

Metro train chugs along 100 Feet Road

Travels From Koyambedu Depot To Ashok Pillar

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: A metro rail train decked with marigold garlands and roses rolled out of the Koyambedu depot on Friday – for its longest trial run. The four-rake coach, looking dusty, came out of the depot around noon and was greeted by shutterbugs who had placed themselves on top of buildings to get a glimpse of the future of urban transportation.

Three years in construction and eight years since the first feasibility study was done and more than 10 years since the idea of a metro rail for the city was mooted in 2003, the trial run on Friday was a coming together of technology, bureaucratic processes and coordination between agencies. "The past 15 days have been really tight as we had to put together a lot of things, after we cancelled the contract with CCCL (Consolidated Construction Consortium Ltd)," said a senior official from CMRL.

Enduring traffic congestion and bad roads, commuters did not know what was happening overhead. While the trains' headlights and blaring horn failed to catch the attention of commuters below, construction workers on top of buildings stopped work to

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

AFTER AN IDEA FOR THE PROJECT WAS MOOTED IN 2003, FRIDAY'S LONGEST TRIAL RUN OF THE METRO TRAIN WAS A NEW HIGH FOR THE MUCH-AWAITED SERVICE



VROOM: The four-rake coach during its trail run over MMDA Colony on Friday

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Dec 2007 State gives in-principle approval to two initial corridors

Nov 2008 JICA agrees to finance the project – 59% of total cost of ₹14,000 crore

Jan 2009 Centre approves Chennai Metro Rail project

Sept Construction begins

June 2013 First metro rail coach arrives from Brazil

Sept Testing of signalling completed

Feb 2014 Trial run of coaches on elevated line between Koyambedu and Ashok Pillar

WHAT LIES AHEAD

- ▶ **Koyambedu-St Thomas Mount** line likely to be complete by **October**
- ▶ **Saidapet-Airport** elevated line to be finished by **early 2015**
- ▶ **Underground** line to be complete by **end of 2015**

watch the train. "I have seen the project shape up for so many years now. It is nice to see the train up and moving," said Baldev, who works in a lodge on 100 Feet Road.

Metro rail has lined up more trials. "Today, we just checked if the coaches were running well, if the tracks were proper, and if the overhead cables were fine. We carried out some safety checks," said the official. The first time the train was taken out of the Koyambedu depot, the operator did not go faster than

5kmph. The train made three trips on Friday. "By the third trip, we were moving at 25kmph," the official said. Once fully functional, these trains will have an average speed of 35kmph and a top speed of 85kmph.

Friday's run was basic. "The train was run manually today. Once the program and software are loaded, the train will function on its own. This will take at least five months," the official said. The automatic signalling system will be tested in later trials.

Pic: B A Raju