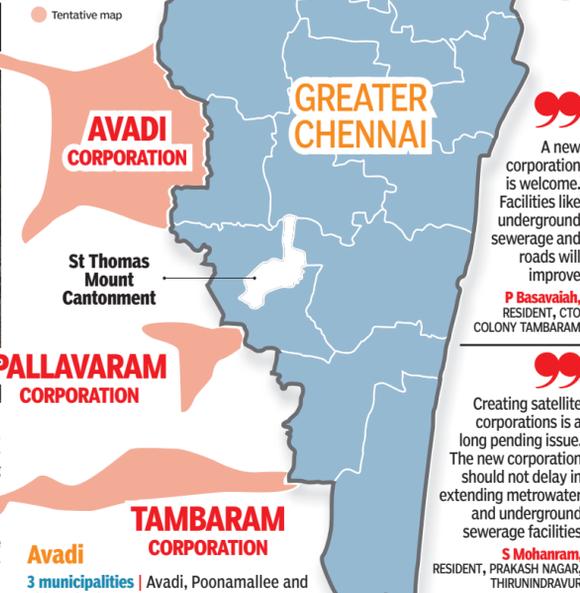


Residents In Neighbourhoods Could Access Long-Due Civic Amenities

New corporations can keep old promises



AT THE CENTRE | Tambaram (in pic), Avadi and Pallavaram are likely to get new corporations

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Open drains, overhead power cables, dark alleys and a handful of staff struggling to solve a multitude of civic complaints could be a thing of the past for residents of Avadi, Pallavaram and Tambaram as the government is planning to create three independent satellite municipal corporations adjoining Chennai, headquartered in these neighbourhoods.

If the proposal gets through, people in places which are yet to see basic amenities could have piped water supply, street lights and motorable roads. For instance, areas falling under the jurisdiction of Avadi Municipality are covered by underground sewerage system. A municipal corporation will ensure people living in villages within its ambit access to it.

Formation of new municipal corporations would mean more funds from various financial institutions in the state government and the Centre. "Municipal corporations get a better share from the government. Loans can be availed for infrastructure-related projects," an official said. Municipal corporations open the window for a slew of services including improved sanitation. Like those living within Greater Chennai Corporation, people in the new corporations may have access to corporation-run hospitals and schools, online services and upgraded technology to resolve civic issues.

Engineering professor at Anna University, said corporations will have better technical knowledge for planning, designing and execution of basic amenities such as water supply, underground sewerage system, liquid and solid waste management. "Development will be regulated as constructions cannot be carried out in violation of building rules. The strength of officers will also increase for addressing issues related to civic amenities, leading to better quality of life," he said. However, he noted people may have to shell out more towards property tax and water tax.

Real estate may see an upswing in the long term. According to Kanchana Krishnan, director, Knight Frank (India) Pvt. Ltd, real estate price in Chennai increases gradually and over a period of time. "Infrastructure and connectivity are two major factors that influence growth of any city. This in turn will result in creation of new residential pockets. So appreciation of land will happen gradually in the medium to long term," she said.

WHAT'S IN STORE

Though residents are enthused about the new proposal, some said authorities should not delay in providing civic amenities. While welcoming the move, S Mohanram, a resident of Thirunindravur, said some areas in Ambattur Municipality are yet to get underground sewerage system and metrowater facilities even after five years of merging with Greater Chennai Corporation. "Such glitches should not happen in the proposed new corporations," he said.

- Avadi CORPORATION**
- 3 municipalities | Avadi, Poonamallee and Thiruverkadu
 - 1 town panchayat | Thirunindravur
 - 11 village panchayats | Including Nemilichery, Nazarethpet, Kattupakkam, Ayapakkam and Vanagaram
 - Wards | 80-100 (proposed)
 - Area | 148 sqkm
 - Population | 6.12 lakh
- Pallavaram CORPORATION**
- 3 municipalities | Anakaputhur, Pallavaram and Pammal
 - 1 village panchayat | Cowl Bazaar

What it means for residents

- Better amenities** | Corporation can plan, design and execute basic amenities like water supply, underground sewerage system, liquid and solid waste management better
- Effective implementation** | More manpower to address civic amenities
- Development** | Regulated and planned development in terms of constructing buildings will take place
- More value** | Real estate prices will appreciate in long term
- Quicker transport** | Corporation can augment transport facilities
- Welfare** | Corporation-run hospitals and schools may come up

Flip side
Property and water tax will increase

A new corporation is welcome. Facilities like underground sewerage and roads will improve

P Basavaiah, RESIDENT, CTO COLONY TAMBARAM

Creating satellite corporations is a long pending issue. The new corporation should not delay in extending metrowater and underground sewerage facilities

S Mohanram, RESIDENT, PRAKASH NAGAR, THIRUNINDRAVUR

No income tax on VRS for staff of sick PSU: HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: In a significant ruling, the Madras high court said the voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) package, equal to salary for 72 months, paid to willing employees of Hindustan Photo Film (HPF) Manufacturing Company Limited in Ooty was in the nature of compensation and no income tax should be deducted. On their part, employees accepting the package shall vacate and hand over possession of the quarters within a month of the date on which they receive the monetary benefits, the court said.

Justice T S Sivagnanam, concurring with the submissions of senior counsel R V.igai, said: "The benefit, which will accrue to the employees, is in the nature of compensation, which is pursuant to a decision taken by the government of India specifically for the employees of HPF. Therefore, the amount would be exempted from income tax in terms of the first proviso under Section 10



DEFUNCT: Hindustan Photo Films in Ooty has been a non-performing unit since 1987

(10B) of the IT Act. Therefore, provisions of Section 10 (10B) of the Income Tax Act, 1961 are attracted and accordingly, the same shall not fall within the definition of income, while computing the total income of concerned employee and income tax cannot be deducted from the severance package paid to the employees of HPF."

Quick to realise the ruling could lead to other public sector undertakings preparing similar severance packages for their employees, counsel for the Centre said the government of India would appeal against it in the Supreme Court.

Once a public sector giant with a monopoly in X-ray films market, HPF became a white elephant since 1987 when salary stagnated and staff had either no or little work. A VRS package was readied by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs which approved a proposal for providing non-plan budgetary support of ₹181.54 crore for voluntary retirement at the 2007 notional pay scale.

The HPF Workers' Welfare Centre termed VRS unfair and illegal. It sought payment of 72 months' salary on 2007 pay scale to each employee, non-deduction of income tax on severance package, special performance allowance, adjustable advance paid to employees and permission for employees to occupy staff quarters till May 1, 2016 at the same rate of rent.

Contentious issues boiled down to 72 months' salary as severance package instead of 60 months, exemption from income tax and no eviction from the quarters.

Record haul as corporation collects ₹650cr property tax

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: The city corporation has netted a record in property tax collection for fiscal 2016-17 with more than ₹650 crore earned so far.

According to revenue department officials of the civic body, the city's 11.70 lakh assesses have contributed a little more than ₹654 crore so far, enabling the corporation to surpass its property tax collection target for the year. The sum collected so far also represents an increase of around ₹70 crore from the last year.

Together with professional tax revenue, which crossed the ₹240-crore mark, the collection is a significant increase in revenue generated by the local body. The professional tax collected so far is an increase of more than

10% from the last year's figures. And with five more days to go before the end of the financial year, officials expect to add on to these numbers by a sizeable margin. "We expect to collect another ₹20 crore property tax. The last two days are frantic usually because assesses turn up in huge numbers to pay their dues," said a corporation official.

Despite a setback during cyclone Vardah, officials said they "worked hard", although there was staff shortage, to meet the target of ₹650 crore set in the local body's budget document. Meanwhile, the central government's move to demonetise high value currencies in November 2016 also came as a blessing in disguise for the corporation.

"In a two-day period with-

in the first week of demonetisation, we collected over ₹25 crore in property tax. We were able to clear a significant portion of the arrears as well within 15 days (of the announcement)," an official said.

Unlike the previous year, revenue officials also steered clear of controversies when attempting to get large sum defaulters to pay up. Last year, officials involved transgender people who played drums or dumped garbage at the doorstep of business establishments or residences to call upon attention to the defaulter. These measures proved unpopular and attracted criticism for the local body. "We served them with notices and judiciously followed up all cases we could," a senior official said.

At 263, TN to send most teams to 36-hr non-stop hackathon

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Tamil Nadu has the highest number of teams shortlisted for the 36-hour non-stop digital programming competition 'Smart India Hackathon 2017' on April 1 and 2.

Of about 2,100 teams shortlisted from across the country, 263 teams are from Tamil Nadu, the highest number of entries, said Balamurugan, All India Council for Technical Education southern region officer.

A total of 7,531 teams from across the country had submitted ideas from more than 2,100 technical institutions of which 1,266 were shortlisted for the competition launched by the AICTE under the ministry of human resource development.

The initiative involved 598 problems posted by 29 government departments for which students had to find practical solutions.

The participating teams will simultaneously compete from across 26 locations in

India to offer digital and sustainable innovative solutions to solve real time challenges faced in the country. The event aims to harness the creativity of bright young minds and is touted to be the biggest hackathon in the world till date.

In Tamil Nadu, 1,990 student teams submitted proposals of which 263 have made it to the grand finale that will be held from different nodal centres across the country. After Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have the next highest number of entries. In Tamil Nadu, the grand finale is being held at Chennai and Coimbatore. While the nodal centre in Coimbatore will be the Srikrishna College of Engineering and Technology, (Nodal Centre for Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change), the Chennai Nodal Centre will be the Sri Sivasubramaniya Nadar (SSS) College of Engineering, Kalavakkam (Nodal Centre for Ministry of Earth Sciences).

Probe found illegal custody, torture

► From P 1

His family of aged father, wife and two children were also summoned to the police station where they were verbally abused.

On May 10, 2010, he was again picked up by the Melur police. The next morning, Nambu was taken to a private hospital in Manapparai from the station. There he was declared dead the same day. Why he was taken to a distant private hospital, instead of rushing him to a government hospital in Madurai became a non-issue.

While the revenue divisional officer gave a finding that there were contusions which might have been caused by police torture, a probe by ADGP-CBCID laid the issue bare. The officer concluded that Nambu had indeed been held in illegal custody and subjected to 'ill-treatment' which led to his hospitalisation and death.

While his family moved the court for ₹10 lakh as compensation, the government said the family court could move an appropriate civil court for a remedy.

Justice Ramesh expressed aston-

ishment when he was informed that the ADGP's report was pending with the government, and that the district administration was still awaiting the government's nod to proceed against the erring officials.

Citing past apex court rulings on custodial torture and compensation package, the judge said the theory of 'last seen with' and 'mutilant liability' would prove police were to blame for Nambu's torture in custody, and death. An experienced driver, Nambu would have been earning at least ₹1 lakh a year, so the demand for ₹10 lakh compensation was fair, he said.

Man held for eloping with schoolgirl

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Three months after a Class XII student went missing, the girl and her boyfriend walked into a police station in Tiruvallur district on Friday, seeking protection. The two feared they would be targeted by the girl's relatives and came to police, who arrested the man for kidnapping the minor. The girl was handed over to her parents.

The girl, student of a government school in Pallipattu, 130 km from Chennai, had disappeared from her house. Unable to find any trace of the girl, the parents lodged a missing complaint in the Pothatturpet police station. On Friday, police discovered that the girl had left on her own accord, eloping with her boyfriend, who was identified as Raghunath, 26, of Bommarajupet in Tiruvallur district.

Second inquiry initiated on same charges

► From P 1

The contempt proceedings were initiated by a government employee called Lawrence against whom a charge memo was issued on July 28, 2008. Since no action was taken till 2014, during which time Lawrence lost his promotion opportunities, he moved the high court for the first time. The court had in December 2014 asked the authorities to pass appropriate orders. Though the charges were not proved at the end of the inquiry in February 2015 and the court directed the authorities to take appropriate decision, a second inquiry was initiated on the same charges in violation of rules. It held him guilty of most of charges. It was then the high court issued statutory contempt notice against Reddy.

FYI: Madras high court not a fan of abbreviations

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Chennai: Abridging words and using acronyms are a social media fad. Whacky abbreviations may be the in-thing on WhatsApp, Twitter and text alerts via SMS. But, the higher judiciary in Tamil Nadu has made it clear it is not a fan of such abbreviations.

Deprecating the practice of subordinate courts using unfamiliar abbreviations in official transactions, the Madras high court has cautioned that no court in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry should use abbreviations in their documents and judgments.

The immediate provocation for a division bench of S Nagesan and Justice M Sathyanarayanan to flay lower courts on this score, was an abbreviation-rich remand extension order passed by a special judge for National Investigation Agency (NIA) cases in Puducherry.

"The special judge had passed



the following order: 'Acc. Pro. R.E. Till 18/07/14,' pointed out the bench, adding: "We find it diffi-

cult to understand this telegraphic abbreviation in the order of the special judge. But R Muthuku-

marasamy, standing counsel for the high court, explained the abbreviations and we also infer that 'Acc' means 'Accused', 'Pro' means "Produced" and 'RE' means "Remand Extended."

The bench further said: "This practice of courts using unfamiliar abbreviations needs to be necessarily deprecated. The orders passed by courts should be understandable by a common man, more particularly the person in whose favour or against the order is passed. We only expect that judicial officers in this state and in the union territory of Puducherry shall not hereinafter use these kinds of abbreviations understandable only to the maker of the abbreviations. They are expected to write orders legibly without using unfamiliar abbreviations."

The case pertaining to six suspects arrested by NIA (Hyderabad), and their remand/extension of remand by the special judge in Puducherry. Their counsel M Radhakrishnan, arguing their

habeas corpus petitions to declare their remand illegal and consequently set them at liberty, said that on three hearing dates - July 18, 2014, August 14, 2014 and September 12, 2014 - the judge did not pass any specific orders but merely extended the detention.

The bench, agreeing with his submissions, said the judge ought to have afforded opportunity to the accused and applied his judicial mind before passing remand orders. Instead, the special judge had merely made an endorsement on these three dates.

Though such endorsements are not in accordance with law, referring to various Supreme Court orders, the bench declined to declare the detention of the accused as illegal saying valid remand orders were passed on their subsequent production before the court.

Therefore, their detention as of now cannot be stated to be illegal and so they cannot be set at liberty, the bench said.

CITY DIGEST

Poll officials meet to discuss procedures

More than 1,600 polling personnel underwent training on Saturday ahead of the RK Nagar byelection scheduled for April 12. Polling officials from Greater Chennai Corporation, including returning officer Praveen Nair, general observer Praveen Prakash, expenditure observer Aparna Villuri, and law and order observer Shiv Kumar Verma, met at Ripon Buildings to discuss poll procedures. The general observer will be at the government guest house in Chepauk between 5pm and 6pm daily for public to meet him.

Chennai airport receives Tamil Nadu Tourism Award: Chennai International Airport on Friday received the Tamil Nadu Tourism Award-2016 in the category of 'Best Tourist Friendly Airport'. This award

was conferred by Madura Welcome, a tourist guide book company, in association with Incredible India, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Airport director G Chandramouli, along with Anil Garg, deputy airport director received the award from film director K Bhagyaraj. This was the second time in a row that Chennai airport received the honour for the 'Best Tourist Friendly Airport'. Twenty-nine international airlines are operating from the airport connecting 15 international cities and eight domestic airlines are operating to 25 domestic cities.

College fest on March 31: Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering will organise its college day on March 31 at 2pm at 'Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Platinum Jubilee Complex' on the college premises. Muthuvel gajapati, vice-president and delivery head (business intelligence) of Infosys, will be the chief guest.

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