

The Hindu 25.05.2018

FGG accuses GHMC, HMWSSB of funds misuse

GHMC commissioner charged with providing false assurance to High Court

The Forum for Good Governance (FGG), through a letter to the Chief Secretary on Thursday, has levelled allegations of misuse of public money, on GHMC and the water board.

Both the public offices have collected money running up to Rs. 120 crore on the promise of constructing rain water harvesting structures, and failed to fulfil the same, the letter alleged.

As per the Section 17(1) of WALTERA Act, GHMC must insist on construction of rain water harvesting structures in all the residential premises having an area of not less than 200 square metres. In case the owner fails to construct one, the Act authorises GHMC to do it and recover the costs.

Section 17(2) of the same Act stipulates that permanent water and electricity connections be extended only after construction of the structures.

GHMC, taking advantage of the provisions, began to collect cost of the structures at the time of issuing building permissions, the letter mentioned. However, the Corporation has not taken up construction of the structures in individual houses, from the owners of which money was collected.

A public interest litigation filed in the High Court by FGG had a counter affidavit filed by the GHMC Commissioner B. Janardhan Reddy which stated that an action plan had been prepared for the rain water harvesting structures, and the amount collected from public was being deposited in the GHMC treasury under separate head of account.

“We have a reason to believe that just to close the PIL in High Court, the Commissioner gave wrong assurance to the court,” the letter read.

Though a few structures were constructed here and there, they are mostly in common places, rather than individual houses. There is no account for the money collected by GHMC, it alleged.

Meanwhile, an RTI application to the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) revealed that the Board had collected Rs. 20.65 crore for construction of the rain water harvesting structures from people who had applied for water supply connection.

Of this, only Rs. 88.13 lakh has been spent so far on establishment of the structures, with no account available for the balance amount, the letter signed by Secretary of FGG M. Padmanabha Reddy said, and pointed out that WALTA Act does not authorise water board to collect such an amount.

In a few cases, both GHMC and water board collected amounts for construction of the structures, but defaulted on the same.

“We have a reason to believe that about Rs. 120 crore collected by the GHMC and the water board has not been spent for the purpose for which it was collected from individuals.

It is a clear case of misuse of funds,” the letter stated, while requesting the Chief Secretary for an enquiry by appropriate

agency.

We have a reason to believe that about Rs. 120 crore collected by the GHMC and the water board has not been spent for the purpose for which it was collected from individuals.

M. Padmanabha Reddy

Forum for Good Governance