

New report urges fast tracking of High-Speed Rail >>

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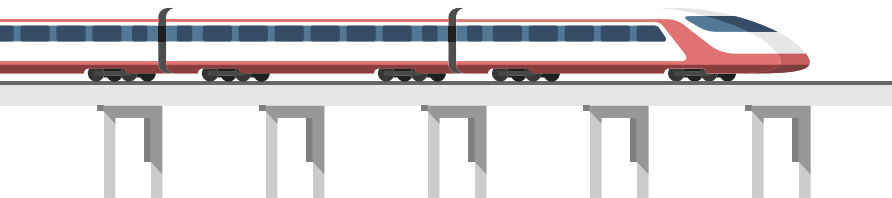
Editor's Note

February flew by, as The Infravision Foundation made the most of the shortest month of the year to plan for the months ahead. Fresh initiatives, new reports and impending roundtables. Much thinking was done to make the right policy interventions, maximise outcomes, and amplify outreach.



India Needs to Put High-Speed Rail on Fast Track

The Infravision Foundation (TIF) urges swift action to develop a world-class High-Speed Rail (HSR) network in India, essential for enhancing connectivity, reducing congestion, and driving economic growth. With Indian Railways undergoing rapid modernization—including the expansion of Vande Bharat services, dedicated freight corridors, the imminent completion of the Bullet Train project, Regional Rapid Transit Systems like Delhi-Meerut, station redevelopment, and the deployment of modern 'Kavach' safety systems—HSR must be a strategic priority. India is well-positioned for this transition, supported by strong economic indicators and the establishment of a High-Speed Rail Training Institute in Vadodara. Following a detailed assessment, in a report for TIF, rail expert Ramakrishnan TS has investigated these aspects rigorously and suggested the following corridors as priorities for development by 2035:



Corridor 1:

Delhi-Rewari-Jaipur-Ajmer-Jodhpur-Ahmedabad-(Mumbai);

Corridor 2:

Chennai-Mumbai via Tirupati, Bengaluru, Tumkuru, Davangere, Dharwad, Belagavi, Kolhapur, Satara, Pune, Navi Mumbai, with a spur to Goa;

Corridor 3:

Delhi-Sonapat-Panipat-Karnal-Ambala-Chandigarh-Ludhiana-Jalandhar-Amritsar; and

Corridor 4:

Delhi-Agra-Lucknow-Varanasi-Patna-Kolkata.

NEW DELHI | WEDNESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2025 **Business Standard**

Move fast on high-speed rail

When the first Rajdhani left Delhi for Howrah on March 1, 1969, at 5:30 pm, it collapsed a journey that took more than 24 hours to 17 hours. The ticket price was ₹250 for air-conditioned (AC) first class and ₹90 for AC chair car. The gleaming red and white fully AC train, with quality meals thrown in, slipped past iconic stations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at 120 km per hour without stopping. It is amusing to recall that many editorials then branded it "elitist" and a luxury that a poverty-stricken India could ill afford.

Well, the transformational agenda now is clearly high-speed rail (HSR), and we should be careful not to confuse leapfrogging technology development with elitism. HSR is poised to get mainstreamed into India's railway passenger network at a time when four parallel developments are underway.

One, the railways is itself going through an era of rejuvenation. The focused expansion of rail network, dedicated freight corridors, imminent completion of the Bullet Train project, growing numbers and variety of Vande Bharat trains, Regional Rapid Transit Systems (in Delhi-Meerut and others), station redevelopment, and modern 'Kavach' safety systems are all a testimony to the unfolding vision for this crucial national transporter. HSR should be an integral part of the rejuvenation.

Two, the Indian railway carries over 1,000 passenger trains daily, ferrying 24 million passengers (of this about 10 million are non-suburban, long-distance passengers, and about 0.5 million (5 per cent) travel in AC coaches. This is the well-backed segment that is increasingly threatened by affordable air travel and inter-city luxury coaches.

Three, India's economic indicators suggest the country is primed for a transformative leap in rail technology, India's per capita gross domestic product (on a purchasing power parity basis) is par with

the gross domestic product of other countries at a time when they pioneered HSR several decades ago—pointing to the fact that this is the right time for India to make the leap from conventional to HSR.

Four, an HSR training institute is being developed by Vadodra and it will have high-end facilities to train about 4,000 people on an ongoing basis. Capacity building for HSR is underway.

With all these, HSR is in many ways an inevitable option because the Indian Railway's network is so large and complex that upgrading the existing setup to meet contemporary travel demands may take decades. According to the International Union of Railways, the upgrade of existing lines to a maximum speed of 200-220 km per hour, qualifies as HSR, as much as a new alignment designed for speeds of 260 km per hour or more. This definition offers India a flexible approach to modernising with HSR thrust. It is interesting to note that the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train is expected to have a top speed of 320 km per hour—the same as Japan's Shinkansen. In China, the Shanghai Maglev reaches a top speed of 431 km per hour.

The beneficial fallouts of HSR are many. Shifting AC and AC+1 passengers to HSR will ease continuing congestion on the high-density network of Indian Railways with its separate lines. It will accelerate dispersing urban agglomerations—often popularly referred to as "sleeping towns"—and play a potent role in decongesting major cities. Every kilometre of HSR provides five times the capacity of conventional rail and can play a crucial role in developing Tier-II and III cities.

It is well worth noting among railway specialists that HSR is a complex system requiring seamless integration of various technologies, including rolling stock, track and signalling, control, control, safety, and operating and maintenance systems. While India has

demonstrated its ability to develop trainsets domestically, many other subsystems still need to be improved. The inductance of domestic HSR technology into an over-achieving ecosystem with an "Ammanthor" mindset must be a significant factor in the journey. A new cultural institution is being envisaged which could be called the National HSR Technology Corporation.

Plans are afoot to develop several HSR corridors with the National High-Speed Rail Corporation, examining seven (or more) detailed project reports. There is a plan for indigenous manufacturing. "Bullet trains" with the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai developing faster Vande Bharat prototypes. The Indian Railways has awarded BEAL a contract worth ₹867 crore for two high-speed trains with a design speed of 280 km per hour.

The selection of HSR technology should be based on an evolved understanding of development economics, with an assessment of rideability, paying capacity, regional representation, connectivity, and cost.

The Infravision Foundation has investigated these aspects rigorously and found that the following corridors emerge as priorities for development by 2035:

Corridor 1: Delhi-Rewari-Jaipur-Ajmer-Jodhpur-Ahmedabad-Mumbai;
Corridor 2: Chennai-Mumbai via Tirupati, Bengaluru, Tumkuru, Davangere, Dharwad, Belagavi, Kolhapur, Satara, Pune, Navi Mumbai, with a spur to Goa;
Corridor 3: Delhi-Sonapat-Panipat-Karnal-Ambala-Chandigarh-Ludhiana-Jalandhar-Amritsar; and
Corridor 4: Delhi-Agra-Lucknow-Varanasi-Patna-Kolkata.

The success of countries such as Japan, Italy, and Spain—each charting its unique course in HSR—shows that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. India must forge its own path.

Let us move fast on HSR.

The author is an infrastructure expert. He is also founder and managing trustee of The Infravision Foundation. Expert analysis research inputs from Ramakrishnan TS

Business Standard

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To ensure self-reliance, a National HSR Technology Corporation (NHSRTC) has been recommended to drive domestic research, manufacturing, and technological innovation, reducing dependence on imports. With key projects already underway—including locally manufactured high-speed trainsets—India must move decisively to build a modern, efficient, and sustainable HSR. TIF has been advocating for this in the media.

TIF@Media

Chairman of the Governing Council of CAIRA Siraj Hussain wrote in The Wire on the US threat of imposing reciprocal tariffs and how it will impact agri and allied exports.

To read the article, please click on the link <https://thewire.in/agriculture/how-us-tariffs-could-impact-indian-agriculture>

TIF@Social Media

TIF Founder and Managing Trustee Vinayak Chatterjee is always active and engaged on X, often weighing in on issues of the day. A sample of his recent tweets cut a swathe through the need for accessibility and affordability of urban metros and buses, with transport expenses taking the largest share of non food spending, to resilient infrastructure and disaster preparedness in coastal regions given the seismic activity in the Bay of Bengal. Check out his X handle (@Infra_VinayakCh) and his tweets to stay ahead of the curve.

TIF on Smart Cities

For many, smart cities are just a futuristic concept—tech-driven spaces filled with cutting-edge infrastructure. But real smart cities aren't just about technology; they're about how well they serve the people who live in them. A city isn't just its buildings, roads, or apps—it's about access, mobility, and opportunity. It's about creating spaces that put people first. In the final episode of the City Champions Podcast series from online social engagement platform Josh Talks, TIF CEO Jagan Shah deconstructed what a real smart city looks like and how urban spaces can work for everyone. Director ATE Group Anuj Bhagwati also spoke in the conversation conducted by Josh Talks' Head of Partnerships Varun Khara. For the complete podcast, please click on this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_JAoX97mq4

TIF@Women's Day



TIF Co-founder and Managing Trustee Rumjhum Chatterjee was a key speaker at the High Commissioner's Residence, Australian High Commission, on March 7, Women's Day, on Accelerating Action: The Role of Women in Shaping Global Leadership and Equality. Chatterjee is also Chairperson of the CII Centre for Women's Leadership. The other panelists were Surgeon Vice Admiral Arti Sarin, UN Women India Country Representative Susan Ferguson, and Luminous Power Technologies CEO Preeti Bajaj.



On International Women's Day, Chatterjee also spoke on how women in India are breaking barriers across industries, driving innovation and economic growth on CII Podcasts, on Women-Led Development: Shaping the India Growth Story.

To tune in, follow this link <https://bit.ly/41uaJaF>



On April 8, TIF and EFKON will be collaborating on a roundtable in Delhi with key stakeholders to discuss at length a white paper on Decarbonising Urban Transport Using Traffic and Transport Data from ICC. This is a pilot study in Noida, undertaken by IIT Delhi.



TIF@Work

TIF Co-founder and Managing Trustee Rumjhum Chatterjee chaired a session at the Regional Dialogue on Social Justice organised by the Ministry of Labour when the Director General, ILO, was in Delhi. The session was on Building a Bigger Table: Promoting Inclusion and Women's Participation in the World of Work, and among the speakers were Bruno Berretini Camponês, Third Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil, as well as Co-Chair, Global Coalition for Social Justice and Suhela Khan, Country Programme Manager, Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Women. Alison Durbin, Minister Counsellor (Labour) in the Australian Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, joined the session virtually.

Infra@Streaming

The lack of public transport is part of the social commentary in Prime Video's new series Dupahiya when a stolen motorbike becomes the bone of contention between two families about to enter into a marital alliance and threatens to spoil the village's 25-year-old record of being crime free.



QUIZ: Test Your Infra Power

1. For which pilgrimage town did the Union Cabinet recently approve a Rs 4,081 crore-ropeway?
2. In which city have safety inspections begun for a metro launch in mid-2025?
3. Which country is getting its first railway link with Assam to strengthen bilateral ties?
4. Which cities is India's longest LPG pipeline going to connect?
5. What are the three pillars on which investment in people rests, according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

1. Kedarnath
2. Bhopal
3. Bhutan. A detailed project report has been prepared by Indian Railways
4. Kandla and Gorakhpur
5. Education, skill development, and healthcare



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