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Bhandewadi sewage plant agreement sent to NMC house

NAGPUR: The general body of Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) may discuss the draft agreement of 200 million litre per day (MLD) sewage treatment plant (STP) at Bhandewadi before a letter of agreement (LoA) is issued to the operator. Municipal commissioner Shyam Wardhane has sent it to NMC house for discussion. A general body meeting is slated to be held later this month.

Wardhane told TOI that as it was a public private partnership (PPP) agreement it was necessary to send it to the house. However, standing committee chairman Avinash Thakre feels it is unwarranted and would further delay the project. A senior official said Wardhane might have done so to avoid any controversy. "MP Vilas Muttemwar had sent a warning letter asking him to scrap the tender. Leader of opposition Vikas Thakre, who is a close aide of Muttemwar, too has strongly opposed it," he said.

Under normal circumstances it would have been a welcome move but in this case Nagpur bench of Bombay high court has expressed strong dissatisfaction over slow progress of the project. The sewage of Nag river is polluting Gosikhurd dam, adversely affecting thousands of farmers. Therefore, STP needs to be completed as fast as possible.

The STP is being built on the directives of HC. However, NMC has not shown any urgency in completing this process. The bids were floated in late 2011 but the financial bid was opened only in September 2012. NMC took its own time in processing the tender until in July 2013 Muttemwar sent a warning letter to Wardhane. The commissioner sat on the file for three more months before clearing it. Muttemwar opposed execution of the project on public private partnership (PPP) mode and demanded that it be built using government funds completely ignoring financial condition of NMC. Strangely, neither Muttemwar nor Thakre had any problem with PPP model for around two years until this July. Similarly, they did not show much concern about Nag River going dry due to the project before July.

While Wardhane has sent the agreement to the house, it may not necessarily be taken up discussion. This will practically be the prerogative of mayor. Mayor Anil Sole can decide whether the agreement should be tabled before the house so it becomes a public document but refuse to allow discussion on it. Standing committee chairman Avinash Thakre strongly opposed Wardhane's decision. "I am unable to understand why the tender had been sent to the house after standing committee cleared it. It is totally unwarranted," he told TOI.