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Smooth ride inside Metro, not so much outside: How last-mile saviours clog traffic near stations

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New Delhi: Chhatarpur and GTB Nagar metro stations are at distant points in the city, but they have a common problem of autorickshaws parking outside their entrances and causing a traffic constriction. The same problems beset Karol Bagh and Nehru Place metro stations.

The autos, e-rickshaws and cabs that park on the roads outside metro stations is now a cause of concern for Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, especially since the company has implemented multi-modal integration at 59 stations, with Nehru Place and Karol Bagh stations also being developed as such by June.

At Chhatarpur metro station, **TOI** found two rows of autos parked at one gate. On the opposite side, where the metro station is connected with a pedestrian bridge, half the road was occupied by autos, restricting the flow of traffic. Even the bus stand had illegally parked vehicles.

The situation at Nehru Place metro station was no different. Apart from the autos, roadside vendors had taken up road space causing the traffic to move slowly. Ankit Chauhan, who works in the adjoining market, said, "The situation gets worse in the evening when traffic moves slower than a snail."

Things weren't different at Karol Bagh and GTB Nagar. At the former, traffic jams are a bane even at non-peak hours. And almost half of the road outside GTB Nagar metro station is filled with e-rickshaws. A frustrated local resident, Bakul Chopra, rued that the authorities hadn't yet resolved the menace of illegal parking.

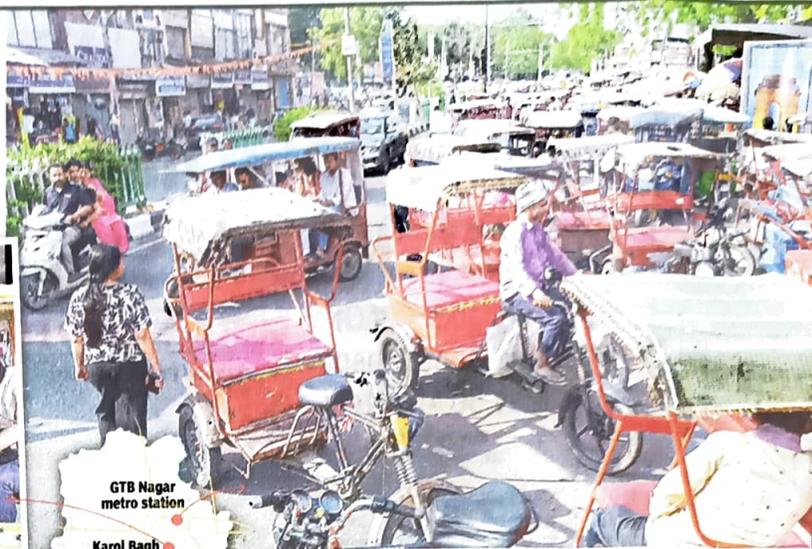
S Velmurugan, chief scientist and head (traffic engineering and safety), Central Road Research Institute, said, "Though to a large extent DMRC provides space at certain locations for parking for last-mile modes of transport, the problem is that some elevated stations such as

IN A TIGHT SPOT


E-rickshaws and autos are parked outside metro stations


These vehicles block the road, affecting traffic movement


Commuters say there should be dedicated space for parking these vehicles



GTB Nagar metro station
Karol Bagh station
Nehru Place station
Chhatarpur station

What is multimodal integration (MMI)

- > Planning of 300 metres around metro stations; integrating them with bus stands, autos and e-rickshaws
- > Includes approach roads, pedestrian walkways and parking areas
- > MMI work has already been implemented at 59 metro stations

and work at 10 metro stations is under progress

- > Nehru Place and Karol Bagh metro stations are under development, likely to be completed by June 2023

> MMI work at GTB Nagar metro station is proposed

Karol Bagh has no land or service lane for such planning. DMRC has no authority outside the metro stations and road owning agencies are not providing any dedicated spaces for autos and e-rickshaws to park."

Such road constrictions inconvenienced motorists, metro commuters and pedestrians. "An integrated approach is required to solve this problem. There should be a specific traffic management plan that is assiduously enforced. Last mile connectivity also has to improve," said Velmu-

rugan. "The road-owning agencies should demarcate space for parking, allowing only a few autos or e-rickshaws to stand near the gate with 'waiting' signs. If some measures are taken at some of the potential locations, it can contribute to significant reduction in traffic congestion."

A DMRC official said, "Metro station officials liaison with Delhi Police, traffic police and concerned civic authorities such as DDA, Delhi Jal Board, MCD, NDMC, Ghaziabad Development Aut-

hority, Noida, etc., to carry out intensive cleaning, removal of encroachments, shifting of beggars/vendors in and around metro premises."

Multi-modal integration considers the immediate zone of 300 metres around metro stations to integrate them with stands for buses, autos and e-rickshaws, wherever possible. "MMI is an important tool to ensure optimum utilisation of public transport facilities. In DMRC, we are making all efforts to not only to provide MMI facilities at our stations,

but also to improve the aesthetic qualities of the stations while creating these facilities," said a train company official. "DMRC is working with all regulatory as well as implementing agencies so that our stations can be transformed into multi-modal hubs that allow passengers to shift from one mode of travel to another."

According to DMRC, at present MMI work has been implemented at 59 stations. Nehru Place and Karol Bagh stations are also un-

der development and the work is likely to be completed by June. MMI work at GTB Nagar station has also been proposed and will be taken up after approval by road engineering authority Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure (Planning and Engineering) Centre.

Talking of the illegal parking, a traffic cop said, "We challan vehicles that are improperly parked and sometimes tow them away. However, encroachment is the subject of the civic bodies."

Govt to NGT: Waste, encroachments at Saket forest area

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NEW DELHI: In a submission to the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the Delhi government's forest and wildlife department said it has found encroachments as well as waste and scrap material on a 6-hectare forest area near Press Enclave in Saket.

The findings were part of two inspections carried out by the department in June and November last year, following a petition in the NGT. The petition alleged there were encroachments in the forest area with the possibility of trees being felled.

The report said while some trees were found fallen on the ground, this likely occurred due to natural causes.

"On the land, some jhuggis were present near the Kadeem Zari Muslim Eidgah in Hauz Rani village. During the survey of these jhuggis, scrap material shops were found operating by the people living in these jhuggis. Plastic, polythene bags, and other dump materials were also found dumped in this land," said the report, stating the first inspection was carried out by a team comprising the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), the forest department, and the Delhi Police on June 22, 2022.

The report added that they did not find burnt plastic, polythene bags, or electric wires. "However, no paper or documents were provided by the people living in these jhuggis when asked. Therefore, it seems that they have encroached on the land," the report added.

The submission made by the deputy conservator of south (DCF) said the area has been identified as a deemed forest. A deemed forest is not a notified forest yet but is "deemed" to be one, based on the over 250 trees per hectare in the area.

The report also said they conducted a second inspection of the area along with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on September 30, 2022, where they made similar observations.

"While inspecting, it was observed that there is a graveyard near the hospital, surrounded by various trees.



Vehicles parked illegally and some hutments in the wooded area in south Delhi's Saket.

RAJ K RAU/HT PHOTOS

ACCORDING TO A SENIOR FOREST OFFICIAL, THE AREA HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A DEEMED FOREST

Materials were found dumped on this land and some encroachment was also found," said the report. The report also mentioned that the DDA was supposed to number the trees in the area, which has not been done yet.

The DCF (south) also said that after the joint inspection in September, they have not received any communication from DDA regarding the numbering of trees, adding that they wrote several letters to the land-owning agency on November 7, 22, December 2, and December 6.

DDA did not respond to HT's queries when contacted.

NGT had, in May 2022, formed a joint committee comprising DPCC, municipal corporation of Delhi, and the forest department to look into a plea by a Delhi resident who alleged illegal felling of trees in this forest patch, along with possible encroachments.

Sonya Ghosh, an activist, said that agencies only take action when a plea is filed in the NGT, and the forest department and DDA are often unaware of encroachments within their jurisdiction.

"We have seen boundary walls broken in large parts of the southern ridge and it is easy for encroachers to access these areas to dump waste and even start living there. Such inspections should be a routine exercise and not done only when a petition is filed," she said.