

The Times of India 23.09.2014

Civic bodies yet to finalize tenders for 546 buses sanctioned last year

PUNE: It has been over a year since the ministry of urban development sanctioned 546 buses for Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad, but the Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited (PMPML) is yet to finalize the tenders.

At a high-level meeting earlier this month, the ministry had said if any city is finding it difficult to procure the vehicles, then the proposed buses would be transferred to other cities in the waiting. A total of 10,000 buses were sanctioned last year by the UPA government in the second phase of funding under JNNURM.

A total of 1,991 buses were sanctioned for 12 cities in the state in the second phase. While Pune has been allotted 200 buses, 346 buses have been sanctioned for Pimpri Chinchwad. All these buses will be run by the PMPML, which has been told by the two corporations to complete the tender process. Five various types of buses are being procured by the two municipal corporations.

The rise in the cost of the low-floor (900mm) standard size non-AC CNG buses has resulted in the delay for finalizing the tenders, said the state government. "The cost of the buses is higher by around Rs 10 lakh to Rs 12 lakh than the estimated cost. A total of 165 buses of this type are being procured. Thane, Vasai-Virar and Mira Bhayander are also in the list of cities which are yet to finalize the tenders," state government authorities said.

Ministry officials emphasized that the decision must be taken as soon as possible. While the ministry would not interfere in the state's procurement policy, officials said a decision has to be taken whether the cities want to procure the buses at all. "If any city fails, then these buses can be transferred to other cities in the waiting list," ministry officials said.

Incidentally, the state has failed to release funds received from the ministry to some of the municipal corporations for the purpose. Authorities said that besides Maharashtra, the other defaulting states include Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana and West Bengal.

The ministry said the delay in transfer of funds from the state to municipal corporations has resulted in delay in payment to bus manufacturers. The ministry said if the 'funds are not released to the corporations, the amount would be recovered from the states with interest for the default period'.

While the state agreed to follow the conditions, it also claimed that "almost all reforms for sanction of funds" were in place.

The state had set various conditions and reforms, including setting up of a special purpose vehicle for bus operations, as well as creating an urban transport fund to be used for public transport. The Centre had also asked the cities to approve a parking policy to discourage use of private vehicles.

- ** Articulated buses: 25
- ** Low-floor Volvo buses: 50
- ** Mini low-floor buses - 50
- ** Low-floor (650mm) buses - 245
- ** Low-floor (900mm) - 165
- ** Others - 11