

**The Hindu** 17.08.2013

## 511 religious structures encroaching on city roads

**Shastry V. Mallady**

Irrigation channel cleared of encroachments near  
Moondrumavadi

Civic authorities are in touch with local groups to ensure the peaceful removal of roadside temples and mosques identified among 511 "religious structures" as encroachments.

The Town Planning Wing of the Madurai Corporation undertook a survey of encroachments by religious structures and submitted its report to Mayor V.V. Rajan Chellappa and Commissioner R. Nanthagopal.

Official sources said on Friday that most of the religious structures that had encroached on Corporation land were temples and mosques.

“Though people are aware of the inconvenience posed by the roadside temple or mosque, when we take steps to remove them they resist the move. Since they are places of worship, we are compelled to go slow on this sensitive issue,” an official said.

However, a few days back, the Town Planning Wing drew up an action plan to get rid of the remove the religious structures.

"Most of the roadside temples are found in south and east zones. In consultation with the district administration, we have decided to remove 10 religious structures a week, especially in narrow lanes with commercial establishments. The idea is to remove those religious structures that hinder traffic flow," officials said.

The civic authorities plan to remove them without hurting the religious sentiments of people by seeking their cooperation in the eviction drive. "They can remove the idol and keep it elsewhere without occupying public space," an engineer said.

Chief Town Planning Officer M. Rakkappan said that his team

would act as per the instructions of the Mayor and Commissioner.

## Eviction drive

Meanwhile, the Public Works Department carried out a large-scale eviction drive on the Moondrumavadi-Iyer Bungalow Road on Friday morning to clear illegal constructions that prevented water flow in an irrigation channel, which reduced carriage space.

M.Thiyagarajan, Irrigation Inspector-Madurai North, said the illegal constructions affected water supply in the Tallakulam-Pudukulam channel.

“The PWD razed 90 houses after the High Court gave us permission to remove encroachments. Now the road can be widened,” he added.