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Corporation may double spending on health

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CHENNAI: Keeping its priorities on target year after year, the oldest civic body in the country, Chennai Corporation, is all set to table another budget sans any new taxes, focussing mainly on health and education sectors.

According to sources, the annual budget for 2010-11, likely to be tabled during the third week of March, is expected to double allocations in the education and health segments to maintain momentum before the Assembly elections due in May 2011.

In last year's budget, Rs 5 crore was allocated for education development and Rs 1 crore for maintaining health priorities.

Besides, allocation in the infrastructure sector is likely to stay around Rs 100 crore this year. The allocation for the

sector stood at Rs 175 crore last year and the high allocation according to officials was due to construction of several cement roads in North Chennai.

Though the proposed budget is likely to be without any new attractive schemes due to the corporation's burgeoning day-to-day expenditure, the civic body may announce its plan to build a modern communicable diseases hospital for south Chennai to cater to lakhs of people now dependent on the only CDH located in Tondiarpet.

The proposed facility would come up at suburban Madambakkam where the civic body has a vast stretch of land.

Since the Assembly elections are due in May 2011, the civic body's new budget is unlikely to introduce any new tax or enhance the existing property tax structure in the next financial year.

According to sources, the civic body's property tax collection target for 2009-10 is very much achievable.

Till January, its Revenue Department had collected Rs 275 crore and by March-end, they hope to cross the target of Rs 350 crore.

While the Corporation's revenue is increasing over the years, senior officials say that it has reached the saturation and the civic body's increased expenditure would not allow them to divest funds for more developmental schemes.