

Now private firm offers to desilt Varthur Lake

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BENGALURU: In a step towards rejuvenating [Varthur Lake](#), private company Mineral Enterprises Limited (MEL) has offered to desilt a portion of the polluted water body immediately with its CSR funds of Rs 25 crore.

A technical committee, comprising representatives from the [Bangalore Development Authority](#) (BDA), [Karnataka](#) State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) as well as experts like TV Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science, have been deliberating the proposal over a series of meetings, the most recent of which was held on Monday.

In August last year, the company had signed a memorandum of understanding with the BDA, custodian of the lake, for implementation of its action plan, which focused solely on desilting.

According to the BDA's action-taken report which it drafted on the direction of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), MEL will take up "desilting of .85 million cubic meters (of 4.5 million cubic meters of silt accumulated), covering an area of 258.6 acres, to a maximum depth of 2 meters".

"Varthur has been accumulating silt for decades and desilting it using one company's CSR funds will be impossible. As per our DPR, we will take up the shallow part of the lake (southwest side near the wetland) and dry-dredge it. However, there are a lot of complications; there is a high-tension wire there and the spot is close to where the minor irrigation department is constructing a pipeline," said Sobia Rafiq of Sensing Local, a think-tank which drafted the DPR for MEL.

While the BDA and the government have consistently maintained that desilting of both Bellandur and Varthur lakes would be taken up only after 2020 once the sewage treatment plants (STPs) are up and running, MEL is ready to go ahead with it now.

"Following our meetings with the BWSSB, we have understood that Varthur will be getting clean water from Bellandur soon. While we could potentially wait till 2020, we are ready to start work now and prompt other companies to come forward and take up work in other parts of the lake," said Rafiq.

"Ideally, desilting should start after 2020 once the STPs are built, but they are interested in going ahead with it now. To do this, we will have to divert untreated water, which could pose a problem. The technical committee is looking into the proposal; we will hold some more meetings next week, following which we will take a decision," said a BDA official.