The Times of India 26.03.2017

Record haul as corporation collects 650 crore property tax

CHENNAI: With over Rs 650 crore earned so far, Greater Chennai Corporation has netted a record total in property tax collection for the fiscal 2016-17.

According to revenue department officials of the civic body, the city's 11.70 lakh assessees have contributed a little over Rs 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 Rs 70 crore from the last year.

Together with professional tax revenue, which crossed the Rs 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 over 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 Rs 20-25 crore property tax. The last two days are frantic usually because assessees turn up in huge numbers to pay their dues," said an

official.

Despite a setback during cyclone Vardah, officials said they "worked hard", although there was staff shortage, to meet the target of Rs 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 within the first week of demonetisation, we collected over Rs 25 crore 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 or residence 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.