Divine Dharamsala’ as it has been christened in the proposal was today selected as Smart City by the Union Ministry for Urban Development. It means that the city would receive a grant of Rs 1,000 crore from the union government in the next five years for conversion of Dharamsala to Smart City. Each year the city would receive a grant of Rs 200 crore for development.

The announcement has come as a big achievement for Sudhir Sharma, MLA Dharamsala and the Minister for Urban Development. Sudhir Sharma received a lot of criticism from within the party and opposition for sending the proposal of Dharamsala for Smart City via-a-vis Shimla the state capital.

Sudhir Sharma also converted Dharamsala municipal council into corporation by adding eight adjoining villages in the urban limit to increase the chances of selection under the Smart City scheme. The agenda for inclusion was opposed by elected members of panchayats but was endorsed by the people as the Congress won with thumping majority in Dharamsala corporation elections.

The minister, who was in Delhi today, while talking to The Tribune on phone congratulated the people of Dharamsala for the achievement. He said, “I have talked to Union Minister for Urban Development Venkaiah Naidu and he has assured that Shimla being the summer capital of the country would also be covered under the smart city scheme very soon”.

Sudhir Sharma said that Dharamsala fared 3rd in the list of cities announced by the Union Minister for Urban Development today.

An analysis of the proposal sent by the Dharamsala Municipal Corporation under Smart City scheme, which has been accepted by the Union Ministry for Urban Development, reveals that the city would get 11 multilevel parking places and 10 puzzle parkings that would solve the parking blues of the town especially during peak tourist season.

As per the proposal the city would get bike-sharing stations at Bhagsunag, McLeodganj, Kotwali bazaar and Kachehri adda. The city would get 35 e-buses for local transport and two electrical charging stations would be set up for them. There would 120 bus shelters with public information system, route maps and safe lighting.

There is proposal to create 89.8-km additional foot paths in Dharamsala municipal corporation area, 60 smart kiosks, 100 public convenience centres, LED based lighting and streets varying from nine meter to 12 meter in size.

A proposal has been mooted for creation of rejuvenation centre and funicular at Bhagsunag, tree houses in forest areas for eco tourism, a convention centre and mountaineering paragliding institute at McLeodganj.

**History of Dharamsala**

After the annexation of Kangra region by the British after the Anglo Sikh war, a small contingent of British army was posted at Dharamsala. By 1855 Dharamsala became a small but flourishing hill station and administrative headquarters of Kangra district. Dharamsala had two main areas at that time ---- McLeodganj named after the then Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, David Mcleod and Forsythganj named after a divisional commissioner. Dharamsala was formally recognized as district headquarters of district Kangra that included present districts of Hamirpur, Kullu and Lahaul and Spiti district in 1855. The Tibetan settlement began in Dharamsala in 1959 when the Dalai Lama had to flee Tibet and the Indian government allowed him and his followers to settle in McLeodganj and Upper Dharamsala. The Dalai Lama established Tibetan government in exile at Dharamsala in 1960 after the area attained international repute as “The Little Lhasa in India.” Dharamsala is also considered as a quasi second capital of Himachal Pradesh and there was assembly complex here.

**BJP leaders claim credit**

The BJP leaders claimed credit for Smart City status to Dharamsala. In a press release issued here said that Shanta Kumar the BJP MP from Kangra had worked hard for the project. Kishan Kapoor, former minister, thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shanta Kumar for the project.