



First combined Budget of Independent India, that includes Railways, presented Total Capital And Development Expenditure of Railways pegged at Rs. 1,31,000 crores

Government to focus on 'Swachh Rail'; Rs. 1 lakh crores 'Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh' to be created in 5 years

Cashless reservations go up from 58% to 68%

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The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley while presenting the General Budget 2017-18, in Parliament today, said that this Budget is the First combined Budget of Independent India that includes the Railways. He said that India is now in a position to synergize the investments in railways, roads, waterways and civil aviation. For 2017-18, the total capital and development expenditure on Railways has been pegged at Rs. 1,31,000 crores. This includes Rs. 55,000 crores provided by the Government, the Finance Minister added.

The Finance Minister Shri Jaitley in his Budget Speech said that, the Railways will focus on four major areas, namely, passenger safety, capital and development works, cleanliness and finance and accounting reforms. For passenger safety, a '**Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh**' will be created with a corpus of Rs.1 lakh crores over a period of 5 years, to be funded by seed capital from the Government, Railways' own revenues and other sources. Further, Shri Jaitley informed that the Government will lay down clear cut guidelines and timeline for implementing various safety works to be funded from this 'Kosh'. Unmanned level crossings on Broad Gauge lines will be eliminated by 2020. Expert international assistance will be harnessed to improve safety preparedness and maintenance practices.

Talking about the proposed steps for **modernization and upgradation of identified corridors** in his Budget Speech, Shri Jaitley said that Railway lines of 3,500 kms will be commissioned in 2017-18, as against 2,800 kms in 2016-17 and steps will be taken to launch dedicated trains for tourism and pilgrimage. In the next 3 years, the throughput is proposed to be enhanced by 10%. Further, the Minister added that Railways have set-up joint ventures with 9 State Governments and 70 projects have been identified for construction and development.

Regarding **station redevelopment**, the Finance Minister Shri Jaitley informed that at least 25 stations are expected to be awarded during 2017-18 for redevelopment and 500 stations will be made differently abled friendly by providing lifts and escalators. It is also proposed to feed about 7,000 stations with solar power in the medium term, of which, a beginning has already been made in 300 stations. Works will be taken-up for 2,000 railway stations as part of 1000 MW solar mission, the Minister added.

Emphasizing the Government's focus on '**Swachh Rail**', the Finance Minister informed that a series of steps are proposed to be taken to enhance cleanliness in Railways, of which, an SMS based '**Clean My Coach Service**' has already been started. It is now proposed to introduce the '**Coach Mitra**' facility, a single window interface to register all coach related complaints and requirements. Further, the Finance Minister Shri Jaitley said that by 2019, all coaches of Indian Railways will be fitted with **bio toilets**. Pilot plants for environment friendly disposal of solid waste and conversion of biodegradable waste to energy are being set-up at New Delhi and Jaipur Railway Stations and five more such Solid waste management plants are now being taken-up.

The Finance Minister, in his Budget Speech, also gave details about proposed steps to be taken by the Government to help Railways stay competitive vis-a-vis other modes of transportation dominated by the private sector and retain their position of pre-eminence. These include:

- (i) **End to end integrated transport solutions for select commodities** to be implemented through partnership with logistics players, who would provide both front and back end connectivity. Rolling stocks and practices will be customized to transport perishable goods, especially agricultural products.
- (ii) **Competitive ticket booking facility** to the public at large. Service charge on e-tickets booked through IRCTC has been withdrawn. Cashless reservations have gone up from 58% to 68%.
- (iii) As part of accounting reforms, **accrual based financial statements** will be rolled-out by March 2019.

During his Budget Speech, the Finance Minister Shri Jaitley re-emphasized on the Government's continuous endeavour to improve the **Operating Ratio** of the Railways. He informed that the tariffs of Railways would be fixed, taking into consideration costs, quality of service, social obligations and competition from other forms of transport.

Regarding Metro Rail, the Finance Minister informed that a **new Metro Rail Policy** will be announced with focus on innovative models of implementation and financing, as well as standardization and indigenization of hardware and software. This will open-up new job opportunities for our youth. A new Metro Rail Act will be enacted by rationalizing the existing laws. This will facilitate greater private participation and investment in construction and operation, he added.

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