



10th November 2008

EXCELLENT RESPONSE FOR WALK TO RECLAIM BENGALURU

Hundreds turned up at Lal Bagh West Gate today to participate in the **Walk to Reclaim Bengaluru** organised under the aegis of *Hasiru Usiru* a network of community organisations, residents associations, project affected communities, voluntary organisations and individuals concerned about protecting equitable access to public social spaces such as roads and parks in Bengaluru. Gracing the occasion were Mr Dinesh Gundu Rao (MLA, Gandhinagar), Ms.



Premila Nesargi, Former Chairperson of the Karnataka Women's Commission. The Walk was also endorsed by Prof. B. K. Chandrashekar, former Chairman of Karnataka Legislative Council, Justice A. J. Sadashiva (Retd.), Mr. Chiranjiv Singh, IAS Retd. (former Addl. Chief Secretary), Mr. N. A. Haris (MLA, Shantinagar) and several other eminent persons who could not be present due to prior commitments.



Children, cyclists, senior citizens, community organisations, concerned individuals marched on from Lal Bagh West Gate to Town Hall holding colourful posters and shouting slogans against the unlawful widening of roads and the illegal implementation of the Metro in the city of Bangalore. Several demanded that these projects be suspended as they violate all legal norms and more importantly are likely to damage the city, livelihoods and its streets in the most irrevocable manner. Others urged the government to ensure public involvement in the process of planning and decision making.

Signing an appeal to the Chief Minister of Karnataka Shri. Yeddyrappa, the endorsers urged him to seriously consider the implications of these infrastructure projects, which will affect thousands of lives, property, trees, public spaces and everyone's right to street space.

Speaking to those gathered Leo Saldanha, the coordinator Environment Support Group said that, "The Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka held in a PIL filed by Environment Support Group and ors. (WP 7107/2008) that such projects would have to conform with the law, respond to public interest objectives and involve the public in decision making prior to implementing these projects. To ensure



these objectives were met the Hon'ble High Court appointed a committee of experts under the Chairmanship of Mr. Yellappa Reddy. Minutes of the Committee's proceedings are ample proof that the parameters set out by the Hon'ble Court have not been met, yet the projects are being implemented."



Addressing the crowd Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao (MLA, Gandhinagar) said "Higher officials decide without taking into account general public opinion and consent. Decisions should be taken by talking to all concerned people, and experts of the field. Public parks like the Lal Bagh are sacred spaces and the bureaucracy is destroying these monuments without paying any heed to the people's concerns.

Ms. Premila Nesargi, Former Chairperson of the Karnataka Women's Commission, explained that the Metro is illegal and there is no law supporting its construction. She also said that it was a great tragedy that people were being kept out of the planning processes deliberately.

Shri. Rajeev Gowda, Prof Indian Institute of Management (Bangalore) said that one recognises that there is crisis of urbanisation. What is important is to realise that instead of succumbing to it one must include people and keep their interests in the centre of every project that is being undertaken. Projects like these fundamentally alter lives and livelihoods. Decisions should not be made in such autocratic manner.

Kathyayini trustee of CIVIC Bangalore emphasised that the government should keep in mind what has been laid out in the National Urban Transport Policy. She also said that the government must keep in mind the needs of the common man.



After the walk ended in Town Hall, the crowd shout slogans and decided to carry forward their demand for public involvement in decisions that affect the city by gathering again on 29th November. Affected communities from Avenue Road, Chamrajpetta, Infantry Road, CMH road have also confirmed that they will carry on this demand in their respective areas.

For Hasiru Usiru

Divya Ravindranath

Campaigner

Environment Support Group

105, East End B Main Road, Jayanagar 9th Block East, Bangalore 560069. INDIA

Tel: 91-80-22441977/26531339, Voice/Fax: 91-80-26534364

Email: esg@esgindia.org/esgindia@gmail.com

Web: www.esgindia.org

<http://www.deccanherald.com/Content/Nov102008/city2008111099919.asp>

Hasiru Usiru for Garden City
DH News Service, Bangalore:

More than 1,000 residents took part in a walk to draw attention towards the need for better road and protection of green cover in the city.

"The government should not chop trees in the name of development," said Shamala Rao, one of the participants in the walk.

Initiated by Hasiru Usiru, a non governmental organisation along with a conglomeration of various other city-based community organisations, the walk for better city took off from Lal Bagh and ended at Town Hall.

"I am happy that the citizens are being concerned and have addressed crucial issues like bad roads and loss of green cover in Bangalore. The public has decided to raise their voices through the walk," said Dinesh Gundu Rao, Legislator, Gandhinagar constituency who flagged off the rally. Kathyayini Chamaraj, Executive Trustee, CIVIC and part of Hasiru Usiru said the event marks that citizens of Bangalore should be included in the rebuilding process of the city.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Citizens bemoan the state of Garden City

10 Nov 2008, 0328 hrs IST,TNN

BANGALORE: The gathering of around 800 people had a single agenda: reclaim Bangalore from development that comes at the expense of environment and heritage. They walked from Lalbagh to Town Hall on Sunday, raising slogans and holding placards. Bangaloreans of all ages gathered to protest against widening of roads, felling of trees and the demolition of landmark structures to make way for Namma Metro.

By 10 am, hundreds had gathered at the west gate of Lalbagh. The crowd included people who are set to lose their houses and shops to the Namma Metro project, apart from environmentalists and activists. They walked as part of an initiative by Hasiru Husiru Network.

Divya Ravindranath, a researcher with Environment Support Group (ESG), said the walk focussed on widening of roads and other projects started without taking citizens into confidence. "People don't have a forum for their opinion. Most of the projects that are underway are illegal and today, people from different parts of the city have come together in protest against these projects," she explained.

The Hasiru Husiru network had sent a petition to chief minister B S Yeddyurappa, protesting the road-widening, a project that costs Rs 4,000 crore, and the Namma Metro project for which parts of Lalbagh and Lakshman Rao park have been acquired.

Many of those who participated in the protest said trees need not be felled unnecessarily. "The trees have been here for long and we are not ready to compromise them," said Prashantha Bhatt.

Rise in private transport

There were cyclists as well, slamming the rampant felling of trees in the city, which in turn encourages more people to use private transport. "Cycling in Bangalore is less appealing now because it's too sunny to cycle and dehydration is another issue. Instead, the government should be increasing fuel prices and subsidizing public transport fares," said Mayank Rungta, who belongs to a cycling group.

Sushanth Jain, holding a placard that said 'save our heritage zones', said Lalbagh should be identified as a heritage zone. "Bangalore, also known as the Garden City, does not deserve the name anymore," said Neelu Jethani, another participant. Most of the walkers said BBMP is trying to change the way the city looks but not for the better.

Another issue brought up was the construction of Namma Metro. According to Prahlad Rao, the metro rail is not worth the cost it will put on us, such as demolition of important buildings and shops. Shruti Prasad felt metro should be made underground, thus avoiding chaos and helping preserve trees. The organizers said a meeting will be held on this matter on November 29.



Bangaloreans protest to save city's green cover
Rati Ramadoss
Monday, November 10, 2008 (Bangalore)

In



Bangalore over 500 people gathered to protest against the widening of 140 arterial roads for the metro train. Widening the roads will mean cutting down thousands of trees that line the roads, and a complete loss of green spaces in the city.

A court appointed committee and the Bangalore municipal corporation recently sanctioned the widening of the roads, which will mean more than 30,000 trees will be cut.

"Trees as part of the built-in heritage is very important to protect, and I think Bangalore also belongs to people who walk, not just those who drive around in cars," said a Bangalore resident.

It's not just the green cover that people are worried about. Krishnamoorthy has owned a stationery store on Avenue road in the city for the past 48 years. But when the road is widened, the 100-year-old shopping area will go, and that will be the end of business for the shopkeepers.

"Avenue Road has been around for so many years. It will be a huge problem for all of us. They are widening the road by 1 kilometer. This will make sure that 1.5 lakh people lose their jobs," said Krishnamoorthy, shopkeeper.

The reduction in Bangalore's green spaces is an issue that resonates with many

environmental activists throughout the world, and is relevant to all our major cities today. With the voices of dissent only growing louder in Bangalore, one just has to wait and see what the government has to say.

THE HINDU

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2008/11/10/stories/2008111050490200.htm>

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For a greener and more organised Bangalore

Staff Reporter

Concerned citizens take out walk opposing felling of trees

Photo: K. Murali Kumar.



Needing attention: (Top) The row of trees inside Lalbagh at West Gate which will pave way for the Bangalore Metro Rail project. (Below) Members of Hasire Usiru, an environment support group, joined by residents, taking out a rally from Lalbagh to Town Hall, against trees being cut in Bangalore. —

BANGALORE: The massacre of an alarming number of trees in the city for purpose of road widening and the Bangalore Metro has been a cause of concern among the environmentalists. On Sunday, several environmental groups joined in a walk from Lal Bagh to Town Hall, to raise the issue of environmental degradation the “City of Gardens” has witnessed in the recent times.

The walk, organised by Hasiru Usiru, a network of concerned individuals around Bangalore with support from various non-government organisations like Environment Support Group (ESG) saw hundreds of people of all age groups walking for a cause.

With bold placards reading slogans such as “We want greenery”, “Push the Metro underground” and many more, the members of the walk were determined to urge the people to use public transport in order to decongest roads. In view of the few heritage sites left in Bangalore such as “Lal Bagh” and “Cubbon Park”, the enthusiastic activists hope to push the metro underground to avoid destruction of such places.

Maliha Ibrahim and Naomi Menon, students of Christ University, said: “Such projects have been rampant all over the city. We just hope to save what is left of this city. The metro especially has led to so many people on MG Road losing their livelihood. We need to bring about a change.”

“People need to be involved to understand the ill effects of such plans. The number of vehicles on the road doubles every five years, so how long are we going to resort to felling of trees for widening the roads,” Divya Ravindranath, a Researcher at ESG told *The Hindu*.

Another walker for the cause, Meera Gopal, corporate trainer, E-Learning Company said: “Very soon there will be no greenery in Bangalore. I am sure there are better alternatives in urban planning. The metro is supposed to serve only a small segment of the population. It will make more sense to improve the current transport system, which could be less expensive.”

Among those present were Dinesh Gundurao, MLA, and former chairperson of the State Women’s Commission Premila Nesargi.

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By IANS

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Bangalore citizens walk for better roads and greenery

BANGALORE: Over 1,000 residents of Bangalore took to the streets Sunday, demanding better roads and protection to the green cover in the city.

The walk was an initiative of Hasiru Usiru (Greenery is Life's Breath), a conglomeration of various city-based community organisations.

The walk took off from Lalbagh and ended at Town Hall, covering a distance of almost three km.

The event was flagged off by Dinesh Gundurao, legislator from the Gandhinagar constituency.

'I am happy that the citizens of the city are a concerned lot and have addressed very vital issues like bad roads and loss of green cover in

Bangalore and decided to raise their voices through the walk,' said Gundurao.

'I want to thank all the participants who have joined in our campaign through today's event. The main purpose of the entire exercise is to highlight the extensive damage road-widening and metro projects are causing to Bangalore,' Divya, a member of Environment Support Group (ESG), an NGO and part of Hasiru Usiru, said before the event took off.

'The event is to say that the citizens of Bangalore should be included in the rebuilding process of the city,' said Kathyayini Chamaraj, executive trustee of Civic, an NGO and part of Hasiru Usiru.

Bangalore in recent times has lost around 50,000 trees, felled for developmental activities, states an ESG report.

During the early 1990s, the city had less than 700,000 public vehicles plying on its roads daily.

By the end of 2004, the number had crossed 2.1 million and in the last four years two million more cars, three-wheelers and two wheelers have been added to the city roads.

On an average, around 1,500 new vehicles come on to the city roads daily.

'By participating in the walk I want to tell the government that they have to find an immediate solution to horrible traffic congestion problem of the city. The city was once green and healthy. The government in the name of development cannot simply chop trees,' said Raghuveer Anand, who participated in the walk.

Hasiru Usiru pointed out that the measures undertaken by the government in the name of easing traffic congestion are highly damaging to the environment.

According to Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, for any developmental project to be taken forward, public opinion has to be sought. The ESG pointed out that large scale tree felling carried out for these developmental projects is in violation of Karnataka Prevention of Trees Act, which clearly states huge number of tree should not be cut and re-plantation of trees is a must.

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