

Signal failure throws metro ops out of gear

CMRL Restores Services But Issue May Recur

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Chennai: It began as the usual Sunday metro ride for commuters, until around 10.30am when train operators noticed something amiss on their consoles. Instructions on the location and speed of the trains that usually appeared on their screens vanished as signal systems failed, bringing operations to a grinding halt on the corridor along Poonamallee High Road. Though alternative arrangements were made immediately after the glitch was identified at Nehru Park station, commuters — particularly those boarding trains on the St Thomas Mount-Cen-



trains on the St Thomas Mount-Central Metro corridor — were inconvenienced as they had to break their journey at Shenoy Nagar and board another train

tral Metro corridor — were inconvenienced as they had to break their journey at Shenoy Nagar and board another train. Based on past experiences with signal malfunctions, authorities expect such technical glitches may recur. “We wanted to reach Central Railway Station and thought taking the

metro would be convenient, but it turned out to be a disappointment as we were asked to get off the train at Shenoy Nagar and board the next. We had to transport big boxes,” said Manikandan, who boarded a train from Ashok Nagar.

Trains were operated manually by ensuring that trains begin

the journey only after ensuring that the previous train had reached the next station. They travelled at a speed as low as 25kmph against the normal 70kmph between Nehru Park and Central.

“We had to manually operate trains with personnel monitoring from the operations control centre. We also informed passengers travelling from St Thomas Mount towards Central that they would have to deboard at Shenoy Nagar and board the next train to proceed towards Central metro,” an official said.

Though CMRL officials said services were restored by 4.30pm, staff in the know said the issue was far from resolved. Malfunctioning signal systems have disrupted services before and, according to officials, there are chances of it recurring if not attended.

While permanent staff, who recently went on strike, blamed CMRL for lack of maintenance

and using inexperienced contract workers, officials said the frequent problems with the signal system has nothing to do with maintenance, but servicing by the company that designed and supplied it.

“We are not able to identify the problem and Siemens, which supplied the software, is supposed to rectify it. They know where the problem is but they are not doing anything to solve it. We are well within the two-year warranty period as per the contract, but the company officials are not reachable,” an official said.

“It works like a computer and needs no maintenance from our side. Only the components used in changing of tracks require maintenance which is done by CMRL staff every 15 days.”

Officials blamed at least two of the frequent disruptions reported last year on the faulty signal systems and corrupted software.