

GEARING UP

AMC starts registrations for online voting, plans fresh bond issue

Those opting for e-voting will be given a choice to do so either at an e-polling booth or from their homes

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AHMEDABAD

Residents of Ahmedabad will be the first in India to have the option of online voting, when the city's municipal corporation goes to the polls in October.

Voters in some other Gujarat cities such as Jamnagar, Surat, Vadodara, Bhavnagar and Rajkot will also be able to vote through the Internet in elections to their respective municipal corporations.

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, or AMC, has 3.5 million voters spread across 64 wards, with three corporators to be elected from each ward.

Those who opt for e-voting

ipal commissioner I.P. Gautam.

"The state election commission has decided for online voting. It is optional. An option will be taken well in advance. Accordingly we will make the preparations and a password will be given to the registered voters," he said.

Voter registration for elections to the 192 seats has started.

Registration forms will be available at 23 civic centres across the city until 16 August.

"Everything is ready. This only involves the software cost. We already have the systems in place and have lease lines. We are not buying any hardware as we already have them," added Capt. Dilipkumar J. Mahajan, deputy commissioner, AMC.

AMC already has an e-governance system in place, with 2 mbps of leased lines and around 1,300 computers on wide area network. The system provides citizens online access to track the status of their applications and complaints, among

AMC plans to sell bonds worth Rs150 crore for meeting its investments towards programmes such as BRTS

strength of around 30,000.

The corporation plans to expand the city's bus rapid transport system (BRTS), known as Janmarg, which is operated by the special purpose vehicle **Ahmedabad Janmarg Ltd (AJL)**. The scheme will require an investment of Rs1,000 crore.

BRTS currently has 40 buses and covers 30km, catering to 65,000 passengers daily. AJL aims to add another 10km by the first week of September and an additional 40km in second phase by March 2012, requiring an investment of around Rs600

Every six months the BRTS network will expand by 5-10km and by March 2012, we will reach 89km including 4km of elevated corridors," said Gautam.

Of the Rs1,000 crore investment earmarked for BRTS, 35% funding will be provided by the central government, 15% by the state government and the rest by AMC.

The corporation also plans to sell bonds worth Rs150 crore to meet this and other investments. AMC was the first municipal corporation in the country to sell bonds, and raised Rs458 crore through four bond issues. It has already repaid Rs358 crore raised through issuing bonds.

"We are close to issue bonds worth Rs150 crore by March for funding towards the infrastructure projects," Gautam said.

AMC registered an income of Rs2,010.90 crore in the last fiscal year and ended the year with a surplus of Rs827.33 crore. Taxes contribute 29% of the corporation's income. The rest comes from grants from the state gov-

will be given a username and a password and can choose to vote at an e-polling booth or from their homes, said AMC's munic-

other things.

The city has a population of around 5.5 million, spread over a 466 sq. km. AMC has a staff

of 200 crore. It will also order 200 new buses for BRTS, including buses for feeder services.

"We plan to do it in phases.

from grants from the state government for primary education and in lieu of duties, and returns from municipal property.