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Hon'ble Governor stated that my delight is doubled on seeing that the Indian Railways have chosen Chennai as the location for holding the event.

The event promises to be a useful platform for the industry to display their latest technological advancements in Rail Coach Manufacturing, rail Interiors and safety related products. Needless to say this also provide an opportunity for the Indian Railways to showcase its vision for the future.

The Indian Railways is the fourth largest railway network in the world and is probably the largest railway system in the world under a single management.

The Indian Railways runs more than 13,000 passenger trains daily, on both long-distance and suburban routes, from 7,349 stations across India. In the freight segment, the Indian Railways runs more than 9,200 trains daily.

The Indian Railways' rolling stock consists of 277,987 freight wagons, 70,937 passenger coaches and 11,452 locomotives. Being one of the largest Public Sector employers, it has nearly 15 lakhs employees in its ranks.

In 2017-2018, the Railways carried about 8.5 billion passengers and transported about 1.2 billion tons of freight. The Railways have an enviable operating ratio of 96% and an annual revenue of about 30 billion dollars with two-thirds of it coming through freight earnings.

The history of the evolution of Indian Railways system is a long and prestigious one. The first Railway proposals for India were made in Madras in 1832. The country's first train, Red Hill Railway ran from Red Hills to the Chinradripet bridge in Madras in 1837.

India's first passenger train, hauled by three steam locomotives (Sahib, Sindh and Sultan) ran for 34 kilometers with 400 people in 14 carriages on a broad gauge track between Bori Bunder (Mumbai) and Thane on 16 April 1853.

In 1873 the Chennai Central railway station was opened. After that one more junction of Indian Railways namely Secunderabad Junction railway station was

opened in 1874. In 1897, lighting in passenger coaches was introduced by many railway companies and on 3 February 1925, the first electric passenger train in India ran between Victoria Terminus and Kurla.

The organisation of Indian railways into regional zones began in 1951, when the Southern (14 April 1951), Central (5 November 1951) and Western (5 November 1951) zones were created.

In 1988, the first Shatabdi Express was introduced between New Delhi and Jhansi; it was later extended to Bhopal. In February 2000, the Indian Railways website went online. On 3 August 2002, Indian Railways began online train reservations and ticketing. Last year the Railways have decided that the country's entire rail network will be electrified by 2022.

Referring to coaches specifically, the Integral Coach Factory coaches, which are being produced here in Chennai since 1955, constitute the bulk of the current operating stock of coaches. The Indian Railways is a vertically-integrated organization that produces the majority of its rolling stock at in-house production units, except for a few recent exceptions. The Chittaranjan Locomotive Works in Chittaranjan manufactures electric locomotives, and the Diesel Locomotive Works in Varanasi makes Diesel and Electric locomotives and the Diesel-Loco Modernisation Works in Patiala upgrades the WDM-2 locomotives. Some electric locomotives have been supplied by Bharat Heavy Electricals, and locomotive components are being manufactured in other plants around the country. The Rail Wheel Factory at Yelahanka, Bangalore and the Rail Wheel Plant, in Chhapra, Bihar manufacture wheels and axles.

Infrastructure modernisation projects include a high-speed train, from Ahmdabad-Mumbai to come into operation in 2022, redevelopment of 400 stations by monetizing 2,700 acres of spare railway land; doubling tracks to reduce congestion and delays while improving safety, the refurbishing of 12 to 15-year-old coaches at the Carriage Rehabilitation Workshop in Bhopal to enhance passenger amenities and fire safety; Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled tracking of trains to improve safety and service; Digital India-driven digitalisation of the railways to improve efficiency and reduce costs, and reforestation of railway land and along the tracks.

I am informed that solar-powered trains are being planned with the installation of one gigawatt of solar and 130 megawatts of wind power plants, by 2022. India introduced the world's first solar-powered train and 50 coaches with rooftop solar farms in June 2017. Rooftop solar electricity is planned at stations to reduce long-term fuel costs and protect the environment. Locomotive factories are being modernised, including the setting up of two new factories in Bihar: an electric locomotive factory in Madhepura and a diesel locomotive factory in Marhaura, Bio-toilets were introduced from April 2014. And a 200 billion (US $ 3.1 billion) partnership is on the anvil with Alstom France to supply 800 electric locomotives.

The British began to build railways in India primarily for the commercial transport of goods and subsequently for military control to transport troops from place to place. But they little imagined that the fledgling Railways that came into existence in the 19th century will grow into a giant. Today the Indian Railways have diversified and acquired a reputation which has made them successful project consultants and executors not only in India but also in foreign countries. They have pioneered the Metro Rail concept in many cities of India. When this pioneering venture extends its reach to the Tier II towns, an explosion of rail traffics will take place all over India.

The Railways have a great promising future with a highly committed cadre of officers and employees who are specialized in various branches of engineering and in matters of commercial and traffic expertise. Many of the officers at the higher ranks are recruited through Union Public Service Commission, which is known for its merit and reputation.

With all these advantages and with the proposed comprehensive electrification of the Rail network, a larger share of passenger and freight movement will be definitely cornered by the Railways in the coming years. EXPOs such as this will not only enlighten the common public about the benefits which the Railways provide for for common man but also encourage more and more entrepreneurs to participate in setting up enterprises meant to serve the Railways. The Railways by themselves are great providers of employment. Through the spin-of effects of the indigenization of manufacturing for the Indian Railways in the private sector, particularly among the smaller and medium enterprises the growth of employment prospects for skilled and semi-skilled people is bound to multiply phenomenally.

That the Indian Railways will be a part of the Indian growth story in the coming years, is a matter of certainty not a subject of speculation anymore.

I feel extremely happy that the Indian Railways have decided to organize the Rail coach EXPO at this important juncture when they are poised for a quantum leap in business and manufacturing.

I congratulate the Indian Railways for the efforts taken and wish them success in all their endeavours.

On this occasion Mr Ashwani Lohani, Chairman, Railway Board, Indian Railways, Mr R Dinesh, Chairman, CII Southern Region, Mr Sudhanshu Mani, General Manager, Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Mr C P Sharma, Chairman, CII Railway Transport Equipment Division, Mr Shubhranshu, Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer, ICF, Ms. Madhu Vasanthy, Director, CII were present.

Raj Bhavan, Chennai-22 Sd/-

Date : 17.05.2018 Joint Director (PR)