



30 November 2008, Bangalore

FANTASTIC RESPONSE FOR “CAMPAIGN TO RECLAIM BENGALURU”

Campaigners Light a Candle in memory of victims of senseless attacks in Mumbai

Over 2,000 people gathered on the steps of the Town Hall in Bengaluru on the evening of 29th November, Saturday, in a strong statement of strength against projects that destroy lives, livelihoods and greenery in Bangalore. This gathering was a follow-up to the *Walk to Reclaim Bengaluru* that was organised as an initiative of *Hasiru Usiru* on 9th November. More details at www.esgindia.org.

Everyone gathered held a candle through the evening in memory of the victims of the senseless attacks in Mumbai. A moment of silence was observed in memory of our brave soldiers and especially those who have laid down their lives to ensure safety for thousands. Major Unnikrishnan was especially remembered as a fellow Bangalorean who made the ultimate sacrifice in an act of extraordinary courage to protect his subordinates and the lives of tens of civilians caught in the cross fire.



Saturday's gathering witnessed excellent response for communities affected by the road widening and Metro projects in Bangalore. The Avenue Road Traders Association decided to down shutters for the evening, and every shopkeeper along with workers trooped to Town Hall, raising slogans against the illegal and destructive road widening projects. Similarly, those affected by road widening in Chamrajpet, Infantry Road, Devanga Hostel Road, Tannery Road, Banaswadi Main Road, and tens of other roads joined this Campaign in large numbers.



Bamboo weavers of K. R. Road joined this Campaign questioning why the Metro project could not go underground and save unnecessary destruction of livelihoods, homes, greenery and public spaces in Bangalore. The street that has sustained their livelihoods for over 40 years is now being claimed for the Bangalore Metro, in total contravention of Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act and various other laws. They protested against the threat to their livelihoods as the Metro displaces them but without in any manner compensating them as they are not property owners.

Joining the Campaign, Dr. Hemachandra Sagar, Member of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, called upon everyone gathered to build their strength and protest against projects that destroy the city, livelihoods and greenery. He demanded that the Government must involve the public and elected representatives in decisions relating to mega projects such as the Metro and road widening projects. He assured affected communities that he would raise their issues and concerns with the Chief Minister of Karnataka. He encouraged everyone concerned about the sustainable and just development of Bangalore

to come out in large numbers and join the *Campaign to Reclaim Bangalore*.



Dr. Hemachandra Sagar, MLA, joins the Campaign and holds a Candle for the Mumbai Victims

Representatives of various affected communities spoke at the Campaign. In particular, Sreedhar of Avenue Road Traders Association announced that the next major action in the Campaign would be to hold a festival of Old Bangalore including Avenue Road, Balepet, Chickpet, and other surrounding areas. Not only would this celebrate the spirit of old Bangalore, but would also serve as a major action to demand heritage status for such areas. He demanded that the Chief Minister must ensure that mere connectivity to the International Airport through high speed roads should not be at the cost of the lives and livelihoods of lakhs of traders, homeowners, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.



Leo Saldanha of the Environment Support Group demanded an immediate stop to the illegal road widening programmes in light of many other progressive and less impacting solutions that could be implemented to relieve traffic congestion. He also called for diversion of unnecessary investment in elite projects such as high speed rail links and elevated roads to the airport and invest such monies in pushing the Metro underground to the benefit of all. Such visionary action would save Bangalore for today and ensure its strong future as well.



Everyone gathered shouted slogans energetically demanding that unviable and unnecessary road widening projects must be abandoned. They called upon the government to play its role in ensuring just development and not keel under the pressure of the elite and invest in useless projects. They demanded that only lawful and sustainable projects must be implemented, and that too after consulting the public at large as required per law.

Issued by Environment Support Group Team on behalf of *Hasiru Usiru* – a progressive network of individuals, organisations and affected communities working to protect lives, livelihoods and public and social spaces in Bangalore.

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More pictures of the Campaign may be viewed at http://picasaweb.google.co.in/leo.esgindia/NammaRaste_29Nov08_HasiruUsiru