

Romance and realism of Indian Railways

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Most of us have gone through the stage when Indian Railways was the only means of transport available to the common man. One had enjoyed travelling

even in the so-called third class compartments as long as one had reservation. My first long distance journey was as a student by Kalka Mail from New Delhi to Kolkata with a tiffin box carrying enough sustenance for nearly 28 hours of journey.

One was always lucky if one managed to grab a window seat which enabled one to see the sights of the Indian landscape through the plains of UP, Bihar and West Bengal. These journeys were also an occasion to get familiar with your fellow passenger and, by the time the journey ended, the addresses were exchanged for better reconnection at a later date.

One would also share, not only the food carried by each one of us but also the experience and stories of the good days and bad days like one would do with a member of the family. Excitement would peak when one neared the destination in the last half an hour of the journey, leading to the excitement of visiting a new place.

Times have changed in the last 30-40 years. Travelling by train is restricted only to shorter distances where flights are not convenient or not available. The trains are much faster, more functional and are in a hurry to get you to the destination, the enjoyment quotient is, by and large, gone and the conversation with the fellow passenger has mostly disappeared. One is confined to the self, often fiddling with the mobile to look at messages seen earlier.

We now look at the Railways more for carriage of goods and it is in this area Railways has risen to the occasion by increasing the

capacity, opening new routes and excelling in providing a competitive means of transportation of bulk commodities over long distances.

Indian Railways

Indian Railways is one of the world's largest railway network comprising of a length of 65,436 kilometres and serviced by 7,172 stations. In 2014-15, Railways carried 8.4 billion passengers annually or more than 23 million in a day and 1,050 mt of freight. Its revenues were at ₹1,069 billion from freight and ₹403 billion from passenger tickets.

Freight

Indian Railways earns about 70 percent of its revenue from freight traffic. Most of the profits come from transporting freights and this makes up for the loss from passenger traffic. It deliberately keeps passenger fares low and offers subsidised rates. The loss-making passenger traffic is taken care of with the profit-making freight traffic.

Railways continues to lose goods traffic to road traffic. In 1951, Railways' share was 65 percent and the share of the road was 35 percent. Over the years, with the number of wagons going down every year, the share of Railways has declined to 30 percent and the share of road has increased to 70 percent.

In fact, transportation of bulk commodities by rail over longer distance is still the cheapest. In a study of transportation of coal over 400 km by truck, it was discovered that energy spent in transporting this coal by road is more than the energy carried in the truck. Hence, it is a waste of natural resources if coal is carried over 400 km by road.

Rail links to adjacent countries

The existing links are:

- ◆ Nepal: Break-up gauge – gauge conversion under uni-gauge project.
- ◆ Pakistan: Thar Express to Karachi and the more famous Samjhauta Express to Lahore via Amritsar.

- ◆ Bangladesh: The Maitree Express between Dhaka-Kolkata.
- ◆ There is also a freight train service from Singhabad and Petrapole in India to Rohanpur and Benapole in Bangladesh.

Under construction and proposed links

- ◆ Bhutan: Rail link under construction
- ◆ Myanmar: Manipur to Myanmar rail link under construction
- ◆ Vietnam: Rail link under consideration by way of rail link from Manipur to Vietnam via Myanmar
- ◆ Thailand: Possible if Burma Railway is rebuilt

DFCs to revolutionise freight movement

Indian Railways is set to revolutionise the freight movement by constructing the two new Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC)s:

- a) Eastern Corridor from Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni in West Bengal (1,760 kilometres).
- b) The Western Corridor from JNPT Port in Mumbai to Tughlakabad in Delhi/Dadri (1,468 kilometres).

Along with internal linkage of the two corridors at Khurja in UP

Through the DFCs, Railways is planning to take the freight loading from the current 1 billion tons to 1.5 billion tons, ie, a rise of 50 percent in the next 5 years. DFC is expected to carry the extra freight that will come out of JNPT Port once it expands its capacity by 2018.

The Eastern DFC is expected to move annually, once operational, 75.6 mt of total freight which will include 54.46 mt of coal for power houses and 8.24 mt of steel. The Western DFC is expected to move, once it is fully operational, 3.80 billion TEU of containers and 10.9 mt of freight, excluding containers.

DFCs are proposed to adopt world-class state-of-the-art technology. The length for each train shall be 1,500 m in place of the existing 700m and each train is expected to carry 15,000 mt in place of the existing 4,000 mt. The speed on these tracks is expected to be 100 kilometres per hour in place of the existing speed of 75 kilometres per hour.

Steps to improve connectivity to new coalfields

Coal India Limited, in conjunction with

LOGISTICS

Railways, is proposing to work on express basis to construct the following 3 lines to reinforce evacuation capacity in the existing and proposed coalmines.

The 3 new lines are:

- ♦ Tori – Shivpur – Kathautia (Hazaribagh)
- ♦ BG Triple line for North Karanpura Coalfields
- ♦ Jharsuguda – Barpalli – Double line for Ib Valley Coalfields

The 3 projects will be executed through a joint venture between CIL/Railways/state government and its implementation will be monitored at the highest level.

Railways shall continue to be the life-line for the travelling passenger and commodities through the length and breadth of the country. It does suffer from a lot of ills on over-exploitation and inefficiency arising out of large manpower and financial constraints arising out of low passenger fares.

The government has understood its importance and has decided to take the bull by its horns and shall put in the best technology and leadership to bring in the



desired efficiency to ensure much larger capacities. In other words, Railways shall continue to be the vital arteries responsible for carrying passengers and goods to all parts

of the country. And the romance of Railways shall continue. ■

The author is the Chief Mentor, KCT Group.

Volvo crosses landmark of 10,000 truck deliveries

Coal Insights Bureau

Volvo Trucks, synonymous with high performance mining and dimensional transport applications, has set a new benchmark in the premium heavy-duty commercial vehicle segment with the delivery of the 10,000th truck in India recently.

The company, the leading truck manufacturer in premium European segment, recently launched technologically advanced Volvo FMX 440 8x4 I-Shift. The milestone 10,000th vehicle was handed over to M/s Mahalaxmi Infracontracts Pvt Ltd, which has a fleet of over 350 Volvo trucks.

Driving change for the industry

Since its rollout of the first truck way back

in 1998, Volvo Trucks was the first to introduce fully air-conditioned and crash tested cabin in trucks and pioneered the driver training concept by establishing the driver training centre even before first truck was rolled out.

Over the years, Volvo Trucks in India have become synonymous with the mining and construction industries where the 8x4 concept was introduced in the mining segment and the innovative 10x4 Dump truck concept introduced in 2012 has also established itself.

Being the customer's best business partner Volvo Trucks innovations were not limited to products.

In order to support the customers' right through the lifecycle of the products, it

pioneered the concept of container workshop at remote mining locations and on-road assistance through Volvo Action Service.

Rama Rao A S, Senior Vice President, Sales Marketing and Aftermarket, Volvo Trucks, VECV said, "Today Volvo Trucks facilitate around 1/3rd of coal production in India by moving overburden in the mines and in the process has been driving progress for the country. The support from the industry has been encouraging and has helped us deliver what it takes."

Over the years Volvo Trucks has built up an elite customer base having over 100 vehicles in their fleet operating at various mining sites across India.

The customers vouch by the high reliability and productivity and have expanded business operations at a fast pace with quick return on investments.

Pierre Jean Verge Salamon, President, Volvo Group Truck Sales, India said, "Reaching the 10,000 mark is a testimony to the fact that the new high tech capabilities and the wide range of benefits of our offerings are suiting the Volvo customer." ■