

# Ward Development Funds in Cold Storage: Study

Fund utilisation by Chennai Corprn councillors down though allocation went up in last 4 years

by C Shivakumar

**Chennai:** The utilisation of ward development fund by councillors in Chennai Corporation has dwindled with the rise in allocation of funds during the last four years.

The Transparent Chennai study pointed out that while there has been a significant rise in allocation of ward development fund from ₹7 lakh in 2007-08 to ₹15 lakh in 2008-09, ₹25 lakh in 2009-10 and ₹30 lakh now, the utilisation of the funds decreased significantly with each increase.

Interestingly, in 2007-08 when the allocation was ₹7 lakh, 70 per cent of funds were utilised by the council-

lors. However, in 2008-09 when it was raised to ₹15 lakh, there was a fall in utilisation, as only 63.50 per cent of funds were used. Similarly in 2009-10, when the fund was raised to ₹25 lakh, a council-

### RISE AND FALL

The Transparent Chennai study says that while fund allocation rose from ₹7 lakh in 2007-08 to ₹15 lakh in 2008-09 and from ₹25 lakh in 2009-10 to the present ₹30 lakh, the utilisation of funds decreased significantly with each increase.

lor on an average used only 40.60 per cent of funds.

Surprisingly, the Mayor's Special Development Fund also received a sharp increase in allocation from ₹50 lakh

in 2007-08 to ₹2 crore in 2009-10. But spending from the fund has been dismal, and steadily decreasing, both as a percentage of the total and in actuals.

In 2009-10, only a mere 4.9 per cent of the funds were spent. Though the numbers are small relative to the total city budget, the Mayor could have done a better job of spending it.

The systematic under-utilisation of funds by both the councillors and the mayor suggests that either a concerted effort is needed to educate elected representatives and residents about this money, or that the process for spending the money needs to be made simpler.

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**Chennai:** Fifty-five councillors, including 38 from the DMK, did not pose any question during Corporation Council meetings from January 2007 to May 2011.

According to a study by Transparent Chennai, a total of 458 questions were asked in Council meetings and councillors D Subhash Chandra Bose of the DMK asked the most questions (18) followed by P L Kalyani (Congress), Usha (DMDK), and S Umassavai (BSP) who posed 17 queries each. S Venkatesan (PMK) asked 16 questions.

The councillors from the parties with the smallest representation asked the largest average number of questions, suggesting that perhaps the allocation of questions by party skews the question hour in favour of

## '55 Councillors Kept Mum at Corpn Council Meetings'

extremely small parties, the study said.

The high number of questions from parties with just one to three members in the Council also allays fears that electing an independent or a non-ruling party councillor will decrease your ward's voice in the Council, at least

problems, the last speakers were almost always the PMK leader M Jayaraman, Opposition leader Saidevi P Ravi and the ruling party leader N Ramalingam, the study observed.

In the 58 meetings that took place from January 2007 to May 2011, 844 speeches were made by the councillors. M Jayaraman spoke 40 times; Saidevi P Ravi 48 times and N Ramalingam spoke 47 times. V Prabu of the BSP has spoken the most with 36 speeches followed by P Devi of CPM with 33 speeches.

While S V Sekhar spoke four times and V S Babu spoke twice, 28 councillors did not speak. Of these councillors, 25 were from the DMK, two from the PMK and one from DMDK.

The data was culled manually from the official reports on Council proceedings.

### COUNCILLORS FROM THE PARTIES WITH SMALLEST REPRESENTATION ASKED THE LARGEST AVERAGE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS

in the matter of questions," the study added.

Similarly, at the Council meeting, after the question hour where councillors get a chance to make speeches about matters regarding their ward and city-related

### WARD DEVELOPMENT FUND

Year	Allocation	Expenditure	% used	Allocation per councillor
2007-08	₹1.065 lakh	₹7,60.28 lakh	70%	₹7 lakh
2008-09	₹2.325 lakh	₹1,478.36 lakh	63.50%	₹15 lakh
2009-10	₹3.875 lakh	₹1,578.85 lakh	40.60%	₹25 lakh

### MAYOR'S SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Year	Allocation	Expenditure	% used
2007-08	₹50 lakh	₹18.36 lakh	36.72%
2008-09	₹50 lakh	₹12.62 lakh	25.24%
2009-10	₹200 lakh	₹9.74 lakh	4.86%



SOURCE: TRANSPARENT CHENNAI