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BBMP

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT:

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER:

27/11/20
Date of Publication : DATE:

BBMP delimitation aimed at favouring BJP: Opposition

RSS leaders deciding new wards, says Ramalinga Reddy

BENGALURU, DHNS

A political row has erupted over the delimitation of Bengaluru's municipal wards, with the Opposition parties claiming that the exercise was just gerrymandering to benefit the ruling BJP ahead of the BBMP polls.

Speaking to *DH*, senior Congress MLA Ramalinga Reddy who represents BTM Layout accused the BJP of delimiting wards as per their electoral

convenience, a practice he said was observed when the BJP government increased the number of BBMP wards to 198 in 2010.

"The delimitation exercise should be taken up by the four-member committee, which has the BBMP Commissioner and Bengaluru Urban Deputy Commissioner as members. But, as per our information, BJP and RSS leaders are sitting together and deciding new wards for Bengaluru



city," he said.

Former JD(S) corporator Prakash said that a few of the newly-formed wards had a lion's share of public amenities, while others were deprived.

Citing Kaveripura in the Govindarajanagar Assembly constituency as an example, he said that the ward is be-

ing divided in such a manner that not even one of the seven parks previously in the ward remained. "It will all now be part of Maranahalli and the proposed Dasahalli wards," he said.

Prakash claimed that the absence of specific guidelines for delimitation has allowed the wards to be divided at will. Influential politicians are also exerting pressure to divide wards in their constituency to strengthen their core vote base, while making sure that their political opponents had little ground, he alleged.

BJP legislators maintain that the four-member committee formed by the government was delimiting wards as per norms.

BJP's CV Raman Nagar legislator S Raghu, who headed

the joint legislative committee that recommended the delimitation, said: "How will increasing the number of wards from 198 to 243 help the BJP? They are making these claims as they have no other issues to talk about."

'Baseless' talks

BBMP Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad said the allegations are baseless.

"We have six months to finish delimitation and we have not even started the work. We can only start work once the state government issues terms of reference for delimitation," he said. Everything was dependent on the High Court order regarding elections to the BBMP, he said, adding that the court has reserved its order.