

# Modi, Abe to kick off bullet train project in Sept

## Loan agreement also likely to be signed during Japan PM's visit

**NAYANIMA BASU/MAMUNI DAS**

New Delhi, July 25

The foundations for the much-touted Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) or bullet-train project using Japanese 'Shinkansen' technology is going to be laid during the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe here in September 12-14.

Abe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be jointly inaugurating the project with the laying of foundation stone and a ground breaking ceremony. This is expected to take place in Ahmedabad or Gandhinagar (Gujarat), sources told *Business-Line*.

The loan agreement may also be signed between both sides

during the visit. This involves a commercial loan worth \$12 billion, at a cost of 0.1 per cent, for a 50-year period including a 15-year moratorium, according to diplomatic sources.

"The project is finally going to take off after a lot of initial hiccups," said an official, involved in the project.

For detail designing of the project, Japan has appointed a consortium of consultants led by Japan International Consultants for Transportation, Nippon Koie Group and Oriental Structures.

The joint feasibility study was done in 2015, and after that follow up studies were conducted to finalise standards and spe-



A file picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe on-board the Shinkansen bullet train PTI

cifications for the project.

At present, there is just one Mumbai-Ahmedabad HSR project that is being planned. The decision was taken by Modi and

Abe in December 2015 during the Japanese Prime Minister's last visit here.

It was decided then that the construction of the 500-km bul-

let train link between Mumbai and Ahmedabad will begin in 2018-end and made operational by 2023.

Although the actual work on HSR is expected to begin next year, it will be inaugurated this year during Abe's visit here for the India-Japan Annual Summit that takes place alternately in India and Japan.

India is keen to have joint ventures with Japanese firms that would lead to transfer of technology and manufacture certain components in India in line with the Make in India model, said sources.

India has also set up the National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd, where a Managing Director has been appointed and other officials may also be appointed soon. The government plans to build HSR in Delhi, Kolk-

For designing of the project, Japan has appointed a consortium of consultants led by Japan International Consultants for Transportation, Nippon Koie Group and Oriental Structures.

ata and Chennai as well. The idea is to adopt the 'Shinkansen' technology, although it is more expensive compared to the Chinese technology, sources said.

During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan in November last year, he had travelled in the Japanese bullet-train with Abe from Tokyo to Kobe. He had also visited a bullet-train manufacturing unit where Shinkansen bogies are made.