

Parking lot near temple shuts unannounced, causes chaos



MADURAI: The closure of the city corporation's parking lot near the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple for smart city works has made accessibility to the temple a problem with the civic body planning to open parking spaces at Tamukkam to ease the traffic in the festival season.

A decade ago, vehicles could go up to the entrance of the temple on the Chittirai streets. As there were apprehensions that the movement of vehicles on the Chittirai street could endanger the temple's structure, it was converted into a vehicle-free zone then. When Madurai's central vegetable market was shifted from near the temple, the area was converted into a parking zone for private vehicles coming to the temple.

Located nearly 300 feet away from the temple, it could accommodate about hundred four-wheelers at a time.

Two weeks ago, this parking lot was closed as it is to be converted into a multilevel parking spot. This left people going to the temple with no option but to park their vehicles, especially four wheelers, near the temple. ``I had to park my vehicle in the West Masi street which is about

one-and-a-half kilometres away from the temple and walk in the hot sun with my elderly parents,” said K Krishnamoorthy of K K Nagar, adding that there had not been any prior announcement about the closure of the parking lot.

Madurai Central MLA P T R Palanivel Thiagarajan says this is what happens when crucial projects are begun without seeking inputs from the people. “This is all due to the absence of councillors to review the projects. I have asked my leader to take steps to audit the smart city works across the state and hope we get a solution soon,” he said. Police sources said that the vehicles coming from other places did not have information about the closure of the parking lot and were parking vehicles in the Masi streets and Marret streets leading to a worsening of traffic congestion . “Two-wheeler parking is already chaotic near the temple,” he said.

Madurai corporation commissioner Aneesh Sekhar said that they had planned to open a parking space on the Tamukkam grounds. Talks had been held with TNSTC to provide shuttle services up to the temple from there during the festival season when lakhs of people from other places visit. “We have one more parking space at Ellis Nagar, which is already functional, and propose to open two more near Madura Coats and another place to ease the traffic,” he said.