

DEEPAK JOSHI

Former Minister, Government of Madhya Pradesh

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To

Shri Amit Shah Ji
Hon'ble Home Minister
Government of India
New Delhi

Subject: Appeal not to lay the foundation stone of the controversial West Bhopal Bypass

Respected Shri Amit Shah Ji,

I respectfully appeal to you, as the Hon'ble Union Home Minister, not to lay the foundation stone of the proposed West Bhopal Bypass during your visit to Bhopal.

The proposed road project has become a matter of serious concern and controversy among the residents of Bhopal, who have been consistently opposing the project because of its potentially irreversible impact on the Bhoj Wetland and its catchment, forests, wildlife and the ecological balance of the region.

The Bhoj Wetland is not merely a lake; it is a historic and ecologically sensitive ecosystem, created during the reign of the legendary Raja Bhoj in the 11th century. Its catchment is fundamental to the lake's existence and health. Any major intervention that alters its natural drainage, forest landscape or ecological corridors deserves the highest level of scrutiny.

The proposed bypass also involves diversion of forest land and the removal of thousands of trees. The environmental consequences cannot be viewed merely as the construction of another road. Once forests are fragmented and natural

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drainage and ecological systems are disturbed, the damage may be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reverse.

There are also serious concerns regarding the impact on wildlife movement and habitat. A road cutting through an ecologically sensitive forest landscape can create fragmentation, disturbance and barriers to wildlife movement, notwithstanding proposed mitigation measures.

Most importantly, the people of Bhopal have been raising these concerns and opposing the project. Their objections deserve to be heard before a project of such potentially irreversible environmental consequences is given a formal political and symbolic commencement.

I therefore earnestly request you to refrain from laying the foundation stone of the West Bhopal Bypass until:

- an independent and comprehensive assessment of its impact on the Bhoj Wetland and its entire catchment is completed;
- the impact on forests, trees, wildlife and ecological corridors is independently examined;
- all feasible alternative alignments are transparently evaluated; and
- the concerns and objections raised by the residents of Bhopal are properly considered through a transparent public process.

A foundation stone can always be laid later after all concerns have been satisfactorily addressed. But once an ecologically sensitive landscape is irreversibly altered, no foundation stone can undo the damage.

Bhopal's development is important, but so is protecting the natural heritage that has sustained the city for centuries.

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I sincerely hope that, in the interest of Bhopal, its residents and future generations, you will kindly consider not laying the foundation stone of this controversial project at this stage and instead direct that the environmental and public concerns be comprehensively addressed first.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

Deepak Joshi

Former Minister

Government of Madhya Pradesh

(S/o: Late Shri Kailash Joshi, Former Chief Minister of MP)

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