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## User charges on property tax assesses for garbage clearance

### Madurai Corporation is the latest urban local body to take up the idea

The Madurai Corporation is the latest urban local body to embrace the idea of levying user charges on certain sections of property tax assesses for garbage clearance.

Madurai is, however, not a solitary case. Some other urban local bodies have been levying the user charges.

Recently, Avadi has decided to introduce the levy, where the monthly charges vary from Rs. 200 to Rs. 2,000. An official points out that Sembakkam municipality is netting a monthly revenue of Rs. 3.5 lakh to Rs. 4 lakh.

Asked whether it is not part of the core functions of any local body to collect garbage, the officials reply that ideally, a local body should devote greater attention to the functions of

disposal and treatment of waste than that of collection.

But, in reality, it is the other way round. Manpower shortage and increasing transportation cost are stretching the resources of the local bodies beyond the manageable level.

In Madurai, the quantity of waste was around 300 tonnes to 400 tonnes a day three years ago. After its limits have been enlarged, it is now around 700 tonnes to 800 tonnes.

The present daily generation of solid waste by 135 urban local bodies (other than Chennai) is about 7,300 tonnes. In Chennai, it is 5,000 tonnes. (A senior official of the Chennai Corporation says no such charge is made).

The focus of the present drive is on “bulk generators of waste” such as shopping complexes, hotels, restaurants and hospitals. Generally, domestic category of property tax assesses is not covered.

The levy can result in waste reduction too, the officials add.

N. Jegatheesan, president of the Tamil Nadu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TNCI), who terms the proposed charges of the Madurai Corporation unfair, says that if the local bodies focus on bulk generators, there will not be any problem.

An official responds that the move is only in the initial stages and the final decision will be taken only after holding a public hearing and taking an approval of the government.