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Driverless technology on metro rail

Two loco pilots to run the trains till passengers grow accustomed to its operation

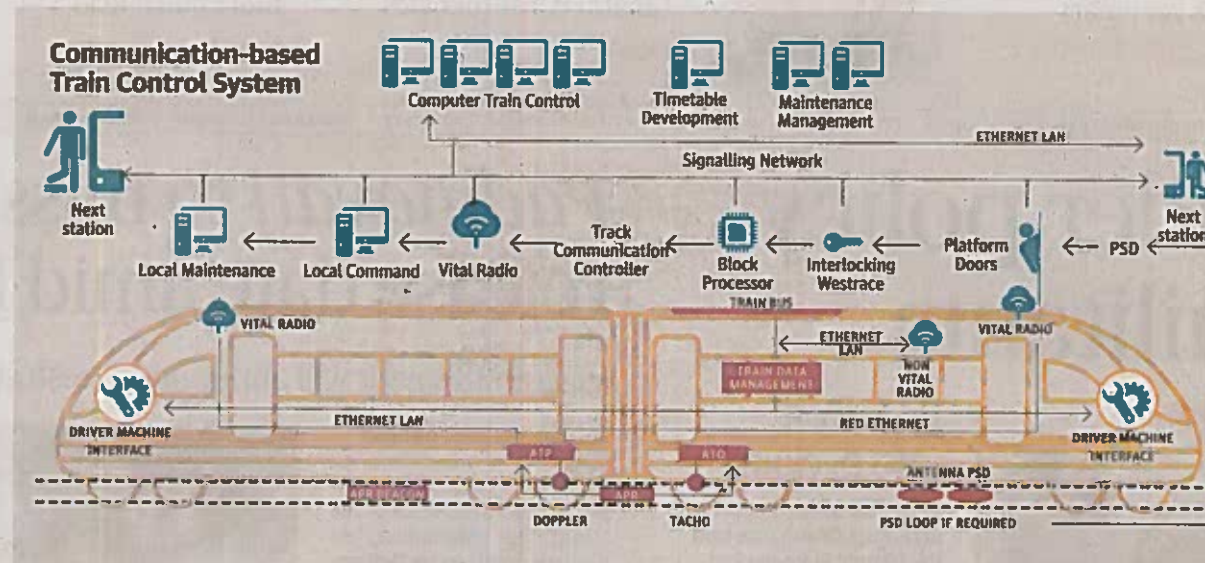
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The Hyderabad Metro Rail (HMR) will have two drivers, one in the front cabin for the onward journey and the other in the rear cabin for the return direction. But wait! Is this not supposed to be the first metro rail system in the country to adopt the Communication-Based Train Control (CBTC) technology for all the three corridors?

The metro rail authorities have been talking about the CBTC ever since the project work commenced. Then why should there be any loco pilots at all to run the metro trains? When this was asked to HMR managing director N.V.S. Reddy, he had an interesting answer.

"The L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad (L&TMRH) has deployed the latest technology available for the metro rail system through CBTC and this can enable automatic train control operations, but for now, we will not be using the technology to the fullest," he explained.

Pray why? Apparently, when the technology was first used in the metro rail



GRAPHIC: SUBYENDU GANGULY

system in Europe without any loco pilot on an experimental basis a few years ago, passengers panicked thinking it was a 'ghost train' and tried to jump off it!

However, Mr. Reddy said in some of the advanced nations, the CBTC system was being used to the fullest and the metro train services were being run without the loco pilots. "What the loco pilots

do in our trains is to keep a close watch on the happenings in the trains and at the stations," he said. They can also operate the opening and closing of the doors, which are generally done automatically.

The trains would be controlled and monitored from the state-of-the-art Operation Control Centre (OCC) at Uppal depot, also with a back

up centre where the giant display panel would indicate the 'trains' movement on all the corridors along with their current locations.

In the unlikely event of the CBTC failure, a fallback system has been put in place as a secondary train detection system. While the Automatic Train Operation (ATO) is the normal mode of operation of trains, the Automatic

Train Protection (ATP) system continuously monitors the safe train operation and initiates necessary action if a train does not respond as expected, according to L&T-MRH officials.

The HMR MD said over a period of time, once the passengers get used to the trains' operations, they would likely be run without the loco pilots.