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Bengaluru: Green panel pulls up official for road near Varthur lake

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Varthur lake | Pushkar v

BENGALURU: Senior advocate Raj Panjwani on a commission representing the National Green Tribunal (NGT) slammed an official of the Minor Irrigation Department for construction of a road and dumping of debris at Varthur lake here on Sunday. The commission, formed as per the Tribunal's directions during its last hearing on April 11, officials of civic agencies and scientists — including wetland conservation expert Prof TV Ramachandran — inspected

Varthur lake on Sunday.

According to a volunteer of Whitefield Rising present at the lake, on seeing a wide road built around the periphery of the lake and the debris scattered around, a visibly angry Panjwani questioned an official of the minor irrigation department present there about it.

"You seem to have a lot of money," Panjwani told the official. He replied that the road was built to cover a pipeline that would transport water from the lake to Kolar district. The debris was a result of excavations the department had carried out, the official said. Panjwani slammed the official for constructing such a wide road and alleged that the quantity of debris indicated that even construction debris was being dumped on the lake. Ramkumar Narayanan, a resident of Ramagondanahalli, said the construction had been going on for about six months and a high-tension wire had also been erected on the lake bed.

Later in the day, residents of areas around both Varthur and Bellandur lakes made a representation to the commission. "We wanted some respite from the health problems and wanted officials to take up interim measures for the same. We also made the point that if you give six months to apartments to build sewage treatment plants (STPs), then why is the government being given two years to build an STP," said Sonali Singh, a resident of Bellandur lake area.

Panjwani assured the residents that their concerns would be considered. According to Sonali, joint commissioner (Solid waste management) Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Sarfaraz Khan, who was also a part of the meeting, admitted that though marshals were present around Bellandur lake, they may not be enough to keep a watch on the large lake, especially during the night. Regarding illegal settlements of immigrants beside the lake, Khan said one such group had been evicted and they had sent a letter to the police commissioner to get two other settlements removed.

An official said during deliberations of the commissions, that it was agreed that whenever fires occur in Bellandur lake, they were due to human intervention. "Another finding was that till we ensure that sewage water does not enter the lake, all other efforts become very incidental and peripheral. So focus has to be to ensure that sewage water does not enter," the official said.

PANEL MULLING SMALLER STPs?

A source said the NGT might be considering to order construction of STPs of smaller capacity for Bellandur lake as an interim measure. The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewage Board (BWSSB)

had however, said that an STP of the capacity sufficient to treat all water entering the lake, would be completed in 2020.

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