

State Legislative Brief

KARNATAKA

The Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill, 2024

Key Features

- A Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), chaired by the Chief Minister will be constituted. An Executive Committee will assist it in daily functions.
- The Greater Bengaluru Region will be divided in to multiple City Corporations (up to seven), whose functioning will be coordinated by the GBA.
- Each corporation may have up to 150 wards.

Key Issues and Analysis

- The Chief Minister chairing the GBA and the Metropolitan Planning Committee may violate the principles of the 74th Amendment.
- The Bill gives executive and administrative powers to legislators at the local governance level.
- The Bill creates an overlap between powers of city corporations and existing statutory authorities.

The Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill, 2024 was introduced in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on July 23, 2024. It replaces the existing Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Act, 2020. The Bill was referred to a Joint Select Committee. The Bill (as recommended by the Committee) was passed on March 10, 2025. The Governor has returned the Bill to the legislature.

PART A: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

Context

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is the municipal corporation governing the city of Bengaluru. It was set up in 2008 under the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act, 1976 (KMC Act).¹ Under the KMC Act, Bengaluru had a three-tier system of municipal governance consisting of the BBMP, ward committees and area sabhas.¹ In 2020, the BBMP Act, 2020 was passed to replace the provisions of the KMC Act applicable to Bengaluru.² The BBMP Act, 2020 added a new level of zonal committees each consisting of several wards. The entire municipal area was divided into zones (maximum 15), governed by the zonal committees.

The Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill, 2024 (GBG Bill) was introduced in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on July 23, 2024.³ It replaces the BBMP Act, 2020. Instead of a single municipal corporation, it seeks to establish multiple city corporations in the Greater Bengaluru Area and set up an apex body called the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). The Bill was referred to a Select Committee of the Assembly for further examination in August 2024.⁴ The Committee suggested various amendments, and the Bill suggested by the Committee was passed by the Assembly and the Council in March 2025.⁵ The Governor has returned the Bill for reconsideration by the legislature.⁶

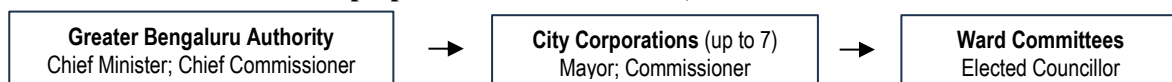
In 2014, the state government had set up a three-member expert committee to recommend measures to restructure governance in Bengaluru.⁷ This committee was reconstituted as the Brand Bengaluru Committee in 2023 with a mandate to strengthen governance in Bengaluru.⁷ In July 2024, the Committee presented a draft Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill to the state government, proposing a three-tier governance framework with the GBA at the top.⁷ The GBG Bill is different than the draft Bill presented by the Brand Bengaluru Committee. This note is based on the Bill passed by the Assembly which was the same as suggested by the Select Committee of the Assembly.

Key Features

Key features proposed under the Bill include:

- **Administrative structure:** Currently, the BBMP Act, 2020 provides for a four-tier system of urban governance consisting of: (i) BBMP, (ii) Zonal Committees, (iii) Ward Committees, and (iv) Area Sabhas. The Bill changes this to a three-tier structure. The Greater Bengaluru Area will be split into multiple city corporations, with the Greater Bengaluru Authority as the apex body. Each corporation will have an elected Mayor and an appointed Commissioner. The corporations will be divided into wards each with a Ward Committee. The Bill to be reconsidered does not have zonal committees and area sabhas unlike the BBMP Act and the Bill introduced in 2024.

Figure 1: Administrative structure proposed under the GBG Bill, 2024



- **Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA):** The Bill provides for the constitution of GBA as an apex body. It will be responsible for coordinating and supervising the activities of the city corporations and overall development of the Greater Bengaluru Area. It will be headed by the Chief Minister, and the Chief Commissioner will be the member secretary. The Chief Commissioner will be appointed by the state government for a period of three years. Members of the GBA with voting rights include: (i) Minister of Bengaluru Development, (ii) state Ministers from constituencies in the Greater Bengaluru Area, (iii) all MPs and MLAs from constituencies or residences within the Greater Bengaluru Area, (iv) Mayors of the city corporations, (v) Commissioner of Police, (vi) Chief town planner and engineer, and (viii) heads of agencies responsible for metropolitan transport, electricity supply, and solid waste management.

The GBA will coordinate, execute, and administer plans, schemes, and projects in the Greater Bengaluru Area. It will be the Planning Authority for the Greater Bengaluru Area, and make the master plan for the infrastructure development of the Area. It will be entrusted with execution of projects that spread across multiple corporations. It will also integrate and supervise the activities of all public authorities in Bengaluru. An Executive Committee will help the GBA in discharging its day-to-day functions (chaired by the Minister of Bengaluru Development). The government will also constitute sectoral expert committees to advise the GBA.

- **Metropolitan Planning Committee:** The state government will constitute the Bengaluru Metropolitan Planning Committee, which will develop the draft development plan for the Greater Bengaluru Area. It will be chaired by the Chief Minister, and the Chief Commissioner will be the Member Secretary.
- **City Corporation:** The Greater Bengaluru Area will have up to seven city corporations. Each city corporation area must have: (i) population of more than 10 lakh, (ii) more than 5,000 inhabitants per sq km area, and (iii) the revenue generated from such area for the local administration in the last census year must be more than Rs 300 crore. Each corporation will have a term of five years. It will consist of the following members: (i) councillors elected from each ward, (ii) Lok Sabha MPs and MLAs whose constituencies lie within the corporation area, (iii) Rajya Sabha MPs and MLCs registered as voters in the corporation area, and (iv) nominated experts in municipal administration, health, town planning, or education (without voting rights). The state government can dissolve a corporation under certain circumstances.
- **Authorities of the City Corporations:** The members of each city corporation will elect a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor, whose term will be 30 months and co-terminus with the corporation. The Mayors will preside over city corporation meetings and have general powers of inspection and issuing directions (related to functions of the corporation) to the commissioners or standing committees. Each corporation will have a commissioner for two years, appointed by the government in consultation with the GBA. The commissioner will be the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation and will coordinate between the Mayor, deputy Mayor, council, and ward committees.
- **Wards:** Each city corporation area will be divided into wards with roughly equal population, on the recommendation of the Delimitation Commission (set up by the government). Each city corporation will have up to 150 wards. Each ward will have a ward committee chaired by a Councillor, elected for a term of five years, and 14 other members. Functions of the ward committees will include: (i) preparing and submitting ward development schemes and plan to the corporation, (ii) ensure collection of taxes, and (iii) ensure maintenance of civic services like solid waste management, sewerage, water supply, and street lighting.
- **Zones:** The government will notify zones within each city corporation. The state government will appoint a Joint Commissioner of a zone who will be responsible for carrying out the civic administration in the zone. He will also supervise and coordinate with ward committees, and perform functions as directed by the Commissioner or Mayor.
- **Taxation:** Taxes to be levied by the Corporations include: (i) property tax, (ii) advertisement fee, (iii) tax on professions and trade, (iv) entertainment tax, (v) cesses on infrastructure, solid waste management, (vi) taxes or levies related to building license. Property tax rates will be determined by government, in consultation with GBA.
- **Finances and budget:** If a city corporation is unable to raise funds to carry out its mandatory functions, the state government will provide them grants to meet the gap. The Commissioner will prepare a budget estimate for the corporation after considering the budget estimates from all committees. The corporation will pass the budget at least three weeks before the beginning of the fiscal year. The Mayor, in consultation with the Commissioner, standing committee and ward committees will prepare a medium-term fiscal plan for the Corporation, which will contain the receipts and payments projections for three years. The corporation will frame a Comprehensive Debt Limitation Policy for loans to be raised by the corporation. It will lay down the general principles governing the raising of loans by the corporation. The corporation will also set up a Sinking Fund for the repayment of loans.
- **Other functions related to municipal governance:** Various other powers vesting with the city corporation include: (i) all functions related to public streets, (ii) making building bye-laws, (iii) taking adequate measures related to public health, (iv) assisting central and state governments to prevent or manage natural calamities, (v) coordinating with the respective department for the collection, storing, processing and disposal of municipal solid waste, (vi) impose penalties on polluters, and (vii) conservation and maintenance of urban heritage.

PART B: KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

Lack of devolution of powers as per the 74th Amendment

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 provides for the establishment of urban local bodies (ULBs) as institutions of local self-government and devolution of powers to them. It provides states with the power to devolve the responsibility of 18 specified functions to these ULBs. These functions include urban planning, regulation of land use, water supply, and slum upgradation. The Statement of Objects of the Bill provides that it aims to institute a decentralised, participatory, and equitable governance framework in Bengaluru and improve political accountability. However, the municipal governance structure proposed under the Bill centralises powers instead of adhering to the principles of devolution enshrined in the 74th Amendment. We discuss some of these issues below.

Chief Minister to head the apex municipal body and the Metropolitan Planning Committee

Bill:
Clauses
9, 14

Head of the apex municipal body: The Bill provides for the formation of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) as the apex body for Bengaluru. It will be headed by the Chief Minister of Karnataka. It also consists of various Ministers, Mayors of the city corporations, heads of key public authorities (civic agencies). The GBA will coordinate, execute, and administer plans, schemes, and major projects in the Greater Bengaluru Area. Creating a municipal body helmed by the Chief Minister and comprising of various ministers may undermine the principles of decentralisation enshrined in the 74th Amendment, as it gives the state government a direct say in municipal governance.

Head of the planning authority: The Bill provides that GBA will be the Planning Authority (as defined by the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, 1961) for the Greater Bengaluru Area. The 1961 Act provides for the constitution of a Planning Authority with a Chairman appointed by the state government.⁸ Thus the Chief Minister will also be responsible for planning, which is one of the functions to be devolved to the municipal bodies. The Constitution provides for the creation of a Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) which will prepare a draft development plan for the metropolitan area.⁹ The chairperson of the MPC will forward the plan to the state government. Under the Bill, the Chief Minister will chair the Bengaluru MPC, thus, removing the separation of roles.

According to a CAG (2020) report, the Bengaluru MPC was constituted in 2014.¹⁰ However, the MPC was not functioning as envisaged and had only met three times until 2020.¹⁰ In addition, as of 2020, the MPC had not prepared any comprehensive development plan for Bengaluru metropolitan area.¹⁰

Public authorities vs city corporations

Bill:
Clauses
14, 111,
First
Schedule

The Bill provides the GBA with the power to formulate, co-ordinate, and execute schemes made for the plans prepared by it. It also gives city corporations the power to implement schemes under its jurisdiction for the 18 functions listed in the 74th Amendment. However, in Bengaluru, several of these functions are carried out by public authorities such as the Bangalore Development Authority which are governed by their respective Acts. Most of these public authorities were set up prior to the 74th Amendment.¹⁰ These authorities function independently of the ULBs and are directly accountable to the state government.¹¹ As a result, ULBs, which are elected bodies, are often divested of their functions.¹¹ While the Bill is providing for devolution of municipal functions to the city corporations, it does not alter the position of these public authorities. The GBA has the power to coordinate and supervise such public authorities, who must obey its directions. Thus, while there is a coordination mechanism between the city corporations and various public authorities, there is no clear demarcation of roles. This may create an overlap and weaken accountability.

Power to dissolve corporations

Bill:
Clause 130

Under the Bill, the state government can dissolve a city corporation if in the opinion of the government or in public interest: (i) it is not competent to perform or default in its performance of any duties imposed on it, (ii) it exceeds or abuses its powers, or (iii) fails to carry out directions given to it. Following such dissolution, all councillors in the corporation will cease to hold office. During such dissolution, all powers and duties of the corporation will be vested in the Chief Commissioner. This implies that a directly elected body can be dissolved by the state government. Lok Sabha and State Assemblies are dissolved prior to the end of their term if the government loses the support of the majority in the House or if the government decides to call for an early election. State Assemblies can also be dissolved if President's Rule is established and ratified by both Houses of Parliament.

Approval of government or GBA required to exercise certain powers

Bill:
Clauses
134, 142,
147, 238,
318

The Bill requires a Corporation to require prior sanction or approval from the government or the GBA to exercise several powers. These include: (i) disposal of property by the Corporation through sale, (ii) leasing of property for more than five years, (iii) entering contracts, and (iv) sanctioning construction of or addition to any public entertainment building in certain cases. The Corporation also has to get approval of the government for making any regulations under this law, including matters such as: (i) regulating the payments from the Corporation's fund, (ii) temporary erection of structures, (iii) regulation and inspection of slaughterhouses and public places, (iv) securing cleanliness of milk-shops, and (v) hawking zones, food courts. A corporation (comprised of elected councillors) requiring the government or the GBA's permission for exercising its powers may defeat the purpose of devolving powers to it.

Taxation powers with the GBA

Bill:
Clause
147

The Bill provides that the government will set the property tax rates in consultation with the GBA. In other states such as Delhi, Kerala, and Maharashtra, property tax rates are determined by the respective Municipal Corporations.^{12,13,14} According to a performance audit report of the 74th Amendment in Karnataka (2020), the powers related to fixing and revision of rates with the state governments have constrained the ULBs.¹⁰ Fiscal autonomy of ULBs can only be achieved if financial powers are devolved.¹⁰

Local Participation

The KMC Act, 1976 and the BBMP Act, 2020 provided for the constitution of an Area Sabha for each area under a ward.^{15,16} The Bill introduced in the Assembly retained these provisions. It stated that area sabhas were responsible for: (i) generating proposals to determine the priority of development programmes, and (ii) identification of beneficiaries for schemes. Each area sabha consists of all registered voters as members and one nominated area sabha representative. This facilitates enhanced community participation. However, the Bill passed by the Assembly (as recommended by the Committee), removed the provisions on area sabhas.

Legislators involved in administrative work

Bill:
Clauses
9, 95, 96

The Bill provides for the constitution of an Assembly Constituency level consultative and co-ordination committee. The MLA of the respective area will act as a Chairman of the Committee. Functions of this Committee will include: (i) co-ordination with all public authorities in the GBA, (ii) monitoring project implementation in the constituency, and (iii) assisting ward committees in their functioning. The question is whether a legislator should be involved in an administrative role of coordinating with civic agencies and monitoring their work. Civic agencies, which are headed by bureaucrats, are answerable to the respective line Ministries/departments. These ministers are then accountable to legislators in the Assembly. The CAG (2020) observed that the state government should make the public authorities accountable to ULBs.¹⁰

The Bill states that MPs and MLAs from constituencies or residing within the Greater Bengaluru Area shall be members of the GBA. This may violate the principle of separation of powers between the legislature and the executive.

Elected vs Appointed officials

Bill:
Clauses
10, 85,
134,
142, 182

The Chief Commissioner of the GBA and the Commissioners of the city corporations, who are appointed officials, will act as the principal executive officers of the GBA and City Corporation, respectively. Executive functions of the Commissioner include: (i) selling or leasing properties owned by the Corporation, and (ii) regulating and issuing instructions regarding public streets, (iii) entering contracts on behalf of the city corporation, and (iv) preparation of the corporation budget. Under the BBMP Act, 2020, the Commissioner must get the Mayor's (who is an elected official) approval before entering any contract.¹⁷ The Bill removes this and requires the Commissioner to obtain prior approval from the government.

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007) had noted that Mayors in most states only have a peripheral role in urban governance.¹¹ The Commission noted that charging commissioners with executive power dilutes the role of the Mayor and violates the spirit of self-governance and local empowerment.¹¹ The Expert Committee on Indian Urban Infrastructure (2011) had recommended that the commissioner should act as a city manager and be recruited through a transparent selection process led by the Mayor.¹⁸ The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007) recommended that executive power must be exercised by the elected Mayor mandating true democratic legitimacy.¹¹ It also added that in large cities, a Mayor's cabinet may be formed, appointed by the Mayor from among councillors.¹¹

Note that in some places this system is in place. For example, in Kolkata, the executive power of the Corporation is exercised by a Mayor-in council (consisting of the Mayor and up to 10 elected members of the Corporation).¹⁹ The Madhya Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 2003 also provides for a Mayor-in-Council, which has powers to sanction contracts up to a certain amount and appoint certain municipal staff.²⁰ In comparison, Delhi and Mumbai vest the executive power in the commissioner.

Variation in fines for some election-linked offences

Bill:
Clauses 51,
52, 54

The BBMP Act, 2020 provides for fines for offences linked to election proceedings for councillors. The Bill retains these offences and fines. The fines for three of these offences differ from the penalties in the Representation of Peoples' Act, 1951.²¹ The penalties are also significantly higher than the municipal laws of other cities. For example, under the Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Chennai municipal laws, the maximum fine for canvassing near a polling station is Rs 250, the same as for Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections.^{21,22,23,24} Under the Bill, the maximum fine for the same offence is one lakh rupees. For causing disturbances in election meetings and printing pamphlets without authorisation, the penalty in these cities is imprisonment up to six months and a fine of up to Rs 2,000. In the Bill, the penalty is imprisonment of up to six months and fine of up to one lakh rupees.

Delimitation exercise and Municipal Elections

Need for a Delimitation Commission

Bill:
Clause 29

The Bill provides for the constitution of a Delimitation Commission which will divide a Corporation into wards, for the election of councillors. Other states such as Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh have vested the powers of delimitation with the state governments.¹¹ According to the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007), in urban areas, state election commissions (SECs) have to wait until a delimitation exercise is concluded, to hold elections to ULBs.¹¹ The Commission had recommended that the task of delimitation and reservation of constituencies should be entrusted with the State Election Commissions to ensure timely conduct of elections.¹¹ It had also noted that a separate delimitation commission is not necessary for local governments.¹¹ States such as Kerala, West Bengal, and Maharashtra have empowered their SECs to delimit wards.¹¹

Delays in Municipal Elections

In Bangalore, delimitation has been delayed earlier leading to delayed elections to the municipal corporation.¹¹ Elections to BBMP were last held in April 2015 for a five-year term. Since the end of that term, an appointed administrator has been in charge of BBMP.¹⁰ According to the Constitution, an election to the municipality should be completed before the expiry of the duration of the existing municipality, or within a duration of six months from the date of its dissolution.²⁵

Comparison of the GBG Bill, 2024 as introduced and as passed

The following table provides some changes between the GBG Bill, 2024 as introduced in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on July 23, 2024 and the GBG Bill, 2024 as recommended by the Joint Select Committee. The Bill passed in the Assembly on March 10, 2025, was the same as the Bill recommended by the Committee.

Table 1: Comparison of some features of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill, 2024 as introduced in the Assembly and as passed (with recommendations of the Joint Select Committee)

	Bill Introduced	Bill passed (as proposed by the Committee)
Provision	The Greater Bengaluru Area may have up to 10 city corporations.	The Greater Bengaluru Area may have up to 7 city corporations
Provision	Chief Minister (CM) to head a Municipal Body	No change
Issue	May undermine the principles of decentralisation according to the 74 th Constitutional Amendment.	
Provision	No Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC)	Provision for GBA as the Planning Authority and constitution of a Bengaluru MPC
Issue	Against the 74 th Amendment which mandates the constitution of an MPC in every metropolitan area.	CM will chair both these bodies which may undermine the principles of decentralisation under the 74 th Amendment.
Provision	GBA to ensure equitable allocation of funds to corporations, approve property tax rates (with government approval), recommend new revenue streams, and review medium term fiscal plan of corporations.	Functions like review of medium term fiscal plan, ensuring equitable allocation of funds removed. Tax rates to be determined by government in consultation with GBA.
Issue	Financial functions being allocated to GBA may limit the fiscal autonomy of the city corporations.	
Provision	Commissioner requires government's permission to enter into contracts. Under BBMP Act, 2020, Mayor's permission was required.	No change
Issue	Experts have highlighted Mayor's peripheral role in urban governance. Executive powers being exercised by appointed officials instead of elected officials may violate the principal of self-governance.	
Provision	State government can dissolve city corporations in certain cases.	No change
Issue	State government has the power to dissolve a directly elected body.	
Provision	Area Sabhas consisted of all registered voters in the area as members and was responsible for beneficiary identification and determining the priority of development programmes.	The provision for Area Sabhas has been removed
Issue		May limit community participation in local governance.
Provision	Powers to conduct the delimitation exercise to be vested in a newly formed Delimitation Commission	No change
Issue	With the presence of a State Election Commission, a Delimitation Commission may not be necessary.	
Provision	A Greater Bengaluru Security Force will be created for: (i) security of corporation property, and (ii) aiding officers of corporation with matters related to tax evasion and leakages.	The provision for constitution of a Greater Bengaluru Security Force has been removed

Sources: Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill, 2024 as introduced in July 2024, and the version passed by the legislature in March 2025 based on the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee.

Zones and Joint Commissioner

Bill:
Clauses
2(81), 4,
92, 93, 94

The Bill lays out a three-level structure of authorities: the GBA, city corporations, and ward committees. However, it further states that the government will notify zones within each city corporation. The state government will appoint a Joint Commissioner of a zone who will be responsible for carrying out the civic administration in the zone. He will also supervise and coordinate with ward committees, and perform functions as directed by the Commissioner or Mayor. It is unclear how zones will fit within the structure proposed under the Bill.

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