

An IAS officer who quit to reform governance

Despite cracking down on corrupt road contractors, Vijay Pingale was shifted from Chennai Corporation

Vijay Maruti Pingale, a 2004 batch officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, joined the civil services because he wanted to reform governance from within the system. But after 14 years of trying, the civil servant, who holds an MBBS degree, has decided to throw in the towel. He submitted his resignation some days ago and hopes to pursue his goal of governance reform by joining an NGO. The State government, however, is yet to accept his resignation.

Dr. Pingale first came under the spotlight in 2013 when, as Deputy Commissioner (Works), Chennai Corporation, he introduced advanced technology to fix responsibility for shoddy work on civic infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, streetlights, and pedestrian facilities.

It was during his tenure that for the first time contractors who re-laid roads without adhering to norms began to be regularly penalised, winning him much support among the public. He involved IT companies in develop a digital dashboard for monitoring all civic projects on a real-time basis at the field level.

A special team of engineers that he had formed to track the quality of the roads had found that more than 30% of the roads re-laid in Chennai lasted less than a year.

Dr.Pingale had also unearthed a scam in the maintenance of public toilets in Chennai and initiated action against those who had illegally collected money from residents.

Surprisingly, or perhaps expectedly, after just 16 months in the Greater Chennai Corporation, Dr. Pingale was shifted to the Industries Department. According to sources, this was done under pressure from the contractors whom he had penalised.

As Joint Secretary, Industries Department, Dr. Pingale organised the Global Investors Meet in Chennai. With his resignation as yet unaccepted, he remains with the department, under the Union Ministry of Commerce in Delhi. According to sources close to him, Dr. Pingale, is all set to join a NGO involved in an issue close to his heart – the use of technology to improve governance.

“With his departure, Tamil Nadu would lose a very good IAS officer,” said R.A. Israel Jebasingh, his batchmate.

Source: xaam.in