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## Despite court ban, manual cleaning of drains still on

As the world celebrates May Day seeking more rights for the working class, corporation workers in the city were spending the day in manholes, forced to manually remove blocks caused by plastic bags and garbage.

Despite stringent rules that no solid waste should be pushed down the drains, poor official implementation and the careless attitude of the public has led to a situation where even jet rodding machines are unable to clean the sewage blocks.

The State government has banned manual cleaning of drainages, following a Supreme Court direction. Subsequently, the city corporation purchased four jet rodders to stop manual cleaning of Under Ground Drainages (UGD). Though officials claim that these jet rodders alone are put to use in clearing blocks in drainages, manual cleaning has become the order of the day, due to the poor solid waste management sense of residents.

On an average, the sewage network in the city pumps about 56 million litres discharge to treatment plants at Panchapur. However, due to clogging in sewage lines, most of the days, the city roads especially, commercial hubs like the Central Bus Stand area and the Chathiram bus stand, sewage flows on the road posing health hazards for residents.

The City Corporation instructed all the hotels, commercial complexes and apartments in the city to have diaphragm chambers to filter silt, sanitary napkins, left over food items and other solid wastes, which cause frequent blocks in the underground drainage lines. However, only a few commercial establishments have complied to the order.

On Wednesday, the sanitary workers were seen engaged in manual cleaning of sewage lines and a manhole at the Madurai road. The workers took out clothes, fibre, plastic and other solid materials that choked the free flow of sewage through the drainage line.

Since jet rodders cannot remove these kind of solid materials, the sanitary workers are forced to manually undertake the cleaning.

When asked whether they knew it was banned, they replied that the officials asked them to execute the work and hence, they were on duty.

However, the officials from the City Corporation maintained that only jet rodder machines were being used to clear blocks in drains. Corporation Commissioner PV Thandapani, said he would look into the issue. He said about 70 percent hotels and commercial establishments constructed diaphragm chambers, and the remaining 30 per cent would complete the work shortly.

“We are monitoring those yet to construct the diaphragm chambers in the City”, the Commissioner assured.