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## Citizens hope NGT order will give Varthur Lake much-needed attention

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BENGALURU: The fire-spitting Bellandur Lake has once again brought into focus the plight of the city's other waterbodies like Varthur Lake which are equally polluted. Residents hope that the National Green Tribunal (NGT)'s Monday directive to the state government to come up with a time-bound action plan for both Agara and Varthur lakes will change things on the ground.

The tribunal has also directed the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) to maintain strict vigil with regard to industrial pollutants and effluents entering these three lakes.

"There's no harm in giving more attention to Bellandur Lake which is much bigger than Varthur. Since Varthur is a downstream of Bellandur, whatever measures taken to improve Bellandur Lake will have an impact on Varthur as well. The NGT asked the government to look at all three lakes together and they are all interconnected," said Praveen Bagrodia, a resident of Varthur.

Welcoming the NGT decision, K Elangovan, member of a citizen group in Whitefield, said: "We hope this move will lead to better work on the ground. The residents have also filed a petition with the NGT highlighting the dismal state of the lake."

### Encroachments, sewage inflow trouble waterbody

From frothing to encroachments, the 450-acre Varthur Lake has been dying a slow death. Being a downstream lake, a large portion of its sewage inflow comes from Bellandur Lake. The latest is the ongoing construction of a pipeline which will transport treated water from Bengaluru to water-starved Kolar. However, residents living around the lake said the work—dumping of mud and debris in and around, violates the NGT directives and puts pressure on an already polluted waterbody.

Prof T V Ramachandra, head of the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and member of the expert committee for Bellandur Lake said: "Short-term measures that need to be taken include harvesting of macrophytes, prevention of dumping of construction debris and removal of encroachments. The ongoing work is against the NGT order which states that no activity should take place within the 75-metre buffer zone. I'm told that the work is being undertaken without the approval of the Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority".

### Revival work from Sunday

Bangalore Development Authority officials said the rejuvenation work is likely to start on Sunday. "All the processes and tenders are in place, and from Sunday, we'll start fixing the areas where the lake had breached. We'll also start dewatering the lake. The sluice gates will be reconstructed which will help reduce froth formation. The long-term measures include setting up of sewage treatment plants," said an official.