

THE VOICE OF TRAFFIC HAVE-NOTS

Geetam Tiwari

CHAMPION OF PEDESTRIAN RIGHTS

This IIT-Delhi professor has gone beyond her brief to make a difference to the city's roads and the chaotic traffic on it. Remember her when the High Capacity Bus System rolls out.

■ Joel Joseph

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In the maddening rush that defines life in the city, not many have the time to speak up for pedestrians and cyclists, who're losing spaces to make way for cars whose numbers daily seem to rise out of control. Geetam Tiwari has. An Associate Professor at IIT-Delhi, Tiwari has been instrumental in changing the way residents of the city will commute in the years to come. She is behind the soon-to-be-introduced High Capacity Bus System (HCBS) and she has also taken up the cause of cyclists and pedestrians who get run over by vehi-

cles daily on the city's roads. "I am very happy that at last the HCBS would roll out this September, almost 10 years after we had proposed it to the government," says Tiwari. "The most promising achievement for me would be the launch of the HCBS corridor." Pointing to the impact it will have on a congested crossing like the one near the ITO, she says, "The day the HCBS is introduced at ITO, 80 per cent of the congestion problem would be solved. The government should not construct flyovers and underpasses there."

With 17 years of professional experience in transport planning and traffic engineering in India, Bangladesh, the US and

African countries, Tiwari believes that the only way to decongest the city is to have an economical and efficient public transport system. And she is against flyovers. "Instead of flyovers, there should be dedicated corridors for buses and light motor vehicles, apart from a separate corridor for cyclists. There are over 1.5 million cyclists in Delhi who risk their lives every day they go out for work."

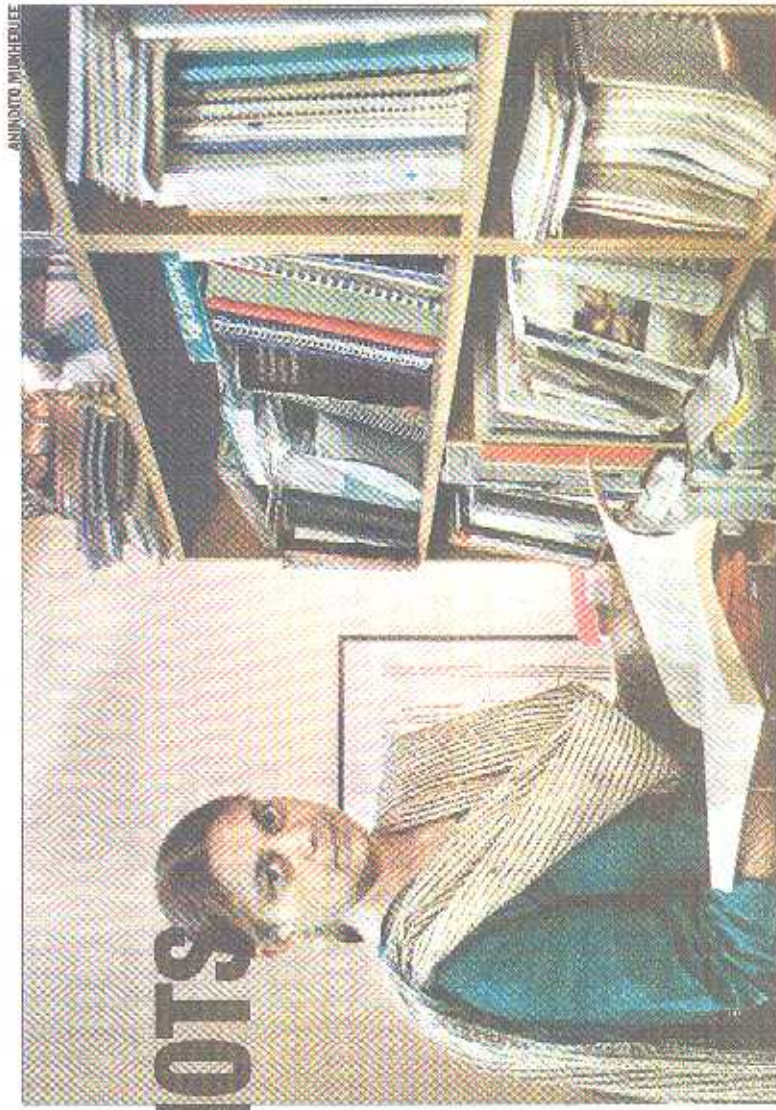
Tiwari makes a strong case for cyclists and pedestrians.

"We must make this city 100 per cent pedestrian-friendly and realise that most commuters are pedestrians even though they travel by buses," she says. "We had given the first report to the Delhi government in 1995 after conducting a detailed survey and I am glad that it will finally see the light of day." The professor adds that at IIT, students are discouraged to drive cars on the campus. "We have a bank of bicycles for students to use free of cost," she says.

Tiwari, who has a PhD in

Transport Planning and Policy from the University of Chicago, isn't quite optimistic about the 2010 Commonwealth Games. "Nobody seems to be bothered about what will happen after the Games," she says. "They are hurriedly building flyovers to ease the traffic. Does it mean there wouldn't be any traffic problems after the event?"

But with the organisers still debating issues concerning the infrastructure for the Games, the post-Games scenario must be lost somewhere in the din. ■



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