

"Row over outsourcing leaves Ambattur in a mess"

CHENNAI THE HINDU
MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021

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Workers' protest over fear of job loss forced the GCC to drop its plan to engage a private party in removing garbage

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CHENNAI

The vast open space at the intersection of Justice Rathnavel Pandian Road and Oori Road in Mogappair East, which has become a dump, is symptomatic of the issues in conservancy operations across Ambattur zone of the Greater Chennai Corporation.

Not only the residents, but the conservancy workers also dump garbage on this spot, which is surrounded by houses, a hospital, eateries and shops. The stink from garbage permeates the area. K. Meyyappan, a resident of the locality, said the pro-



An eyesore: An open space in Mogappair East at the intersection of Oori Street and Rathnavel Pandian Road has turned into a dump. **PH: PICHAI**

CITY MATTERS

blem persisted despite bringing it to the notice of the Corporation officials several times. "It is unhygienic, causing health issues. It has led to an increase in rat menace as well in the area," he said.

Businesses hit

A person running a restaurant in the locality said that he spends a full bottle of insect repellent every day to keep away the flies as odour keeps customers away.

Ambattur has a unique arrangement of conservancy operations. The zone was supposed to be one of the four — the other three being Tiruvotiyur, Manali and Madhavaram — in which conservancy work was to be outsourced to the Ramky Group earlier this year.

Even as the Ramky Group was installing garbage bins in the zone, the plan was

shelved after fierce protest by conservancy workers engaged under the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), who feared loss of job. Subsequently, Ramky Group took over the work in Tiruvotiyur, Manali and Madhavaram zones and just three of the fifteen wards in Ambattur zone.

Residents and conservancy workers alleged that as the garbage clearance in the zone was supposed to be outsourced, the GCC did not invest adequately in conservancy operations. While the GCC had begun addressing a number of these issues now, the workers and residents said that a lot more had to be done to improve the situation.

Not enough vehicles

A few key concerns raised were inadequate number of bins, tricycles, battery operated vehicles and compactor vehicles, all of which led to overflowing garbage bins

and dumping of garbage in open spaces.

A conservancy worker said the tricycle she was using was more than 10 years old. "There are fewer garbage bins. I have to push the tricycle for long distances to dump the garbage in the bins," she said. The workers were not even given adequate safety gear. "Workers in many other zones received rain coats during the recent rain. We had to work without them," she said.

Nearly 1,500 NULM conservancy workers were engaged by the GCC in Ambattur Zone, whose contract had been extended till April 2022 following their protest. With the GCC not investing adequately, the workers fear that they would eventually be terminated and work would be outsourced to a private contractor.

Data provided by the GCC showed that there were 16 compactor vehicles deployed in the zone to remove

roughly 420 tonnes of solid waste daily. Compared to other zones, the number of compactor vehicles was low. For instance, Thiru Vi Ka Nagar zone, which generated 426 tonnes of waste, had 22 compactor vehicles and Anna Nagar had 33 compactors for 501 tonnes of waste generated daily.

Admitting that rain had worsened some of the problems, a top official said that several steps were being taken to improve the situation. He said that more bins had been allocated to the zone apart from deploying 100 new battery-operated vehicles.

Eateries blamed

He said that a key problem was smaller eateries dumping their waste in bins past midnight, soon after the compactor vehicles cleared the garbage. "Now, we have told them that our battery operated vehicles or tricycle operators will collect it from

Outsourcing was never a smooth affair

CEX-ONYX bagged the first contract

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

An Ambattur zone of the Greater Chennai Corporation struggles with conservancy work with partial outsourcing of the work to a private contractor, a recollection of the city's history of outsourcing conservancy work showed that the exercise often faced trouble.

Outsourcing started in 2000, when the then Ice House, Kodambakkam and Mylapore zones were given to CEX-ONYX. After their contract was over, Neel Metal Farnalca was engaged to do conservancy work in Ice House, Kodambakkam, Adyar and Pullantheppu zones. However, their contract was terminated due to poor performance.

In 2012, Chennai Municipal Solid Waste Pvt. Ltd. owned by the Ramky Group, was engaged for conservancy operations in Teynampet, Kodambakkam and Adyar

zones. The contract, which lasted till 2020, drew several complaints of inefficiency. In October, Urbaniser Sumeet, a joint venture between Spain-headquartered Urbaniser and India's Sumeet Group, took the contract for seven zones — Teynampet, Kodambakkam, Valasaravakkam, Alandur, Adyar, Perungudi, and Sholinganallur. The contract was one of the largest ever globally for Urbaniser.

The Ramky Group, through a separate company, now handles the conservancy operations in Tiruvotiyur, Manali and Madhavaram zones, apart from three wards in Ambattur zone. The GCC carries out the conservancy work in the remaining areas of Ambattur zone and the four remaining zones of Tondiarpet, Royapuram, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Nagar, and Anna Nagar.

them at night. We have asked them to keep the waste segregated," he said.

The official said that a drive had been initiated to repair all the partially damaged bins and tricycles with in the next 10 days.

Pointing out that the recent rains resulted in the

generation of a lot of garden waste, he said these have been cleared.

The mass cleaning drive planned from Monday till Friday would help in clearing all the accumulated garbage and in maintaining the zone cleaner going forward, the officials said.

News Item in The Hindu newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 20th December 2021

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Businesses hit

A person running a restaurant in the locality said that he spends a full bottle of insect repellent every day to keep away the flies as odour keeps customers away. Ambattur has a unique arrangement of conservancy operations. The zone was supposed to be one of the four — the other three being Tiruvottiyur, Manali and Madhavaram — in which conservancy work was to be outsourced to the Ramky Group earlier this year. Even as the Ramky Group was installing garbage bins in the zone, the plan was shelved after fierce protest by conservancy workers engaged under the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), who feared loss of jobs. Subsequently, Ramky Group took over the work in Tiruvottiyur, Manali and Madhavaram zones and just three of the fifteen wards in Ambattur Zone. Residents and conservancy workers alleged that as the garbage clearance in the zone was supposed to be outsourced, the GCC did not invest adequately in conservancy operations. While the GCC had begun addressing a number of these issues now, the workers and residents said that a lot more had to be done to improve the situation.

Not enough vehicles

A few key concerns raised were inadequate number of bins, tricycles, battery operated vehicles and compactor vehicles, all of which led to overflowing garbage bins and dumping of garbage in open spaces. A conservancy worker said the tricycle she was using was more than 10

years old. “There are fewer garbage bins. I have to push the tricycle for long distances to dump the garbage in the bins,” she said. The workers were not even given adequate safety gear. “Workers in many other zones received rain coats during the recent rain. We had to work without them,” she said. Nearly 1,500 NULM conservancy workers were engaged by the GCC in Ambattur Zone, whose contract had been extended till April 2022 following their protest. With the GCC not investing adequately, the workers fear that they would eventually be terminated and work would be outsourced to a private contractor.

Data provided by the GCC showed that there were 16 compactor vehicles deployed in the zone to remove roughly 420 tonnes of solid waste daily. Compared to other zones, the number of compactor vehicles was low. For instance, Thiru Vi Ka Nagar zone, which generated 426 tonnes of waste, had 22 compactor vehicles and Anna Nagar had 33 compactors for 501 tonnes of waste generated daily. Admitting that rain had worsened some of the problems, a top official said that several steps were being taken to improve the situation. He said that more bins had been allocated to the zone apart from deploying 100 new battery-operated vehicles.

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He said that a key problem was smaller eateries dumping their waste in bins past midnight, soon after the compactor vehicles cleared the garbage. “Now, we have told them that our battery operated vehicles or tricycle operators will collect it from them at night. We have asked them to keep the waste segregated,” he said. The official said that a drive had been initiated to repair all the partially damaged bins and tricycles within the next 10 days. Pointing out that the recent rains resulted in the generation of a lot of garden waste, he said these have been cleared. The mass cleaning drive planned from Monday till Friday would help in clearing all the accumulated garbage and in maintaining the zone cleaner going forward, the officials said.