

# Public 'in'convenience

Public toilets were expected to flush out open defecation in the city and give a much-needed fillip to Swachh Bharat Mission. However, the stench on the ground brings hardly any relief to users and residents

■ TUBA RAQSHAN

**CHENNAI:** To meet Swachh Bharat Mission's target of ending open defecation by 2019, the Greater Chennai Corporation has built 884 public toilet seats (a mixture of bio and e-toilets) in 236 locations till now. However, ground reality showed that most of these toilets, especially the bio toilets, are ill-maintained and unfit for use, defeating its very purpose.

The civic body has a target of building 1,120 public toilet seats in 348 locations, under the Swachh Bharat Mission's Community Toilet Construction programme. "We have constructed 884 structures including bio toilets, Namma toilets and e-toilets, in 236 locations. The rest of the work will be completed in the next two months. These toilets are user friendly and are periodically checked by the respective zones. Installed in public places like bus terminus and shopping areas, these toilets are to reduce open defecation," said a senior Corporation official.

The bio toilets are installed in areas which have no underground sewerage system and recently, e-toilets have been introduced, which are unmanned, fully automatic and 'self-cleaning'. While the e-toilets are mostly spic and span, the bio toilets paint a dreary picture. Syed Hassan, an IT professional from Korattur, said most of these bio toilet facilities are unusable. "There is a bio toilet near Arvind Towers in Korattur but it is in a bad condition, stinking perpetually. I don't see many people using it. There was another instance, when I was in Guindy and wanted to use the rest room. Since the manual toilet was closed, I was directed to a mobile toilet opposite the Police Station. I couldn't even approach the toilet as it was stinking and totally unusable. Unless we find a way to maintain the toilets, there is no use in expanding this facility," he said.

In Mylapore too, there are a few bio toilets in St. Mary's Road and RK Nagar, some of which are dysfunctional, said K Viswanathan, Secretary, Mylapore Residents Welfare Association. "The mindset of the people is also to be blamed for the shabby condition of our toilets. In a typical situation, people urinate outside and walk away. We had to request the Corporation to remove the non-functional toilet at Venkatesa Agraharam Road, which was turning into a garbage dump. However, the Corporation also set up some e-toilets in Nageshwara Rao Park, which are well-maintained," he added.

Professor V Chandrasekhar, a resident



1. E-toilet on Habibullah Road 2. A new e-toilet in Alandur 3. Poorly maintained / damaged bio toilet in Besant Nagar

of Besant Nagar, said despite repeated complaints, the dilapidated bio toilet near the bus terminus, has not been attended to. "The bio toilet was destroyed during Cyclone Vardah but till now, there has been no move to rebuild it. It is quite unusable and doesn't serve its purpose," he added.

While the modular toilets have been causing woes, the e-toilets seem to be preferred by many. Subodh Kumar, Regional Deputy Commissioner (Central), said that a few e-toilets were set up in Anna Nagar and Teynampet, which have garnered a positive response from the public. "These

toilets are easy to use and the maintenance is done regularly. To install a unit, we need a connection from the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB). The feedback has been positive," added the official.

The e-toilets were created by Eram Scientific, a social enterprise. "The toilets are programmed to flush 1.5 liters of water after three minutes of usage or 4.5 litres if usage is longer. It can also be programmed to clean the platform with a complete wash down after every 5 or 10 persons use the toilet," reads the website. In March 2016, an app was launched

## CLEAN PLAN

Chennai Corporation has been addressing the need to provide adequate number of toilets in public spaces

Corporation to construct **1,120** toilet seats in **348** locations

- Pending community toilets will be completed in two months
- Bio-toilets are set up in places with no underground sewerage system

**884** toilet seats have already been constructed in **236** locations

- E-toilets have self-cleaning facilities and are automatic, easy-to-use latrines
- In Tamil Nadu, work has commenced on building 13,365 toilet seats. Out of this, 2,048 toilet seats have been installed

by the company, to help people locate the nearest e-toilet. These toilets are located in busy hubs such as Thiruvanniyur, Velachery, Beach Road, Anna Nagar and RA Puram to name a few.

In a step towards ensuring that provisions made for better sanitation are optimally used, Eram Scientific Solutions — the company which has installed electronic toilets (e-toilets) across the city — launched an app on Monday to make it easy for people to locate these e-toilets. The app, which can run on both android and iOS platforms on mobile phones, helps users find the nearest e-toilet. Currently, 188 e-toilets are currently located in the city including at Broadway, Beach Road, Anna Nagar, RA Puram, Ramakrishna Mutt Road, Taramani, Thiruvanniyur and Velachery.

The Corporation is also working towards declaring 46 wards as 'Open Defecation Free' wards and has solicited the help of residents, schools, resident welfare associations and other stakeholders to prevent open defecation.

A part of the Swachh Bharat Mission, the households without toilets can avail central Government funds to construct a lavatory or if there is no space, avail the access of a community toilet within 500 meters of their living quarters.

## IMPROVE SPOKEN ENGLISH

This series will focus on **idioms**. An idiom is a group of words that means something different than the individual words it contains. As with any language, American English is full of idioms, especially when spoken.



### Salt something away

to store something for future use (originally referred to preserving food and storing it). Mr. Smith is saving money to use after he retires from work; he salts away \$50 every week.

**Worth one's salt:** worth one's salary. Any worker worth his salt would do a better job than that.

**In a stew:** (about someone or something): bothered or upset about someone or something (informal). What's Bill in a stew about this morning? Did the boss find mistakes in his work again?

**Out of the frying pan into the fire:** from a bad situation to a worse situation (cliché). Kim's situation is bad enough now, but if he quits his job, he'll go from the frying pan into the fire.

Knowledge partner:



U.S. Consulate General Chennai

### May his tribe increase!

In the last week of February, there was a terrible odour in the Metro water we had been receiving and on checking the sump, found the water to be dirty and contaminated. Immediately, we made arrangements to drain the foul-smelling water and clean the sump and closed the inlet of Metro water. However, there was not much change in the quality of the water received later. I rushed to the Chennai Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Double Tank office at KK Nagar to order a tanker of water. The office was crowded with consumers in need of water. I found a gentleman managing the surging crowd and politely replying to all, particularly the senior citizens and directing his distribution staff to organise the bowsers in the order of dates of registration. I did as suggested. Later, we learnt he was Srinivasan, the Area Engineer. This AE seems to know every nook and corner of the area under his jurisdiction and has clearly furnished his mobile number on the notice board also. On the due date, when I thought I had to remind the AE, I got a call from the driver of a water tanker seeking directions to our house and within 20 minutes, it was delivered. May all government offices have officials with organising ability like Srinivasan.

Tharcus S Fernando, Virugambakkam



### Government delivers on its promise

Kudos to the central government as it delivered its promise. The Parliament passed the landmark Bill, which has increased the maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, which will benefit many working women. This move would enable many working women to spend more quality time with their newborn, thus increasing the bond between mother and child which is a must for the welfare of both.

TS Karthik, Valasaravakkam

## OPINION

Maternity Benefit Bill a long overdue welfare measure

Letters have been edited due to space constraints.

Contact us