

## **INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OR ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Industrialize and perish would soon become words of caution today and it is going to become the truth if infrastructure development does not take the right direction. Industrialization, urbanization and destruction go hand in hand today. It is necessary to develop infrastructure to meet the growing need of the present day cities and its increasing population, rather than to please the MNC's and IT companies and draw them to our cities to set up their branches, to enable the politicians to amass wealth by building bridges across non-existent river. The World Bank, The central and state government, private organisations and MNC's- in short every tax payer contributes towards the infrastructure development. But at what cost? Every time a road, an under-bridge, a mall or a fly-over is built, we hurt Mother Nature. Every step towards industrialization and so called infrastructure development takes us nearer to our own destruction because when you harm the ecology and environment you are harming yourself. So what needs to be done towards avoiding self-destruction? You need to think of policies and programme that are strictly eco-friendly, besides being citizen-friendly. It is only then that we can co-exist with Mother Nature. A concerted and co-operative effort by environmental scientists, experts in the field of infrastructure development, government agencies, financial institutions, and some committed social agencies, would help provide a balanced and sustainable growth of infrastructure in exploding cities. For this, a special purpose vehicle (SPV) may be established with proper power and authority to see that the infrastructure growth is not mindlessly pursued, and the cost-benefit analysis given its due consideration in the whole process of evaluation. Only then we can think of building the required infrastructure purposefully, with the benefit going to all sections of citizens

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### **INTRODUCTION :**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Infrastructure as permanent installations as basis for any operation or organization. It can also be defined as basic facilities on which a City, State or town depends. Today everybody talks of infrastructure – be it that of an organization, city or entire country. Comparisons are often made between the infrastructures of one state with that of another, one country with that of the other. Corporators and engineers are sent on foreign jaunts to study the development in the field of infrastructure. But what has been ultimately achieved in this field? Is so little development enough to sustain the growing need of a modern City? What other policies should be made and implemented to develop infrastructure in the right direction? From where does money flow to fund these developmental projects? Is every pie put to proper use? What are the repercussions of infrastructure development on the economy in particular and the entire ecological system in general? These are some of the burning issues that should be thought over by the intelligentsia and the paper aims to answer a few of these questions keeping in mind the present Indian scenario. Emphasis is laid on the urban infrastructure that includes within its purview certain social aspects to like health.

Why develop infrastructure in an urban area? The reasons are many and varied. One can group them easily under the following headings:

- a. Increase in urban population: People flocking cities in search of employment, food, shelter, water etc. throw new challenges to the governments to develop infrastructure. Bangalore today is not the Bangalore of 20 years ago and 20 yrs from now we have to visualize an altogether different Bangalore – this sea change is brought about mainly, by infrastructure.
- b. Development in science and technology has led to mushrooming of industries, educational institutions, MNC's, Tech parks, electronic cities, satellite towns and many more smaller parasites of the IT boom. When foreign Companies come to the city to start a branch, infrastructure of the city is what really matters and the governments do all that they can to please the MNC's and make a show of developing infrastructure.
- c. Rise in the standard of living of the urbanites working in MNC's and IT firms automatically increases the need for better roads, flyovers, under passes, malls, metros etc. with every family possessing a vehicle or two vehicular traffic has increased suddenly by leaps and bounds and hence the need for roads, flyovers etc.
- d. Political pull cannot be ignored at all in infrastructure development of a city as this area is the one that is in need of a huge amount of money. Even when there is no need to build a road or a bridge, politicians poke their noses and get developmental projects sanctioned and make hoards of wealth. In an urban scenario, where the need is enormous, there is no death for political manoeuvre in this field of activity.

- e. Social factors responsible for creating a need for infrastructural development cannot be ignored with a boom in science and technology, MNC's and IT firms, hospitals, health clubs, education institutions, recreation centers, parks, play grounds, stadiums, shopping malls, banks, ATM's, hotels, eat outs, drive in theatres, houses, offices multi storied buildings, parking lots, water, electricity, sanitation etc. etc. – throw new challenges to the infrastructure developers.

**II. Whatever may be the reason for the development of infrastructure, certain policies must be drafted and these policies must be implemented too by the Government.**

1. Ground – reality must be
2. Thoroughly studied i.e. what is practical, feasible to the Indian context alone should be thought of. There is no point in planning infrastructure development keeping in mind Singapore or Australia. What is feasible in Bangalore must serve as a basis for framing development policies here.
3. Any policy that is framed must be far sighted: infrastructure development should aim at certain long-term projects that are beneficial to society in the long run.
4. Only when there is a real need for infrastructure development should a policy be developed and implemented and not on spurious or fictitious or on flimsy grounds.

5. All the governmental departments that are likely to be affected by a policy decision regarding infrastructural development should put their heads together and take equal responsibility. For example, in Bangalore, the PWD, the BWSSB, KPTCL, BDA, the Police, financial departments and the common people of the area should all be consulted before forming new developmental policies.
6. Just because this area is a heavily founded ocean from which everyone connected can take a share the policies must be very carefully framed so as not to allow and misappropriation of funds.
7. Policies framed must all be eco-friendly.

**III. Where does money come from the development of I infrastructure? The following are the main sources of finance :**

- a. The world Bank allots money towards infrastructure development and the more the need for infrastructure, the more the money flow will be.
- b. The state Government in collaboration with the Centre also spends money on Infrastructure development.
- c. Private enterprises and organizations like NICE and some IT companies like Wipro and Infosys also come forward to bear the expenses of infrastructure development to a limited feasible extent.
- d. There are also instances of common people coming together, pooling resources and developing their area when the government turns a

deaf ear to their agony and pain. In short, it is the tax payers' hard earned money that goes towards the infrastructure development projects.

- e. In fact, apart from the government funds, it is the major duty of MNC's that have established their branches in a city, to spend quite a huge sum of money on infrastructure of the city too. While issuing them licenses, it is the bounden duty of the government to make this kind of a heavy contribution mandatory.

## **REPERCUSSIONS OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT – PROS AND CONS**

“Industrialize or perish” was the motto a few years back in India. Industrialization naturally means infrastructure development. But at what cost? Our environment is sacrificed at the altar of infrastructure and urbanization. Trees are mercilessly cut down to make way for buildings and roads; vehicular traffic is filling the cities with poison; rivers and streams are polluted; water tanks and mountains are disappearing, concrete jungles and roads and flyovers are choking people and bringing in new, unheard of diseases; man is losing his human side and becoming a robot; happiness, peace and love are fast disappearing and malls and over bridges and underpasses are taking their places. The rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. In such a scenario battles are likely to be fought for water, air, food and ultimately man destroys all that he has constructed and may go back to the Stone Age. Is such infrastructural development really called development? This question is for everyone to think over and ponder.