

# 'We live in hope of a Greater Bengalooru'

## Greater Bangalore, a milking cow?

I have been wallowing in misery in the last five years that I have been living in Vignan Nagar, 6 km from Indiranagar, which is the CMC limits.

When I first read about GB, I was thrilled because I thought my area would finally see some improvement. But after reading the news items in Deccan Herald that the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike will have uniform property tax system, it seems that my worst fears had come true.

The whole GB exercise seems to be just another elaborate exercise to increase revenue. The areas in the CMC limits remained invisible to the State government for many years. But suddenly they are getting noticed as they have 'more potential to generate resources'. Officers say that the expected tax revenue will be Rs 200 crore from the present Rs 51 crore. This proves my point.

Currently, the Capital Value System (CVS) for property tax is not being implemented in BMP limits. However, CVS is already operational in some CMCs and the plan is to implement it across the BBMP areas. We are all aware of the stark contrast in the civic amenities in BMP and CMC areas. Then how does the government justify the proposal? There has been no infrastructure development in Vignan Nagar in the past five years. I would like to ask then why we are paying property tax and service charges, and that too on a par with the BMP areas?

There are no roads, no footpath, no road signs, no street signs, no working streetlights, no drainage system, no trees, no bus shelters, no Cauvery water, no police beat, no parks, no playground for children, no garbage collection, no sweepers for the roads, no HOP-COMS, no Nandini milk outlets. What we do have is plenty of stray dogs, apartment blocks built in blatant violation of building byelaws.

First give us the amenities and then tax us. Until

The Greater Bangalore show is on the road. Will it lead to a better Bengalooru? Yes, to the extent that an outstretched rubber band does the job. But why this rare scepticism from a self-confessed optimist?

Surely there are many competent, committed officers in the bureaucracy burning the midnight oil to make it work. So why worry? Here's why.

Competent, former senior bureaucrats have, privately, publicly and in print, eloquently spoken about their concerns on why the system does not get it and what needs to be done. Greater reliance on 'command and control' kind of solutions, need for decentralisation to be closer politically and administratively to address citizen concerns, need for administrative firmness, allowing citizen voices to drive public policy and implementation, greater powers

for City administration, directly elected mayors, more transparency, capacity building are all there in their collective wish list.

A venerable professor at IIM-A told us students on day one that we would gain more business acumen by drinking the waters of the Sabarmati river, which accounted for local enterprise. Similarly, a potential solution may be to get the 'current powers' to experience whatever the 'former powers' are experiencing currently!

Jokes apart, arriving at the optimal results would require political will and administrative flexibility to drive the desired citizen-oriented outcomes.

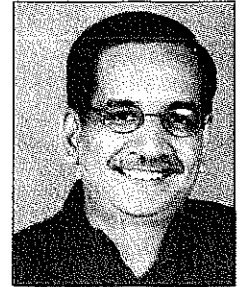
What would be the contours of an optimal solution? Better minds have

stated them but here are a few critical milestones on the path to a Greater Bengalooru.

For starters, can the State which produced the Panchayat Raj innovation decades ago take a similar leap of faith to genuinely empower Greater Bengalooru? This will allow a local leadership to emerge with the requisite authority to deliver and therefore be truly accountable to greater Bangaloreans.

Any future service delivery arrangement needs to recognise the centrality of the urban local body as a single, accountable entity for citizens. Think New York. Think Rudy Guilliani.

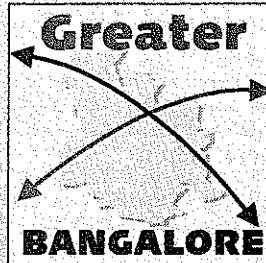
Citizens want favourable outcomes as they go about their daily life. An outcome-oriented



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approach calls for a drastic change in mindset from the traditional silo, maintenance-oriented and more of the same outlook in vogue currently. Are we up to it now?

In the years to come we have the choice to listen to new retired voices on what needs to be done or know how a genuinely better Bengalooru was achieved by the powers in the hot seat currently.



### To help development

We hope the new system to be developed under Greater Bangalore will help the poorly developed areas like Ramamurthy Nagar and its surrounding areas.

### Lower stamp charges

If the stamp charges for property registration is reduced, the buyer or seller can declare the original value of property he is purchasing. Such an initiative will put a break on movement of black money and reduce crime rate.

The revenue collected as tax will be more than sufficient to provide good infrastructure.