

DC CORRESPONDENT



Sheer joy of a first metro ride

There is nothing quite like a first metro ride on the gleaming service that has been operational along a couple of lines in the city in the last few years. As more and more young citizens get to enjoy the ride, the awareness also spreads of how nice a metro service is for a city commute.

The pace of metro work has, however, been a bone of contention with the government itself expressing its unhappiness over getting the whole system going quickly. The city of Chennai has been bogged down by the huge delays, a part of which may have been caused by the collapse of a Russian company, which was one of many involved.

The citizens of Chennai are still waiting for the opening of lines to Central Station and along Mount Road that would make connecting many inner and core parts of the expanding city possible. The metro trials are endless and many dates for inauguration of trains to Central are mentioned that seem to be in the far future for a city that desperately needs commuter services to back up its buses and, hopefully, lead to keeping more personal transportation off the roads.

Chennai has been blighted by slow construction while other cities have galloped on with the Namma Metro now crisscrossing

Bengaluru, where they have even devised a women's only section up front in a segregated area so that one half of the metro users can travel without worrying about sexual harassment in peak hours in crowded stations and trains.

Even as Chennai waits for true metro connectivity along many corridors, there are many great experiences to be had. The DC's weather forecaster S. Sivakumar of Kea Weather had this to say of his experience on the metro — "A customary routine wait at Tirumangalam Metro. Almost pin drop silence at the platform and I'm glued

to the display board which shows "Nehru Park" 2 minutes.

I pick up my backpack and position myself at the arrow marking in front of the closed glass sliding doors..

The silence is broken as you hear the Alstom make rail's unique noise and the smooth entry inside the underground station. The twin doors open and I step into the coach with total disbelief. It's choc a bloc and sports a stadium like ambience. The door closes and to my amusement I see scores of happy looking school children aged 12 to 13. A young boy gets up ... "Anna..Neengo inga

utkaarungo, utkaarungo. (You kindly sit here) Great gesture. I thanked him while politely declining his offer.

"It's your day. Your day out. You guys need to enjoy this memorable day."

The atmosphere is just unbelievably boisterous and you can sense their euphoric feel, their happiness, their freedom, togetherness. Spontaneous smiles all

around, without a semblance of any worries. You almost feel you belong there, you are one among them, for a while at least.

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A charming boy narrated the name of his school and from where they take took the metro ride.

(Vadapalani - Airport - Nehru Park

- Vadapalani). There were 101 children with six teachers to assist in escorting them. They are from Chennai High School, (Corporation School)

Rangarajapuram, Kodambakkam.

They go ecstatic the moment my mobile phone cam is ready to click pics of their fun. Maybe, I was a sort of media guy for them. One enthusiastically asked if I can post the pics in the internet. His smile widened from ear to ear when I nodded in approval.

The electric mood got over when I had to bid good bye to the young smiling faces, kids at Nehru Park Their day was made and so was mine. Hope school kids get numerous opportunities such as this. Bravo young India!" says Sivakumar in signing off.