

METRO RAIL SPECIAL

Step out at any hour of the day and the roads are chock-a-block with traffic... the only respite people have is the much-awaited Hyderabad metro rail project, which promises to put an end to all traffic woes. But is the project a reality and is the government actually doing its job? Putting to rest all controversies and questions, **NVS Reddy**, IRAS MD of Hyderabad Metro Rail, talks to Sinduri Vuppala

“It’s a great opportunity to rehaul the city”

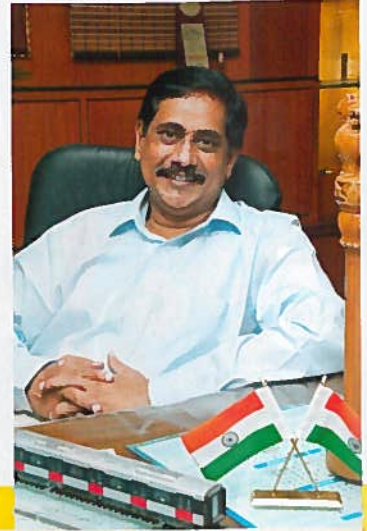
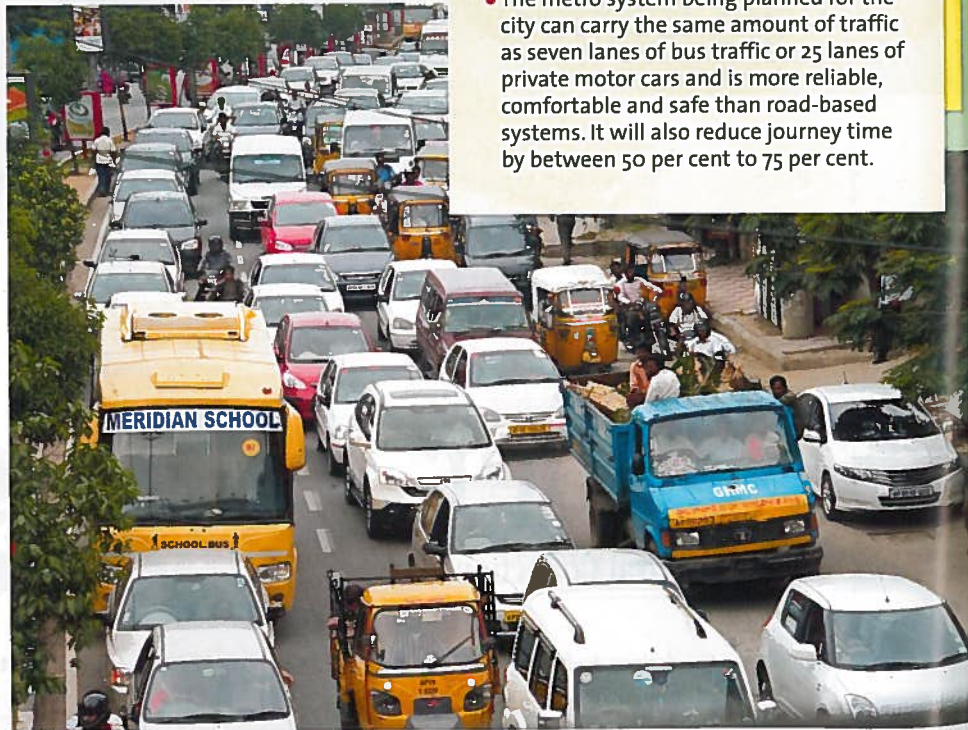
It may seem ironic, but the last time I interviewed NVS Reddy was in October 2007, when he promised our city would soon be another Singapore or Thailand and we would not have to worry about traffic or commuting any more. The metro rail project, which would be the solution to all our traffic problems, was to be ready by 2011. Today, four years later, I go back to him with the same question: Will our traffic woes never end?

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“While the Chennai and Delhi projects were government projects (where there is a tremendous burden on taxpayers) the Hyderabad metro was undertaken as a public private partnership. Unfortunately it was caught up in the Satyam fiasco, and two years were lost. There has been a lot of uncertainty in the state ever since. The CM, YSR passed away and the project suffered delays. However, because of its robust and transparent model, the city has been lucky. I&T was chosen to implement the metro in September 2010. Having achieved financial closure in six months, it is the largest fund tie-up in India for a PPP (Public Private Partnership) project till date. A project of this magnitude (Rs 14,132 crores) has

never been done in a public private partnership, and the whole world is watching,” he explains.

NVS Reddy explains how most of the design work is already in progress. “Almost 300 agents are working silently and not many are aware of the kind of work that is being done. I am not just looking at this as a simple transport and traffic project. It is a whale of an opportunity for me to redesign and rejuvenate the city,” he explains.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Ecofriendly elevated metro stations will be located along the route every one kilometer with passenger access through staircases, escalators and lifts.
- The project will be well integrated with the existing suburban railway network (MMTS) and bus stops so as to ensure seamless and comfortable travel for the passengers.
- Adequate parking and circulation areas adjoining the stations shall be provided at 25 locations along the corridor.
- The metro system being planned for the city can carry the same amount of traffic as seven lanes of bus traffic or 25 lanes of private motor cars and is more reliable, comfortable and safe than road-based systems. It will also reduce journey time by between 50 per cent to 75 per cent.

With eco-friendly stations, sky-walks, ramps and a host of other commuter-friendly facilities, the metro project, which was planned after doing an intensive study of other countries, aims at making Hyderabad world class. "It will also help to revive several parts of the city that are decaying," explains Reddy.

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Yet another problem plaguing the project is the Sultan Bazar issue (the heritage street may be affected by it). Reddy exclaims, "In the 71 km metro project, Sultan Bazar is just 200 meters. The issue is simply being blown out of proportion. The rest of the city has undergone road widening more than once. There are 100 shops and the ones affected will be accommodated in a complex just 300 meters away for which we are ready to spend Rs 7 crores. Even after the metro stations are built, the space under the stations will be assigned to hawkers and the stations will be designed with walkways and paths providing complete access to the stores. People working against us may think they are campaigning for a great cause, but they are just hindering the city's development."

Is it true that several heritage structures like the Assembly, Mozamjahi market and Secunderabad Clocktower might be in danger because of the metro? "The city has a total of 145 heritage structures and we are going in front of nine of them, but a minimum distance of 50 feet will be maintained. In fact, some of these structures are in such bad shape, the less said the better. I give an open invitation to all these so-called heritage lovers to come forward, mobilize money and improve the structures. I will hand over the property as a challenge and I am willing to contribute half the sum towards it. Talking is easy, but doing things in an Indian context is difficult. Even when the flyovers were being built, there was a lot of opposition. But today everyone is reaping their benefits," he sums up. ■