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Citizens, authority: Road-like structure flouts NGT order

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BENGALURU: Varthur Lake is back in focus. Citizens allege the ongoing work to lay a pipeline for transporting treated water to Kolar is in violation of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ruling on buffer zones and is putting additional pressure on the severely polluted lake.

"Excavation is on to lay the pipeline and the soil that has been removed is being levelled. So it is starting to look like a road. This '100 feet road' flouts the NGT order, which says no construction is permitted within the 75-metre buffer zone," said a volunteer from Whitefield Rising, which is monitoring the lake.

The project, approved by the government, intends to transport treated sewage water from Bengaluru to Kolar via a pipeline in order to replenish 137 lakes and tanks.

To bring the alleged violation to the fore, residents contacted the Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority (KLCDA). A team was soon dispatched to the site. "Our staff inspected the site on August 9 and found the ongoing work was in violation of the NGT order. We wrote to the BDA, asking them to furnish details of the project. They, in turn, wrote to the minor irrigation department, which has undertaken the work," said Seema Garg, CEO of KLCDA.

Surprisingly, no proposal has reached the KLCDA for approval. "Before work like this is executed, a proposal has to be sent to us. Our technical team goes through it and verifies it. Only after getting our nod can work commence. While we had received a proposal for work to be carried out in the area between Bellandur and Varthur, no proposal for laying of the pipeline was submitted to us," she added. Dumping continues

What's worse, mud and rocks are once again being dumped into the lake, allege citizens. "Contract workers at the site said only mud was being dumped, which is easy to remove. However, we found even rocks were being thrown into the waterbody," said a resident of a nearby area.

Residents fear the 'road' will become a permanent fixture. "Workers told us the mud would be removed once the pipeline work was over. But it (the mud) will only harden and will be difficult to remove," said another volunteer.