

# TASKS BEFORE SIDDHARAMIA

## For a new Beginning

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"A new beginning" by S L Rao

After Dharam Singh, Kumaraswamy, Yediyurappa and others, a single rules Karnataka with a stable majority. Envious and greedy dissidents must be prevented from rocking the government boat. Siddharamiah, an upright and principled politician, no family baggage, is a good administrator. As Chief Minister he must be supreme and the local Congress President advise only in private. In the year or less before his party loses power in Delhi, he must unlike his predecessors, lobby Delhi for benefits for the state.

The most urgent are Energy and Water. Karnataka gets all fuels from outside. Karnataka needs extra allocations of electricity from the central pool. It must get another nuclear power plant.

Environmentalists blocked coastal power plants using imported coal. Andhra added around 30000 MW of new capacity in coastal power plants under construction, despite a powerful environmentalist movement. The GAIL gas pipeline must be completed soon. Though expensive LNG it can also be piped for domestic use and for transport. A gas terminal on Karnataka's coast for LNG for power generation and fuel is needed. We need serious exploration of our coast line for oil and gas. All potential for wind power, bagasse and rice husk based co-generation, biogas, and other renewable energy, must be stimulated.

Privatization of electricity distribution, proposed by SM Krishna and since forgotten, must be revived. Distribution efficiencies and maintenance will improve, thefts brought down and availability improve. The misguided free power to agriculture without even

metering, to small and large farmers, and without improving efficiencies of pump sets, must be rationalized if not eliminated.

Water is scarce in most of the state, monsoon dependent, with Bangalore being expensive to supply. Rain water harvesting is compulsory but needs enforcement, with penalties for not introducing it. Bore wells must be ruthlessly pruned to match water basin availability, licensed and charged for water used. Water rates in Bangalore must cover at least operation and maintenance costs. Water storage must be encouraged in rural areas.

The central government must be asked to upgrade the present Karnataka Bombay rail and road links to carry larger loads and more passengers.

Land mafia with tentacle in government agencies, especially in Bangalore, its hinterland, and other urban areas, must be cleaned up. It should not be difficult to find another Jerome to revive the BDA as a surplus producing and honest body. The Chief Minister must move to clean up the Bangalore Municipal Corporation, now in the grip of real estate contractors. We must revive the proposals by Drs A. Ravindra and Samuel Paul, to reform the structure and governance of the corporation.

Road construction in Karnataka is beset with corruption. Poor roads and worse maintenance, poor pavements, are not so for lack of funds. Large amounts are spent appear to be enriching contractors, bureaucrats and politicians.

While old Mysore state continues to perform well, the parts that came from the Bombay Presidency and Hyderabad state, have languished. If we are to prevent a Telengana-type agitation from starting in Karnataka, these regions need priority attention.

Karnataka is said to be now the most corrupt state in India. The Lok Ayukta should be given powers as suggested by ex-Justice Hegde and become a watchdog over government officials and Ministers.

Information technology industry is now receiving unwanted central government attention, especially in tax matters, both as demands and as withdrawal of benefits. I.T. also needs government's strong support in fighting the visa and immigration issues in the USA.

Mining can again be a large source of employment and revenues for the state, if honestly run. The mining districts had become personal fiefs for a few mine owners. Politicians and government servants were helpful to them, and benefited. It must be revived and regulated honestly. The Posco and Mittal interest in steel making in Karnataka must be strongly encouraged. With Volvo and Toyota here, Karnataka could become another automotive and lorry making hub. We must relax labour laws so that our garment, leather and toy industries can scale up and use much more labour than they do in any unit today.

Tourism has great potential to accelerate employment, incomes and tax revenues. But 'moral policing' of pubs, restaurants, and night life, must be replaced by policing for law and order and safety. The Chief Minister did not shy away from proposing cheap and safe liquor for the lower income groups. Of course there must be designated places and policing so that order is not disturbed.

Garbage disposal in urban Karnataka and especially Bangalore is an unresolved issue. It is so because of the links between lorry and garbage contractors with corporators. The Chief Minister must impose a permanent solution (experts have worked them out), and appoint a competent and honest officer to implement it.

The university system in the state has deteriorated badly. Part of the problem is the politicization of their governance and the quality of Vice-Chancellors. Karnataka was known for the quality of its college

and higher education. The problem is the people who have captured it. Education policy for schools also needs attention. Language has become a big issue with the rulers imposing solutions on the people that they do not follow for their own children. Little attention has been paid to skill development and this must be corrected.

Karnataka must thank the BJP for enabling a single party government again. The Chief Minister has a daunting task to restore the state to past glory. If anyone can do it, he can.

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