

Cities may Take a Year More to Become Smart

THE REASON Lockdown resulted in delay of nearly 9-12 months in 20 smart city projects

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New Delhi: The Covid-19 crisis has delivered a setback to the National Smart Cities Mission after disruptions due to the nationwide lockdown have resulted in delay of nearly 9-12 months in 20 smart city projects, said the project heads and district consultants associated with these projects.

While work at most of the 99 smart cities will be affected but completion of a fifth of these locations was due within a year. "Some may even get delayed by 18 months while some might face delay of six to nine months, depending on the

work left. Average delay would be of one year," said Pradeep Misra, CMD, REPL (Rudrabhishek Enterprises), which is part of six smart city projects—Varanasi, Kanpur, Moradabad, Dehradun, Itanagar and Indore.

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PRADEEP MISRA
CMD, REPL

Work at Varanasi, PM Narendra Modi's constituency, is being reviewed closely and the central government has assured a three months extension to contractors. The government has not committed to any extension although it is unlikely to levy a delay penalty on the contrac-

tors. "Everyone is aware of the situation and by June end, we are expecting work to gain momentum. For the delay, if within the contract there is a provision of 'force majeure', the state government can take a call on this," said Kunal Kumar, Joint Secretary and Mission Director (Smart Cities Mission), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

The Government of India launched the Smart Cities Mission in June five years ago and cities were chosen in a phased manner - 20 locations initially while 79 cities were added later. "The lockdown has impacted the supply chain also. We are also expecting delay in the payment. Field activities stopped completely for three months but that would eventually lead to delay of about a year," said Vishal Mehra, VP, iRAM Technologies.

