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No smart city tag for city but GHMC pays a whopping Rs 46 lakh for consultancy

HYDERABAD: Hyderabad might have backed out of the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) giving in for Karimnagar's inclusion, but the same has not prevented the cash-strapped Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation from shelling out a whopping `46.26 lakh towards consultancy services.

The GHMC Standing Committee approved the proposal and recommended the same to the state government a few days ago. It was as per the request of the Chief Minister that the Central Government replaced Hyderabad with Karimnagar for SCM last year. Warangal is another city selected by the Centre for the mission.

However, before Hyderabad was replaced from the SCM, the civic body had appointed consultant M/s Knight Frank (India) Private Limited for preparation of proposal for assisting GHMC to participate in the smart cities challenge. The consultant prepared proposals and submitted to GHMC and charged `40.40 lakh towards fee and `5.85 lakh towards service tax.

The above consultant was one among the 11 empanelled consultant listed by the Centre. The consultant prepared city-wide concept plan, draft smart city proposal and final city draft proposal.

On Dec 7, 2015, the consultant was verbally informed that state government has decided not to pursue the smart city challenge proposal for Greater Hyderabad. However, by that time most of the work for smart city challenge proposal was completed.

Since the GHMC had already engaged the consultant for preparation of smart city challenge proposal, the consultancy charges payable to the extent of work done, if any, be paid by GHMC, as per the state government instructions.

The consultant submitted the smart city challenge proposal as per the template of Ministry of Urban Development (MOUD) and the total work entrusted to them is complete and if the proposal was forwarded to MoUD, the consultant will be eligible for 100 per cent payment for

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consultancy from MoUD. However, the consultants agreed to receive 60 per cent of the contract price from GHMC, since the smart challenge proposal not forwarded to the Central Government.

SCM is an urban renewal and retrofitting programme launched by Central Government with a mission to develop 109 cities all over the country making them citizen friendly and sustainable in June 2015.