

# Rlys to ICF: Make trains that can run at 250 kmph

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In a first, the Ministry of Railways has asked its production unit, the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai, to manufacture two trains that can run at 250 km per hour (kmph).

In a letter dated June 4, the Railway Board asked the ICF to develop these two trains as part of its production programme for 2024-25.

The trains will be built with a steel body and have a maximum speed of 250 kmph and a running speed of 220 kmph. It will be built on standard gauge.

According to officials, the trains will be based on the Vande Bharat platform as part of the transporter's plan to increase the speed of future Vande Bharat trains.

These will be eight-coach trains, according to the railways. Over the past year, it has been developing a test track for standard gauge trains in Rajasthan, primarily to test its abilities to develop high-speed trains and to export Vande Bharat trains, which have to be converted from broad gauge to standard gauge, which is the most accepted gauge globally.

India has no trains that can run so fast.

Experts say the project will be a challenge. "The top speed of Vande Bharat trains is 180 kmph and to develop a 250 kmph standard gauge train by March 2025 is nothing short of impossible," said Sudhanshu Mani, former general manager of the ICF who had spearheaded making the first Vande Bharat trains.

"The ICF can be motivated with a free hand and a committed leadership can take up this development over three-four years. If they succeed it would be a very significant milestone. But issuing letters which merely put forward unrealistic targets is self-defeating." Ashwini Vaishnaw, caretaker minister for railways (as the current council of ministers has resigned in accordance with the Lok Sabha election protocol), had told *Business Standard* the government had been aiming to indigenise high-speed rail technology.



**Officials said the new standard gauge trainset would be based on the Vande Bharat platform**

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# Specifications given to ICF may be a challenge

High-speed trains are being built with Japanese technology used in Shinkansen, or bullet trains on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridors, and the government has been taking lessons to develop such trains in India.

Specifications given to the ICF too could prove to be a challenge, according to Mani.

“Making such a train in stainless steel is a makeshift retrograde step; if it has been done because only two trains in aluminium is too small a number to develop aluminium extrusion facilities, the number on order should be increased such that the right type of train can be developed,” he said.