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Title : MY OPINION - The abysmal fate of an ancillary district

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The Bengaluru Rural district, carved out of Bangalore in 1986 and then bifurcated again in 2007, completely lacks the identity of a district. Like its physical presence on the periphery of the city of Bengaluru, its development is also determined by the needs and the greed of the fast-growing mega city .

Bengaluru needs workforce and a good proportion of this workforce commutes from Bengaluru Rural on a daily basis. Bengaluru needs land, not only for industrial and service sectors and housing, but also for the ever-increasing greed for 'investment' in real estate sector. The airport is located in Bengaluru Rural and the flyway allows Bengalureans to reach there without coming in any contact with Bengaluru Rural residents whose only connection is perhaps that they lost their land when the government acquired huge chunks, much more than needed, to build that airport.

The relatively high income in this district reflects the income of those who do not have much stake in the district and therefore does not translate into human development indicators for those who belong here. The district headquarters continues to be located in another district, Bengaluru Urban, almost like a government in exile.

The district can convert this proximity to Bengaluru into a potential, only if it is able to carve out an identity, and does not leave itself to be taken advantage of. The economic gains need to be converted into educational, health and employment opportunities for its people, especially those who are more vulnerable. This means that the district needs to strengthen its governance vis-a-vis those who lack the negotiating power: women, dalits, poor, migrants.

Farmers need to be protected from real estate pressures; this needs special vigilance. A high maternal mortality rate and high increase in diseases call for special interventions for young women's health and for general living conditions. The decline in public expenditure on both education and health in real terms in recent past needs to be reversed. The district government and administration need to negotiate with both the government of Karnataka and the private entities using the district land and services for specific preconditions and measures that protect both the people and the ecology of the place, and gives them a better, and not a worse, life.

(CBPS was the lead agency for preparing the Human Development Report for Bengaluru Rural district)

