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## **EXCELLENT RESPONSE FOR WALK TO RECLAIM BENGALURU**

Hundreds of individuals, community organisations and affected communities have come forth enthusiastically to confirm their participation 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. Over a thousand are expected to participate in the walk that would commence from Lalbagh West Gate at 11 am on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2008, Sunday and conclude at Town Hall.

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. Dinesh Gundu Rao (MLA, Gandhinagar), Ms. Premila Nesargi, Former Chairperson of the Karnataka Women's Commission, Mr. N. A. Haris (MLA, Shantinagar) and several other eminent persons have confirmed their support for the cause and would participate in the walk. Dr. Hemachandra Sagar (MLA, Chickpet) has endorsed the effort but would not be able to participate due to prior commitments.

Speaking yesterday in a Press Conference organised by *Hasiru Usiru*, Dr. Hemchandra Sagar had this to say: "What was Bangalore when the Metro was conceived? And what has become of the city now? There has been an increase from 220 sq km. to 840 sq. km. How can an antiquated plan work for today's growth?" Speaking about the proposal to lay elevated Metro tracks, Dr. Sagar said: "Everyone knows the condition of roads. There is hardly space for cars on roads, and to top it all you are putting a Metro overhead! And in addition one needs stations, one needs parking. Where will you get so much space from densely populated areas?"

On the choice of the Metro technology, Dr. Sagar said: "We call our city "Modern Bangalore" and we use a Metro system that has been abandoned world over. If you want to travel peacefully and ensure peace everywhere the Metro runs, we should go underground. Its not a question of cost but of convenience."

Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao addressed the same Press Conference and said this about how Metro and Road widening projects are planned in Bangalore: "Higher officials sit and decide without taking into account general public's opinion and consent. Whoever it is, decisions should be taken by only after talking to all concerned people and experts of the field."

Arguing that an elevated Metro through Core Bangalore will destroy the city, he added: "We should not compare Bangalore Metro with Delhi because Bangalore city is very different with different layout and roads."

On the implementation of the Road widening project of BBMP, Mr. Rao said this: "Avenue road is part of Bangalore's heritage. Chandni Chowk is an heritage of Delhi and has narrow roads too. Does one see roads in Chandni chowk being widened?"

Speaking for the need for the safety of pedestrian and cyclists' safety, Mr. Rao said: "Roads should not be built with traffic in mind, roads should be built with all of us in mind." On the issue of road widening being solution to traffic congestion he added: "A broad minded approach and long term vision is required. Has the Anand Rao flyover stopped traffic congestion? NO!"

Emphasising the importance of sensitive road design, he emphasised: "Adequate footpath with road should be the agenda. One should worry first about how pedestrians use the road and design around it."

Mr. Rao also lamented that there is no forum whatsoever to air such grievances for Legislators. "When such is the case for us, the fate of the common man can only be imagined. For various controversial reasons Municipal Corporation elections are not held, and there are no Corporators to represent people's voices. As a Legislator, I have trouble getting an appointment with the BBMP Commissioner!" He emphasised the importance of people centred planning and insisted that Public Consultations must be held before implementing any projects in Bangalore.

The Walk on Sunday has found resounding support amongst our elected representatives. Tragically, felling of trees on K. R. Road continues in blatant disregard of law and in violation of the directives of the Hon'ble High Court in WP No. 7107/2008. (Copy of the direction is online at: [www.esgindia.org](http://www.esgindia.org))

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](mailto:esg@esgindia.org)/[esgindia@gmail.com](mailto:esgindia@gmail.com)

Web: [www.esgindia.org](http://www.esgindia.org)