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**Dear Bengalurean,**

This letter is an appeal to you - as citizen and an active supporter of our City, towards starting a new galvanized and united approach to protect our City, Namma Bengaluru.

You and I, are both witnesses to and victims of a situation where the city despite its rapid economic growth continues to become more unliveable making life increasingly difficult for its citizens. At the same time our beautiful city is being destroyed with almost irreversible damage being caused to its environment and heritage. The evidence is all around us – the dying/encroached lakes, the receding water table, garbage mismanagement, public health issues, poorly funded schools, rampant tax evasion, revenue leakages, Illegal constructions and their regularization. All these ail our city besides the many bureaucrats and politicians who profit, enriching themselves as people continue to suffer and huge projects are announced whilst old projects remain in disrepair and without maintenance.

So what is the cause of this situation where it seems that people are the lowest priority, when it comes to determining the future development of the city and neighbourhoods?

The single biggest reason is that Citizens are no longer the most important stakeholders in the city. The key stakeholders now seem to be businessmen, politicians and/or bureaucrats connected to these businesses. This means our city is being run more like a real estate or contractors company with plans, projects and resources focussed on needs of this group instead of people of the city, its communities and neighbourhoods which need planned investments. This in turn has allowed vested interests and rampant corruption spread their tentacles unchallenged into every facet of the city's institutions and governance, thus making most



politicians and bureaucrats have direct or indirect interests in real estate or contracting. The corruption we see is not just petty corruption but a widespread diversion and loot of public money and resources away from citizens into the pockets of these vested Interests. It is the silent acceptance for last several years by most of our citizens that has in a sense helped this brazen takeover of our city and its resources.

But while we may not be able to change our past, we can certainly do something about the future! And do something we must so that we can leave behind a better city for our children and future generations of Bengalureans.

That is why I write to you in the belief that we are at an inflexion point as a City. We all saw a big change in the last few months. I rejoiced with you as we together participated in the recent deep awakening of citizens to the rampant destruction of Bengaluru - triggered by a dubious Steel Flyover thrust upon us.

The visible anger and opposition of the people paused this otherwise brazen project mid-step. This unprecedented awakening and coming together of citizens on the Steel Flyover issue can and must become the tipping point in the assertion of Citizens' Right to be involved in defining the future of our city. Through this campaign we saw a silver lining emerge for Bengaluru - the uniting of ideas and efforts of many NGOS, RWAs and Citizens who are fighting to protect our city.

As an elected representative, I have long fought for stronger involvement of citizens in shaping of the City's future and have been at many times disappointed by the lack of unity amongst the many voices who can change the direction of our city's future. As such, I welcome this new energy and effort seen for our common quest to alter the tide in the struggle to regain Bengaluru.

Here, **I will come to the core of my appeal** - NammaBengaluru has a vibrant spirit of volunteerism and there are many NGOs, citizen and resident groups as you, who carry an active spirit of volunteerism and are working hard to develop Bengaluru. But we need to figure out a way to harness all this energy and passion to bring about a real change as we shape the future of our city. For long, governments and administrators along with their business accomplices rely on 'divide and rule' policy to prevent civil society and citizens from coming together on vital issues. It suits them when citizens and organizations contradict each other due to strong commitments to their respective areas of interest. This is precisely the reason that citizens' protests are ignored generally by governments. However, this changed and we saw the change during the united #SteelFlyoverBeda movement.



So while we may all have our views, politics, ideologies and may even differ on specific solutions for our city, it is vital we come together united on few fundamentals regarding the future of our city and relations between the Government, City and its People. If we can agree on these and we must try to - then we can create a fundamental change for our city and its growth, shaping how current and future governments would the serve city and people, rather than exploit and plunder it.

I share a few ideas which could be considered as a beginning for this conversation that I hope helps in developing a united approach to permanent involvement of citizens in transforming our Namma Bengaluru. I look forward to hearing your thoughts, suggestions about and support to this Call for Unity.

I wish you, your family and loved ones the best of the holiday season and best wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely,

**RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR**



## **Citizens must Shape the Future of the City**

### **1. Citizens must be Involved in Shaping the City and Deciding its Future**

#### **Government/Agencies must consult Citizens on projects/decisions that impact neighbourhoods, wards and City before Approving Plans**

*Public consultations a must. This helps create a Government - Citizen Dialogue which is the best way to transparently arrive at solutions for city.*

- a. Government must ensure all information of project/plan/policy is in Public domain much in advance of consultations
- b. Public consultation should be conducted for at least 4 weeks or more depending on scale, nature and impact of project/plan
- c. Public consultation responses and their disclosure by Government should be mandatory

### **2. Comprehensive City Development Plan is a Must - To plan, finance and also Stop Adhoc Decisions and Misuse of Government discretion as means of favour and Corruption**

*Statutory Multi-Year Development Plan for Bengaluru region - which should cover all aspects of the city's development including sustainability, falling under these categories.*

- a. Zoning (commercial use of residential areas) and Land use
- b. Transportation and Mobility
- c. Public Health, Education Lakes and Water bodies
- d. Urban poor
- e. Environment and Heritage

### **3. Governments/Agencies are responsible - Hold Them Accountable;**

#### **Citizens have Rights - they should Assert and Fight for These**

*Citizens must become Aware and Alert. Government must serve Citizens and the City and has to be held accountable for all Public Money, Assets and Contracts*

- a. Increase Governance and Citizenship Literacy ie. awareness of various regulatory institutions; their functions and responsibilities towards the City.
- b. Increase awareness of Laws and Citizens' Rights.
- c. Fight for Accountability and Transparency in Government/Regulatory Institutions and Parastatal Agencies; Demand Prosecution of Officers found negligent or corrupt.
- d. Volunteerism by Citizens, NGOs, RWAs who wish to embed themselves into Government as advisors must continue in their spirit of volunteerism and contribution; but this should not dilute the Government's absolute responsibility and capacity building towards the City and its development.