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Builder group regrets attack on lake expert, court dismisses contempt petition

The National Green Tribunal dismissed the contempt of court case filed by NGOs after Mantri Developers counsels apologised in the court.

Akshatha M , 08 Oct 2015

Counsels of Mantri Developers have tendered an unconditional apology in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Tuesday, October 6th, 2015, with regard to the contempt case filed against them.

Namma Bengaluru Foundation and Forward Foundation had filed the contempt case in the NGT after an expert committee member was reportedly stopped from entering Mantri Developers site at Agara in Bengaluru for inspection and his GPS device was snatched.

According to the order posted on the NGT website, legal Advisor of Mantri Developers Bhubendra tendered an unconditional apology. Mantri Developers Managing Director Sushil Mantri who was present in the court, along with his legal advisor, told the court that a member of the Committee was requested not to take GPS to the Meeting and later on the same was returned to him. However, there was some altercation with the security person for which the Legal Adviser had tendered apology to the member.

The [NGT order](#) notes that “they even regret the said incidence. Of course they specifically said that no insult was inflicted upon the member and there was no bad intent in asking the GPS not to be taken to the meeting.”

According to petitioner’s advocate, they added that the security man had fallen on the feet of Prof Ramachandra seeking apology soon after the issue took place. They also contended that the media has blown the issue out of proportion, and the petition was based on media reports. However this was denied by the petitioner’s advocates.

The bench observed, while dismissing the case: “We are satisfied with the explanation offered by both the director and legal advisor who are present before the Tribunal. To maintain harmony, the Legal Advisor has tendered unconditional apology, which is accepted.”

The Tribunal also noticed that they have not received any complaint from the member of the committee. “Therefore, we dispose of this application and drop the proceedings against the respondents.”

## The background

According to [reports](#), on September 11th 2015, the members of Expert Committee constituted by NGT that is studying the Mantri and Coremind SEZ project on Agara-Bellandur catchment area, had visited the project site. During the visit, a security personnel at Mantri project site allegedly snatched the GPS device from the hands of one of the team members, Prof T V Ramachandra, and stopped him from entering the site.

Following the incident, Prof Ramachandra had filed a complaint with the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) and had reported the same to the Expert Committee. On the other hand, petitioners in the

case including Forward Foundation and NBF had filed a contempt case in the NGT on the same incident. NGT had summoned Sushil Mantri, the Chairman and Managing Director of Mantri Developers in connection to the case. Sushil Mantri was present in person for the hearing on Tuesday.

## **NGT postpones hearing, no stay on construction work**

Meanwhile, the petitioners pressed the Tribunal to issue a stay on the construction activities in the project site. They argued that several licenses issued for the project had expired. However, the Tribunal did not take a call on the matter.

The Expert committee team has submitted its field visit report to the NGT. The Tribunal has directed to supply inspection note to all the parties before the next hearing. The next hearing is on November 4th 2015.

## **‘Nobody fell on my feet’**

In contrast to Mantri’s submission before the NGT over threat incident, Expert Committee member Prof T V Ramachandra has clarified that neither Mantri security personnel nor its legal advisor has sought apology over the incident.

“Nobody fell on my feet asking for apology. It was Mantri’s security person Chidambaram who snatched GPS device from me. He also assaulted my student, a research scholar who had accompanied me to the spot on September 11th. After snatching the GPS, he deleted all the data and the device was not handed over to me till the evening. After visiting the site, we went to inspect Bellandur lake where even other two members of the Expert Committee joined us. Throughout our inspection, Mantri staff had kept a watchful eye on us. It was only after we finished our work, that they handed over the GPS to me,” the professor said.

Further, he said that they (Mantri Developers) showed no remorse to the incident. “They continued to intimidate me even on the next day, at a meeting at KSPCB office. They abused me saying I lacked knowledge and alleged in the open meeting that I was intentionally preparing report against them,” T V Ramachandra said.

When *Citizen Matters* asked the professor why didn’t he file a contempt case, he said that he is a basically a researcher and his job is to do research.

Following the incident, T V Ramachandra wrote a protest mail to KSPCB and requested to provide him security. “After 15 days of sending them (KSPCB) the mail, I received a response from KSPCB Member Secretary, who asked me to “approach appropriate authority.” Now, I do not know who the appropriate authority is,” he said.

Mantri Developers spokesperson who didn’t want to be named declined to make any comments on the issue.

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