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Civic body to decide on maintenance proposals for road sweeping machines

With the warranty period of the three mechanised road sweeping machines bought from Italy last year already over, the decision of what to do with these 'white elephants' once again stares at the Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh.

At its House meet to be held on Tuesday, the civic body will discuss the two proposals put forward for the maintenance of these machines. While the annual maintenance contract estimates an expenditure of around Rs 15 lakh, the comprehensive maintenance contract quotes a figure of Rs 36.99 lakh (without stating a time limit!). To top it all, there are 34 items which have not been included in either of the proposals and will have to be separately purchased by the civic body. These include the side-brooms for the machines. Each costs around Rs 19,000 and five brooms are used every month.

Earlier, a committee was constituted to examine the contracts, which voted in favour of the comprehensive maintenance contract. A final decision, however, will be taken after the proposals are discussed in the House.

The machines were purchased at an expenditure of Rs 3 crore.

Interestingly, prior to the purchase, several civic body officials including former Medical Officer of Health Dr G C Bansal and the then Joint Commissioner H S Kandhola went to Italy to inspect the machines. The trip was sponsored by the company.

Chairman of the Sanitation Committee Chander Mukhi Sharma says: “What did the officials assess when they visited Italy? This year we are looking at an expenditure of Rs 36 lakh. Will it keep increasing every year? Also, there are more than 30 items that are not included in the contracts.”

Councillor Dr A P Sanwaria, who was the chairman of the Sanitation Committee when the machines were purchased, said the councillors were kept out of the loop when the trip was planned. “We were presented a rosy picture but no one bothered to inform us about the recurring costs. The machines were supposed to be capable of working 16 hours a day, this does not seem to be happening,” he says.

The warranty period of the machines ended on April 24 this year.