

Soon on track: India gets loan from Japan for bullet train work

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The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project seems to be on track. Japan has signed on the first of several yen loans to India to help finance the construction of the country's new high-speed rail network.

Officials from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Indian government attended a ceremony in New Delhi on Friday to sign documents concerning the initial provision of a loan worth about 787 million dollars.

India is aiming to start services along the 500-km rail system between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, in the country's west, in 2023. The network will use Japan's 'Shinkansen' (bullet train) technology. Japan will provide up to 12.8 billion dollars in yen loans in stages for the 15.8-billion-dollar project.

The Indian government is set to acquire land and begin construction by the end of the year.

Katsuo Matsumoto, head



of JICA's India office, says the introduction of the "safe and punctual" trains should spur the movement of people and goods and aid regional growth.

Earlier, the National High Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRC) denied media reports claiming that the JICA has stopped funding for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Railway. It had also dismissed reports of the funding freeze, clarifying that they "have not stopped any funds for this project".

The other big project that Japan and India have embarked upon is the building of a metro rail system between Howrah Maidan and Salt Lake Sector V, including an underwater section, as a part

of the 'Kolkata East-West Metro Project (III)'.

JICA, the nodal agency, will provide a loan of 25,903 million Japanese Yen (Rs 1,600 crore) for the project whose primary objective is to mitigate traffic congestion. The project involves an ambitious tunnel crossing below river Ganga in between Howrah and Mahakaran stations which will be the first transportation tunnel in India under any mighty river. The elevated portion is planned with the construction of piers mainly on the median of the road, while the underground section is planned with shield tunnelling method by using tunnel boring machines and stations by 'cut & cover' method.