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Greater Chennai corporation forms new committee to review rates

CHENNAI: In the face of allegations of corruption in fixing prices for material used in laying of roads and other infrastructure projects, Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) commissioner G Prakash has formed a committee of all chief engineers to streamline various rates fixed by the civic body.

The order for constituting the committee was issued last week.

This comes shortly after anti-corruption NGO Arappor Iyakkam raised a stink about how the rates of materials fixed by the corporation was not accurate and that it was helping in 'unjust' enrichment of contractors. To buttress their allegations, the NGO had provided RTI replies given by the buildings department of the corporation. Prakash denied the allegations in an official rejoinder.

Currently, the schedule of rates for material like sand, concrete and bricks is prepared by the works department and

the buildings department. This is calculated based on basic rates given by the public works department (PWD) or the highways department every year.

The rates are then placed in the council for approval. Currently, the civic body does not have an elected council in place.

In his order, Prakash said this required streamlining due to the increase in size of the civic body and major infrastructure.

“The process of arriving at schedule of rates by a single department requires further scrutiny to avoid miscalculations,” Prakash said in his order.

As a means towards this end, Prakash has ordered the formation of a committee to approve a schedule of rates. It should comprise all chief engineers and is headed by the principal chief engineer.

It will have a sub-committee consisting of engineers drawn

from executive engineers of bridges, electrical, storm water drain, roads, works, mechanical, buildings and parks.

A meeting would have to be convened on the first Wednesday of every month. Departments which require modifications, corrections or technical decisions would have to request for a meeting to be convened.

“Any new item of work which requires fixing of rates including purchase and receipt of new materials would have to be placed before the committee,” the order said.

All records of the committee should be maintained properly, Prakash ordered.

Arappor Iyakkam’s convenor Jayaram Venkatesan said this order was a recognition of the problems that the NGO had been talking about for a while. “It is good that the corporation has come up with a broader committee,” Jayaram said.