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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
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Member of Standing Committee on Finance
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Member of Central Advisory Committee for the National Cadet Corps
Co-Chairman, District Development Coordination & Monitoring Committee, Bengaluru Urban District

13 June 2018

Dear Shri Kumaraswamy Avare,

Sub: Reconstituting the Bengaluru Metropolitan Planning Committee (BMPC)

I am writing to you about the need for an urgent, comprehensive and statutory regional plan for Namma Bengaluru.

As you are aware the 74th amendment of the constitution provides for a Metropolitan Planning committee (MPC) to undertake the planning of the city. The MPC is envisaged to undertake such planning in a transparent, consultative manner involving citizens – keeping in mind the core idea that a city is about its citizens and neighbourhoods.

I have been urging this for some years now and in fact had written to the then CM about his attempt to weaken the MPC rules way back in 2013. I am enclosing that letter for your reference.

The previous government had made every effort to bypass the MPC – including not convening it. It is only due to intervention of the court that the then Government was forced to convene the MPC – and even then, only had two short abrupt meetings of the MPC without any agenda. The MPC was then sought to be bypassed by setting up a Bengaluru Vision Group – consisting of some eminent business luminaries but not even one RWA or citizen group.

I had cautioned them, that such bypassing of the MPC was illegal and approached the High Court for a finding on the same. The Honourable Karnataka High Court in its order dated 11.06.2018 (*Copy Enclosed - Annexure 1*) has observed that “During the course of consideration of these matters on the earlier occasions, the Honourable High Court of Karnataka had expressed reservations that a parallel advisory body in the name of “Bengaluru Vision Group” was constituted by the previous Government, particularly when Bengaluru Metropolitan Planning Committee is already in place, as required by Article 243ZE of the Constitution of India, and as constituted under the Government Notification No. UDD 356 MNJ 2005 (P), dated 04.01.2014”.



This case which I had pursued along with the Namma Bengaluru Foundation through the petition W.P. Nos. 31791-31792/2016 (PIL) vindicates my position that the previous Congress Government led by Siddaramaiah in a brazen effort to push expensive, dubious projects was violating constitution by trying to bypass the MPC which is the constitutionally mandated body for city planning.

The previous Congress Government has also tried to bring in a Regional Master Plan through the corrupt BDA and not MPC – which was eventually stalled only because of the intervention of the court.

Therefore, I urge you to reconstitute the MPC with the following changes, which have been raised by citizens and in my letter to the then Chief Minister on November 22nd, 2013, during the framing of the draft rules (*Copy Enclosed – Annexure 2*):

1. Revise the rules of the MPC to ensure participation of RWAs and citizen groups. By making only a fleeting reference to consult NGOs and other professional bodies in preparing the draft development plan, the MPC in its current form deviates from the mandate of the 74th Amendment Act and MPC will not be able to deliver on the promise of better planning and development
2. The MPC in its current form does not provide for the real and active participation of citizens. Without their participation, the MPC is in violation and inconsistent with the 74th Amendment that envisages a specific role for ward committees, citizens, RWAs and NGOs. This is a glaring omission and must be addressed. I would urge at least 2-3 RWAs to be represented in the MPC rather than having Corporate Czars from IT-BT Industry.

Further, to ensure active citizens' participation in city planning I urge you that rules prescribe that Ward Committees chaired by Corporators will have at least 50 percent local RWAs nominated to them.

3. Of the remaining 10 members of the MPC, at least 2-3 should be experienced in Urban Planning. Such experts must have real qualifications and track record in City planning and not be self-professed experts.
4. While the rules have the Chief Minister, MPs, MLAs and MLCs as Members of the MPC, the Mayor who represents the largest and most important part of the Bangalore Metropolitan Area has been excluded, must be included if there is to be real devolution of planning powers and autonomy.
5. Make BMRDA the secretariat for the MPC after ensuring high Integrity officials are posted there.



6. After the constitution of the MPC, Convene the MPC immediately and start the process of devising a Regional Master plan.

The 74th amendment of our constitution represents the need for devolved planning and development of cities with active citizen participation. The cities woes and decline are a direct consequence of lack of transparency and citizen involvement in determining the nature and type of development for their cities. The city deserves an accountable and transparent planning institution that addresses all the various aspects of city's growth needs for ALL its citizens and not just a pocket of business interests.

Constitution of the MPC marks a significant Urban Governance reform and I would urge you to implement it in letter and spirit and include my suggestions/requests. That is the only way to reverse the many years of decline and exploitation of this city and to develop our city to be a beacon of investments and tourists and act as gateway to investments and development to our state Karnataka.

Our people and our city and state deserve better than what they have received in the last 5 years

Yours Sincerely,

Rajeev Chandrasekhar

Enclosures –

1. Annexure 1 – High Court Order dated 11.06.2018
2. Annexure 2 – Letter to CM dated 22.11.2013

Shri H. D. Kumaraswamy
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka, Bengaluru

CC:

Dr. G. Parameshwara
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka, Bengaluru