

The Times of India 15.02.2013

Taxes in mind, civic body says sorry for underground drainage work mess

COIMBATORE: Civic officials have finally woken up to the fact that the slow-mowing [underground drainage work](#) (UGD) has been a major headache for residents. Corporation vehicles, usually used to relay messages regarding tax payment, have been deployed on city roads to tell residents that the civic body regrets the mess on the city roads.

So, we have the spectacle of civic officials addressing citizens through loudspeakers fitted on corporation vehicles, mainly autorickshaws, that UGD work is in progress and that the civic body regrets the inconvenience caused to residents. "Please be careful while using roads where the work is being carried out," the message concludes.

This reach-out initiative started only a few days ago. So, what is it that prompted civic officials to become courteous to city residents?

"We are playing these announcements to acknowledge the co-operation of the city residents to our workers. We are taking all measures to ensure that the (UGD) work gets completed at the earliest," said S Sivarasu, commissioner (in

charge), Coimbatore Municipal Corporation. At the moment there are three vehicles running in west zone, two in north zone and one each in central, south and east zone offices.

Drivers have been given flash drives with pre-recorded announcements that are played when they ply on the city streets. The corporation officials also added that sorry-for-the-inconvenience boards will also be erected at UGD worksites across the city. "It is a basic sign of courtesy to the residents from our side. The contractors have to erect these signboards and we will ask them to do so in the coming days," Sivarasu added.

However, sources in the corporation told TOI that the special UGD messages were part of the corporation's attempt to reach out to residents ahead of the drive to mop up taxes. The corporation has set a minimum target of 90% tax collection this year with a set target of Rs 103.5 crore. As of now, the civic body has collected over Rs 67 crore from the residents. Last year, [Coimbatore Municipal Corporation](#) collected 87% of the taxes due, which was the highest among urban local bodies in Tamil Nadu.

The UGD work began as part of the first phase of JnNURM projects in the city. The works are being carried out in about 340 kms in the city. Though maintenance works have been carried out in about 184 km where the pipes have been laid and chambers constructed, the corporation is facing a funds crunch and has sought additional resources to the tune of Rs 86 crore from the state government to complete the work.

Residents agree that a proper underground drainage network is a necessity for a bustling city like Coimbatore but they resent the inconvenience on the city streets as they have been dug up for laying the pipelines. Apart from incidents of pedestrians and two wheeler riders falling into pits, two labourers digging the trenches were buried alive near Suguna Nagar in Kavundampalayam on March 27, 2012.