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Polls advance civic budget to Feb.

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Jan. 19: Chennai corporation's budget session has been advanced due to Assembly elections. Mayor M. Subramanian, who chaired a budget review meeting at Ripon Buildings on Wednesday, said the civic budget would be tabled by February 15.

The corporation council, for the last four years, has neither revised the tax nor introduced a new tax component.

Addressing reporters, the mayor said last year the corporation budget announced 122 new schemes; of this, more than 100 welfare schemes have been implemented. The remaining announcements will be implemented before the middle of February. The officials have been instructed to speed up the pending proposals and the overall performance of the corporation departments was assessed.

In two days, a high-level meeting will be held to discuss new ideas regarding the ensuing budget, and, subsequently, an

all-party meeting will also be called, he said.

When asked whether the new budget will focus on infrastructure, Mr Subramanian said several major projects like construction of new flyovers and micro and macro drain works were under way, and the corporation will focus more on completing these projects and thrust will be given to health and education sectors.

Corporation sources opined that with implementing the sixth pay commission recommendations and the expenditure of the civic body shooting up due to new schemes announced in the previous budgets, the pressure is high on the revenue department to ensure that the financial burden of the corporation is met through its annual tax collection.

However, as usual, the budget will focus on health and education sectors and with elections round the corner, the civic body is all set to present a tax-free budget, sources added. Corporation commissioner D. Karthikeyan, deputy commissioners Anu George, Darez Ahamed and M. Balaji, along with senior engineers took part in the budget review meeting.

