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## **Delhi Metro to become more disabled-friendly**

By Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar

NEW DELHI, FEB. 9. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation is now headed towards becoming a lifeline for people with disability as well by facilitating their education and employment through a cheap, reliable and safe transport system, now all set to get even better for those with varying disabilities with installation of more signages, modern equipment and conduct of sensitisation workshops for the Metro staff.

At a meeting with representatives of Samarthyaa, the Centre for Promotion of Barrier Free Environment for Disabled People, the DMRC agreed that sensitisation workshops would be started for the staff depending on availability of time and the conducted visits by disabled persons on the Delhi Metro system would be resumed on weekends since on weekdays it was difficult for parents to bring their children on to the system.

The DMRC spokesperson, Anuj Dayal, who was present at the meeting along with the Chief Architect, Tripta Khurana, said the Corporation would also try to incorporate another good suggestion which was made by Sanjeev Sachdev and Anjali Aggarwal of Samarthyaa regarding installation of signages depicting wheelchairs in white over a blue backdrop at the spot from where disabled people would enter the specially-marked section for them near the cabin car on the first coach.

Following the hour-long meeting, Mr Sachdev appeared very satisfied with the response of the Delhi Metro, which he wants to be "the best Metro in the world in every respect". Samarthyaa, he said, suggested installation of some cost effective techniques during the meeting.

These techniques include talking guides for the vision impaired, pictogram signages on seats marked for the disabled, escalators with four steps so that the disabled are able to park their wheel-chairs on them and a folding step in the driver's cabin which can be used for allowing wheel-chair riding passengers in where there is a gap between the platform and the coach as at the Kashmere Gate station. All these techniques were found to be in use by the Samarthyaa members in Tokyo Metro.

Samarthyaa, which has been working with Delhi Metro since 2002, has also called for redesigning of the Sulabh toilets at the Metro stations as they did not possess the kind of ramps, door closure space or non-slippery floors that would have made them disabled-friendly. "We want universal and inclusive designs on the system so that Delhi Metro sets the standards for all others to follow," said Mr Sachdev.

Ms Aggarwal said while people generally associate train travel with high cabins and difficulties, it is essential that the "power of signages" is used to make them aware about the comforts and friendly nature of the Delhi Metro as this would also facilitate the education and employment of the disabled who ill-afford costly private modes and find the other public transport too difficult to commute on.

In the signage, she said, the key one would be the pictorial representations of wheel chairs which have been suggested on the platform from where the passengers enter the wheel-chair compartment right behind the driver's cabin. Also, similar signages have also been suggested right above this spot and on the exterior of this coach so that people all over the Capital become aware and sensitive about the needs of the disabled.

Finally, Samarthyaa has also suggested making of a short film on the subject for various presentations and telecast on channels so that more and more people adopt the Delhi Metro as their own.