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PAPER CLIPPINGS

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ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Count masterly - BBMP Election

ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 05/12/2020

High Court direction to hold civic polls in only 198 wards causes a stir

Some fear that imbalance across the wards will worsen; Minister says government would appeal in

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court's direction to hold elections to 198 wards of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council has caused a stir within the civic body.

While some welcomed the HC's direction, others questioned how the polls can be held for just 198 wards, when as per the recent amendment to the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976, the city has 243 wards. The division bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice S. Vishwajith Shetty held that the amended law to increase the number of wards to 243 will not apply for the present election.

Former Congress councillors Abdul Wajid and M. Shivaraju, who had filed a PIL challenging the government's decision to defer elections to the BBMP council, welcomed the judgment.

Mr. Shivaraju alleged that the government was trying to weaken the local bodies by postponing the polls. "The judgment is a victory for us. The term of the previous council ended on September 10 and polls should have been held before the end of the term. The BJP government delayed the delimitation and finalising reser-



In Karnataka, all decisions pertaining to delimitation and reservation for local bodies are taken by the State government and not the State Election Commission. • SUDHAKARA JAIN

tions since they (party) were not interested in holding elections," he said, and pointed out that earlier the BJP had put off polls to the civic body for over three years.

Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs J.C. Madhuswamy, also a member of the Joint Legislature Committee on BBMP Bill 2020, said the government would appeal against the High Court order in the Supreme Court. However, urban experts pointed out that the BBMP has once again missed the bus for some much-needed reforms.

Mathew Idiculla, research

consultant at Centre for Law and Policy Research, said that the court's directions under normal conditions would be welcome. However, in the case of the BBMP, it is far from optimal. "As per the existing law, BBMP has 243 wards. How can polls be held for just 198 wards? That apart, the new Bill will take time to be finalised. The government cannot make that the ruse to put off polls," he said.

He also pointed out that unlike in other States, such as Kerala and Gujarat, all decisions pertaining to delimitation, reservation for local bodies are taken by the State

'Number of booths may cross 10,000'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has followed directions issued by the State Election Commission (SEC) and published the final voters' list, said civic chief N. Manjunath Prasad.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the launch of an awareness campaign on Friday, he said,

"There are 7,500 booths. However, given the pandemic and subsequent directions of the election commission, ad-



VVPAT machine. • BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

ditional booths have to set up wherever the number of voters exceed 1,000. Going by that yardstick, the number of booths may increase more than 10,000," noted.

government and not the State Election Commission.

V. Ravichandar, urban expert, said Bengaluru needs deep decentralisation in terms of right sized ward units and appropriate integration of all parastatal agencies. "The current KMC Act doesn't serve the purpose of managing Bengaluru, which needs a governing architecture to manage the multiplicity of agencies. A large me-

tropolis like Bengaluru needs a separate law stated.

If the elections are for 198 wards, the imbalance across the wards will persist. "The 110 villages are struggling. Much of the growth has happened outside the Outer Ring Road has clearly not worked last 10 years and the problem will be compounded in the next five years," he said