

Metro rail's automated signals ready for testing

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Chennai: A future where machines will automatically control the way humans move is not far away. Even for Chennai.

The first set of signals to control the movement of metro rail trains has been installed on a test track inside Koyambedu depot.

The 800m track has two virtual stations at either end so the automated movement of trains between two stations can be simulated. "We'll install the systems as each station is completed," a Chennai Metro Rail Ltd official said.

The signalling system will be different from the systems used in suburban trains. In the suburban lines, railwaymen used 'line sight signalling'. "In the system, the driver just has colours — red and green — to tell him when to halt and proceed. The new system will have a human-machine interface in the operators' cabin. Though the driver will know how much and for how long the train has to accelerate, decelerate and brake, he does not have to control the train manually," the official said.

The operator will have nothing to do after the introduction of the new signalling system. "The stations are about a kilometre apart. The speed of the train is pro-

TRACKING SUCCESS



The signals have been installed at Koyambedu depot (above)

DECEMBER 2007 | Tamil Nadu government in principle approves the two initial corridors

JANUARY 2009 | Government of India approves the Chennai Metro Rail project

SEPTEMBER 2009 | Construction begins

JUNE 2013 | First metro rail coach arrives from Brazil

SEPTEMBER 2013 | Testing of signalling complete

grammed and every journey will have the same speed, which means the same acceleration and braking. As the train passes each section, the tracks will communicate with the train on how fast it should be going," said the official.

Train doors will open only when they align with passenger screen doors at the station. This information is also transmitted from systems embedded in the tracks.

Unlike suburban trains, metro rail will not have emergency chains to stop trains.

"There will be a button for emergencies. After pressing the button, a passenger can communicate with the driver. We believe we can provide better relief at the station than on the track," said the official.

A central office will monitor all trains and respond to emergencies on a real-time basis.