

New Maha govt to push bullet train project, says Vaishnaw

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By Nayan Dave

With the new government having taken charge in Maharashtra, the bullet train project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad is set to get a much needed boost, said Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union minister of railways, communications and electronics & information technology.

Talking to media-persons on the sidelines of a startup event at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI) near Gandhinagar, Vaishnaw said that the former Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra government was not interested the bullet train project, but “hopefully now there would be some momentum on the Maharashtra side, as the state is having the benefit of double-engine government”, he said, adding that work for the bullet train is going on at rapid speed in Gujarat.

The minister said that pillars for the ambitious project have been put up on a 70-km route and foundation work is in advanced stages along over 160 km between Ahmedabad and Vapi. Besides, the construction of bridges on eight rivers is progressing fast.

“We are confident of achieving the target of running India’s first bullet train between Surat and Bilimora stations in 2026,” said the minister. Talking about the ingeniously made Vande Bharat (VB) trains, Vaishnaw said that the success of these trains has been proven, and the railway ministry is all set to roll out another 250 VB trains in coming days. “Just like iPhones, from time to time, upgraded versions of VB trains will be launched with necessary improvements. Nearly 370 railway stations, including Ahmedabad, will be upgraded in line with the redevelopment at Gandhinagar and Bhopal railway stations. In fact, tendering processes for 45 stations have already been completed,” he added.

Commenting on the Digital India initiatives, he said India is relying heavily on technology, adding that the Centre is promoting startups in crucial sectors including railways, defence, postal services, etc. Just a decade ago, there were hardly 800-900 startups, but currently there are 73,000 startups functioning successfully across the country, said Vaishnaw, adding, "At present there are as many as 103 unicorns in the country."

He also stated that startups could avail maximum benefits under the recently approved semiconductor policy through its design-led incentive (DLI) programme. He expressed optimism that the semiconductor sector would generate more than 5 million fresh jobs in the next five years in the country.