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## Staff shortage hits urban local bodies hard

BENGALURU: The functioning of urban local bodies (ULBs) across the State, barring Bengaluru, is crippled due to an acute shortage of manpower at various levels. However, a major move to go in for computerisation of all citizen-related services is under way.

Out of the sanctioned strength of nearly 10,000 staff in the top management level (A grade), middle level office staff (B grade), and clerical grade (C), only around 5,000 personnel are on the rolls presently, says V Ponnuraj, Managing Director, Karnataka Urban Infrastructure and Finance Development Corporation (KUIDFC).

Sufficient personnel are available only in the Group D category. While the position in South Karnataka is comparatively better, the vacancy rate in North Karnataka is as high as 60 per cent with certain pockets having up to 70 per cent vacancies, he said. "This has crippled our functioning," Ponnuraj said.

"The recruitment process is under way with 2,000 candidates set to join the ULBs in the next six months. An additional 1,000 jobs are set to be outsourced. So, a year down the line, we will be in a comfortable position," he said.

“We are in the firefighting mode now. To manage the crucial technical level posts, the Chief Minister has okayed the temporary recruitment of retired officers,” the KUIFDC MD said. “Project management consultants help out and agencies provide some kind of manpower,” he added.

While the front-end operations of citizen-related processes are computerised, it is still paper documents that are largely supplied for all practical purposes. “By using Enterprise Resource Planning methods, we have embarked on the process of computerising everything, what can be termed as Process Reengineering,” Ponnuraj said.

This will help public who want to obtain a Katha certificate, building plan sanction or any kind of government-related approvals.

Presently, even if documents given by the same department is required, the individual has to furnish a physical copy. “If it can be accessed online, it will be easier for all,” he said.

Tracking of all projects online is in the pipeline. “This will ensure

100 per cent transparency. An applicant can track on real-time basis the movement of files from one section to another. It will also help us identify the particular desk where any delay is taking place,” Ponnuraj concluded.