

The Hindu 15.12.2010

Corporation does a re-think; TNSCB to build houses for urban poor

Staff Reporter

Opposition councillors stage walkout to protest against move

File Photo: K. Ananthan

TOUGH TASK?: After initially indicating that it will construct the tenements for slum dwellers at Ukkadam, the Coimbatore Corporation now says it is already overburdened with other projects. -

Coimbatore: The Coimbatore Corporation has decided to hand over to the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) the project to construct 9,600 flats for the urban poor in Ukkadam.

A resolution tabled in this regard at the council's urgent meeting here on Tuesday also said that the Corporation would seek the government's approval for executing the project through the Board. It may be noted that the Corporation had recently indicated that it will construct the tenements for slum dwellers at Ukkadam.

The 9,600 flats form part of Phase Three of the scheme to resettle the urban poor and those living in slums. In all, the civic body would construct 12,630 flats with Central Government assistance under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).

In the third phase, the Corporation would relocate people living in 91 slums that were alongside water bodies, highways, railway tracks and private lands and 'objectionable' areas.

The resolution said that in order to relocate the people, the civic body had identified 96.87 acres at the sewage farm at Ukkadam. There, as per the Government's advice, the civic body had changed the land use classification from agricultural land to housing land. The State Government had accorded approval for this.

The resolution further said that the Corporation could now go ahead and construct 134 apartments in the ground floor and five-storeyed format. To build the tenements, the civic body had sent a proposal to the Government seeking Rs. 314 crore.

Justifying the decision to hand over the housing project to the Board, the resolution said that the civic body was not in a position to execute the project as it was already implementing many JNNURM projects, including the ones for underground sewers and water supply augmentation.

Walkout staged

Opposition Councillors in the Coimbatore Corporation on Tuesday staged a walkout against the decision to hand over to Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board the construction of tenements at Ukkadam.

The reason for their walkout was the resolution regarding the tenements, that the civic body tabled at the Council meeting.

As soon as the resolution was read aloud, Opposition Councillors were up on their feet arguing how the Corporation could ask the Board to take up the construction of the flats as the latter had proved its incompetence in Ammankulam by building poor quality flats.

“The Board had demonstrated its capabilities by constructing tenements that sank a few months ago at Ammankulam. The same fate will await the Ukkadam tenements,” said P. Rajkumar, AIADMK councillor from Ward 71.

The 96.87-acre land at sewage farm at Ukkadam, where the tenements were supposed to come up, had also been a water body, storing the city's sewage, he pointed out to drive home the point that there too the flats would sink.

Alleging that the civic body had violated rules and norms in handing over the construction to the Board, he said that it would be the next Adarsh Housing Society scam.

C. Padmanabhan, CPM councillor representing Ward 3, said the Corporation was handing over the responsibility to the Board, which lacked administrative and technical capabilities.

The Board had already violated Central Government norms in constructing tenements under the 'Basic Services for Urban Poor' scheme by reducing the flat size from 260 sq.ft. to 200 sq.ft. And, the basic amenities work it had executed at its tenements was poor.

He also said that the Corporation would be violating the JNNURM rules by letting another agency – in this case, the Slum Clearance Board - do the work it was supposed to carry out in the first place.

The living conditions at the tenements, proposed to be constructed in the ground plus five format, would be poor, he added. He also questioned the need for shifting nearly 10,000 poor families to a place and isolating them from the rest of the localities.

Outside the Council Hall, the councillors urged the Corporation to review the decision, given the fact that it selected the list of beneficiaries for the 9,600 flats.