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Bill seeks to halve tenure of panchayat heads

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
Bengaluru: The government on Wednesday tabled a controversial bill which reduces the tenure of gram, taluk and zilla panchayat presidents and vice-presidents to half — from five to two-and-a-half years.

The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (amendment) bill, 2020 was tabled by RDPR minister KS Eshwarappa amid the din over the Madhya Pradesh political crisis.

While the debate on the

bill is yet to begin, the proposed amendments suggest a drastic change in the original act. According to government sources, the decision to curb the tenure has primarily been taken due to "political considerations".

"It is basically to share power among more people. Panchayat presidents and vice-presidents function under political patronage.

They (parties) don't like one person to be president for the entire five-year duration," said a government official, adding that

even now, political parties force panchayat presidents and vice-presidents to step down after 30 months.

Yet another reason for the amendment is to reverse the changes brought about by the 2014 Congress regime. A committee led by former Speaker KR Ramesh Kumar had presented a comprehensive report giving complete power to panchayat presidents and vice-presidents for a full term of five years from 30 months.

Another amendment has been proposed to safeguard the

tenure of presidents and vice-presidents for 15 months, with the government suggesting no motion for no confidence will be moved against them till the expiry of at least half their tenure. In another amendment, the government has said any no-confidence motion has to be moved in the presence of the district's deputy commissioner.

The government has also proposed an amendment to allow liquor shops to be open till 48 hours before polling. Earlier, they had to shut down from the date of poll announcement.