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Tax evaders earn garbage dump, pay up 90% of dues

Padmini Sivarajah | TNN | Updated: Mar 20, 2017, 07.25 AM IST



Representative image

MADURAI: The Ramanathapuram municipality has successfully collected its long pending tax dues from about 20 people by resorting to a novel method - keeping overflowing [garbage dumps](#)

in front of the houses or shops of those evading tax dues. What has apparently helped the municipality have its way is the absence of an elected council whose members usually intervene for the

tax evaders

, mostly affluent people.

The authorities of this [first-grade municipality](#) with a population of 61, 440 spread over 6.33 sqkm across 33 wards had managed to collect '1.40 crore out of the '1.50 crore tax dues pending for the past five years. The town has a literacy rate of 93.07%. Municipality sources said that the outstanding dues worked out to about '1.5 crores mainly by way of property tax pending for about five years and other taxes for seven years.

Those who paid their taxes on time were mostly the economically weaker sections and they very rarely received notices. On the other hand, some affluent people who had some political clout had been evading tax payment for the past five years.

"We kept on issuing notices, but they were ignored. If we sent them notices warning of penal action, we would get phone calls from the chairman or the councillors asking us to refrain from further action," the sources said. Shantha (named changed) of [Keeraikara Street](#) in the municipality said that she had at first felt angry when the overflowing bin suddenly appeared in their street, but when workers told her that it was to collect long-pending dues she had agreed to put up with it.

Municipality commissioner A [Abdul Rashid](#) assumed office in September 2016 and was presented with a long files of

pending dues. With the period of the council coming to an end the very next month, it was left to the commissioner, who also became the municipality's special officer, to collect the dues. Notices were issued and when there was no sign of the pending dues filling the coffers, the municipality resorted to placing garbage bins which were not emptied regularly.

"The bigwigs came and shouted at us and told us to remove it immediately. But they were politely informed that they would have to pay the dues if the bins had to be emptied. After some time, they started paying up," said a municipality worker. "The absence of a council and its members is one reason why collecting the dues has become easy, because their presence had only helped these evaders for the past five years," he said.

When contacted, commissioner Rashid said that he was confident of collecting 98% of the tax dues by the March 31 deadline. Till date '1.40 crore out of the pending '1.50 crore has been collected by the municipality.