

Forget VIPs. People 'inaugurate' flyover

Anindya Chattopadhyay

Dipak Kumar Dash & Ipsita Chakravarty | TNN



New Delhi: With a crash, the barricade at the Rao Tularam Marg-Palam flyover fell to the ground. 'Chak De,' someone cried. It was 6.10 on Monday evening. Inspired by a TOI report which quoted supercop Kiran Bedi questioning the delay in opening the flyover, recalling how she had got the Zuari bridge opened in similar circumstances in Goa, people seized the initiative and declared the flyover "open".

It was an unprecedented move. A crowd of over a hundred gathered at the foot of the flyover near Vasant Vihar, chanted shlokas, broke a coconut and cut a ribbon — and then, they dedicated the flyover to the people.

This wake-up call to the authorities came after an endless wait for politicians to inaugurate the flyover.

The cops and National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) did attempt to prevent the opening. Entry to the flyover from the Vasant Vihar road was blocked by huge concrete barricades (weighing about two tons each). At certain points, there were two layers which could only be removed by cranes.

► 'We don't need a formal inauguration', P 2

RIGHT OF WAY: The Gurgaon-Palam flyover thrown open by the people, for the people, on Monday

'It's done, we don't need a formal inauguration'

NHAI Promises To Throw Open Missing Link In Expressway

Dipak Kumar Dash & Ipsita Chakravarty | TNN

Photos: Anindya Chattopadhyay

New Delhi: Inspired by a TOI report, a crowd of over hundred gathered near Vasant Vihar on Monday evening and declared Rao Tularam Marg-Palam flyover "open". Interestingly, traffic management was for a change good and ensured not too many people stopped to join the crowd, as Amit Agrawal of Vasant Kunj pointed out.

People managed to topple one barricade with the police watching. N N Mishra, a protester from east Delhi, then darted through an opening on a cycle. "The traffic cops should help remove the barricades since they are facing the tough task of managing the traffic on this stretch. We hope they will open it. Why should anyone open it now when the inauguration has been done by the people?" he asked.

Reacting to the people's action, Kiran Bedi said they had set an example for the country. "They should not stop here. They must file a PIL, seeking an explanation from the government why a facility that has been created for the people should not be opened even after its completion. The government owes them an answer. It's an indication that things are changing in the country," she added.

Meanwhile, sources in NHAI said a letter has been sent to the surface transport ministry urging that the flyover should be opened quickly. "The ministry is aware of everything. We are doing a review of the safety aspect and the flyover will be opened soon," said NHAI member (technical) Nirmaljeet Singh. But he added that only the ministry could give the date for its formal opening.

"Because some politician has to come and inaugurate it, we can't be taken for a ride,"

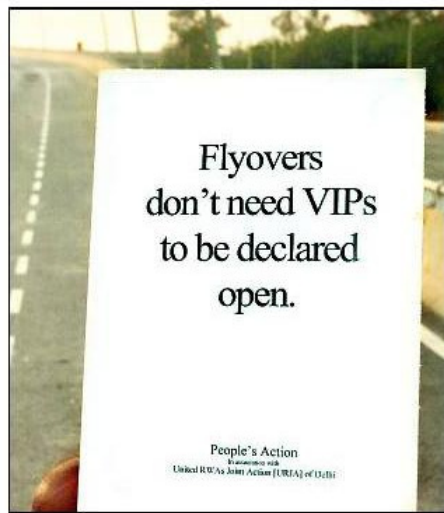


PEOPLE POWER: Residents throw open the RTR flyover in Gurgaon on Monday

fumed People's Action president Sanjay Kaul. "Since now any formal inauguration will have no significance, we expect good sense to prevail upon the authorities who should open the flyover to public immediately."

Many who could not make it to the event expressed support for the move. "Everyday, I felt like doing it since we could see everything was ready but we were not allowed to use the flyover. If a minister or some other VIP is interested in inaugurating it, he/she could do it even at the toll plaza in the future," said Vinod Kumar of DLF-II who takes the road regularly.

"We saw the TOI story this morning and that encouraged us to take this step. It's an encouraging sign of people's role in democracy," said Virender K Arora of People's Action.



"We are not inaugurating the Suez Canal here. This is just a 2.5-km-long flyover. It is time the public did something. Media plays a vital role in the process because everytime it takes up some issue, it gets people thinking"

Sanjay Kaul | ACTIVIST



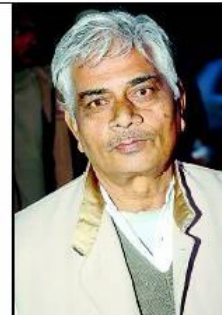
"We had to wait for hours in the jam near the flyover everyday. But this morning, when I read the TOI article about Kiran Bedi's decision to open a bridge in Goa, I was inspired to do the same. In the evening, people had actually done it"

Ranjana Mehrotra | IT ENGINEER



"People are running out of patience waiting for dignitaries to open the bridge. This is not acceptable. TOI wrote about this problem and inspired a set of people to take the proactive step. We depend on the media to address our woes"

S S Talwar | RWA MEMBER



"People are helpless, waiting for politicians and VIPs to find time to open this important flyover. Public money has been utilized for building the flyover and they should get its returns at the earliest"

R K Agarwal | SENIOR CITIZEN