

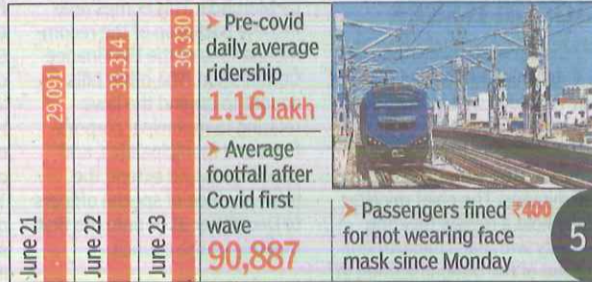
Metro rail gets back 29% of pre-Covid footfalls

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: As office-goers and air passengers comprise a majority of its commuters, the city's 54-km metro rail network saw 29% of its pre-Covid footfalls daily since its resumed operations on June 21. A total of five passengers were caught for not wearing masks in station premises and were fined ₹400 each. CMRL's pre-Covid average daily footfall was 1.16 lakh and its initial estimated footfall was 7.75 lakh.

On Monday, 29,091 passengers took the metro and it increased to 33,314 on Tuesday and 36,330 on Wednesday. Officials said most of them were office-goers returning to their

ON THE RISE



workplace after the lockdown restrictions were relaxed and some of them were domestic air passengers. There were also many one-time passengers who opted to buy tokens instead of using a smartcard.

At present, trains are operated from 6.30am to 9pm with five-minute frequency during peak hours and every 10 minutes during non-peak hours. Only 50% occupancy is allowed and commuters are not allowed

to travel standing. Besides following other safety protocol to prevent infection spread, station and train staff are also on the watch for commuters who do not wear or remove their face masks when inside the stations or trains and penalise them. "Passengers are watched through CCTV cameras. If a passenger is seen not wearing mask in the train, a staff is sent to ask the passenger to wear it and collect fine when the train stops at the next station," an official said.

It took at least six months for metro stations to get back 80% of its pre-Covid numbers when it resumed services in September 2020, after nearly five months due to Covid wave

one. In March, an average 90,887 passengers boarded metro trains daily and on a few days the numbers crossed one lakh. This was also due to the opening of the 9km line from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar in February 2021.

Even as it struggled to achieve its pre-Covid numbers and metro services were shut again due to the second wave, CMRL started floating tenders to rent out its space in 31 stations and under the elevated viaducts to boost revenue. An official said, "We want to effectively utilise the space. As these spaces are either in stations or closer to our stations, we also hope they will encourage more people to our train service."