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Last week, chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said, "It is for the first time in the history of Bengaluru that 11 flyovers s have been sanctioned in one year. These changes would provide long-lasting solutions to the citizens."



Mobility experts and civic activists criticised the approval from Karnataka government for construction of 11 flyovers in Bengaluru (HT Photo)

Mobility experts and civic activists have criticised the approval from the Karnataka government for the construction of 11 more flyovers in Bengaluru, saying that the move does not solve the traffic congestion and bottlenecks in the city.

Last week, chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said, "It is for the first time in the history of Bengaluru that 11 flyovers s have been sanctioned in one year. These changes would provide long-lasting solutions to the citizens."

While Bommai did not reveal which junctions the new flyovers would be constructed at, they have been proposed at Minerva Circle, Ittamadu Junction, Sarakki Signal, Nayandahalli-Tumakuru Road stretch, Sankey Road, Hosur Road near Forum Mall and St John's Hospital, Yelahanka, and Hoodi, among others.

According to Professor Ashish Verma, a mobility expert from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, the move defies the rationality of the long-term and sustainable solution

and does the solve the core issue of the transportation congestion problem. "In no technical or logical terms, can one call these flyovers long-term or short-term solutions," Prof Verma said.

"This is completely brazen. They are ignoring the voices of the experts and people. If you think you want to construct a flyover at every junction, is there any city in the world which has done this?"

At a meeting organised by Citizens for Sankey, a residents' collective, which met civic officials earlier this month to discuss the BBMP's plans on the Sankey Road Flyover, the BBMP chief engineer hinted that more flyovers in the pipeline, Verma said.

"He said that if we have a series of flyovers, we can move faster. Then there was a hint that the government is planning many flyovers."

The proposed widening of Sankey Tank Bund Road and the flyover from T Chowdaiah Road to 18th Cross in Bengaluru has drawn criticism from residents, civic activists and urban experts. According to the residents, the project will not reduce the traffic congestion in the area, and the felling of trees close to the bund could have ecological implications.

Verma pointed out that these road spaces will never suffice with the kind of population growth, and issues will reoccur in the future.

"Also, the more you create them, the more miles you create. These flyovers make things faster but make you travel longer distances in many cases. This will also increase your fuel consumption, and more emissions will happen. When our country is not oil-producing, 80% of our oil is through imports, which will make our economy more oil dependent. Where is the thinking?" Prof Verma said.

Civic activist, Srinivas Alavilli, said, "After every flyover, more vehicles have appeared in Bengaluru city. If flyovers increase, vehicles increase. This is the science. Bengaluru is living proof of it. It's a mystery why government after government keeps constructing flyovers when it is clear they are not the solution. Flyovers are big-ticket infrastructure projects and that is why they go for it."

### **Shivananda Circle Flyover - A lesson not learned**

Urban experts pointed out that even the Shivananda Circle Flyover, constructed even after it drew strong opposition from the residents, has failed to address the actual causes of congestion in the area.

"You construct a flyover at one or two junctions. What would be the effect on the subsequent junctions? The most recent example we have been seeing is the Shivanand circle flyover. They proposed this plan to solve the traffic congestion problem, now they have a bottleneck just ahead of it at the railway crossing. So, your whole purpose of the flyover is defeated," Verma said.

Mahesh, who was at the forefront of the agitation, said that despite two experts from the IISc, Ashish Verma and MN Sreehari, who provided inputs and stressed that the Shivananda Circle Flyover was going to be a disaster, the authorities did not consider it and neither did the court.

"After the construction of the flyover, it has become chaos for the service road. Earlier, the road width was approximately 120 ft. Today, there is no bus stop. Even if buses stop there, the

traffic piles up. In peak hours, the service road and flyover are jammed because of the railway track. What's the great fun in spending the exchequer's money? Especially during the rainy season, the traffic under the railway bridge is chaos. It has only been beneficial for the politicians," Mahesh said.

"A city's growth, prosperity, and liveability depend on the collective wisdom of everybody," Verma added.