

Green signal for high-security number plates in Delhi

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New Delhi : The Delhi High Court Friday dismissed a plea by a city-based private company that was seeking stay on the tender process for high-security registration number plates (HSRNP) in the national capital. It also slapped a fine of Rs.8 lakh on the petitioner.

A division bench of Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice Rajiv Shakdher said: "Application is dismissed and the petitioner is directed to pay Rs.7.76 lakh to Delhi government."

"Rs.19,000 shall be given to central government," said the bench in its 42-page judgement.

Seeking to put a stay on the tender process which invited various companies to bid for the HSRNP project, Tonnjes Eastern Security Technologies Pvt Ltd had contended that the tender issued by Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Ltd (DIMTS) had many defects which made the tender illegal.

It had stated that many important features under Rule 50 of Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989 were missing in the tender. In its petition, the company had cited that one of the security features - "permanent consecutive identification number" - was not included in the tender process. Counsel U.U. Lalit, appearing for the company, had argued that the new number plates were a permanent feature of the vehicle and if certain security features were missing, then the entire exercise of implementing the security plates will be futile.

The Delhi-based company had also raised question over the validity of the DIMTS, which is a joint venture of the government of national capital territory of Delhi and the Infrastructure Development Finance Company Ltd in issuing the tender.

The bench observed: "It is bounden duty of the registering authority to ensure compliance with requisite of Rule 50 of Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989." During the course of arguments, Nazmi Waziri, Delhi government's chief standing counsel, contended that DIMTS is implementing the schemes on behalf of the government. He said the lowest bidder has been identified. By this, the party will have to only pay Rs.277, which is very low in comparison to other countries.

In June, the high court's vacation bench of Justice S. Muralidhar and Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw refused to put a stay on the HSRNP tender process and declined to rule in favour of the petition which sought to quash the request for qualification and proposal for procurement of security licence plates.

The HSRNP project was made mandatory throughout India after the Supreme Court April 7 this year upheld it. While states like Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Goa had already implemented the project, Delhi along with Punjab and Uttar Pradesh had not taken any step yet. Acting on the apex court order, DIMTS had issued tender on May 5 for supply of complete set of security licence plates, in terms of the Motor Vehicle (New HSRP) order 2001 and Rule 50 of Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVRs) 1989.

Interestingly, the Supreme Court had earlier refused to stay the tender process for procurement of security licence plates and associated items for HSRNP issued by DIMTS for the national capital region. The HSRP consists of a number of parts: a chromium-based hologram with chakra image, a self-destructive sticker with the engine, chassis number, unique serial number/code etched with laser, the word "India" scripted with a hot-stamping foil and a non-removable and non-reusable snap lock.

As per the existing arrangement, DIMTS will procure the plates from the vendor, emboss each plate with a seven digit code, and mark them with the registration details of the car. The accompanying sticker, to be placed on the windshield, will have the same details and the hologram. Being tamper-proof, HSRPs will help law enforcement agencies track vehicles involved in crimes. Easy identification of traffic offences, stolen vehicles and vehicles involved in crimes like hit and run as well as reduction in car thefts are some other advantages. Unregistered vehicles would not be able to ply on roads once the scheme is implemented.