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# JNNURM: Lagadapati's remarks trigger row

Staff Reporter

*The Vijayawada MP pleads ignorance of State government's order on funding*

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*Lagadapati attends the VMC meeting after a long time*

*The subject postponed for next meeting*

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VIJAYAWADA: Lagadapati Rajagopal, MP, has pleaded ignorance of an order issued by the State government seeking to treat a major part of its share of funding for the projects taken up under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) as loan.

The MP said this at the general body meeting of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) on Monday, the second day of deliberations after only a few issues on the agenda were discussed on Saturday.

The State government's decision to treat a major chunk of its contribution for the JNNURM projects as loan was reported in these columns recently.

The MP, who attended the VMC general body meeting after a long time, said during a discussion on the issue: "I came to know recently that the State government issued a GO stating that its contribution as grant would be 2 per cent and the remaining 18 per cent would be treated as loan, instead of the entire 20 per cent as grant as stated earlier."

## Acrimonious debate

The statement led to an acrimonious debate between CPI (M) floor leader Ch. Babu Rao and Mr. Rajagopal.

Refusing to accept the MP's claim of ignorance of the order, Mr. Babu Rao questioned him: "How do you substantiate your claim when the GO was issued in 2006? Were you not a member of the sanctioning committee?"

Sharply reacting, Mr. Rajagopal said: "I can't study every GO issued by the State government on day-to-day basis."

The CPI (M) leader reminded the MP that the guidelines were prepared by the Central government, and the State government religiously followed them.

Mr. Rajagopal reacted bitterly and said that he would not like to enter into an argument.

"I am neither a member of the State level committee nor an MLA. The issue has to be sorted out between the urban local body (VMC) and the State government," he maintained.

In a bid to ease the situation, Mr. Rajagopal said that in the interests of the city and its people a committee could be formed to take up the issue with Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

"We all can request the Chief Minister to exempt the city from footing the huge loan in view of the financial implications it involves," he said, and left the meeting hall without giving any scope for a further discussion.

Later in the evening, the officials placed before the general body, under section 88K of the HMC Act, the GO and the information pertaining to it.

The ruling Congress and opposition parties decided to postpone the subject for next meeting.

Congress corporators said they would discuss the issue with the officials for taking suitable action and to chalk out a necessary plan.