

Experts want security during lake survey

Researchers, officers intimidated and abused during visits, they say

BENGALURU: It has been 15 days since researchers from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and members of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) demanded security from the State government for conducting a survey of encroached lake beds in Bengaluru City, but nothing has been done so far.

During the visit of the NGT Committee member and researchers to Bellandur and Agara lakes on September 11, the hand-held GPS device of Prof T V Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Energy and Wetlands Research Group, IISc, was snatched away by proponents of a project.

The team of inspecting officers and researchers was also abused and intimidated. The team was surveying the encroachment and collecting details of residential and commercial construction projects of Mantri Tech Zone and Coremind Software Limited at Agara and Jakkasandra.

Following this, the NGT wrote to the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board directing them to investigate the matter and provide security to the researchers, but there have been no further developments in this regard.

"All the GPS data collected for a year has been deleted from the device. The data in-

cluded those of the Western Ghats and other locations which need to be collected again. It is also shocking that such cases take place with NGT officials," Ramachandra said.

No report prepared

An NGT official, on condition of anonymity, said, "We are scared to come to the City for survey. We were sent by the Centre, but at the outset, we realised that private people and citizens overpower the government. No security was provided to us by the State government despite prior intimation. Also, till date, no report has been prepared or investigation carried out. We are sure if this is the case, no water bodies will be free of encroachment in the City. It is important to protect the lakes and the people working towards conserving them. Now, we will plan our next visit only after we and those coming to the site on our invitation are assured of security."

The Principal Bench had held a meeting on September 10 and had invited two expert members of Mantri and Coremind to Agara and Jakkasandra villages in Begur hobli on Sarjapura on September 11. It had also invited Ramachandra and other researchers along with the members of the Koramangala Resident Welfare Association to the site.

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