

Sole woman engineer calls the shots on Metro tunnel

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Mumbai: Wearing a white hard hat, tough workmen's boots and green fluorescent jacket, she watches over a group of supervisors and the operator as a giant drill digs into Mumbai's belly. Meet Nimisha Singh, 26, the only woman civil engineer with expertise in tunnel technology recruited for the Metro III underground corridor.

Nimisha, from UP, joined the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation as deputy engineer (civil) in August 2015 and has been working shoulder-to-shoulder with her male colleagues on a stretch between Mumbai Central and Achary Atre Marg.



NOT A MAN'S WORLD: Nimisha Singh, 26, says she's rough and tough

They are at the moment digging the shaft through which the tunnel-boring machine will be lowered. What made her choose this outdoor and grimy work? "I always wanted to be a civil engineer as my family

members are associated with the field. As a kid, I used to visit construction sites to observe the work," she said, tucking her long hair behind her ear.

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At first, men weren't ready to take instructions from me, but now I've built a rapport: Nimisha

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The Bulandshahr girl admits with a rue smile that all her 12 women batchmates have taken off-field jobs like planning and design, as most women in civil engineering do not prefer on-site work.

Nimisha passed out as an engineer in 2013. "I give a lot of credit to my parents as they have always encouraged me." Her father is a lawyer-politician and her mother is government counsel.

Questions inevitably turn to working alongside male colleagues in what is largely a men-dominated field. "It was challenging. Mumbai has a different work culture than Delhi, but here too, male employees were not keen to take instructions from me. Gradually, I was able to build a rapport and now things are working well," said Nimisha, who has worked with the capital's Metro network.

Nimisha started with a private firm working on the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's underground corridor in October 2013. "I had no prior experience as tunnelling is not taught in the college. I had worked on irrigation and canal projects as an intern in college. But when I saw the advertisement on the web about the vacancy, I straightway applied for the job," said Nimisha, who



Nimisha Singh poses with a tunnel-boring machine. Digging in her sector could start in May

is single and focused on her career now. The interviewer in the firm made the difficulties clear: irregular work hours and tough working conditions. That wasn't going to deter her. "I'm a rough-and-tough person and was keen to work in this field," she said.

She met her first hurdle soon after joining. The expatriates working on the DMRC project were apprehensive about her ability. "They were critical,

THE METRO WOMAN

Name | Nimisha Singh, 26

Hometown | Bulandshahr, UP, which falls under the National Capital Region

School | Nirmala Convent

Class XII | Delhi Public School

Civil engineering | Madan Mohan Malviya College, passed out in June 2013

First job | Joined L&T-SUCJ joint venture for DMRC in Oct 2013

Present employment | Deputy engineer (civil) with MMRC



and not keen to give me exposure either. For a few weeks, they did not even allow me to work. But the Indians in the firm convinced them, after which I was given access to work and the technology," said Nimisha, a foodie and adventure sports junkie who picks trekking and rafting as her favourites. She relaxes with music and is always looking for a chance to travel.

Nimisha said she finds tunnelling

Now, WR's Matunga Rd station to be all-women

Matunga Road station on Western Railway will become the second railway station in Mumbai to have all-women staff from March 8, which is International Women's Day. Central Railway's Matunga station was the first station in Indian Railways to be manned by women. WR chief PRO Ravinder Bhakar said, "We have posted 31 women as frontline staff from commercial, operating and security departments." CR will deploy all women ticket-checking staff on Koyna Express and Deccan Queen from March 8. CR divisional railway manager S K Jain said, "We will upgrade facilities for women staff at various stations."

—Manthan K Mehta

more challenging in Mumbai than Delhi, where the work is mostly off the road. "In Mumbai, the utilities are not mapped and we have to work through the road by barricading the stretch."

Her ultimate aim is to be an expert on mechanized and conventional tunnelling. "I want to have post-graduate degree in tunnelling technology and underground construction," said Nimisha.