

# City Comes Together to Save Carlton House Grounds

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BENGALURU: Architects, environmentalists and historians are expressing displeasure over the government's proposed move to build the chief minister's official residence at Carlton House grounds.

The headquarters of the state's premier investigating agency, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), is located at the Carlton House premises on Palace Road. According to sources, the State Public Works Department has identified part of the premises to build an official residence for CM Siddaramaiah.

## Rich History

Carlton House is an old building with a lot of open space around it, a mini coffee plantation and numerous trees. It was said to be the office of Sir Mirza Ismail, Dewan of the old Mysore State. Carlton was a successful auctioneer and ran a firm in the city and lived in it for a few years before selling it to the Government of Mysore.

Environment scientist Prof T V Ramachandra from CES and CISTUP at the Indian Institute of Science told Express, "The CM is supposed to be progressive and he knows there is no need for him to shift residence. Our recent studies show that in Bengaluru, there is just one tree for every seven people. The Vedas, they say 10 children are equal to one tree. Which means when a tree is cut, it is equal to murdering 10 children. Our CM should not get carried away by these people who give him wrong advice."

The city's heritage includes its open spaces, its green cover, flowering trees, lakes and its old buildings. Suresh Heblikar, a noted environmentalist, said the Carlton House grounds is one of the few remaining lung spaces in the city, whose green cover has vanished in a hurry. "Whatever we have needs to be valued and protected. There are valuable trees in that area, I remember some rare varieties of Ficus. "

"Traffic has gone up on the road and there is a lot of carbon dioxide being produced. We need trees in and around Chalukya Circle, especially as we have lost so many trees to the soldiers' memorial opposite the planetarium. The trees along the golf course were cut too. At this rate, we will become environmentally poor. Our CM is sensible and agreed not to raze Balabrooie Guest House. Most trees in the city are old and they must be preserved," he said.

He added that politicians have cars and drivers and so, can afford to travel 10 to 15 from the heart of the city to get home. Special buildings should be converted into museums as they are memories of a historical past, not just architectural legacies.

Netas' Disdain?

Architect Naresh Narsimhan said the proposal shows the government's disdain for

the city's heritage and that most politicians have no emotional connect with Bengaluru. "Would they do it to the town from which they come?" he asked.

However, he expressed confidence in Siddaramaiah's sensitivity, and said the proposal was most likely the brainchild of someone else in the CM's coterie.

"There were around 4,000 heritage structures in the city about 25 years ago. They have been reduced to a few hundred today, including some private residences. We need a Heritage Act to protect our heritage structures. The draft is ready and the government has to introduce it in the House," Narsimhan said.

## HOLDING FAST TO HERITAGE

A few heritage buildings in the city that still stand

- Vidhana Soudha (1940)
- Mayo Hall (1931)
- High Court building (1864)
- Bangalore Palace (1887)
- Sri Aurobindo Society building, Ulsoor (was a palace belonging to the old Nepali kings, given away by them in 1973)
- Higginbothams building, MG Road —W the city's oldest bookstore (1897)
- St Mark's Church (1812)
- Tipu's Palace (1537 & 1791)
- NGMA — Old Manikyavelu Mansion
- Bhoganandeeshwara

Temple at the foot of Nandi Hills — it is an amalgamation of architecture of the Chola and Hoysala eras 'AN UGLY SIGHT'



Environmentalist Suresh Heblkar said next to Cubbon Park, there is an SBI building and next to it stands a white building where Sir Cubbon lived. He was a frugal man and did not add rooms to the building. Instead, he made his guests stay in tents in the park for he did not wish to waste space. This was over a century ago. But now, the mindset has changed and ugly buildings are sprouting up everywhere, he said.