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Chennai Corporation blunder: Work done before tender

Julie Mariappan, TNN 3 November 2009, 06:36am IST

CHENNAI: The Chennai Corporation does not appear to have learnt any lesson from its tendering misadventures. Even as tenders for road widening and improvement of footpaths on Gandhi-Irwin Road were to be finalised on Friday last, TOI has found that part of the work was completed weeks earlier.

On October 17, The Times Of India had exposed irregularities in the demolition of the Communicable Diseases Hospital, Tondiarpet, ahead of the finalization of tenders. The report rocked the council meet on Thursday last, with mayor M Subramanian offering to quit if his role in the scam was established.

The two incidents point to a contractor-official nexus that allows irregularities. While officials struggle to explain that the works were inadvertently taken up under the annual maintenance contract, insiders say that the nexus makes sure that the preferred contractor gets to do the job for a profitable estimate, while other applicants are often bought over. Essentially, the tenders that follow are rigged.

The Nungambakkam zonal office floated tenders last week for works for 290 metres on Gandhi-Irwin Road in two parts — one covering Whannels Road and Kennet Lane and the other Kennet Lane and Egmore MTC bus stop. However, a portion of the work in the second package was carried out before tenders were finalised.

The cost of the work, including removal of a couple of trees and pillar boxes and widening of the road, was estimated at Rs 9.03 lakh. As many as 15 contractors purchased the tender forms from Ripon Buildings after paying Rs 1,688 each. “Officials told us not to participate in the tendering process as the job has already been completed,” said a contractor. When the tenders were to be finalized on Friday last, there

were only two bids each for the two packages.