years to follow, we, the people, need to put unceasing pressure on our governments, policymakers, community representatives -- and ultimately on ourselves.

In Bengaluru, the BBMP council needs to develop a plan for environmental and climate action on a war footing, carefully formulated in conjunction with environmental groups, resident groups of all kinds, and experts from different domains. There is a real need for decentralised ward environmental monitors, who visit and report on the locations of waste dumps, blocked drainage, mosquito breeding sites, and other local problems that can easily be fixed if identified and tackled quickly. In addition, long vision planning is needed to help wean Bengaluru off unnecessary fossil fuel use, finding alternate paths to our energy security without compromising our wellbeing. At stake is no less than our own future, and that of our children.

## NEXT STORY



Gautham Machaiah,

- MAY 15 2022, 00:31 IST
- UPDATED: MAY 15 2022, 03:28 IST

Elections to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council are long overdue, and when they are finally held sooner or later, perhaps after a Supreme Court order, one can be sure that almost all seats will be cornered by big moneybags, as has been the trend for several years now. Those familiar with the ostentatious lifestyles of present-day politicians may be surprised to know that there was a time not very long ago when many councillors could not afford a car, an air ticket, or even a decent meal.

One among them was M Massay, an independent councillor, who was so poor that the then Mayor offered to buy him a motorbike so that he could attend to his official duties without any inconvenience. But Massay declined the offer as this would mean an additional expense on petrol. He instead requested the Mayor to buy him a bicycle, which became his favourite mode of transport until the nineties, when he served his last term in the council.