

“One must always be prepared for riotous and endless waves of transformation.”

NATIONAL

IT INITIATIVES BY INDIAN RAILWAYS TO IMPROVE TRAIN OPERATIONS & PASSENGER EXPERIENCE

Indian Railways has always focused on adoption of new technologies to improve train operations and provide better passenger experience to its customers.

In this series, IR has introduced various IT initiatives.

Real Time Train Information System (RTIS):

Railways have experimented with tracking of trains using GPS devices with these GPS devices located in the locomotive.

For a sustainable solution, a Real Time Train Information System (RTIS) is being implemented, whereby GPS tracking devices would communicate using satellite communications. The trials have been successful.

Computerised Train Signal Register:

In an effort to computerize the transactions of the station master, a Computerized Train Signal Register is going live at 650 stations.

This enables arrival/departure information to be transmitted to the Control Office Application (COA) and the National train Enquiry System (NTES) directly from the station master's desk.

Handheld Terminals for TTEs:

Handheld Terminals (HHTs) are being provided to the Train Ticket Examiners (TTEs) to be able to check the reserved coaches, allot the vacant berths and transmit information on available berths to the subsequent stations.

The terminal can potentially connect to a Point of Sale (POS) machine and charges can be collected digitally.

Modernization of Ticketing Website (IRCTC):

Over the last four years, the capacity of the website has increased to 20,000 tickets per minute starting from 2000 tickets per minute in 2014, a ten-fold increase.

New features have been added that enable better planning of journeys aiding the passenger to obtain confirmed tickets.

Paperless Unreserved Ticketing through Mobile Phones:

This has eliminated the need for passengers to stand in queue for getting tickets for journey in unreserved compartments of trains.

The ticket is delivered on the Mobile Phone and is embedded with QR Code.

Indian Railway e-Procurement System (IREPS):

Complete tendering activity of Indian Railways for procurement of goods, services & works and e-auction of scrap sale is on IREPS.

IREPS system is largest such G to B portal in India.

It has helped in achieving objectives of transparency, efficiency and improving of ease of doing business.

INDIA AND FRANCE SIGN AN IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT ON “MOBILISE YOUR CITY” (MYC)

India and France have signed an implementation agreement on “MOBILISE YOUR CITY” (MYC).

It is part of an international initiative which is supported by the French and the German Governments and was launched at 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in December, 2015.

Based on a proposal made by AFD in 2015, the EU has agreed to provide funds of Euro 3.5 million through the AFD (Agence Française de Développement) to contribute to specific investments and technical assistance components within the programme in India.

The MYC aims at supporting three pilot cities viz. Nagpur, Kochi and Ahmedabad in their efforts to reduce their Green House Gas (GHG) emissions related to urban transport.

This will be done by implementing urban mobility plans at local level and to help India at national level to improve their sustainable transport policy.

The three pilot cities selected under the programme as well as MoHUA will benefit from the Technical Assistance activities. The main components of the proposed assistance are:

- to support planning and implementation of sustainable urban transport projects,
- support to strengthening institutional capacity for regulating, steering and planning urban mobility, and
- learning and exchange formats with other cities across India for exchanges on best practices.

The details of the project activities will be worked out by AFD in consultation with MoHUA and the three partner cities including institutions such as the respective Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) for Smart Cities, the Municipal Corporations and any transport authority or transport related SPV.

ATAL PENSION YOJANA INDEFINITELY EXTENDED, SCOPE BROADENED

The Union Cabinet has decided to indefinitely extend the Atal Pension Scheme, which lapsed in August.

But seeing the mass participation in this runaway-success scheme, the cabinet has decided to extend it and keep it open-ended.

It is a social security scheme launched by the government in 2015 to provide a defined pension between Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000.

Now the scheme will expand its focus to target individuals, instead of households. Union Cabinet decided to double the accident insurance and relaxed the age criteria by five years to further incentivise the scheme.

To further incentivise people's participation in the scheme the government had decided to relax the age criteria for participation in the scheme.

Earlier, people of age 18 to 60 years were entitled to enroll in the scheme. But looking at the rise in average age-expectancy, now it has relaxed it further to 65 years.

All accounts opened after August 28 will have an accident insurance limit of Rs 2 lakh, double the earlier Rs 1 lakh limit.

INDIA AGREES TO END PISA BOYCOTT, TO PARTICIPATE IN 2021

PISA introduced in the year 2000 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) tests the learning levels of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science.

The test is carried out every three years.

India stayed away from PISA in 2012 and 2015 on account of its dismal performance in 2009, when it was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.

Having not participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) since 2012, India has now decided to end its boycott of the examination.

The ministry will dispatch a team of officers to Paris this year to negotiate India's terms of participation in 2021 with OECD.

The decision to boycott PISA was taken by the UPA government, which had blamed "out of context" questions for the poor show in 2009.

The country, subsequently, chose to not participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycle.

As on date, there are 80 countries participating in PISA, including China and Vietnam.

In addition to schools in Chandigarh, the HRD Ministry is keen that all Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVs), funded and run by the Centre, also take the test.

PISA:

PISA is a competency-based test.

The PISA assessments were started in 2000, but India made its debut in the "extended cycle" of the test for 2009 with 16,000 students from 400 schools across Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In 2012, schools of Shanghai in China topped the reading, mathematics and science test, followed closely by Singapore.

In 2015, Singapore, Japan and Estonia were ranked as top three countries, in that order.
