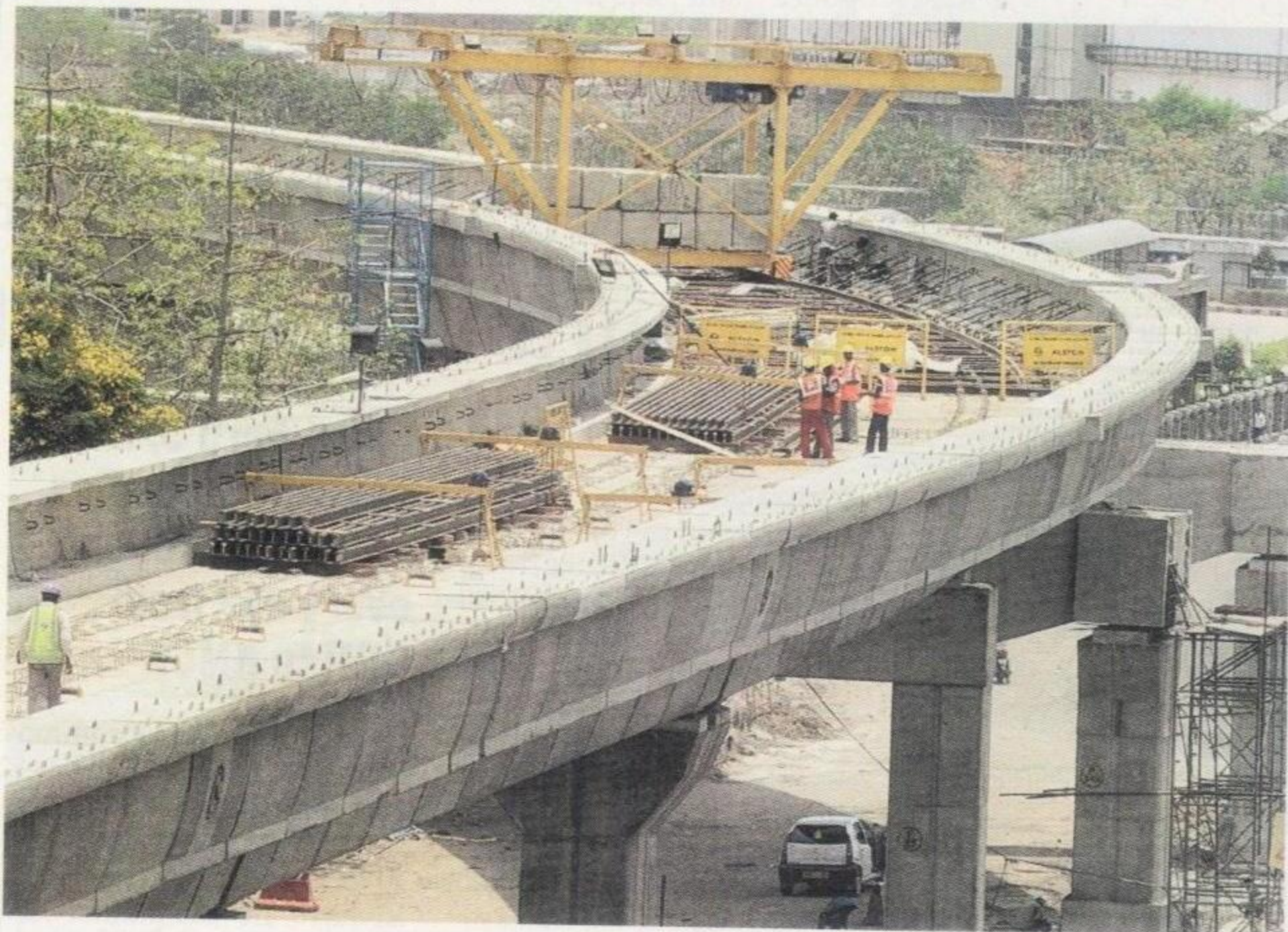


# Chennai Metro will be barrier-free: CMRL

Decision was taken in response to suggestions given by Disability Rights Alliance – Tamil Nadu



**INCLUSIVE PATH?** Access audits shared by the Disability Rights Alliance with CMRL showed Delhi Metro as having missed out on some crucial aspects in making the service accessible to persons with disability. Chennai Metro, however, has a chance to address the requirements in its upcoming facilities such as this one near the depot in Koyambedu, where tracks are being laid currently. – PHOTO: S. S. KUMAR.

Meera Srinivasan

**CHENNAI:** Persons with disability will have comfortable access to metro stations and trains, the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) said on Saturday.

According to an official of the CMRL, all metro stations will have signage within and outside the station to guide users. A dedicated parking space will be provided to persons with disability, subject to space availability. Non-slippery flooring and well-lit passages will be provided.

“We will make sure that the stations enable free movement. Tactile tiles will be provided to help persons with disability access functional areas and platforms,” the official told *The Hindu*.

The decision to make such provisions comes in response to suggestions made by the Disability Rights Alliance-Tamil Nadu (DRA), which has been in dialogue with the CMRL since January this year. Members had shared details of some best practices,



in addition to highlighting the shortcomings in the existing metro network in New Delhi. CMRL had told the DRA that engineers and those involved in finalising the station designs would get back with details of what provisions will be made in the metro stations in Chennai.

The stations will have bumpy tiles to alert users with visual impairment, before nearing the edge of the platform. The toilets will be made accessible, and the ticket counters will be positioned at a convenient height. Induction loops at ticket counters for hearing-impaired passengers, a uniform terminal design, ramps with adequate

landing space and staircases with handrails are among the other provisions promised. “The elevators will be accessible, with grip rails on three sides, audio announcements and buttons in Braille.”

The CMRL has also said that wheelchair users and mobility-impaired persons would not require rigging or lifting devices to get into the coaches. Also, a wheelchair egress request signal shall be provided, which will enable a passenger in any car of a metro train to alert the operator to stop the car for a prolonged time to enable wheelchair users to get off the train.

The provisions, according to CMRL, are in compliance with the ‘Guidelines and Space standards for Barrier Free Built Environment for Disabled and Elderly Persons’ evolved by the Ministry of Urban Development. Members of DRA-TN said while the provisions were considerate, it would be important for the CMRL to supplement the guidelines with recommendations in the

manual for standards and specifications for railway stations - June 2009, a Railway Board reference document, because the guidelines issued by the Ministry were not been updated after 1998.

Vaishnavi Jayakumar, a DRA member, said: “Also, in the absence of an in-house accessibility consultant, the CMRL could share its plans with an access consultant for comments.”

Rajiv Rajan, another member, said it arrangements for emergencies should also be made known. “Will the CMRL train its staff to deal with passengers with disability? That is vital,” he said. Acknowledging the provisions as a “good start”, DRA members said Chennai metro can be considered truly progressive and sensitive when it takes into account more such factors.

Ms. Jayakumar said: “It would be really nice when persons with disability can find out about the provisions being made for them, when the CMRL website itself is made accessible to them.”