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The crucial decision that might expedite formalities, including consent of the finance department, comes just as the BBMP council elections are round the corner



Naveen Menezes, DHNS, JUN 03 2022, 00:50 IST | UPDATED: JUN 03 2022, 04:17 IST



White-topping work at Seshadri Road on Thursday. Credit: DH Photo/S K Dinesh



After being in cold storage for more than two years, the third phase of the white-topping project has surprisingly been approved by the Chief Minister.

The crucial decision that might expedite formalities, including consent of the finance department, comes just as the BBMP council elections are round the corner.

The project is estimated to cost Rs 1,154 crore and will cover 121.70 kilometres that would include 89 roads.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) floated a tender for this project when H D Kumaraswamy was the Chief Minister. When B S Yediyurappa replaced Kumaraswamy, funds allocated for the project had been withdrawn citing discrepancies in the tender process and delays in the implementation of the first two phases.

Expectations that the project would be revived four months after Bommai took charge created a buzz.

In a story titled 'White-topping 3.0: Bommai keen to do what Yediyurappa wouldn't', *DH* had reported that Bommai began meeting senior officials over reviving the project either by floating fresh tenders or approving those floated in 2019.

Highly placed sources in the Chief Minister's Office and Urban Development Department (UDD) confirmed on Thursday that Bommai, also the Bengaluru Development Minister, consented to issue work orders for all six packages after taking a legal opinion.

It is, however, not sure whether the six construction firms have agreed to reduce the bids they had quoted as they were more than 5% the cost estimated by the civic body.

The approval has also caused considerable discontentment among local BJP MLAs since roads identified

in Phase III of the white-topping project largely fall in constituencies held by the opposition Congress.

With white-topping of over 100-kilometre roads so far, the BBMP, which is implementing the project, is proceeding at a snail's pace to avoid major traffic disruptions.

Disaster in the making, says expert

Prof Ashish Verma, a civil engineering expert teaching at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), dubbed the large-scale approval of the white-topping project a disaster in the making.

"Failure to build and maintain black-topped roads should not be used as an excuse to build concrete roads. White-topping of roads increased the road level and changed the city's topography completely, leading to flooding of houses and properties. It is a colossal waste of money," Prof Verma said.

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