

CMRL plans a towering monolith near Central

The tallest building in the city is likely to come up as part of a project that plans to transform the locality

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A 33-storey building, likely to be the tallest in the city, and possibly the State, may soon come up near Chennai Central station. Sources in the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), which is likely to construct the building, said it will be part of the Central Square project that integrates the Chennai Central Metro station with various other transport hubs, and seeks to transform the locality. The towering structure will come up opposite Chennai Central station.

This building will be 150 m high and will be used for commercial development. "We will call for a tender and lease it out to a concessionaire. The firm will have the choice to use it either as a shopping mall or office space or a combination of both," an official said.

Mammoth task

But before construction, a mammoth task awaits CMRL in obtaining a series of No Objection Certificates (NOC) and planning permissions from several agencies in the city. "We need to get clearances from various agencies, including the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) and Airports Authority of India (AAI). Though this structure is quite far from the Chennai airport, we still want to get a certificate from the AAI to avoid any problems in future. Also, an Environment Impact Assessment needs to be done," an official said.

Detailed study

Experts said a detailed study is necessary before construction is feasible. S. Rajarathnam, former director of The Centre for Disaster Mitigation and Management, Anna University, said, "The city falls under seismic zone III. So it should be designed in such a way so as to be earthquake and cyclone resistant. There are special design rules stipulated by the government on building such high-rise structures. They have to study the soil strata, characteristics and its behaviour during vibrations. If all the conditions are adhered to and the planning permissions are in place, it is possible to build this structure," he added.

S. Santhanam, former member-chief urban planner, said, across the world, there are high-rise structures, which have been beautifully built and the city too needs such buildings.

"If they receive all the clearances, which I think they can, it will be nice for the city have such a tall building. Once upon a time, the LIC building used to be tallest. It's high time we have well-built, tall buildings," he added.

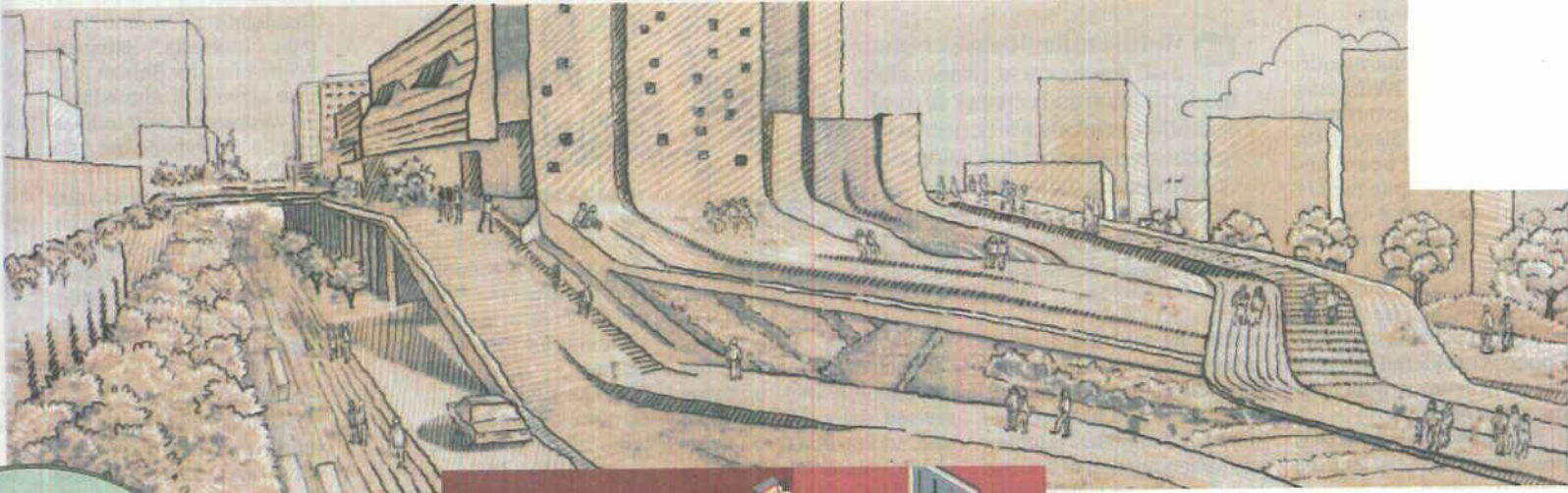
Disaster management expert N. Mathavan said any new multi-storied building near the Chennai Central station will increase the risk during any disaster event.

"The Chennai Central Metro Rail station is going to be a crowd-puller. Chennai is already a vulnerable place. The evacuation of people from such a huge building during any disaster event may be challenging in that location. The security risk may also be high," said Mr. Mathavan.

CENTRAL SQUARE:
Total area: **1,54,950** sq.m
Cost: **₹400** crore

LANDSCAPING WORK:

- Covered pathways will connect the suburban station and Chennai Central station with the Metro Rail station's entry/exit points



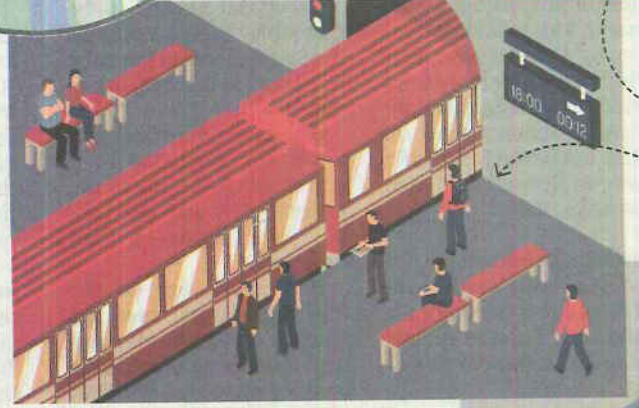
CHENNAI CENTRAL METRO RAIL STATION:
Area: **70,000** sq. m (It will be the largest underground station)
Depth: **25** m



- The space in front of Ripon Buildings and Victoria Hall will be redesigned with some statues being relocated
- Buckingham Canal will be covered and a landscaped garden is proposed
- There will be bus stops, auto stands and taxi drop-off lanes
- Parks will also be built as part of the project

MULTI-LEVEL BASEMENT CAR PARK:

- It will be located in front of the suburban station and can hold 2,000 vehicles
- The ground level of the car park will have a garden



The two Metro corridors – Airport-Washermanpet and Chennai Central-St. Thomas Mount – will meet at this station

First level: Concourse area, where commuters can get tickets

Trains from Airport coming via Nehru Park will stop here

Trains from Washermanpet will stop here

- Six entry/exits at Southern Railway HQ, Park Town suburban station, Park Town MRTS station, Ripon Buildings, Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and Chennai Central
- Airport check-in counters will be set up for air passengers



The building will be leased out and can be used as a shopping mall, office space or both by the concessionaire who bags the contract

S. SANTHANAM
CMRL OFFICIAL
Former chief urban planner

It's high time we have well-built, tall buildings. Such structures can be seen across the world

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New multi-storied structures will hide the facade of the heritage buildings

V. SRIRAM
Historian