

Dedicated buses, 24X7 monitoring of transport for Games athletes

By Mayank Aggarwal

New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS) Dedicated buses, GPS-based vehicles, CCTVs...Organisers of the Commonwealth Games in the Indian capital are leaving no stone unturned to ensure a smooth and secure ride for international athletes, support staff and the media.

Right from the time they land here to the time they fly back, elaborate plans have been drawn up by the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee (CGOC) to take care of athletes during the Oct 3-14 event.

The CGOC is leaving nothing to chance after reports from private security experts scared sportspersons from Australia, England and New Zealand, saying they would be going to India at their own risk.

Jiji Thomson, the Kerala cadre IAS officer who holds a pivotal position in the CGOC, said things have more or less fallen in place and the security agencies have an impeccable blueprint to protect athletes and officials as they move around the city.

"Keeping in mind all the concerns, everything has been planned to the minutest possible detail. After the athletes arrive at the recently renovated Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), they would be taken to the Games Village near the Akshardham temple in east Delhi through air-conditioned low-floor CNG buses," Thomson told IANS in an interview.

The security agencies, CGOC and the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) would be working in close coordination at the airport and there would be a dedicated parking area for the Games vehicles at IGIA to avoid traffic glitches.

"Every bus carrying athletes would be accompanied by a well-equipped security vehicle to ensure its safety. There would be dedicated traffic lanes for the Games vehicles," Thomson said.

A transport hub is coming up near the Millennium Park for the Games vehicles and a transport mall at the Village.

"There will be a 24X7 control room manned by traffic police, DTC officials and CGOC volunteers and they will supervise all transport operations through GPS (Global Positioning System)-based vehicle tracking system. And there will also be CCTVs to aid security," he added.

There will also be dedicated buses to carry athletes and team officials to different competition and training venues and back to the Village. Their designated primary routes and secondary routes in emergency have already been identified.

"On the day of the opening and closing ceremonies, nearly 7,500 athletes and support staff would have to be transported to the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium within two to three hours. It will be a gigantic effort and it will be done without a hassle," Thomson told IANS.

Then there are plans to make over 100,000 expected tourists to the Games feel comfortable.

Over 500 buses would be pressed into service to cater to an estimated 7,500 athletes and their support staff, 1,250 technical officials and 3,000 mediapersons and broadcasters. They will all use dedicated buses.

For mediapersons, a shuttle bus service would be available from their hotels to the various venues and to the main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre at Pragati Maidan.

CGOC has also earmarked hundreds of limousines, sedans, SUVs and other swanky vehicles for the Games VIPs who include senior officials of the Commonwealth Games Federation and the CGOC.

"These cars will probably be sponsored by the automobile manufacturers and we are in discussions with them," Thomson said.

The CGOC has also devised a 'Vehicle Access and Parking Permit Scheme' (VAPPS) to control all vehicle access and parking entitlement during the Commonwealth Games.

"At the end of it all, the arrangements will be to everyone's satisfaction and nothing will go wrong for want of effort," said a confident Thomson.

Shooters have already dispelled the fears, describing the security cover provided to them in two words - "best ever"! The shooters at the Commonwealth championship are impressed with the impregnable four-layer security ring the athletes will have at all the venues during the Games, starting with an outer level, then middle, then inner and finally the exclusive.

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