

## **Minutes of Meeting of NCHSE Environment Helpline held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016**

There were media report regarding plans of the Bhopal Smart City Development Corporation Ltd (BSCDCL), (the executing Agency for Smart City Project in Bhopal), to cut more than 7000 trees for executing the Smart city project in TT Nagar, and there are concerns raised on the possible environmental impact. An Urgent meeting of Environment Helpline was therefore called on 21st September 2016 to discuss and prepare strategy and action plan to address the issue. Participants of the meeting included environmentalists, Architect and Town Planner, Engineers, social activists, senior journalists, former senior bureaucrats, and common citizen. The list of participants is at Annex –I.

Mrs. Nirmala Buch, Chairperson of NCHSE Environment Helpline while explaining the reasons for convening the meeting said that earlier due to opposition of the people against Smart City Project site in Shivaji Nagar and Tulsi Nagar mainly due to the proposal for large scale tree cutting at the site, government shifted the project site to North TT Nagar where large number of govt. houses were already vacated, demolished and approved for redensification. While the shifting of the site was welcomed by the Environment Helpline and the people at large, it also suggested the government to protect the trees in TT Nagar with an environmentally sensible planning. However, it seems the executing Agency is going to repeat the same mistake and planning large scale cutting of trees at the new site and without taking citizens into confidence and making any efforts to prevent thoughtless cutting of trees.

She further emphasized the need for the Government to be people friendly and the planning citizen centric and environmentally sensible. Referring to recent flooding of Bhopal which exposed the capacity of BMC to deal with the situation, she said that BMC should concentrate on providing services to the people as mandated in the Municipal Corporation Act rather than involve themselves on such activities for which they lack expertise. She said that this suggestion was earlier communicated to the Government by Environment Helpline. But unfortunately no response from the government has been received so far.

A presentation based on the preliminary survey of the trees in project site in North and South TT Nagar was made before the participants. It highlighted the location of trees with houses proposed to be demolished to give way for the new buildings/infrastructure, the trees which have been marked with numbers possibly for cutting to allow the consultants to prepare new development plan for the project site.

This followed a discussion on the issue wherein the participants expressed their views, which are summarised below:

1. It was informed that government has issued notices to the occupants of the government quarters to vacate the quarters. They also plan to stop water supply to the residents as well. It implies that BMC/ BSCDCL plan to clear the entire area before preparing development plan.
2. Some participants raised concern over the reluctance of the Government to take the citizens in confidence, and on the action of BMC/ BSCDCL of going ahead with their undisclosed plans. Consequently members demanded that development plan for TT Nagar should be made public not only on the website, but through public hearing as per procedure to take views of the people and then take the decision. It was agreed that the public hearing by the Consultants are not acceptable. Until public hearing is completed and final decision is taken, no trees should be cut at the site. If BSCDCL/BMC fails to conduct public hearing, Environment Helpline will organise Public Hearing at various locations in the city and send the report on people's responses to the government.
3. Cutting of trees be avoided. BSCDCL should include in the work of DPR the need of avoiding tree cutting and include them suitably in the planning of facilities etc. in the Smart City and take up the project in phases and in small patches to allow protection of trees, which plays very important function in modulating microclimate.
4. It was unanimously agreed that it is possible to save trees at the project site, which can be done through a sensible planning. Reference was also made about the planning for Sarni Thermal Power Plant of MPEB decades back by then Chairman S.N. Mehta ICS where no trees were felled to allow development of the Thermal Power plant and the housing colony there. Thus Smart city planning should be done in such a manner that existing trees become inclusive to it.
5. As per compensatory plantation norm, BMC/ BSCDCL have to plant at least 5 times the number of trees felled. But the norm neither compensate the environmental cost of cutting a fully grown tree nor is the practice successful. Large sum of unutilised government fund for compensatory forestation proves the point. Moreover, unsuccessful attempt of transplantation under BRTS project proved the point that the transplantation option is also

not feasible. Only option is to save the trees as much as possible, which needs sensible planning.

6. Bhopal is known for its greenery. That identity and as heritage should be protected.

Meeting ended with vote of thanks to all.



Coordinator,  
NCHSE Environment Helpline

**Annexure –I**

**List of participants at the meeting held on 12th July 2016**

1. Mrs. Nirmala Buch, Former Chief Secretary, Madhya Pradesh & Chairperson, NCHSE, Bhopal
2. Shri A K Pandiya, IAS (Retd), Bhopal
3. Mr R C Saxena, Vice Chairman, NCHSE
4. Shri Chandra Kant Naidu, Senior Journalist
5. Shri N K Singh, Senior Journalist
6. Shri Ajai Kataria, Architect
7. Shri P V Sreenivasaiya, Former EnC, PWD
8. Shri Suneel Awasarkar, Architect
9. Shri Sunil Deshpande, Institute of Quality Management, Bhopal
10. Dr. Sudesh Waghmare, Forestry Expert
11. Shri Azad Jain, Bhopal
12. Ms Pallavi Singh, Bhopal
13. Ms. Rashmi Saraswat, General Secretary, Mahila Chetna Manch, Bhopal
14. Shri Raghuraj Singh, MCM, Bhopal
15. Dr. Pradip Nandi, NCHSE, Bhopal
16. Dr D D Banerjee, NCHSE
17. Shri Avinash Shrivastava, NCHSE