

A Bangkok Citizen's Agenda

by Dr. Chafia Ferhat

Driving to work this morning I couldn't help becoming frustrated at the clutter on the footpaths. Panels of candidates vying for Bangkok governorship have gone absolutely beyond control, blocking passage for pedestrian, traffic lights, bus stops ...etc,

Wouldn't you think that the first rule of being a city governor is to ensure the safety of its residents?

If one has to select a candidate I would think right there in front of our eyes are the real selection criteria; the panels! They create;

- Visual pollution
- Environmental pollution:
 - All these panels will soon become a huge amount of waste that tax payers have to pay to dispose of;
 - The waste of paper (trees) used;
 - The highly toxic ink used to print;
- The safety hazards they cause to residents.

The last thing Bangkok needs is more pollution, more toxic waste and more environmental carelessness!

Shouldn't the candidates walk the talk and show they really understand what this city needs?

I wonder, some of the platforms presented are straight out Utopia Land!

Here is a Citizen Agenda that come straight from a life in this city, trying to work, raise a family, commute to work, and if at all possible enjoy some quality life;

1. Traffic congestion long term solutions, not empty promises that it will be solved in 6 months! It does not take a rocket scientist to know that Bangkok traffic problems have taken decades to reach these critical levels and no short term policy will ever succeed in solving them. Traffic congestion is a problem that require a careful understanding of city planning, mass transit systems, decentralization, car ownership management and taxation and road patterns to name but few of the issues that are interrelated and none can be solved without the other.

2. Control Pollution in all its forms;

- Visual
- Noise
- Air
- Waste

3. Safety of pedestrians

Try as a Bangkok resident to have an evening stroll. Well if you find a footpath at all, you need to dodge the gas tanks on the footpath, motorcycles driving on the footpath, big grills and frying pans in full actions, and if that was not enough to make your walk pleasant, make sure you don't fall in one of Bangkok's famous holepath (the ever under construction footpaths that last no longer than 6 months (I wonder why driveways and footpaths of Highrise and other buildings adjoining public footpaths never break??))

Why can't we have bikeways and handicap access that really work?

Why can't a mother take the baby for a walk in his stroller? Is that too much to ask?

4. Parks, & playgrounds

For a city of over 10 million inhabitants, the few parks we have are too few. In the last 20 years we have seen one new park in Bangkok. The parks and playground need not be huge. They need to be scattered enough around the city to benefit neighbourhoods. What happen to all the residual land under the expressways and flyovers. Why is it left to complete neglect?

5. Make Bangkok a green city for our future generations

Set realistic goals to reduce Bangkok carbon footprint.

Engage all residents in the action, it all starts with a vision but unless we start now we are not leaving our future generations much to work with.

6. Preserve our heritage

The deterioration and complete neglect of some historical parts of the city needs urgent actions.

We must realise it is the soul of the city and ensure its restoration and preservation.

7. Bangkok River water edge

Is it a dream to have our Chaopraya river edge a promenade for all to enjoy. I guess it's ok to dream!