

'We can do it even better than Mumbai'

Statistics indicate that 30 per cent of our population live in urban India. Projections are that by 2020 over 50 per cent of the population would be residing in urban areas. Therefore, notwithstanding political exigencies, the focus has necessarily to be on urban centres which are increasingly becoming the real engines of growth. Bangalore is in the vanguard of this phenomenon. In fact, today, Bangalore is the most visible face of the "New India".

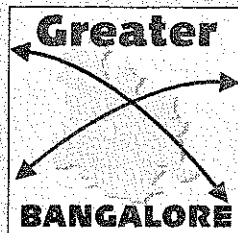
The future of Bangalore lies in its suburbs. There is very little that can be done in the City proper, as it exists now, except making cosmetic changes like road widening and asphaltting, remodeling drains, construction of flyovers and underpasses and so forth. Bangalore's growth cannot be frozen. The City is dynamic and no matter what we do or do not do - or whether we like it or not - will continue to grow and expand geographically.

The present urban governance



EXPERT VIEW

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structures for Bangalore and its suburbs reflect a striking absence of synergy - out of sync with themselves and with one another. While the BMP is responsible for the City, the six CMCs and the one TMC are responsible for the suburbs, where the real growth is taking place.

Unfortunately, these organisations have been working at cross-purposes. Coordination does not exist. Most importantly, a common, focused vision for Greater Bangalore is conspicuous by its absence. Proof: The haphazard development that has been taking place. A case in point is the scant respect for building bye-laws and the prescribed Land Use Pattern (LUP) norms.

Stick to schedule

The idea of Greater Bangalore hasn't come a day too soon. What is important, however, is for the Government to be transparent in how it goes about making it an operational reality. The allegation that this has been done only to

REACTIONS

Greater Bangalore is a good idea. Bangalore is a happening city and its needs real attention. It's time Government does something to improve the quality of life in the IT capital, and I hope GB will be the right way to do it.

It is not possible to provide good infrastructure and amenities for all CMCs overnight. It is a long term plan. GB will really be successful if it is implemented properly.

A H SHETTY, Neelasandra

By forming GB, the Government is planning to generate more revenue. It is a gimmick to pocket money in the name of development. The Government's intention to introduce uniform system of property tax is an indication for this.

stall elections to the BMP should be proved wrong. The only way to do this is for the Government to commit itself to a definite date for its formation, with specific timeframes for achieving that goal.

Apprehensions have been expressed as to whether the new enlarged BMP would be able to deliver. One of the most efficiently run cities despite myriad problems is Mumbai. When Mumbai with 228 councillors can function so efficiently, one fails to understand why Bangalore cannot do better. Optimism born out of self-confidence should be the guiding force.

The new structure would certainly make for planned, cohesive

and comprehensive development of the City. One organisation - not a motley crowd of seven independent outfits - must be given responsibility for city governance. What needs to be put in place is a structure with clearly defined roles for the political executive and the bureaucracy.

The 73rd Amendment has provided a role for Gram Sabhas in the decision-making process. Similarly, the 74th Amendment has to be leveraged to provide a similar body at the ward level. Strangely, in rural areas the opportunity exists without the capacity whereas in urban areas the reverse is the case. Such a mechanism will ensure responsi-

It is better if the Government provide amenities like decent road, footpath, streetlight, sanitary connection, drinking water and others on par with BMP areas and then form GB. There is a sea of difference between CMC areas and BMP's as far as civic amenities are concerned.

VAIDYANATHAN, Cooks Town

Introduction of uniform property tax system is unfair. Citizens should be taxed only after providing them with good amenities. Who will voluntarily pay the tax when there is no proper facility? The Government should be realistic in this regard.

Otherwise, the plan to merge all CMCs with BMP and to form GB is a good move.

MEENA VAIDYANATHAN, Cooks Town

bility, involvement and a sense of pride in being part of urban governance.

The bane of Bangalore has been encroachment, land grabbing and rampant violation of building bye-laws and LUP norms. It is in this area that ruthless efficiency requires to be displayed.

The citizens today have a new hope and the political leadership cannot afford to let them down. Change, no doubt, is difficult. The fear of the unknown is a normal human emotion. The objective, however, should be to master change. In the final analysis, we should be beneficiaries and not victims of development.