

Metro tunnelling draws to a close

After five years of work that faced a lot of interruptions, operations will conclude by October-end

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CHENNAI

Tunnel boring machines that set out to create an engineering marvel would complete constructing nearly 25 km of tunnels by October.

A total of 12 machines and scores of workers came to the city from countries, such as China and Russia and drilled the earth relentlessly for five years. That mammoth work will finally end for both Phase I of the project and the Phase I extension in the next two months.

In Phase I of the project, the only stretch where tunnelling work is not complete yet is from Thousand Lights to AG-DMS. Work on this stretch will over by the end of September. Work on the phase I extension project will be over by the end of October.

The journey so far

Out of the 12 tunnel boring machines (TBMs) that were deployed from July 2012, only four remain in the city

- Two TBMs, one for each track, are presently tunnelling beyond Gemini flyover. By September, when they reach DMS office, all tunnelling on Phase I will be complete
- In the Washermanpet to Wimco Nagar phase 1 extension, 2 km is underground. Work on 1.1 km between Washermanpet up to Thyagaraya College is over. This underground stretch ends at Korukkupet and will be complete by October



Moving ahead: Tunnelling work in progress at the Chennai Central metro station. ■ R. RAVINDRAN

WHAT IS TBM

- It can drill hard surfaces and create tunnel passages to connect underground stations
- Weight of TBM:** 850 tonnes
- Length:** 85-90 metres
- Tunnels are bored 50 feet below the ground
- Each km of underground work costs ₹300 crore
- Initially 12 TBMs arrived in the city from countries including Russia and China
- December 2011:** Two tunnel boring machines from China were shipped to the country
- July 2012:** First tunnel work commenced in Chennai from Nehru Park to Egmore, a distance of 948 metres

Worker electrocuted

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

A 29-year-old electrician, working on the Metro Rail site at Chennai Central, died on Saturday evening due to electrocution.

According to officials of the Chennai Metro Rail Limited, S. Kalasaamy, a native of Tirunelveli district, was working with a concrete vibrator device when he suffered a shock. He was immediately taken to a hospital, where he was declared brought dead.

'Challenging work'

According to officials of the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), efforts are on to speed up the tunnelling work.

"These five years have been very challenging with the difficult soil conditions. But it will all be over in two months. After that, we will

focus on laying of tracks and electrical and signalling work," an official said.

The phase I project that covers 45 km of the city has

24 km of tracks underground and phase I extension project has just about 2 km.

Though the tunnelling work is over, the operations

on the portions of the underground network in Phase I, including Anna Salai and north Chennai, will begin only by the end of next year.