

# Day in a metro: Officials revel in selfies, enjoy view from top

Pics: A Prathap



**ON THE MOVE:** Metro journeys will soon be automated, with the driver only having to punch a button and monitor the ride

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

It was silent and fast. The metro rail train started with a jolt and picked up speed within seconds, as it zipped out of the CMBT station in Koyambedu. Running over the newly-built elevated line, it opened up an altogether new vista of the city.

And several whipped out their mobile phones. Some began to shoot the cityscape, others took selfies as tall buildings passed briskly by. The Brazil-made train on its second trial run between CMBT and Ashok Nagar carried a huge team — officials, engineers, staff and a media contingent.

In the afternoon sun, the view from the top was refreshing — a bright mix of apartments, independent houses, near-symmetric streets, temples and trees. Different from the squalor and crammed living spaces and slums one gets to see from MRTS trains running between Chennai Beach and Velachery.

In a few seconds, the train was in the middle of 100 Feet Road and hotels, hospitals and temples seemed either dwarfed or within an arm's reach.



Then the landmark spotting began. "It is not easy to spot all buildings on the first trip," said a metro rail employee taking a video on his phone. Engineers who had also travelled on the first trial run stood near a window, trying to identify every building.

The train, travelling at an approximate 40kmph, took a little more than five minutes to roll into the elevated Ashok Nagar station.

"The average speed will be 35km while carrying passengers. It can reach a maximum of 90kmph and will be run several times for four months. This will be done for the first few rakes that have arrived from Brazil. Inspections by

Railways' Research Design and Standards Organisation and Commissioner of Railway Safety will follow after signalling systems and other systems are installed," said Chennai Metro Rail Limited deputy general manager (rolling stock) A R Rajendran.

The train was piloted by motormen deputed from Delhi Metro Rail. They will continue till newly recruited motormen complete their training.

"When all is ready, a driver will just have to punch a button to activate automatic operation and sit back and monitor a dashboard filled with screens and colourful buttons as the train runs on pre-fed information," said a motorman.

## Separate area for women on trains

A metro rail train will take just 19 minutes from the CMBT station in Koyambedu to Alandur, a 10km distance that takes motorists more than an hour in peak traffic. The trains will also be safe for women.

The four-car trains will include security features unheard of on suburban or MRTS trains. Every passenger will be under watch by the driver and personnel at a control centre at Koyambedu.

Each train will have a dedicated space for women next to the 'special class' — the equivalent of first class on suburban trains. "Two-thirds of the driver motor car will be for women. Passengers in trouble can talk to the driver on emergency intercom. The driver will locate the passenger automatically using 16 CCTV cameras," said A R Rajendran, deputy general manager, rolling stock. TNN