The Other Metromen & Their Challenges

:: Shantanu Nandan Sharma

Delhi Metro. That familiar showpiece of railways continues to enjoy pride of place among all its projects. But will new Metro networks be rolled out in its iconic status? Or won't they?

Six states, 225 km of new rail lines—Metro rail in India is expanding as rapidly as its transit systems should. Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Jaipur are executing metro projects worth more than ₹50,000 crore. And cities such as Kochi, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Indore, Chandigarh and Bhopal are launching theirs.

But to measure up, do others have an EknathSapkalP Shreedharan, who has set high standards in engineering, financial discipline and in meeting several deadlines at Delhi Metro?

Experts say manpower shortage at the top and middle rungs has become a challenge for these new projects.

To make matters worse, Indian Railways has refused to send its high-performing engineers on deputation to Metro projects. As a result, state governments launching Metro rail projects are increasingly falling back on IAS officers to manage their start-up phases. In fact, a Metro head of any of these new projects could end up as an animal husbandry secretary in the next few years. It takes effort to look at four new “Metromen” and their challenges in executing multi-billion-rupee Metro rail projects.

NVS Reddy | MD, HYDERABAD METRO

At Hand
Building a 71 km-long line in 5 years
Bio
Not an engineer, but an accounts officer with Indian Railways. Had experience in urban transport planning, financial planning and PPPs. Served as additional commissioner, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation

Total Project Cost
₹14,132 cr
To be built on public-private partnership mode. 90% funding by L&T, balance 10% is contributed by Andhra Pradesh government and Centre.
Concession for 35 years, extendable by 25 years.

Key Challenges
To implement the elevated Metro amid congested roads. Integration of other modes of transport, pedestrian and non-motorised transport.

It is also a redesign of a city to transform Hyderabad into a people-friendly green city.

K Rajaraman
MD, CHENNAI METRO

At Hand
Building 45.1 km of metro under phase-I by 2014-15
Bio

Total Project Cost
₹14,600 cr

Kuldeep Ranka
MD, JAIPUR METRO

At Hand
To build 42.8 km of metro at stage-I by July 2013
Bio

Total Project Cost
₹2,034 cr

The central and state governments to contribute 41%

The balance will be arranged from a loan granted by Japanese agency JICA. Another 9 km with a cost of ₹2,845 crore is in pipeline.

Key Challenges
Managing traffic during the build-up phase. Ensuring special pedestrian access in a few stations.

We have plans to integrate Metro rail with proposed monorail network from a metro interaction.

N Sivasailam
MD, BANGALORE METRO

At Hand
Building 42.3 km of metro rail including underground section of 8.82 km
Bio
A mechanical engineer and an MBA, before joining IAS, drafted Central Vigilance Ordinance & Bill, 1998.

Total Project Cost
₹11,609 cr

42% increase from original estimate.

Central government to bear 33% of the cost, state government 33% and the rest will be loan. ₹4,905 crore loan to be raised from Japanese agency JICA and financial institutions.

Key Challenges
Have been at loggerheads with railways on issues like station designs and land. Completing the project by December 2013 with the same cost estimated at 2009 prices.

Creating a champion team and keeping it motivated during highs and lows of the project is a challenge.

In rolling out the project, we are trying our best to keep Jaipur’s heritage intact.

Key Challenges
Delivering the project in record two-and-half years. Dealing out compensation for land because of demand for more.