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THE TIMES OF INDIA

NGT panel lends an ear to Varthur residents' woes

TNN | Apr 16, 2018, 07:07 AM IST



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BENGALURU: Stepping beyond its official mandate, the National Green Tribunal panel set up to assess rejuvenation work in Bellandur and Varthur lakes invited residents and volunteers to a meeting at the BDA office in Seshadripuram on Sunday.

After the expert panel spent four hours inspecting Varthur Lake, residents said they were satisfied after being able to communicate the ground reality to the panel, considering that NGT hearings take place in New Delhi. The panel, along with the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and other agencies, has to submit its report to NGT by April 20.

T V Ramachandra, IISc professor and panel member, said the panel chairman questioned the work being done for the Kolar pipeline in the buffer zone of Varthur Lake, which is supposed to carry treated water out of the city. "The minor irrigation department engineer was questioned about the width of the road coming up as well as the material used to construct it. While he claimed it was excavated mud, we could clearly see construction debris. Apart from this, residents pointed out problems of illegal dumping and encroachments on the lakebed," he said.

Bellandur resident Sonali Singh said they spoke about how de-weeding and fencing were superficial unless the flow of effluents into the lake could be stemmed. "Lake marshals are doing a good job but they cannot be everywhere, especially at night."