

HMR footpaths serve as proxy for lounge spaces

Seating spaces near Begumpet, Miyapur and Parade Ground occupied by people at all hours of the day

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Footpaths near metro stations are turning into social spaces that men, women and children are discovering to be safe and free. Civic workers can be seen catching 40 winks near the upcoming station near National Institute of Fashion Technology at Madhapur. The seating spaces near Begumpet, Miyapur, Parade Ground and other stations are occupied by people on the go at all hours of the day. Not by vagabonds or the homeless, but those who want to take a short break from their hectic schedule.

For a city starved of footpaths, the barricaded areas are turning out to be places where people stretch their arms and feet. The transformation is stunning.

"Earlier, the Maitrivanam traffic signal would remind me of people coming out of VT station in Bombay. Not anymore. Even Panjagutta traffic signal is suddenly a lot more disciplined," says Vijaya M., who did a short hop between Panjagutta and Ameerpet station recently.

The footpath near the station is partially ready, but the change is clearly visible.

"There is a change in environment near all the metro stations. People are using footpaths with freedom as railing gives them a sense of security. Even near Kothapet where the road width has shrunk due to the footpath, people are happy," says Murthy, who has been using the metro for the past few months between Nagole and Begumpet.

But Habshiguda footpath is an exception as it is being



The area beneath an overhead metro station being used both as footpath and lounge in the city. (Right) Seating space at Miyapur metro station.

■ K.V.S. GIRI & NAGARA GOPAL

used by two-wheeler riders, he informs.

Work in progress

But the footpaths are still a work in progress as can be seen at Secunderabad East station and Rathifile bus bay. The first-world infrastructure quickly devolves into a third-world facility with pedestrians left to fend for themselves once they exit from there. Even metro passengers who get down from the 'B' arm of the station are left high and dry if they have to reach the railway station or catch a local bus. People can be seen jaywalking dangerously while trying to reach the other side. Matters are not helped as the roads on either side of the railway sta-



tion are over-run by hawkers selling everything from bananas to *mirchi bajji* to school bags and shoes.

"Cities need these places for people to relax. They need soft infrastructure where people can have some activity rather than just

while away time. We have tried to do that at Miyapur when we created art spot and hawkers plaza and even the inaugural plaque is interactive in a way," says architect Shankar Narayan, who has designed the 1.5 km station zone at Miyapur.