How Pune is done in by poor public transport

The poor public transport is largely to blame for the city's burgeoning traffic population.

The Regional Transport Office figures show that till December 2009, the number of registered vehicles was 18,91,929, not including the six lakhs vehicles in Pimpri-Chinchwad. In Pune, over 74 per cent of the total vehicles, 14,10,821 are two-wheelers. Cars and jeeps account for about 34 per cent of the total vehicles. In sharp contrast, the number of PMPL buses is a mere 1,300.

With such a high number of private vehicles on the city's roads, Pune is already among the most polluted cities in the country.

"As of now, the PMPL runs about 1,300 buses in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad area. While the actual requirement is 2,500 considering the new areas added to the city limits. The PMPL has a fleet of 1,545 buses of which 321 are hired from contractors. With JNNURM funds coming, we hope to get 500 new buses soon," said top PMPL officials.

However, the purchase of buses under JNNURM is stuck as opposition has been divided over the type of buses to be bought. While the standing committee insists on buying buses with doors on the left, the PMPL wanted to go with those with doors on both sides, since the bus stops in PMC area are on the left.

"In such a situation, people have to opt for private vehicles. Most would prefer to use the public transport if there is good service and frequency," said college student Tejas Deshpande.

The large number of vehicles have given rise to many problems, such as accidents on city roads and the highways that pass through Pune. The number of mishaps in 2009 almost doubled since 2000. There were 533 (228 fatal and 245 serious) mishaps in 2000 which in 2009 rose to 906 (383 fatal and 523 serious). While 49 per cent accidents in 2000 (263 accidents) were due to speeding, the number increased to 59 per cent in 2009 (540 accidents).

Vehicular congestion has also increased the air pollution in Pune which was ranked 8th in the list of 91 most polluted cities by the ministry of environment and forests in 2009. The average PM10 level (suspended particulate matter) is 82 micrograms per cubic meter (ug/m3) while the permissible limit of Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) is 60 ug/m3 as per the ambient air quality monitoring standards.