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Urban poverty alleviation cell in BBMP mooted

Staff Reporter

It could look into the socio-economic problems of the urban poor

Bangalore: An urban poverty alleviation cell should be set up in the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) to look into the socio-economic problems of the urban poor, A. Ravindra, Adviser to the Chief Minister (Urban Affairs), said on Saturday.

Speaking at a round table meet on the 74th Constitutional Amendment, Inclusive and Participatory Governance for Bangalore: Opportunities and Challenge, organised by CIVIC Bangalore, Mr. Ravindra said: "There is no single agency that handles urban poverty alleviation here. Such a cell in the BBMP could help ensure social justice and look at education, health and employment of the urban poor."

He said this aspect will be incorporated in the guidelines of the new Bangalore Region Governance Bill. Asked whether this cell would duplicate the functions of the BBMP's Social Welfare Department, he said: "This department works in the framework of the budgetary allocations. It has been implementing the schemes and policies announced for the urban poor in the budget. But the cell can look at their [urban poor] comprehensive development and give a new focus to poverty alleviation."

"The Metropolitan Planning Committee, mandated under the 74th Constitutional Amendment as an essential feature for decentralised planning, is yet to be set up in Bangalore. There is much debate about how the Mayor can be given more powers as against the colonial relic of an all-powerful Commissioner," said Kathyayini Chamaraj, CIVIC Trustee.

The former Chairperson of Karnataka Legislative Assembly B.K. Chandrashekar expressed displeasure that there was no pre-project planning in the BBMP. Several infrastructure projects have been planned without consulting the residents of the area and these projects were of no use to the people.

Good example

Social activist and Magsaysay award winner Arvind Kejriwal of the Delhi-based NGO Parivartan made a presentation on the “Nagara Raj Bill” that has been implemented in Delhi and a few other States. “We have drafted the Bill in consultation with several urban researchers, community leaders, citizens and like-minded organisations. Such consultations should also happen in Karnataka,” he said.