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Govt dallies on new local bodies Bill

DH - 26/12/19.

New legislation to bring in uniformity in functioning of civic bodies

BHARATH JOSHI
BENGALURU, DHNS

A super Municipal Council headed by a mayor who will enjoy a five-year term, with the power to prepare master plans, regulate water supply and levy up to 14 different types of taxes.

These are provisions in the Karnataka Municipalities Bill, 2019, an overarching legislation that promises uniformity in the way local bodies function and reforms in the urban development space. The state government, however, is dragging its feet on this.

The Bill has been drafted by the National Law School of India University at the behest of the government, which signed a memorandum of understanding with the premier institute "to codify, consolidate and reform the urban planning and development laws in the state".

The law school's Centre for Environmental Law Education, Research and Advocacy (CEERA) has submitted the draft Bill to the government. "The Bill was submitted about three months ago. This was a two-year project, which is coming to an end now, and we have not heard from the government," a CEERA member said.

Urban development secretary (Municipalities and Urban Development Authorities) Anjum Parwez told *DH* that no decision had been made yet on the draft Bill.

▸ Local bodies, Page 8

K'taka Municipalities Bill consolidates

- Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964
- Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976
- Karnataka Urban Development Authorities Act, 1987
- Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority Act, 1985
- Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Act, 1964
- Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, 1961
- Bangalore Development Authority Act, 1976
- Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board Act 1973

Some key provisions

- 5-yr term for mayor
- Revamp of municipal areas
- Prepare master plan
- Prepare city development plan, investment plan
- 14 different taxes, including fire tax, congestion tax etc.
- State Municipal Vigilance Authority for transparency

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LOCAL BODIES, FROM PAGE 1

According to sources, some in the government have now questioned the very need for a consolidated urban governance law.

It is also said that the government is wary of backlash — political and bureaucratic — since the draft Bill redefines municipal areas — a metropolitan area with over 2.5 million population as 'Greater City', a large urban area with a population between 500,000 and 2.5 million as a 'City', smaller urban areas with less than 500,000 but more than 50,000 as 'Towns' and transitional areas with under 50,000 but over 20,000 as 'Nagara'.

This will not only change the composition of municipal councils — the number of councillors will range between 10 and 180 — leading to alteration in the political clout of local leaders, but officials and employees will also be moved around, potentially losing key positions they have held. Currently, Karnataka has 280 urban local bodies.

The draft Bill seeks to consolidate eight existing laws, including the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act under which BBMP functions.

In the Bill, the Municipal Council has been tasked with the preparation of master plans, which currently is done by the designated local planning authority. The master plan for Bengaluru, for instance, is prepared by the Bangalore Development Authority. The Bill also proposes formation of a State Municipal Regulatory Commission, State Municipal Vigilance Authority and a State Municipalities Union.