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Bus terminus at burial site? CMDA gets 'stop work' notice from ASI

CHENNAI: The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority's attempts to find land for its proposed bus terminus for south-bound buses hit a new roadblock after it was realised that the Kelambakkam site lies within the protected and prohibited zone of the Archaeological Survey of India.

ASI sources told Express that they have issued a 'stop work' notice, asking CMDA to refrain from carrying out any construction activity in the area which is a megalithic burial site. These stone-capped burial monuments have chambers and other internment arrangements in stone.

According to an amendment to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, in January 2010, all construction is banned within 100 metres of ASI-protected areas. Also, any construction or reconstruction or repair of a building within 200 metres of such areas requires permission from the National Monument Authority.

Though revenue officials have refused to give details on the extent of the ASI site within the 88-acre land that was identified for the bus terminus and allied development, it is

learnt that a major portion forms part of the protected and prohibited zone. This is cause for concern for CMDA, who has been changing sites for bus terminus projects ever since the announcement for a southbound bus terminus by the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, after assuming office in 2011.

CMDA had been studying three options as suggested by consultant CR Narayana Rao to develop the bus terminus after the government won a legal battle earlier this year. The options call for having revenue sources such as amusement parks, a residential area, an office complex, banks, hotels, health centres, a commercial complex and convention centres, besides a parking facility for two-wheelers, cars and autos for commuters.

Sources said the plan to develop a residential complex has been dropped and possibilities are being explored for achieving connectivity between the proposed bus terminus to Urapakkam railway station and Kelambakkam road running along the northern side of the site.

Besides this, connectivity to the proposed public transit systems such as Monorail and Metro Rail is under consideration. CMDA is now evolving a design with minimum

development within the protected prohibited area and larger structures to be planned in the remaining area, sources said.