

## CITY

## 'Garment sector workers harassed regularly'

A report on violence in garment factories in Udyog Vihar on February 12 has revealed how workers are regularly harassed by the management: Page 4



## Brace yourself for a power hike this week

The DERC has completed the process of analysing the power purchase adjustment petitions submitted by the discoms and will announce the percentage surcharge to be imposed within a day or two: Page 5

## Delhi Connect

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**I take the Metro to college and it's quite safe. But, walking from home to the station, I've experienced men passing lewd comments. They even sing songs. The Metro is safe only because of the women's compartment. In the general compartment, there is a lot of pushing and ogling.** — **KAVERI ARORA,** DELHI UNIVERSITY STUDENT



**I prefer to take auto-rickshaws as they are relatively safer than buses. Once, when a friend and I were in a packed bus, a man standing behind us kept inching closer. We moved to the front of the bus and he followed us. Then, we just got off the next stop.** — **CHAJIAN LOWANG,** CIVIL SERVICES ASPIRANT



**Governments come and go, but the issue of women's safety remains where it is. Even now there are no fast track courts, streets are not well-lit and economical cabs are becoming dangerous. I don't have much hope from authorities. We have to take care of ourselves.** — **ZERLENE RAHMAN,** WORKS WITH AN AIRLINE COMPANY



**Travelling alone at night in Delhi and NCR is a horror. Metro is the only safe means of transportation. But I also feel that cases in Delhi get highlighted as it is the Capital. Brutal rapes in many other States are never given due importance.** — **SHRIPARNA SAHA,** CONTENT WRITER



From Ministers and law keepers to professionals and students commuting in buses and metros, The Hindu reporters Kritika Sharma Sebastian, Damini Nath and Sweta Goswami talk to a wide cross-section of Delhiites to find out if the city can ever be a safe haven for women

# FEAR STALKS CAPITAL

## TALKING POINT

## Security of women when they are on the go is our top priority

Transport Minister Gopal Rai talks to Sweta Goswami on what the AAP govt is doing to keep the streets of Delhi safe

**Cases of crime against women using app-based cab services are on the rise. What are the safety measures that have been taken by the AAP government so far?**

Security of women when they are on the go is our top priority. But, this does not mean we do not want to promote the interests of consumers or that we are against any kind of business. All we expect from the companies providing these facilities is that they should be transparent and should abide by the rules. If they were following the rulebook, then why didn't they submit the documents of registered drivers on time? We would not tolerate cheating of any kind.

**What is the status of AAP's key poll promises toward ensuring women's safety?**

We are working on it and special allocations are being made in the upcoming Budget towards installing CCTV cameras in buses and police stations. So far 200 cameras have been installed in buses. We are also enhancing our civil defence team who will be deployed as marshals in DTC buses. Earlier, our plan was to deploy home guards in buses. But, there is a delay in this as most of our home guard personnel are currently deployed to assist the Delhi Police. So as Plan B, we will be deploying civil defence teams in buses.

**Are there plans to hire more female drivers for DTC buses?**

We have one, V Saritha, already on board. Not many women are coming forward at present. So we are working on easing the rules for anyone who is interested. For example, the rules state that a driver must have a licence to drive an HMV and have three years of experience of driving a bus. However, women will now need only a commercial licence for light motor vehicles (LMV) to apply for the job.

**Does the government have any plan to provide transportation service during night hours?**

At present, there is no such plan in the pipeline. But, if the need arises we may begin our own cab service or depute more night buses at some key points.

## Speak out! Someone is listening

With Delhi Police taking steps to make the city a safer place for women, Damini Nath spoke to Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Varsha Sharma, who is responsible for the Special Police Unit (SPU) for Women and Children, on the initiatives taken

**When incidents like the December 16 gang-rape or the Uber assault happen, the perception becomes that travelling in Delhi is unsafe for women. Do you think that is fair?**

I cannot comment on that as it is one's own perspective. But I can tell you that the Delhi Police is doing many things in that regard. For instance, in the day-time we have pickets from the local police's side and we have personnel stationed at bus stops.

**What is the SPU for women and children doing to improve security?**

A special drive in buses is organised by our self-defence team of 40 women constables. I choose the routes at random and send groups of four or five constables to travel in each bus. They are trained in martial arts. They ask the women passengers if they are experiencing any harassment. Behind the bus, a police vehicle with a lady inspector is there. In case any woman complains, the bus is stopped immediately, the complainant and the miscreant are asked to come out, and the inspector, with the help of local police, helps out the woman.

**How successful has this initiative been?**

Initially, women passengers don't come up to the constables with their issues. But, when they see them for four or five days, they open up. They feel more confident. Our presence in the bus is enough for them. It acts as a deterrent for those who may try to harass women. But, there are some passengers who ask 'why are you here, the bus is already overcrowded'.

**What is your advice to women who may come across harassment while travelling?**

As part of our society, women have always been told to keep quiet. But, we don't have to accept everything silently. You can speak out. There is someone to listen to you. Your body language should show you are confident. Dial 100 or 1091 (women's helpline). Tell your family and friends immediately. It makes a difference if you are confident and say "look I've told the police or my family about you".



**IN THE DARK:** Street attack survivors are not the best fighters, they are the people who stay alert and aware, and have a strategy to escape to safety — PHOTO : FILE PHOTO



**Nirbhaya Be Fearless:** The app allows users to reach emergency contacts with a single click that works as a distress signal. It allows users to share their whereabouts with family and friends. By pressing the power button of the phone, an SOS message is sent to a pre-selected list of contacts.



**SafetiPin :** The GPS navigation app allows friends and family members to track the movements of the user if the 'track me' option has been switched on. It gives users pictures and a 'safety score' of different locations as well.



**One Touch Emergency Response :** With a monthly subscription fee of Rs.250, the app allows users to call the emergency control centre with just one tap. The centre will call back and send members of its 180-strong military trained personnel to help within 15-20 minutes using the GPS location.

Every time 28-year-old Sushma Sharma (name changed on request) goes out for a movie, she looks for a male friend to drop her home after the late night show. An executive with a multinational firm and otherwise an independent woman, Sushma is finicky when it comes to using public transport especially during late hours.

"Earlier, I used to hire a cab to come back home after a late night movie. But, these days, I avoid taking a cab. I don't trust them any more," she said.

Two recent incidents of sexual assault on women by drivers of cabs they hired through mobile-app based taxi services have shaken their trust, which, otherwise, are considered to be the safest mode of transport in Delhi especially during late hours. Another incident where a woman was dropped off mid-way late at night by a cabbie after a tiff also shows how vulnerable women are while travelling alone.

Delhi is known as one of the most unsafe cities for women in the country. The horrific rape and murder of a 21-year-old physiotherapist inside a moving bus on the chilling night of December 16 in 2012 in South Delhi, which resulted in nationwide protests, exposed the vulnerability of women travelling alone after dusk.

While crowded Delhi buses are considered unsafe even during the day time, metro ride is safe only till the passengers are inside the metro premises.

Lack of options for last mile connectivity and poorly-lit roads make things

no better for men and women alike who travel by Delhi Metro.

Safety audits conducted by various organisations in the past few months show how the number of women on streets after dusk falls drastically and women are hampered by a lack of gender diversity in public spaces.



**Two recent incidents of sexual assault on women by drivers of cabs they hired through mobile-app based taxi services have left them shaken and at a loss** — PHOTO : FILE PHOTO

The Delhi Police claim they are doing all that they can to ensure safety of women. "We deploy additional PCR vans outside shopping malls and entertainment places till late in the night in order to ensure safety of women," a senior police officer said.

But is it enough to just deploy police outside malls and cinema halls? What about checking on the roads? What about safety of women inside public transports, buses? Metros?

These questions remain to haunt the women in the city. Sure women have started speaking up and are ready to approach the police to file a complaint. But action taken on these complaints is still not enough to mitigate the fear in women.

According to the data collected by the Delhi Police, a maximum number of cases of eve-teasing and molestation happens either at the bus stops or inside buses.

Nothing substantial has however been done either by the police or Delhi Transport Corporation to stop these cases. A meagre 40 constables have been given the task of checking molesters in the 4,705 large fleet of DTC.

Combat and martial art expert Arun Sharma said women need to be more aware of their surroundings while travelling alone and after the dusk to feel safer. "Being aware of yourself and your surroundings is probably the single most important aspect of avoidance. Street attack survivors are not the best fighters, they are the people who stay alert and aware, and have a strategy to escape to safety," Sharma said.

## CREATING A SAFETY NET FOR WOMEN

From emergency helplines to pub deadlines, Delhi Police has taken a range of initiatives to ensure that women can move around the city unrestricted

### SAFETY NET

► **Helpline No. 1091:** Staff on the 10 lines attend to calls by women in distress

► **Himmat SOS app:** This mobile safety app, available on Android phones, provides assistance to women in emergency situations

► **Help Desks:** A dedicated telephone line has been set up at all police stations to attend to women's complaints

► **Check Point:** Intensive patrolling ensured on vulnerable routes to ensure safety of women returning from entertainment hubs and malls

► **Local police and PCR vans** are deployed outside schools and colleges, especially girls' colleges

► **Timeline :** Pubs have been asked strictly to close by 1 a.m. Last customer should be in by 12 a.m.

► **Public Transport:** All women employees should get a drop back home by a cab after 8 p.m. In case a woman employee is alone in the cab, a guard should accompany the woman. If there are other male colleagues, the woman should not be the last one to be dropped.

► **Cab Tab:** Cab drivers should display their identity cards and driving licence on the wind shield so that the details are visible and available to people



### OFF THE TRACK

A security audit by the Delhi Police found that areas around 18 metro stations were poorly lit.

<b>Patel Chowk:</b> yellow line	<b>Peeragarhi:</b> green line
<b>Jahangirpuri:</b> yellow line	<b>Nangloi:</b> green line
<b>Netaji Subhash Place:</b> red line	<b>Dwarka More:</b> blue line
<b>Akshardham Mandir:</b> blue line	<b>Dwarka Sector-14:</b> blue line
<b>Mayur Phase-I Extension:</b> blue line	<b>Dwarka Sector-13:</b> blue line
<b>Shadipur:</b> blue line	<b>Dwarka Sector-12:</b> blue line
<b>Pulbangash:</b> red line	<b>Dwarka Sector-11:</b> blue line
<b>Uttam Nagar West:</b> blue line	<b>Dwarka Sector-10:</b> blue line
<b>Uttam Nagar East:</b> blue line	<b>Dwarka Sector-9:</b> blue line

## CASE STUDY : TICKET TO HELL

### A DTC bus ride? Never again

It was like any other weekday for me, I had made my plans, meetings were fixed and I left home at the usual time. But the only difference was that instead of taking a metro, I decided to take a Delhi Transport Corporation bus to reach Vasant Vihar.

When I stepped on to the bus, it was extremely crowded with very less space to even stand. Somehow, I found a place to sit after a woman vacated her seat.

After a few seconds I noticed a couple of boys standing right opposite me, ogling at me. I felt so disgusted, my blood started boiling but I decided to ignore and started reading a book. But I guess they hadn't had their share of fun and decided to disgust me a little more. One of them came and stood besides me and started rubbing his body on my shoulder. When I turned and looked at the guy, he said, "hey sexy, give me your number"...., a middle-aged man standing next to him smirked and told the woman next to him, ye ajkal ke bachche (youngsters these days)..I knew there was no point in asking help from anyone in the bus and got off at the next stop. After this experience, I decided never to travel again in a DTC bus.

**(The writer works with an NGO in Delhi)**

### Metro ride that struck fear

On a Sunday afternoon, after having lunch with my friend in Hauz Khas village, I decided to head back home. Metro being the easiest available means of transport, we boarded the train from Hauz Khas metro station and because my friend was a guy, I did not mind the general coach.

Being a weekend, the metro was full. As I positioned myself close to the exit door I felt a sense of unease as if someone was watching me. But I decided to ignore it and continued talking to my friend.

When we were exiting from the metro at Rajiv Chowk, someone pinched my back really hard. I was zapped, when I turned back and tried to find out who had done this, I could not locate anyone, he was lost in the crowd. I wanted to catch hold of him and ask him, how dare he? Just because the metro is crowded, he thought he could take advantage of the situation and misbehave with a girl without getting caught.

Since I had no idea who did this to me, I could not even register a complaint, but I was screaming within. I was extremely disgusted at my helplessness. When I told my friend he suggested that we should complain to the security guards, but whom would I complain against?

An unknown man I did not even see?  
**(The writer is a final year student in JNU)**

