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## **With New Government In Maharashtra, Railway Minister Says Hopeful Of Quick Progress On Bullet Train Project**

The second version of the train will begin its run from August, he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target to run 75 Vande Bharat trains across India by Independence Day in 2023.

### **Outlook Web Desk**

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Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday said he hoped faster land acquisition in Maharashtra under a new government will give a fillip to work on the section of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train corridor in that state.

The neighbouring state has a new government under Eknath Shinde, who rebelled against the Shiv Sena, with BJP stalwart Devendra Fadnavis as his deputy.

"The previous Maharashtra government did not want this project. But the government has been changed by the public, so hopefully now there will be progress with a double-engine government," he said.

"I hope if we start acquiring land in Maharashtra, and we will acquire it, then we will start work there as well," said Vaishnaw. The minister said the project overall was progressing well and the target is to commission the stretch between Ahmedabad and Vapi by 2027.

"So far, pillars on 70 kilometres have been laid on Ahmedabad-Vapi section. Foundations between 160 km have been laid, and work on bridges on eight rivers and stations are going on at a fast pace, so hopefully we will complete work," he said while interacting with the media at Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII).

The 352-km distance between Ahmedabad and Vapi was "sufficient length" for a bullet train project as the first bullet train in China ran over distance of 113 km, he added.

Talking about Vande Bharat, the country's first ever indigenously produced semi-high speed trains, Vaishnaw said the first two trains launched in 2019, originally called Train 18 and currently running on the Delhi-Varanasi and Delhi-Katra routes, have covered a distance of 14 lakh kilometres.

The second version of the train will begin its run from August, he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target to run 75 Vande Bharat trains across India by Independence Day in 2023.

"Vande Bharat trains were planned in 2017, and the first two trains were launched in 2019. These trains have run 14 lakh kilometres. Whenever we make new products, we have to test it to prove it, to check every dimension," he said.

"Last year, 75 more Vande Bharat trains were approved, and they are under construction. Every version of the Vande Bharat train come with much better technology. We will start rolling out Vande Bharat Version 2 trains from August, and every month five-six trains will be rolled out," he informed.

Talking about Kavach, an indigenously designed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, Vaishnaw said tenders for 3,000 km tracks have been issued. "Nearly all new trains will have Kavach fitted. This will be a game changer for the country," he said.

(With PTI inputs)