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Tecom closes master-plan contract for SmartCity

State Govt urged to clear pending issues.

The company insisted on freehold land as the lease agreement had to be split for securing SEZ status for the project land.

Our Bureau

Kochi, June 14 The hurdles in the progress of SmartCity Kochi appear to be far from over with Tecom, the promoters of the project, closing its contract with the UK-based Collin Buchanan company, who were appointed for preparing the master plan.

Mr Fareed Abdulrahman, the CEO of SmartCity Kochi, said in a press statement from Dubai: "In order to protect the best interests of SmartCity Kochi and its stakeholders, and further to all activities that were put on hold up until now, we regret to inform all those concerned that we have been forced to close out our contract with the internationally renowned UK-based Master Planning Consultants.

“Regardless of this, we would like to reiterate our commitment to the project and are sure that with the support of the Government of Kerala on the pending issues, SmartCity Kochi will be a success. Once the Government of Kerala takes action in resolving the pending issues and we mutually agree on the way forward, the master planners will recommence developing SmartCity Kochi.

Land lock

“Despite our best efforts to sort out issues by way of action, we have only heard statements in the media about more discussions on the subject of freehold. After our recent press meeting, it was said that SmartCity will come to know of the Government of Kerala’s decision by the first week of June,” the statement said.

The company had set a deadline of December for the State Government to sort out the issues. At a press meet on June 1 in Kochi, the CEO had said the project could not afford any further delay and the State Government should take immediate steps to resolve the issue regarding the 12 per cent freehold land before the end of this year. SmartCity Kochi is entitled to 12 per cent of freehold land and the company wanted a re-assurance from the State Government in this regard. As the project was a joint venture with the State Government, both the stakeholders will have to sit together and find a solution, Mr Abdulrahman said.

The company insisted on freehold land as the lease agreement had to be split for securing SEZ status for the project land. Of the 246 acres, 136 acres have already received SEZ status in principle.

The provision of freehold land has to be included in the lease agreement for the remaining 110 acres before it gets notified as SEZ, because land once notified as SEZ cannot be de-notified for including fresh provisions, the CEO said.

At the press meet, he also asked the State Government to make it clear about the requirements they needed to take the project forward. The CEO was of the view that the Government had not given any positive signs in this direction.