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Budget ignores water crisis and mosquito menace

MADURAI: Though the city faces acute water shortages which may worsen in summer, the Madurai civic corporation failed to set aside any funds to identify new water sources or improve water supply in its budget. Similarly, the budget is silent on measures to tackle the raging mosquito menace.

CPM councillor M Chellam pointed out that there are no provisions for drinking water facilities in the budget. "In many places in the city, the drinking water is running on the streets due to old pipe lines. There should be more funds on improving the drinking water supply to the city," she stressed.

After the monsoons failed in the region and with drought-like conditions prevailing, the prospects of drinking water crisis are real. There were several protests and road picketing in many places in the city over inadequate water supply. Without proper drinking water supply, the extended areas are reeling under severe drinking water crisis.

Strangely, the corporation has earmarked only Rs 33.80 crore as water supply expenditure under the [Integrated Urban Development Mission](#),

while another Rs 90 lakh is allotted for maintenance of pipe lines.

DMK floor leader, M L Raj strongly criticised the city corporation for failing to address the water crisis come out with water projects on drinking water issues. "Drinking water is the need of the hour with drought conditions looming and without any solid projects on that, how the budget could be effective? The budget is old wine in new bottle without any substance in it," he charged.

Raj also came down heavily on the AIADMK-ruled corporation for not distributing the budget copies ahead of the session.

However, at the budget meeting the AIADMK councillors pinned hopes on luck rather than on any concrete measures to address the water issue in the city seem to be least bothered about the drought condition. They expressed that the rain gods will favour their administration. P Kasiraman, AIADMK councillor from ward 62, told the council not to be afraid of the drinking water situation. "Rains will be certain during Amma's reign," he said cheerfully.

The budget also disappointed to provide funds for mosquito-control measures. K Rajapandian, AIADMK's Zone 1 chairman, said the corporation should have set aside sizeable funds for this is, as the problem is severe within the city limits. "The corporation had sanctioned Rs 1.2 crore last year for mosquito control but ended up spending much higher. Only fogging is used to control it at present and it appears futile as

mosquito menace keeps increasing," he pointed out.

Chellam also seconded his opinion saying that the fogging machines available with corporation will not be sufficient and corporation should spend more on mosquito control, she stressed.

When contacted, corporation commissioner R Nanthagopal said that there is no need to identify any new drinking water source since the present sources like Vaigai Reservoir and drinking water schemes are sufficient. "The only concern is the rain and we can manage with the present storage till monsoon starts," he said. On mosquito control, he commented that the corporation had set aside sufficient funds under health expenditure and they are going to form an entomologists' team at the zonal level to contain the problem.