

Letter to the Chief Minister of Karnataka

June 14, 2013

Dear Shri Siddaramaiah,

I have been receiving representations from various citizens and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) expressing their concerns over the recommendations made in the Karnataka Information and Communication Technology Group 2020 (Report) and the dangerous implications and its adverse impact on the development of Bengaluru.

They have pointed out that many recommendations made in the Report do not address the crucial challenges faced by the citizens, especially in terms of real governance reforms and transparency. You will agree that any proposal to develop Bengaluru that does not address the fundamental issues of statutory planning for the city and ushering in citizen-centric governance reforms is not consistent with a government that has been elected on a promise of better Governance.

The core proposal in the Report recommending increase of Floor Space Index for builders to generate funds for development of Bengaluru, without taking into account the infrastructural constraints in the form of adequate roads, water, electricity and civic services required to service the additional Floor Space Index will sound a death knell to the city. Further it represents a surrender of the city's Development to the commercial interests represented by builders, contractors and real estate companies - many of whose commercial interests are directly responsible for the problems faced by the city and residents.

The development of the city, including various contracts and projects has for long been influenced by vested commercial interests of some builders and contractors, who seem to have overtaken the planning of the city. We are all aware of the large number of elected representatives who also have deep and very conflicted interests in real estate that has become almost symbolic of the poor governance of our city. There is an urgent need to put an end to such a nexus between contractors and officials acting against public interest.

In such a scenario, any proposal like the one mentioned, despite being backed by highly visible industrialists must be seen as what is: An attempt by some builders and the real estate lobby to significantly influence the development plans of our city. Nowhere in the world are builders given the responsibility to build cities and this certainly should

not be the case in Bengaluru. Such moves will neither lead to the development of the city nor solve the problems of the city.

This is dangerous and will also represent an abdication of Government of these responsibilities of reforming government and finances through a comprehensive set of policy actions. Shortcuts and so called easy solutions are never without costs and implications.

The government should instead, design a blueprint for development that includes planning and developing satellite towns in the vicinity of Bangalore in locations such as Yelahanka, Kengeri, Devanahalli and Hosakote and reduce the enormous pressure on Bangalore's infrastructure and public services.

Any solution to Bangalore's myriad problems must necessarily follow an intelligent approach that takes into account the aspirations of the citizens of Bengaluru with the interests of all socio-economic groups represented and follow the planning and financing techniques used by other successful cities around the world. Top-most priority should therefore be on important issues including access to adequate drinking water, mass transportation, public health & sanitation and affordable housing for the sections of society that need Governmental intervention.

I urge you to take citizens considerations seriously and protect the city against efforts by lobbies and vested interests.

Yours Sincerely,

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR

Shri Siddaramaiah

Hon'ble Chief Minister

Government of Karnataka, Bangalore