

Mumbai to Delhi in 13 hours, Rlys to upgrade existing train

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 6

THE RAILWAYS is finally moving to connect the country's most high-profile route — Delhi-Mumbai — by upgrading an existing train to complete the journey in 13 hours, three hours less than the current running time for the Rajdhani, official sources told *The Indian Express*.

The move is expected to make

this link a “true overnighter”, sources said.

The first trial of this service was conducted recently, using the Linke Hofman Busch (LHB) coaches of the Rajdhani. The Railway Ministry is now assessing the results and will conduct further trials, said sources.

Members of the Railway Board will also discuss issues related to the new service in a meeting this month, said sources. Railway Board Member (Rolling

Stock) Ravindra Gupta, who proposed this service, is spearheading the project.

While the existing 24-coach Mumbai Rajdhani has a sanctioned speed of 130 kmph, its average speed is about 90 kmph due to the curves and numerous other speed restrictions along the 1,386-km route that takes 15.35 hours.

For the new project, a 14-coach train will be used, pulled by a single engine, even though two engines were deployed in the first

PAGE ONE ANCHOR

trial for faster acceleration and deceleration.

The LHB coaches are designed to run at a top speed of over 150 kmph — the engines are capable of 200 kmph. However, speed restrictions owing to tracks, signalling systems and other route conditions, have forced the exist-

ing rakes to under-perform in terms of speed, said sources.

In what is being termed a “soft trial”, the 14-coach rake took a little more than 13 hours with two operational halts to complete the journey. The Railways' engineers now believe that the final product will have to cut the six halts currently on the route to two, or even one.

The second, “more serious” trial will happen after the Railway Board meeting, a member, who

did not wish to be named, told *The Indian Express*.

The sanctioned speed of the new service under trial will continue to be 130 kmph, but efforts are being made to verify if stretches where the train can attain and remain at that speed for longer can be extended. This is key to the project's success, said sources.

The Mumbai-Delhi route, patronised largely by business travellers, has seen a major shift in

favour of airlines in recent years. A true overnighter will claw back a sizeable pie of that market, said Ministry officials.

This plan is parallel to the futuristic plan, which was sanctioned recently, of developing Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Howrah routes into special corridors with semi-high-speed services. While that will take years and heavy investments in infrastructure upgrade, this project will take off soon, sources said.