

LIFE IN A MIETRO

The ambitious Hyderabad Metrorail aims to solve many of the city's issues, from traffic to its carbon footprint. Its MD, **N.V.S. Reddy** shares how he hopes this will happen

A hundred and fifty years ago in the quiet city of Hyderabad, rulers woke up to the need for a better transport system. History of the Deccan mentions how the tedium of travelling by tonga, bullock cart and horseback slowly transitioned into using the Nizam's State Railway, which opened up the then State.

Today, decades later, the city is being opened up and brought together by yet another mass transit system: the Hyderabad Metro rail. Helmed by N.V.S. Reddy as the project's MD, the ambitious project seeks to combine elements from some of the best mass transit projects across the world and cobble them together to form the city's metro.

"We did extensive research, looking at the best and worst of existing metrorails," he explains. "We tried to analyse what the city needs from the social perspective of different categories of people - children, women, older people, the middle class - and capture all these."

Planning is key. He talks about how people from northern Telangana depend on the Jubilee Bus Station (JBS), and how those from coastal Andhra use points in Dilsukhnagar and the Mahatma Gandhi

Bus Station, while Secunderabad railway station itself sees about 1,65,000 people every day. "Statistics like these were important when it came to planning the route and reach."

One important feature of the Hyderabad Metro is its target of multimodal connectivity, and linking of the metro with other locations. The MD cites Hong Kong's model of connecting residential complexes with the metro, and Singapore Bangkok's practice of constructing skywalks from the metro stations to nearby offices, malls, schools and other buildings. "The Hyderabad Metro will have all these features," says Reddy. "All stations will have feeder air-conditioned bus services which will operate like a merry-go-round or loop, making it easy for people to travel to and from the metro stations."

Going green is important to him, and it is reflected in almost every aspect of the project. He mentions setting up bicycle stations, where passengers can pick up bicycles using their metro access cards and then drop them off at convenient drop-off points - a concept he's borrowing from the metrorail in Bogota and for which he's ty-

ing up with the Hyderabad Bicycle Club. Nothing is left behind in this campaign: the sidewalks will transform from mere spaces to work to thriving spaces based on the Canary Wharf model in London, and areas will be developed into parks to support families and children.

URBAN REDESIGN

Reddy calls this project a process of "urban rejuvenation and redesign, which will take a lot of tact and patience but can make a difference. We're redefining life for suburban people," he says. "In 20 years, we will be a 15 million city, and this development is essential. Most of the lower middle class lives in the suburbs, where commuting is difficult, especially with age. Connections at Uppal, Nagole, and Miyapur will go a long way to serving them, and also to developing those areas at a great rate."

Hyderabad to him is a very well-endowed city, with a reasonably good climate, a cosmopolitan vibe, geographical advantages for growth, and a vibrant population. "Solving the transport issue will open it up to many possibilities, like the entry of banks

and colleges," he says. "We need to capitalise on this and become a competitive global city with a high quality of life."

CRITICISMS

As with every public project, the Hyderabad Metro has received its fair share of criticism. Activists worry about the status of heritage monuments in the wake of metrorail construction. Reddy claims that this is a non-issue, since every plan made for the stations have taken heritage spaces into consideration. He also says the metrorail will take up the least space as compared to other cities, using a structural engineering blueprint that reduces the number of pillars required to hold it up.

Another major complaint came from groups asking why the metrorail couldn't have been taken underground, as done in cities like London and Delhi. Reddy says that there are several reasons why this idea was discarded in Hyderabad. "In the Deccan plateau, we can certainly tunnel through the land, as has been pointed out, but constructing a station at kilometre distances will require a vertical cut-and-cover method that is very disruptive for the

surface," he says. "We also found this to be the cheaper option. Underground stations will require air-conditioning and ventilation at every point. The operating costs would have been higher."

GLOBAL ENGINEERING

"There are many components that define how global a project is: how it makes a difference, the jobs it generates, its carbon footprint, innovation and competitiveness," explains Reddy. It was in this regard that the 6th Global Infrastructure Leadership Forum in New York shortlisted 100 infrastructure projects from across the world based on these parameters. The top three came down to Azerbaijan's Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline, Kuwait's Al Abdaliyah Integrated Solar Combined Cycle Plant, and Hyderabad's Metrorail. The long and short of it is that the Hyderabad Metrorail was selected as the Global Engineering Project of the Year, 2013.

It's definitely a feather in his cap, and potentially something that he hopes will silence critics.

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IN A NUTSHELL

- The Hyderabad Metro will have three corridors and 66 stations, of which three are interchange stations
- The first phase will cover approximately 72 kilometres and will complete in 2014, while the entire project is aimed to complete in 2017
- The metro aims to integrate with existing bus and railway stations for better connectivity
- It will have a frequency of every 2-5 minutes during peak hours and is expected to complete at an estimated cost of Rs. 12,132 crore

