



The NEWS Minute

Environment

NGT team inspects lakes in Bengaluru, raps Irrigation Dept officials over encroachments

The commission that inspected the lakes was assisted by the Namma Bengaluru Foundation, and were briefed by Whitefield Rising.

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The committee formed by the National Green Tribunal inspected Bellandur, Varthur and Agara lakes in Bengaluru over the weekend, and held meetings with different departments and citizen groups with regard to rejuvenating these lakes.

In a hearing on April 11, the NGT had [rapped](#) the Karnataka government over its mishandling of the pollution in the Bellandur Lake and had called the report submitted by the state government “incorrect and misleading”. The Tribunal then formed its own committee to inspect the lakes.

Members of the committee, including its chairperson, senior advocate Raj Panjwani, Bengaluru Development Authority Commissioner Rakesh Singh, CEO of Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority Seema Garg, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Joint Commissioner for Health and Solid Waste Management Sarfaraz Khan, environmentalist Yellappa Reddy and IISc professor TV Ramachandra, were present at the inspection on Saturday and Sunday, assisted by Namma Bengaluru Foundation, with its CEO Sridhar Pabbishetty in the inspection team.

The commission inspected Bellandur Lake, the storm water drain (SWD) at ST Bed in Koramangala, the sewage treatment plant (STP) of a private apartment near the lake, and the STP at the Koramangala-Challaghatta valley on Saturday, and the Varthur and Agara lakes on Sunday.

Whitefield Rising, a citizen action group, briefed the officials about the problems related to the Bellandur Lake, like the dumping of construction and demolition waste, untreated sewage flowing into the lake, especially between 2 am and 4 am, resulting in an unbearable stench, encroachers, etc., on the basis of which the committee formed a blueprint for future actions.

[The New Indian Express reported](#) that when the committee visited the Varthur lake, Raj Panjwani slammed an official of the Minor Irrigation Department for construction of a 100 feet-road encroaching the lake bed and for dumping debris in the lake. He also reprimanded the official over the road coming up over the pipeline meant to carry treated water to Kolar. He asked to move the road to a different location. The committee also took note of other encroachments around the area and the fact that trucks were dumping effluents and construction waste into the lake. The citizen groups expressed concern over the 17 inlets into the lake and the toxic substances released into its waters, which is affecting agricultural produce and entering the food chain, causing severe health issues.

After the inspections were over, a meeting was held at the BDA office, which was also attended by members of Whitefield Rising along with residents of areas near Bellandur and Varthur lakes. The committee will prepare a report along with the BDA and other government agencies by April 18 on the condition of the two lakes, mentioning records of fires, the size of lakes, extent of lakes covered by macrophytes, rate of removal of macrophytes and hydrophytes, extent of sewage being dumped into the lakes and extent of silt and other deposits and their depth, along with future course of action.