

Waste collection: Madurai goes hi-tech

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Chennai, Nov. 17

Madurai, the Temple City famous for jasmine and halwa, has set a precedent in Tamil Nadu on using technology to track vehicles that collect wastes.

Every day, the city generates nearly 400 tonne of waste in the Madurai Corporation area. The wastes are collected by sanitary workers through pushcarts, tri-cycles, auto and bins of various sizes. The collected wastes are then transported to the dump yard through tipper lorry and tractors.

There are around 1,000 bins in the city, which is divided into four zones. These bins are covered by around 70 vehicles, which are now tracked by the corporation's officials remotely. Small electronic chips are attached to each bin. When a vehicle collects the bin, the official monitoring in a remote location gets an alert that the waste has been cleared, said Mr Sridharan Mani, Director and CEO of American Megatrends India, which provides vehicle tracking software.

Every day, a truck collects wastes from four-eight large bins and from 20-30 smaller ones. Till now, there was no accountability on whether the waste in a particular bin was cleared or not. However, today the area engineer for each zone is using the vehicle tracking software, which is provided by HCL Infosystems along and hardware vendor American Megatrends, to monitor the vehicles on bin clearance.

Post implementation of the system, complaints from the public on non-clearance of the bins has reduced. It is very difficult to estimate the amount of garbage getting cleared as our solution does not cover the weight or amount of garbage getting cleared, Mr Mani said.

Based on a manual survey, American Megatrends loaded information on all the bin locations into a database. By using geo-fence and idle time in a specific location, which is close to bin location, the company identified the status of the bin clearance. Mr Mani said an area engineer can generate reports for vehicle; every zone and every bin. This is available every day, every week and every month to the Corporation.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated November 18, 2011)

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