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Six years on, Coimbatore still wrestles with JNNURM

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As the Coimbatore Corporation Mayor and Commissioner take off to New Delhi to attend a conference on the eve of the sixth year of the implementation of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, things on the ground are not all that good.

Almost all the projects the Corporation is implementing with funds under the Central Government-funded scheme remain incomplete even after pushing the deadline more than once. Pilloor Phase II and underground drainage projects are a case in point.

A study conducted by the citizens' technical committee on JNNURM identifies the disconnects between city development plan and the urban local body, and the city development plan and the detailed project report as some of the problems in the implementation of the projects.

This cannot be truer for Coimbatore, says S. Baskar, a

member of the citizens' technical advisory committee, which oversees implementation of JNNURM projects.

“The city development plan prepared for Coimbatore does not entirely reflect its needs. This is because it has been prepared by consultant hired for the purpose with very minimum or no involvement of the stakeholders, the city's residents.”

“The same charge holds good for the city development plan – detailed project report disconnect as well.”

JNNURM, as the Central Government envisaged six years ago, is a policy-driven, outcome-focussed, mission-mode programme with reforms as an additional objective.

This means that the projects, programmes the Corporation design should confirm to the Government policy – national policy on urban transport, national policy on drinking water, etc.

For this to happen, the Corporation has to have a policy for Coimbatore, Mr. Baskar says and asks, “Is there such a policy?”

Compared to many JNNURM cities, Coimbatore fares rather poorly. In the last five years, the city has implemented only five projects worth Rs. 873 crore, says the citizens' technical committee report.

Ahmedabad has executed 25 projects worth Rs. 2,316 crore, Pune 20 projects worth Rs. 3,420 crore, Surat 25 projects worth Rs. 1,818 crore and Mysore eight projects worth Rs. 1,084 crore.

For Coimbatore Corporation to make mends, implement the projects in time and make a fresh start, he suggests that it should appoint the right people like city planners, project management experts, and have an open, transparent administration.