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In road-laying mode, civic body pushes safety out on the wayside

Chennai: Laying a smooth road, the city corporation seems to think, is enough. Most of the interior roads it has laid, or is in the process of laying, ahead of the election do not have the speed-breakers to ensure that they are safe.

The new roads, say experts, encourage motorists, particularly two-wheeler riders, to zip across at high speeds, putting other road-users at risk.

Arun Ramasamy should know. The 41-year-old was recently proceeding serenely on a glass-smooth road to Madipakkam, to visit a friend, when a biker smashed into his two-wheeler at an intersection.

"There was a blind turn ahead and the biker, without slowing down, rode straight into me," said Ramasamy, now confined home with a ligament tear and fractures on the right leg.

Earlier, many interior roads, including in Ram Nagar where Ramasamy was hit, had stony surfaces that ensured vehicles did not move fast. "Now every intersection is a possible accident-zone," Ramasamy said.

Urban planners say simply black-topping roads is not enough. Corporation engineers need to be educated on the nuances of road engineering. Interior roads require several 'traffic calming' measures. "Some speed-breakers need to be introduced to slow down traffic," said former professor of urban engineering at Anna University K P Subramanian.

"Roads should have wider footpaths that, with speed-breakers, will ensure that motorists do not speed or are discouraged from doing so," Subramanian said.

"Corporation engineers need to move away from the school of thought that a road belongs only to motorists. Roads should be shared among pedestrians and cyclists as well," he added.