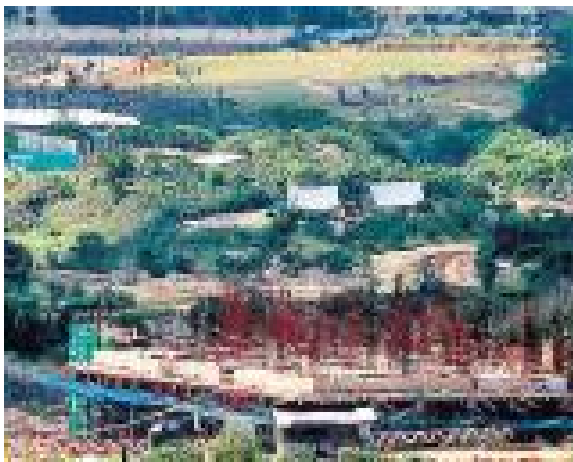




Stay on work at Bellandur-Agara lake fails to deter realtors

Bengaluru, Dec 07, 2014, DHNS:

Shifting of petition to Delhi Green Tribunal may delay efforts to save lake



The petition pertaining to the encroachment of and construction activity on the Bellandur-Agara lake bed has been shifted to the principal bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in New Delhi. This is likely to delay efforts at saving the water body.

The petition was being heard by the NGT in Chennai for the past nine months. It had to be shifted as the judicial member Justice M Chockalingam and expert member Prof R Nagendran have recused themselves from hearing the matter. Although the petitioners smell a rat about the matter being shifted to New Delhi, they say that they are gathering funds to fight the case.

Forward Foundation, Praja RAAG and Bangalore Environment Trust filed the petition and in April 2014 got a stay order on the construction activity on the lake bed. The NGT bench had observed that the construction activity will cause irreversible damage to the water body.

A spokesperson of the petitioners said that despite the NGT's orders staying the construction work, real estate developers continued it. The petitioners have collected evidence of the violation of the NGT orders. Even as the petitioners were in the process of filing a contempt case against the developers, the judge and the expert member recused from hearing the case further.

The land around Agara lake was allotted to two firms for industrial development a few years ago. Residents in the vicinity objected to the huge project on the ecologically sensitive land. Two real estate developers, Mantri Techzone Private Limited and Coremind Software and Services Private Limited, have proposed to set up a special economic zone; hospitality, residential facilities and a mall which covers approximately 80 acres, abutting the Agara lake.

A team from the Centre for Ecological Studies, Indian Institute of Science, which had visited the site, noticed several violations and recommended cancellation of the project. A report from the Union Ministry for Environment and Forests, found that the promoters had violated key conditions imposed while granting environmental clearance. A PIL was also filed before the High Court of Karnataka. However, the division bench asked the petitioner to wait as the matter was before the NGT.