

# Panagal and Natesan parks saved from Metro Rail phase-2 construction

Express News Service

**A**fter residents of T Nagar and other parts of the city strongly opposed Chennai Metro Rail's plan to take over Panagal Park and Natesan Park as part of the phase-2 project, Metro Rail confirmed that they will not be tampering with the parks in any manner.

This comes two days after close to 3,000 people signed an online petition to save Panagal Park. The petition pointed out that the city had previously witnessed three of its parks being destroyed to facilitate phase-1 Metro Rail construction. "Despite opposition from residents, park users, and concerned bodies, Nehru Park, Thiru Vi Ka Park and Chetpet Eco-park were completely devoured by phase-1 project. We won't let two other beautiful



Panagal Park is home to 80 indigenous trees • Martin Louis

parks share the same fate," summarised the petition.

Panagal Park, which is spread over eight acres, is home to over 280 trees. Of this, close to 80 trees include indigenous ones like Magizham, Putranjiva, Ilavu, Nagalingam, Naaval and Vilvam and also the Brazilian Ironwood and the Babab tree. "For the sake of ad-

vancement, an 87-year-old heritage park cannot be destroyed. Its importance goes way above the needs of a railway and cannot be compromised," said Venkateswaran N, a resident who signed the petition.

In the recently released Detailed Comprehensive Project Report for phase-2, both parks were mentioned as other

## GREEN LUNGS COMPROMISED

Stretch	Trees to be axed	length (kms)
Corridor 3	386	45.8
Corridor 4	536	26.1
Corridor 5	1,121	47

structures that will be affected by construction activity. According to the field survey done in 2016, 2017 and 2018 by the project consultant, corridor 4 under which both parks come, has the maximum number of affected structures at a staggering 474. Including the parks, 37 other structures like police stations, schools, hospitals, bus stops and temples will be affected once construction starts by early 2020.

Metro Rail officials said that a few changes have been made in the design pertaining to these parks so that the green lungs of the city face the least damage. They said that the size of the stations has been reduced to minimise the amount of private land to be taken over. "Dimensions of the station has been reduced from 220m x 26m to 150mx 19m. Also, two stations which will be coming near these parks are going to be built underground. Only for the construction of entry/exit points, we will be using little space around the parks. Otherwise, both parks will not be harmed in any manner," said a senior official.

Though Metro Rail said they will be spending ₹3.86 crore to plant 12 saplings for every tree axed, a little over 2,000 trees will be taken down for phase-2 construction.