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BangaloreMirror

Thanks to NGT, Varthur Lake set for a clean-up

/ Nov 8, 2019, 06.00 AM IST



Encroachments around area to be cleared, desilting to begin after drying up of lake and marshals to be hired

At last, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), after getting strictures from the Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal, has commenced work on Varthur Lake that is full of silt, sewage water and weeds. Preparations are in full swing to survey the lake and clear the encroachments in the lake area.

“As of now, the construction of a temporary channel to drain the stagnated sewage water from the lake is in progress. Desilting of the lake will begin as soon as the lake becomes dry. It will be easy to remove the silt from the lake,” said BDA Commissioner Dr G C Prakash.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is also gearing up to recruit marshals and install CCTV cameras at the Varthur Lake.

“We are in the process of appointing marshals, installing CCTV cameras and streetlights at Varthur Lake,” said BBMP Commissioner B H Anil Kumar.

It may be recalled that monitoring committee on Bellandur and Varthu lakes led by Justice Santosh Hegde had submitted a report on September 20 on the measures taken for the rejuvenation of Bellandur and Varthur Lakes. The committee had pointed out that BDA, BBMP and KSPCB have failed to implement the NGT directions on the rejuvenation of these lakes.

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—BH Anil Kumar, BBMP Commissioner

The committee report had stated that the authorities have not recruited marshals for Bellandur and Varthur Lakes and fencing work was incomplete and no efforts were made to clear the encroachments.

On September 21, the Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal has directed the authorities concerned to appear before it with the compliance report during the next hearing scheduled for November 27.

Appreciating the BDA authorities for commencing the work at Varthur Lake, Elangovan K, a member of Whitefield Rising, has said that he would welcome the BDA’s initiative. “I hope the BDA do it in a scientific manner. Hope they restore the original contour of the lake. Hope the silt gets reused by farmers and also in making paver blocks,” said Elangovan.

However, some have also criticised the civic body. Coming down heavily on the BDA for the delay in construction of the temporary channel, Prof T V Ramachandra, one of the members of the committee constituted by the NGT to monitor the progress of Varthur and Bellandur lakes rejuvenation, said the BDA has taken too much time to construct the temporary channel.

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Construction of temporary channel to drain stagnated sewage water from Varthur Lake in progress on Thursday

“The construction of the temporary channel was supposed to be completed two months ago but it is still in progress. If the BDA takes such a long time to construct it, one can guess the time it will take for the rejuvenation of Varthur and Bellandur lakes,” he said.

Meanwhile, Jagadeesh Reddy, a member of Varthur Rising is skeptical about the commitment of the authorities concerned since there is not much time left for completing the pending works. He said the Principal Bench of the NGT had directed BDA, BBMP, KSPCB authorities to submit the compliance report during the next hearing scheduled for November 27.

“The BBMP authorities are yet to install CCTV cameras and street lights on the lake bund to keep an eye on illegal dumping debris, during the night. Additionally, the authorities are yet to clear the debris dumped at Varthur Lake. The civic body has not taken measures to appoint marshals to prevent encroachments and dumping of debris on the lake bund,” he said.

Describing it as a welcome sign, United Bengaluru convenor Suresh NR said that the authorities have to ensure quality in the work. “I am happy to know about the BDA commencing the construction of a temporary channel to drain water from the lake. I want the authorities to focus on the quality. They should not do this work just to make the NGT happy,” said Suresh.

Meanwhile, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Rajya Sabha member and founder of Namma Bengaluru Foundation said that the state government has committed to protect all the lakes in and around Bengaluru.

“Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa wanted to protect all the lakes from pollution and encroachers. Sewage treatment plants (STPs) will be constructed to let treated water into the lakes,” said Rajeev Chandraekhar.