

Bellandur-Agara encroachment case: NGT slaps Rs 5 lakh fine on Mantri Techzone

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Mantri Techzone, a subsidiary of real estate major Mantri Developers, was fined Rs 5 lakh by the National Green Tribunal on Wednesday for not complying with its orders in a lake encroachment case.

The green court also asked Mantri to explain why the court's directions were not complied with.

The NGT has directed the Managing Director of Mantri Techzone present himself before the Tribunal on the next date of hearing, which is on March 20.

In the last hearing, which was held on February 23, Mantri Techzone failed to present a compliance report.

The issue had been closely followed by Forward Foundation, Namma Bengaluru Foundation and other like-minded pro-citizen groups.

Nitin Seshadri, who belongs to the Koramangala 3rd Block Residents Welfare Association, said, "This is a welcome step forward by the NGT to hold erring parties to account. Right through, Mantri Techzone refused to comply with the orders of the NGT and their defiance is making a mockery of the law. It's in the fitness of things that the NGT has started cracking down on this brazen behaviour. Citizen bodies fighting this case are grateful to Namma Bengaluru Foundation and MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar for standing together with the citizens and fighting this issue."

Mantri Techzone, which had encroached the lake and surrounding wetland, was also directed to restore 3 acres and 10 guntas of land in Bellandur – which came within the 75-metre buffer zone – to its original condition at their own cost, and to then return it to the authorities.

The NGT in its September 2017 hearing had formed a five-member team to inspect the violations on site. The committee comprised a veteran environmental scientist of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru; the CEO of Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority, the Additional Director of Town and Country Planning, BBMP; the Chairman, State Expert Appraisal Committee and Member Secretary, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board.

The committee, in its findings, had said that none of the NGT's order were followed, including those relating to encroachments on the Bellandur Lake.