



## Construction in river bed violates HC order: Rajendra Singh

Dipannita Das, TNN Jan 17, 2012, 05:59AM IST

PUNE: Ramon Magsaysay awardee and noted water conservationist Rajendra Singh said that the ongoing concretisation work in Devnadi and the construction of a road along the Mutha river bed from Vithalwadi to NH4 clearly violate the Bombay high court's stay order on concretisation of water bodies.

Devnadi, a stream in Baner, runs for 5 km and flows into the Mula river. Singh visited Devnadi, Ramnadi and Vithalwadi with members of Jal Biradari and Baner Area Sabha on Monday. "Concretisation work is being carried out in both Vithalwadi and Devnadi. This is a clear violation of the high court order."

He added, "The worst situation in case of rivers is in Pune, compared to other places in the country. If the government itself is violating norms, who should protect them (the water bodies). The only way to save our water bodies is through people's movement. People should come together and fight for them."

The Bombay high court in its order has stated that till the next date of hearing, the respondents shall not proceed with any construction on any river bed as the impugned project is likely to reduce the width of [the river](#) as contended by the petitioners. In this case, the respondent is the Pune Municipal Corporation.

The Baner Area Sabha, resident's group, and Jal Biradari, a social organisation, had filed a case on March 21, 2011, seeking a stay on construction and praying for restoration of all water bodies.

Following the continued concretisation work on the river bed, the two organisations recently filed a contempt court case against the Pune Municipal Corporation and its officials regarding the violation of the stay order.

At the Vithalwadi site, Singh, also known as the Waterman of India, pointed out the blue markings of the flood plain near the river. He said, "The construction of the road that connects Vithalwadi to NH4 is being carried out in the flood plain. Standing on the under-construction elevated road parallel to the river, we can see the flood plain markings on the building on the left and the river on the right. It clearly shows this is the river bed. Going by the law, no construction and developmental work can take place in flood plain areas and river beds."

Vithalwadi residents Subhangi Kulkarni and Mansa Kamath, who came to meet Singh, said that they wanted a stop to the flood-like situation the area faces every year. "Last September, water had entered the ground floor of our building. We do not want this road. We want authorities to do something to stop flooding in our area," they said. Singh said that constructing the road would lead to more flood-like situations in the area, as the road would act as a barrier for the stormwater flowing in to the river from other areas.

At the Devnadi site in Baner, a wall has been erected on one side of the stream, in front of an under-construction bungalow, as part of the concretisation work. Singh said, "Walls are being constructed along the sides of the stream and are filling up the land on both sides. This makes it easy to encroach upon the land at this site."

Following the high court order, an inspection team of the ministry of environment and forests had visited Devnadi and Vithalwadi in November 2011. Their report is awaited. The next court hearing in the matter is on January 27, 2012.

**What the PIL says?**

In the PIL filed, the petitioner had stated that under the garb of constructing stormwater drains, which ought to have been constructed along the side of the roads, work was being carried out right in the middle of the natural water bodies.

In addition to this violation, the PIL says, no environmental impact assessment has been carried out for the flood project, which costs well over Rs 400 crore and that the present construction being undertaken was not in compliance with the development plan for Pune.