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Shifting of Varthur lake pipeline still in the pipeline

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*NGT Monitoring Committee members visit Varthur lake for inspection
Residents also complain about odour emanating from diversion channel*

Members of the National Green Tribunal Monitoring Committee of Bellandur and Varthur lakes have expressed displeasure over the delay in shifting the pipeline laid down by the Minor Irrigation Department at Varthur lake.

NGT Monitoring Committee members Prof. T V Ramachandra and UV Singh, accompanied by engineers from the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and others visited the lake to assess the progress of various developmental works and also to redress grievances of residents who complained about odour emanating from the diversion channel.

The members visited Bellandur lake on Friday and directed the BDA engineer to not only keep the area free from dead fish and garbage but also install a trash guard between the Y-Junction and Iblur to prevent waste from flowing into the diversion channel.

Prof Ramachandra said the committee members received similar complaints from Varthur residents but the stink was less at Varthur Kodi compared to the odour emitting at Bellandur waste weir and diversion channel. He expressed displeasure over the delay in shifting the pipeline from Varthur Lake despite clear directions from the NGT.

“The Minor Irrigation Department has claimed that it would not be possible for them to shift the pipeline since it is being used to carry treated water to fill up irrigation tanks in Kolar District. I am aware that filling up irrigation tanks with treated water will help a lot of farmers but that does not mean that the Department will construct a pipeline in Varthur Lake,” said Prof Ramachandra.

According to him, the Minor Irrigation Department has also constructed a road over the pipeline, which has also led to the construction of buildings near the buffer zone. “Earlier, there was a temple. The concerned authorities

did not do anything about it. Later, a few more constructions took place near the temple,” he said. He has also expressed concern over delay in fencing the lake land to prevent encroachment in future. “The fencing work is incomplete,” he said.

Expressing concern over the negligence of the authorities in protecting Varthur lake from encroachments, a resident of Varthur, on conditions of anonymity, said the people who have encroached the lake land have political connections. “Three years ago, encroachments were cleared but illegal structures have come up on the lake land again. The encroachers are powerful people who can silence residents and activists without any hassle,” said the resident.

Meanwhile, Minor Irrigation Department Assistant Executive Engineer S Krishna said the department has already submitted an affidavit to the court stating that it would clear the road and fence the lake land.

“It will be difficult to shift the pipeline that passes through a portion of Varthur Lake while a major portion of it is on its periphery. We have taken up the task of fencing of the lake land. Around 200 metres of lake land is yet to be fenced. It will be completed soon,” said Krishna.