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Ministry of Railways**

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Railway Minister Shri Suresh Prabhakar Praibu concludes his France Visit (11th-12th, April, 2016)

Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu, Minister of Railways (MR), Govt. Of India visited France on 11-12 April 2016. During his visit, he called on Mr. Laurent Fabius, President of the Constitutional Council of France and met with Mr. Alain Vidalies, Minister of State for Transport, Marine Affairs and Fisheries. MR also participated in the Emerging Markets Forum organized at the Banque de France premises in Paris where he delivered a talk on “Emerging World in 2050”. MR also met Ms. Florence Parly, CEO of SNCF (French Railways). SNCF also organized a ride on their fast train (TGV) from Paris to Reims during which MR was seated in the driver’s cabin of the train. The detailed report of the France visit is given below :-

11th April 2016

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Meeting with Mr. Alain Vidalies (AV), Minister of State for Transport, Marine Affairs and Fisheries

AV welcomed MR to his Ministry and recalled the important recent visits from India to France, including Prime Minister’s visit for Leaders’ Conference during COP-21 and the visit of Shri Venkaiah Naidu, Minister of Urban Development in October 2015. He also referred to the great success of President Hollande’s State visit to India in January 2016. AV expressed satisfaction regarding the high level of engagement between India and France in the context of which the two countries also have very good cooperation in the field of railways. Referring to the numerous Agreements/MoUs which exist between Indian Railways (IR) and SNCF, he specifically mentioned the two recent MoUs pertaining to the renovation of the Ludhiana and Ambala stations by SNCF. AV said that he was happy to note that CEO, SNCF would be meeting MR in Paris the next day and that she (CEO, SNCF) is planning to visit India on 2-3 June. AV requested MR for his thoughts on IR-SNCF cooperation.

MR thanked AV for the warm welcome accorded to him. He said that in his views the railways sector will play a key role in taking forward India-France relations which have received a big boost thanks to the visit of President Hollande to India as the chief guest of our Republic Day. MR specially mentioned the participation of the French contingent in the Republic Day parade as a historic first. MR said that cooperation in the field of railways between India and France is important and the role of SNCF in that, in terms of bringing high technology and expertise is very important. MR handed over the presentation showcasing the progress and the way forward for IR to AV. MR informed AV that GoI has decided to invest US\$ 142 billion in next five years in railways. MR informed that Indian Prime Minister is of the view that Railways development is an important engine for growth in India. Besides this, other countries are also investing in India in this sector. Japan will be investing US\$ 16 billion in high speed railways between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Alstom and GE have got a contract of US\$ 7 billion for manufacturing electric and diesel locomotives in India. Several countries including Germany, Spain, Korea and others want to work with India. MR urged France to look at India to participate in the opportunities in this sector. With 8000 stations and handling 7 billion passengers every year, the Indian Railways are looking towards modernisation, safety, technological up-gradation and many other things. MR informed AV that we are not looking for government funding as private sector funding is also available. MR said that France can go beyond the existing cooperation and should invest in strategic technology of Railway sector in which both India and France has mutual benefit. MR informed that Indian Railways is modernizing including increase in speed, safety and modernization of stations etc. in

which French companies should take part. He also requested to fast track the implementation of station developments and semi high speed Railway corridors.

AV thanked MR for his presentation on IR and said that there are many robust French companies who will be willing to work in this sector. France has a great railway culture and has 30000 kms of track and 3000 stations. France has great experience in high speed trains. In 2017, four new lines of high speed trains will be operational. Besides that, in the Paris-region new sub-urban trains will be introduced. French Railways are looking at three issues of importance; (i) role of railways in urban planning so that trains, metro and buses become seamless; (ii) railway stations to be developed as centre of life in cities, including their development as shopping malls etc.; and (iii) renovation projects. There are also important issues relating to security and safety of the railway network and the passengers, especially the safety of technical equipment in view of recent terrorist attacks.

MR invited AV to visit India with a delegation of French companies so that technical round tables could be organized to come up with a work plan between IR and French Railways. **MR said that he would be sending an official invitation to AV** and said that India wants French companies in the success story of IR. AV said that he would be happy to visit India and start preparing and lining up the requisite delegation. He said that it will be a logical follow up to the visit of President Hollande to India.

AV was accompanied with Mr. Patrice Saint Blancard, Conseiller Services Ferovieares, Mr. Michael Martier, Conseiller Diplomatique and Mr. Maxime Du Bois, Officer for India and Oceania, Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy. MR was accompanied with Ambassador, Dr. Mohan Kumar, DCM, Shri Manish Prabhat and First Secretary (E&C), Shri L. Ramesh Babu.

Call on Mr. Laurent Fabius (LF), President of the Constitutional Council of France

MR congratulated LF on his elevation to the august Constitutional office. He also congratulated LF on his achievement as President of COP-21 to have successfully completed the process leading to the Paris Agreement. MR also expressed his deep appreciation of LF's important contribution to the strengthening of India-France relations when the latter was Foreign Minister of France.

LF thanked MR for his warm words of appreciation. LF expressed condolences on the Kerala fire tragedy. MR thanked LF for the latter's sincere words of sympathy.

MR told LF that the Prime Minister is very upbeat about France-India relations. Briefing LF on his earlier meeting with the French State Minister for Railways, Alain Vidalies, MR said that he has invited AV to visit India and look at the great opportunities in the railway sector in India for active cooperation of French companies. He said that there are several projects going on in this sector of high speed trains. Delhi-Agra sector has just seen the introduction of Gatimaan Express. The Spanish company, Talgo, is working on Delhi-Mumbai sector for introduction of high speed trains. In various capacities, more than 40 countries are working with IR and, hence, France should increase its involvement in India in this sector.

LF lauded the role of the Ministry of Railways in India and welcomed the idea of closer France-India relations in this sector. MR informed LF that recent studies by Nomura and Morgan Stanley have pointed out that development of railways has a widespread effect on the economy and can contribute up to 1-1.5% of growth in GDP. LF inquired about the state of recent developments in India. MR told him that we are going at above 7% of GDP growth. We expect a good monsoon this year and, hence, the prospect of growth for the next year is even better. Prime Minister has shown vision and leadership and

has been lauded. He has announced important programmes like Digital India. Manufacturing is growing and core sectors are picking up. Exports have been slow because of global slowdown. Four states in India are going to elections.

LF said that both France and India need stability. EU is also facing challenges. There is a difficult referendum coming up in Britain regarding the question of its exit from EU. He lauded Prime Minister Modi's role in paying attention to economy. He also took the opportunity to highlight Prime Minister's and India's role in ensuring the success of COP-21. LF said that "without you, it was not possible".

MR referred to the successful visit of President Hollande to India and also mentioned the first ever historic participation of a foreign contingent in India's Republic Day parade, the honour of which went to France. MR invited LF to visit India along with his spouse. MR said that he would be happy to invite them to taste the experience of one of the luxury trains in India which has been voted to be the best in the world in tourism and hospitality. LF said that he would be very happy to visit India. **MR told him that he will be sending him an official invitation.**

From the perspective of his current Constitutional position, LF inquired from MR that whether the Supreme Court of India has the power to declare a bill passed by the Parliament as unconstitutional. MR informed him that the Supreme Court of India can declare a law ultra vires if the provisions of the law is found to be in violation of the Constitution or the basic structure of the Constitution. During the discussion, DCM also informed LF about the recent visit of the Chief Justice of India (March 2016) leading a Supreme Court delegation to Strasbourg on the invitation of the European Court there.

LF was accompanied with Mr. Alexandre Ziegler, Ambassador-designate to India and Mr. David Gaudillere, Directeur de Cabinet du President, Conseil Constitutionnel. MR was accompanied with DCM and FS(E&C).

Telephonic conversation between MR and Ms. Laurence Tubiana, Special Representative of France for COP-21.

Due to scheduling difficulties, a meeting between the two could not take place. However, the two had a telephonic conversation in which MR congratulated Ms. Tubiana on the success of COP-21 leading to the Paris Agreement.

12th April 2016

TGV (high speed) train ride:

MR travelled in the driver's cabin of TGV (high speed train) from Paris to Reims. Mr. Diego Diaz, Director, SNCF International and FS (E&C) had accompanied the Minister. The driver of the train had briefed MR on the safety features and modern equipment installed in the driver's cabin. A distance of 150 km was covered in 45 minutes. Mr. Jean Francois Antona, Head of SNCF of the region received the Minister at Reims and showed around Reims station. Mr. Antona had briefed MR on the running, maintenance and up keep of Reims railway station.

Luncheon meeting:

Mr. Eric Dussiot (ED), AREP (Design and Architect subsidiary of SNCF) International Director and Mr. Jean Manuel Hue, Public Affairs Director, Secretary General hosted a lunch for MR. ED briefed MR on the progress and the difficulties faced in the station development project. ED informed MR that the field review of this project is being carried out and SNCF is hopeful to complete study by October-November 2016. ED also briefed MR on the study carried out by SNCF on Chhatrapati Shivaji Railway station in Mumbai. MR requested them to fast track the implementation of Station development and sought French support in Railway timetable preparation, budget issues and how to calculate the profit made per operation of the train. MR also requested to share the study on Mumbai Railway station. Mr. Hue informed MR

that an Inter-Parliamentary delegation responsible for transport including railways is visiting Delhi on 2-3 June 2016. The visit is being coordinated by Business France in Delhi. MR expressed his desire to meet the delegation, possibly over a lunch/dinner hosted by him.

Speech at Emerging Market Forum:

MR participated in the Emerging Markets Forum (EMF) organized at the Banque de France premises in Paris. Emerging Markets Forum is an US based not for profit initiative to bring together high level government and corporate leaders from around the World to engage in dialogue on the key economic and social issues encountered in the emerging market countries. The event held in Paris focussed on the opportunity to learn and discuss the principal conclusion of the study: *The world in 2050-Striving for a just, prosperous and harmonious global community*. MR along with other dignitaries like former President of Germany Mr. Horst Koehler, Chairman of Banque de France released the above book edited by Mr. Harinder Kohli, CEO of EMF. MR gave a talk on "Emerging World in 2050" in which he had enumerated the issues faced by Emerging Market like by Climate Change, Migration, economic slow down, Sustainable development which needs to be addressed to have better world in 2050. Ambassador and FS (E&C) attended the event.

Meeting with Ms. Florence Parly, CEO of SNCF (French Railway):

MR met Ms. Florence Parly (FP), CEO of SNCF. MR informed FP that GoI has decided to invest US\$ 142 billion in next five years in railways and World Bank and other lenders/investors are ready with funding. MR requested to make a complete study plan of enhancing speed in the existing Railway tracks in India. He added that the study could also focus on how IR should look in 2030 and wanted French participation in the success story. MR added that Railways have the potential to increase GDP by 1-1.5 percent. Ambassador added that it would be said without exaggeration that among all the Strategic partners India has, France has been the most reliable partner and activities of SNCF fits in the enhancement of strategic partnerships between India and France. FP agreed that SNCF should do more in the enhanced Railway cooperation with India. She added that they are absolutely convinced on the success of India and would like to invest much more in the field of Railways. She informed that Indian PM showed great interest in railways cooperation during the business meeting held in April 2015 during his visit to France. FP enquired the modalities of how to enhance the cooperation in Railways to the next level. MR said that a nodal officer for France be appointed by him to look into new areas of cooperation and he would personally review the progress. He also invited SNCF to bring a delegation to discuss and sign a protocol on new areas of railway cooperation. FP replied that before the signing of the protocol, SNCF would like to bring in a working level delegation for carrying out technical discussions and finalizing the Protocol. (FP informed that she would be moving over as CEO of Passenger Segment of SNCF from 1 May but would like to be involved in the India-France Railway cooperation)

MR was accompanied with Ambassador, DCM and First Secretary (E&C). FP was accompanied with Mr. Diego Diaz, President, SNCF International.

AKS/DK