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Corporation gives a 'status quo' budget bereft of any fresh ideas

Special Correspondent

Most of the proposals figured in last year's budget

Replete with customary repetitions of several pending project proposals, some of them hanging fire for more than a decade, the Tiruchi City Corporation has failed to come up with a road map for implementing them in its budget 2013-14.

The civic body has not made any substantial financial allocation or identified funding sources for any projects which have been repeated in this year's budget.

A classic example is the proposal on establishing an integrated bus stand in the city.

Even after a decade since the proposal was mooted, the corporation is yet to zero in on a site for the bus stand.

The lack of clarity or direction is apparent as the Budget merely states that steps are being taken to identify a site for the integrated bus stand in view of the heavy congestion at the central bus stand. The AIADMK dispensation at the council is apparently waiting for a direction from the State government.

Similarly, the civic body has not been able to identify a site for the bus stand proposed in Srirangam.

The proposal was announced in the last Budget and the corporation had even made an allocation of Rs. 9 crore then. No financial allocation, not even a token sum, has been earmarked for both proposals in the budget 2013-14.

The civic body's move to revive the proposal on establishing a water theme park, originally mooted by the former Mayor Sarubala R. Tondaiman of the Congress nearly 10 years ago, is bound to be viewed with scepticism. The corporation has proposed the park on a 15-acre site at Panchapur, where it

has a massive sewage treatment facility. Here again no financial commitment has been made.

Civic activists have been critical of the move. N. Ramakrishnan, coordinator, Welfare Organisations of Tiruchi, questions the suitability of the site as Panchapur is already facing heavy pollution owing to the sewage farm.

The Cauvery bank is ideally suited for a theme park, he says.

A section of the former councillors question the viability of the project. The initiative had failed to take off despite Ms. Tondaiman's attempts during her two successive tenures, they point out.

Another proposal announced last year that has failed to take off so far is a move to build multi-level parking lot at Gandhi Market. The existing toilet complex, two-wheeler parking lot, and some of the retail and wholesale shops near the Diamond Jubilee building in front of the Gandhi Market was planned to be demolished to build the new complex at an investment of Rs. 15 crore. It would house a food court, cloak room, indoor

sports amenities, modern toilet, and a multi-storey parking lot. But now the corporation says it will seek government assistance for building the complex.

Proposals on construction of a commercial complex at Thillai Nagar market is an old proposal languishing for want of capital.

The corporation has now proposed a new complex near the truck parking lot on Madurai Road this year, without making any financial commitment.

A waste-to-power project, shifting of the wholesale sections of the Gandhi Market, construction of an office-cum-commercial complex at Sengulam Colony and establishment of a modern fish market at Puthur have all found mention in one or more budgets over the past few years but have not seen the light of the day so far.