

*Excellency Governor Shri HR Bhardwaj, Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri BS Yeddyurappa, my fellow MPs including my dear friend Shri Ananthkumar, Ministers, MLAs, Officers of various City Government agencies and Departments, My dear friends*

*Bengalurina Nanna Preetiya Sodara Sodari-yare nimme-ellirigu nanna namaskaragalu. Namma Bengaluru Awards 2009 Karyakramake tamma-ellerigu suswagata.* I welcome you all to this first ever Namma Bengaluru Awards evening and I thank you all for being here this evening.

Before we start the evening, let me on my behalf and all your behalfs wish our Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Yeddyurappa a very happy birthday. Please join me in wishing him the very best with a round of applause.

You just saw the AV that explains the describes Namma Bengaluru Awards. But let me add to that.

Our City Bengaluru is a great city – it has tremendous history, It has cultural heritage and diversity. Whilst founded many years ago by the legendary Kempegowda, it today is a city which is home to some of the biggest successes, achievers, and stories of courage in Modern India and the world – Chandrayaan mission to the moon, the Light Combat Aircraft, the Dhruv Helicopter, Global and Indian technology giants like Intel, CISCO, Wipro, Infosys, Stories in Courage and patriotism like Maj Sandeep Unnikrishnan, Col Vasanth,; Sporting excellence like Anil Kumble, Pankaj Advani,, Prakash Padukone, etc. It is also home to almost 8 million people , warmly welcomed to make their homes and careers here, irrespective of religion, language, caste, creed.

In recent years however, we have not been kind to our city. We have neither looked after her or served her well. When the Hon'ble Chief Minister assigned me the responsibility and task as Convenor of Abide task force, I realized how the fabric of our city (in all its elements) had slowly eroded over many years, and while there had been much talk of

developing Bengaluru, but it was a development model that was going horribly wrong. Our culture, identity, communities and well planned nature of the city which was the hallmark of Bengaluru for many decades was slowly but surely being destroyed in the name of development and progress by nameless, faceless people in power and behind power, with little heed to the voice of the Bangalorean. But, as much there were these people, I found there were also many many people who were serving the city and its people, determinedly and sometimes despite heavy odds. I felt then as I do now that these are real heroes of the city and hence the idea of Namma Bengaluru awards.

All of us here desire to see a proud and well developed Bengaluru, that makes all of us proud to be its citizens. There are no short cuts or glib talk that will take us there. As a famous railway station slogan said “Short cuts will sell you short”. For too long the spotlight in this city has been on the media savvy, smooth talking, hyperbole ridden few. But the spotlight must move from them to the real icons of our city – People who really make their city proud - because of their citizenship , commitment, integrity and ethics, Hardwork, Courage or Sacrifice. These are the values that I respect and our city must stand for and recognize. These are the values that our children must see in our icons and respect and hopefully emulate. The Namma Bengaluru Awards are a way of reassuring ourselves every year that these values are alive and well in our city and hopefully encourage more and more every year to adopt and follow these ideals. It is an annual celebration of our city – a celebration that is about respecting our city and its heroes - going beyond religion, caste, language.

This is the first time our city is attempting something like this. Indeed, It makes me proud that we are the first city to do this anywhere in India. Despite it being the first time, we received over 4000 nominations – and there were many fabulous stories of service and devotion in those nominations. Most of them are legitimate heroes of Bengaluru. I thank all of those who took the time and nominated his/her hero.

It is after a very difficult process of short-listing with a number of deliberations and time spent by our jury members with the help of an external audit firm that we arrived at the

finalists and winners. We are pleased to have 26 nominees – who have made it to final short list and among whom the 14 winners will be announced later in the Program. A very warm welcome to all the 26 finalists and their families. The finalists are from Government as well as Private and individuals. For those of you who know me, you know that I value and respect hard work and service and have scant regard for talk and hot air, let me tell you this – I have the greatest awe and respect for all the finalists today. On behalf of the city and all people, I express my grateful thanks to them. They are my heroes. Please make them yours as well. Because as John F Kennedy famously said,, “ as we express our gratitude we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them”!

I am extremely grateful to the Jury for their time, efforts, interest and involvement in going through more than 4000 nominees spending hours in arriving at the short list. In the press conference at the launch of Namma Bengaluru Awards, a young journalist asked a question – he said with achievers like this on the jury where would we find other heroes to recognize? I agree with them. I consider it a privilege , serving with these achievers of Bangalore and I would like to thank and place on record our gratitude to all of them for their service and time to the cause of Namma Bengaluru Awards 2009.

One of the things that I have learnt from this experience and my experience at Abide is is that as citizens we all want the same things for our city - We want a balanced, well thought off and comprehensive approach to the future of our city – and want our city administered by Public officials, Political leaders and citizens who are all bound by a spirit of serving the city and not exploiting it. I hope today’s finalists and nominees also inspire (at least a little) the Political and Administrative leadership to move from a ‘ruling the city mindset’ to a ‘serving the city and its people mindset’. In a few weeks, all of us will be electing corporators, political representatives for each of our wards – I hope the aspiring candidates and voters are also inspired by our Namma Bengaluru Nominees, winners and their work and service. If in some small way if the Namma Bengaluru awards and the winners can inspire this change, we can all be happy.

Lastly a word to the team at Namma Bengaluru Foundation, its donors and its team of unrelenting volunteers. It is a sign of the character and soul of our city, that this effort had solid support from the people, media and corporates of our city from its first day itself. To all of you that were active supporters of this effort (and there are many of you) my deepest and sincerest thanks. Trust me, you have started a process of change in this city.

So sit back and enjoy the evening – Again, thank you all for being here and supporting the Namma Bengaluru Awards 2009 .

Jai Hind. Jai Karnataka