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Residents urge BBMP to stop litigating, carry on its work

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*By Reya Mehrotra**Petition asks BBMP to focus on fixing Bellandur lake instead of taking on NGT orders*

The recent developments with the work in progress have suffused Bellandur residents with hope that their lake will come alive again, after a long period of frothing, multiple fires and controversies. However, they fear the state government's decision to start litigations against the National Green Tribunal's orders would jeopardise the progress.

To avoid this, Bellandur residents have started a petition, asking for completion of the rejuvenation work in a time bound manner. "As citizens, we were gratified to note that restoration for Bellandur Lake would start soon as rejuvenation plans were drawn out, under the watchful eye of NGT and expert direction by IISc. Unfortunately, litigating NGT orders in courts has begun, which offsets the agenda of restoring the lake," the petition read.

Recently, 54 CCTV cameras were installed at Bellandur Lake along with three watch towers. Most of the water has also been drained out of Bellandur Lake and the process of desilting is to begin soon.

Sonali Singh, who also stays near the lake, says, "The work will continue till any hearing comes up with a decision otherwise. This is an important issue. The state government has money and time for litigation. Instead it should focus on rejuvenating the lake which is pending for decades rather than getting embroiled in legal hassles. The government has lost the case previously too. Legal fees are paid from citizens' taxes only.

And it is only logical that NGT has fined the state government. Polluters must pay and the lake rejuvenation must start in earnest.”

In December 2018, the NGT had questioned the state government’s failure to protect the city’s lakes and had levied a fine of Rs 75 crore on it and had ordered the setting up of a Rs 500 escrow account for rejuvenating Bellandur Lake. The BBMP had also filed a review petition but, the NGT had declined it.

“Ever since I moved to the Bellandur area I have developed acute eczema and I often gasp for breath due to upper respiratory tract issues. A lot of children around me are facing similar issues.” says Bharathi, who lives near Bellandur Lake, through the petition.

More than 1,200 people have already signed the petition.