

CONCRETE MESS

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29 MAR 2016

Pic: Ashish Shankar

Pune: Citizens would have to bear with heat, cement dust and dug up roads at least till the arrival of monsoon.

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has gone on a road concreting spree on 150 roads, including narrow lanes leading to dead ends. Rs 200 crore of public money would be spent on it.

The road concreting work has not only led to closure of roads, but also causing inconvenience to residents. Puneites will have to grin and bear the problems as the corporators race against the March-end deadline to spruce up their 'report cards' with an eye on the civic elections next year.

PMC is using the 'overlay technique', wherein concreting is done without the need for complete relaying.

The PMC's plan in 2013 to concrete 58 arterial roads in the city could be the trigger of the present mess. Several corporators cited it to insist even interior roads and small lanes should be of concrete, without sparing a thought to if they needed the concrete layer or the residents wanted it.

PMC officials confessed that the civic body had started road resurfacing and concreting works in various parts of the city at the behest of corporators, having their sights set on the forthcoming polls.

"The works have to be done within next couple of months. No new work will be possible in the next financial year because of election code of conduct," said Anil Rane, a corporator of PMC. He said if the work orders were not issued by March-end, the funds could lapse.

"We are trying to finish the ongoing works as soon as possible. Some of the works will be over by March 31. The remaining works will get over in two to three months," said Yuvraj Deshmukh, a senior official of the road department.

He said the details about new works and their completion would be known in the next fiscal. It would depend on the need, availability of funds and demands.

"The digging of road for concreting can damage the service lines like internet, telephone and water pipeline. Hence, the administration needs to be very careful while carrying



Dust rising due to the friction of vehicle tyres fills the air on Baner-Balewadi Road on Monday

RIGHT PLACE

EXPERTS SAID CEMENT ROADS SHOULD BE LAID IN

- ▶ Places experiencing heavy rainfall 
- ▶ Areas where waterlogging is a menace 
- ▶ Places having poor sub-grade soil
- ▶ Roads with heavy traffic

“Standard norms should be followed while concreting roads. The expert committee which PMC had formed few years ago had said that only roads that had heavy traffic and suffer from waterlogging should be made of concrete

Vishwas Sahastrabudhe | CIVIC ACTIVIST

“The road concreting work should be done only if it is necessary. Most of the current works are taking place because the corporators want them done

Vivek Velankar | FOUNDER, SAJAG NAGRIK MANCH

out such works. So, they take time,” said Santosh Tandale, the executive engineer of PMC's road department.

According to preliminary estimates, the expenditure for concreting per sq metre of road is Rs 2,200. The official said tarring of roads costs Rs 1,200 per sq metre.

“If we consider the cost involved for regular maintenance, then concrete roads prove

much cheaper. Besides, the life of a tar road is about three years while a concrete road lasts about 20 years,” said a PMC official.

The PMC officials claimed that the maintenance of tar roads was expensive because they need to be resurfaced once in three years. Making budgetary provision for repeated resurfacing and re-laying is difficult because every year new

projects are proposed. Cement concrete roads will reduce maintenance cost and funds could be used for other projects.

Civic activists differed. “Look at the Jangli Maharaj Road. It is a tar road laid in 1976 and had written guarantee of 10 years. It remained intact for three decades. It did not need repair till the civic body messed it up by digging it for laying a median a few years ago. This

is one of the busiest roads in the city yet it survived because the quality of work was excellent,” they pointed out.

Qaneez Sukhrani, a member of the Nagrik Chetana Manch said discipline should be maintained while carrying out these road works. “Proper passages should be provided to the commuters. If the roads are totally dug up, they lead to massive problems,” she said.

OVERHAULING ROADS

Road works have never been done in such a frenzy for years in the city. Over a 100 arterial roads, lanes and bylanes are being done over with cement concrete.

Work is going on simultaneously on several roads in one area putting residents to severe inconvenience. Every commuter is at the receiving end of the dust, noise and traffic snarls when roads are blocked.



Do you think Pune needs concrete roads when asphaltting can suffice?

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