

[Avishek G Dastidar](#) Published Feb 27 2012

## **Railways: Pitroda panel for fund push**

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The Indian Railways is about to receive yet another high-level report recommending a huge outlay from the Central government this year and the subsequent four years, to save the national transporter from a financial collapse and upgrade it to a modern transport system on par with global standards.

The Expert Committee on Modernisation, formed in September, 2011 under Sam Pitroda, Adviser to the Prime Minister, will present its report to Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi on Monday.

Sources said one of the key recommendations is likely to be a projection of as much as trebling the annual Gross Budgetary Support to the Railways this year, and continue with that for the next five years spread into the 12th Plan period, in order to part-fund the recommended modernisation processes.

Going by its terms of reference, while the report is going to stress major overhauling of the signalling system, tracks and locomotives, the crux of the recommendations — sourcing the funds needed for the major overhaul of the age-old railway system — is going to be the high point of the report.

It is learnt that while the modernisation process would need to be funded by generating around Rs 9 lakh crore in the next five years, around 30 per cent is projected to be as Gross Budgetary Support, while the majority would form Railways' estimated internal generation involving, among other things, the commercial use of land and airspace at stations and other railway properties. The Railways got around Rs 20,000 crore as Budget outlay.

This will be the second high-level committee, after the Anil Kakodkar Committee on Safety last week, that is expected to call for fund infusion into the Indian Railways for a major upgrade.

The Pitroda committee is expected to also emphasise on executing projects with Public-Private Partnerships — something that has not really taken off in the Railways in the past.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways has already written to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister seeking more Central funds. Even the railwaymen's federation has pleaded with the PM for a Budget outlay of Rs 50,000 crore this year to save it from collapse.

### **The French Connection**

To use French technology in modernisation process, the Indian Railways is in talks with SNCF, the French Railway, for a possible continued collaboration.

The Railways is already in an agreement with its French counterpart in development of fire simulation software for coaches, study of high-speed corridor connecting Ahmedabad-Mumbai-Pune and redevelopment plan of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminal in Mumbai. The contract reportedly expires in May.

“Safety, modernisation, high-speed railway have been identified as possible cooperation area,” Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi said in a meeting with French delegation led by Minister for Transport Thierry Mariani. *ENS*

## **France to help India realise high-speed train dream**

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By [Saahil Anant](#) Feb 26 2012 , New Delhi

France has offered to build India's first high-speed train line between Pune-Mumbai-Ahmedabad. French companies are also willing to set up manufacturing facilities in India for production of high-speed trains with related infrastructure.

French transport minister Thierry Mariani met railways minister Dinesh Trivedi on Friday to discuss possibilities around providing infrastructure for rail networks as well as manufacturing of high-speed trains in India.

"French government has agreed to finance feasibility study (for high-speed train network) in India. It is more of a medium-to-long term project and not really short-term. For the short-term, we have also discussed renovation of classical (railway) lines in India," Mariani said on his four-day visit to India. He added that it typically takes four to five years to develop a rail network.

France has offered to chip in with companies that have been responsible for shaping up the European nation's high-speed railway system. This involves French companies such as SNCF (national corporation of French railways), the country's state-owned railway network operator; RFF (or the French rail network) that takes care of maintenance and a public sector company involved in regulating safety aspects in railways, Mariani said. "If given some contracts, companies such as Alstom can set up units in India for production of railway (systems)," Mariani added.

Trivedi is expected to visit France April-end this year to take a look at France's railway operations. Indian Railways has identified six corridors for building high-speed rail networks in the country but are yet to execute them.

Last month, Trivedi had said that India has decided to set up a high-level working group along with Japan – the pioneer in bullet trains, to examine various issues relating to establishment of high-speed rail corridors in the country.

Mariani will meet civil aviation minister Ajit Singh and UDD minister Kamal Nath during his visit lasting till February 27. "The EU-ETS (emission trading system) will of course be one subject (to discuss with Singh)," Mariani said, without divulging nature of discussions to be held. India along with 22 other nations has opposed EU's decision to impose carbon tax on all flights landing or taking off from Europe under ETS.

## **France to discuss Airbus 380 issue with India**

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STAFF WRITER 2/24/2012 7:27:00 PM

**New Delhi, Feb 24 (PTI)** With India opposing entry of the world's largest aircraft Airbus 380 into the country, French Transport Minister Thierry Mariani is likely to take up the issue with Civil Aviation Minister Ajit Singh.

The French Minister, who is on a three-day visit to India, said out of 50 airports across the world, only airports in Delhi and Mumbai have denied permission to land the aircraft.

In spite of demands from Lufthansa, Emirates and Singapore Airlines, government has not been allowing any foreign airline from bringing in the 'super jumbo' passenger aircraft as it would give tough competition to Indian carriers on major international routes.

No Indian airline has acquired the A-380s, though cash-strapped Kingfisher has placed orders for five of these aircraft.

Headquartered in Toulouse, France, Airbus is owned by EADS.

Apart from it, Mariani is also to take up the matter of European Union - Emission Trading Scheme (EU-ETS), as India is leading the non-EU countries on this matter.

The visiting minister today met Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi.

"One fourth of our discussion was on safety issue while rest was on cooperation in other areas like hi-speed trains, in which France has expertise and since 1981, when the first hi-speed train started no accident or life have been lost," Mariani said.

"I understand the hi-speed trains is a medium and long term project in India and not a short term. At present French companies are working on three projects which include feasibility study of Pune-Mumbai-Ahmedabad train route," he told reporters here.

"We have three different agencies looking after various aspect of the rail network. One of the agency is the operator of rail tracks, other constructs the rail network while the third, which is an independent government body, looks after the safety aspect of the rail network," Mariani said, adding that the Railway Minister evinced interest in the third agency.

The French Minister said his country is also interested in working on developing on the urban transport and semi-urban transport system as Indian towns are developing fast and there is need for transport system which connects people there.

"India has done impressively well in development of Metro, but there is a need for more multi-modal transport system," he said, adding that France has expertise in urban and semi-urban transport system.

Mariani said France is interested to work in more Indian cities and replicate the model of Bangalore Metro, for which France has given about 110 million Euro for feasibility study.

After his meeting with Urban Development Minister Kamal Nath and the Civil Aviation Minister, the visiting minister is schedule to go to Chennai and Puducherry. In Chennai, he would be meeting Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa.

During his stay in Puducherry, the Minister would also meet French nationals there.

### **Modernisation: Railways likely to renew MoU with France's SNCF**

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STAFF WRITER 2/24/2012 8:57:00 PM

**New Delhi, Feb 24 (PTI)** With an aim to use French technology in large-scale modernisation of Indian Railways, the national transporter is likely to renew its agreement with SNCF, the French Railway, this year.

The Railways' agreement with its French counterpart is in force till May 14 this year.

SNCF has been involved in development of fire simulation software for coaches, study of high-speed corridor connecting Ahmedabad-Mumbai-Pune and redevelopment plan of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminal in Mumbai.

"The necessary dialogue for a fresh MoU with SNCF has already been initiated...Safety, modernisation, high-speed railways have been identified as possible cooperation area," Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi said today in a meeting with French delegation led by Minister for Transport Thierry Mariani.

The meeting assumes significance as Railways plan to undertake massive upgradation of its network and introduce high speed trains.

Besides Mariani, French Ambassador Francois Richier and other senior French officials were part of the delegation.

Upgradation of stations, PPP and business model for implementing large infrastructure projects are also being identified as possible area for Indo-French cooperation.

"We look forward to have a continued cooperation with French Railway and active participation by French experts in our modernisation initiatives," Trivedi said.

Minister of State for Railway K H Muniyappa, who was also present in the meeting, said that India and France share a long history of friendship in the field of railway transport.

## France to discuss Airbus 380 issue with India

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24 Feb, 2012, 08.24PM IST, PTI

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Apart from it, Mariani is also to take up the matter of European Union - Emission Trading Scheme (EU-ETS), as India is leading the non-EU countries on this matter. The visiting minister today met Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi.

"One fourth of our discussion was on safety issue while rest was on cooperation in other areas like hi-speed trains, in which France has expertise and since 1981, when the first hi-speed train started no accident or life have been lost," Mariani said.

"I understand the hi-speed trains is a medium and long term project in India and not a short term. At present French companies are working on three projects which include feasibility study of Pune-Mumbai-Ahmedabad train route," he told reporters here.

## THE HINDU Business Line

### Allow A-380 to fly to Indian airports: French Minister

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Our Bureau

New Delhi, Feb. 24:

The French Government will take up the issue of India not allowing international airlines to operate the Airbus A-380 aircraft, the world's largest commercial jetliner, to airports here.

"Of course, this will be one of the issues which will come up at the meeting with Indian Civil Aviation Minister. There are 15 airports globally which accept the A-380 aircraft. Delhi and Mumbai are the only two airports that do not. It will not be possible for Indian airline companies to buy this aircraft if they cannot fly it to Delhi and Mumbai," the French Minister Transport, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing, Mr Thierry Mariani, said.

The double-decker A-380 airbus aircraft can carry up to 550 passengers on a single flight, almost 150 more passengers than the next largest aircraft currently in service. The Indian authorities have not allowed any international airline to operate the A-380 here despite several operators, including German carrier Lufthansa, Dubai-based Emirates and Singapore Airlines showing interest.

Railway co-operation

The issue of cooperation between Indian Railways and France in various sectors, including in safety, came up at the meeting with the Minister for Railways, Mr Dinesh Trivedi.

"Almost a quarter of the time that I had with Mr Trivedi was devoted to safety. The rest of the meeting focussed on cooperation on railway lines and cooperation between companies," the visiting Minister said.

The Minister said that two companies, including Alstom, that already have a presence here, were willing to set up production in India on the condition they are given some contracts.

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## **France keen to fund bullet train feasibility study**

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TNN | Feb 25, 2012, 02.45AM IST

NEW DELHI: France on Friday showed keen interest in funding the feasibility study of the Pune-Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor of the proposed bullet train service, one of the three stretches that the government plans to implement under phase-I.

French transport minister Thierry Mariani, who is on a three-day visit to India, said they were also interested in providing financial support to Indian cities which plan to build Metro rail. "We have funded 110 million euros for feasibility study of Bangalore Metro, which is almost 10% of the total project cost. We are interested to provide such support to other cities if we are approached by them," the minister said.

Mariani also met railway minister Dinesh Trivedi on Friday. He added that their discussion centred on safety issues and on cooperation in areas like hi-speed trains, in which France has expertise. "We have never had an accident since the speed train was introduced," he added.

The French minister said he would meet aviation minister Ajit Singh and would take up the issue of India opposing entry of the world's largest aircraft Airbus 380 into the country. He added that airports in Delhi and Mumbai had denied permission for the aircraft to land.

Despite demands from international airlines such as Lufthansa and Emirates, the government has not allowed any foreign airline to bring the jumbo aircraft as it would give tough competition to Indian carriers on major international routes.