

Greater Bangalore raises many questions

DH NEWS SERVICE

BANGALORE: Formation of 'Brihat Bengalooru' seems inevitable, especially after the recent government notification on the proposed merger of the core area (BMP) with the eight local bodies and 111 villages.

But is the State government attempting to solve a multi-dimensional problem in one dimension - geography? Will a single-tier centralised structure of governance address issues concerning a population of 8.5 million, amidst all the disparities?

These are a few of the questions raised during a workshop on 'Greater Bangalore - governance options,' organised by the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), in the City on Monday.

Debate

During the workshop, prominent citizens and senior government officials including principal secretary of the Urban Development department Lakshmi Venkatachala and BMP Commissioner K Jairaj, examined the merits and demerits of the Greater Bangalore proposal.

REFORMS MOOTED

- Directly elected mayor with five-year term, annual performance reports
- Delegate service delivery to Tiers II and III
- Enhance citizen involvement by having ward committees
- Hire professionals and reduce deputation
- Induct new systems and augment training
- Better coverage and collection of taxes

Mooting a three-tier structure for better governance, Dr Samuel Paul, founder-chair person of PAC said, "Will a bigger City (geographically) make things better? We believe it would

only overload the system. Can we afford to have officials as substitutes for elected bodies at the zonal level with a million citizens. Even the management structures are not compara-

ble with competitor cities. We want a public debate and to influence the thinking of the government to evolve a better structure."

A three-tier system?

Drawing attention to the international experience of cities responding to challenges, Mr Krishnakumar, former principal secretary, Urban Development department, Karnataka, proposed a three-tier model

"The global trend is moving towards differentiated tiers with rationalised functions. In Bangalore, we can perhaps have a Greater Ban-

galore City Corporation holding together eight city corporations (zones) with a million population each and each council will have 25 wards with ward committees," explained Mr Krishnakumar.

"A radical but much-needed change would be to have a directly elected mayor for a long term. Another bane of the current practice is the deputation of officials to the civic body by the State government. This hampers accountability and paves way for ceremonial leadership, which a growing city can ill afford," he added.