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NMC starts Kumbh work worth Rs 530cr

NASHIK: With less than 15 months left for the Kumbh Mela to commence in 2015, the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) has taken up work worth Rs 529.55 crore related to the religious gala.

Various other Kumbh-related works worth Rs. 151.37 crore are in the tender process, to be completed after the Lok Sabha elections are over.

"Of the civic body's Rs 1,052.61-crore Kumbh plan, works worth Rs 680.92 crore are already in progress. Work orders for 29 Kumbh projects worth Rs 529.55 crore have been issued to concerned contractors, who have commenced these. These 29 projects include work of 17 roads amounting to Rs 432.49 crore, three works of bridges over the Godavari river amounting to Rs 16.97 crore, five works of water supply worth Rs 65.01 crore and four works of sewage treatment management amounting to Rs 15.08 crore," an NMC official

told TOI on Tuesday.

"Apart from the Rs. 529.55-crore Kumbh works already under execution, 15 works worth Rs 151.37 crore are in the tender process, now to be completed after the end of the Code of Conduct due to the Lok Sabha elections. These include four works of the Sadhugram worth Rs 78.70 crore, two work of roads amounting to Rs 19.61 crore, a construction of a bridge at a cost of Rs 5.99 crore, two works of toilets and parking spaces amounting to Rs 20.08 crore, four works of water supply worth Rs 24.41 crore, one work from the medical department worth Rs 1.5 crore and one work from the electricity department amounting to Rs 1.08 crore," the civic official said.

The apex committee of the state government, led by the chief minister Prithviraj Chavan, had approved the Kumbh plan of Rs 2,378.71 crore for the district, including Rs 1,052.61 crore for the municipal corporation, in October 2013. So far, the NMC has received funds to the tune of Rs 218.17 crore from the Maharashtra government for the Kumbh Mela.

As per the NMC's Kumb plan, there are a total of 96 Kumbh-related works to be taken up by various departments of the civic body. The NMC's Rs 1,052.61-crore Kumbh plan includes Rs 82.7 crore (four works) for Sadhugram, Rs 462.5 crore (21 works) for roads, Rs 24 crore (four works) for construction of bridges, Rs 55 crore (four works) for temporary parking and toilets, Rs 96.23 crore (16 works) for water supply management, Rs 29.25 crore (six works) for sewage treatment

management, Rs 31.58 crore (seven works) for medical services, Rs 20 crore (three works) for sanitary and health related services, Rs 27.35 crore (nine works) for electricity management, Rs 24 crore (22 works) for the fire brigade and Rs 200 crore for land acquisition.

In the backdrop of these plans, activists and citizens drew attention to the city's green cover being threatened and the abysmal pollution of the Godavari river. "The Kumbh is held in Nashik only because of the holy river Godavari. Today, the river is polluted and water of the river is not fit for drinking. Following the Bombay High Court's directives, the NMC administration has even put up boards on riverbank stating that the river's water is not fit for consumption. Instead of doing up roads and spending a fortune on beautification work, the NMC should focus on making the river pollution-free," said Rajesh Pandit of the Godavari Gatarikaran Virodhi Manch.

Citizens like Gorakh Pagar spoke of indiscriminate tree-felling in the city to make way for "infrastructure development". "Protecting the environment is a priority, even while undertaking such infrastructural work. Tree plantation, garden development and water park projects are a necessity today.

The NMC is spending crores of rupees for the Kumbh on various infrastructural and other works. With Nashik's growing population, the civic administration should chalk out a long-term plan, instead of only focusing on events like the Kumbh," Pagar said.

