

Rlys plans to make 80K 'Make in India' wheels a yr

DHRUVAKSH SAHA

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Aiming to reduce import-dependence, the railways ministry is set to procure nearly 80,000 forged train wheels at a cost of ₹600 crore per year.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced on Friday the ministry floated a tender inviting the industry to set up a facility to produce these wheels, which will primarily be used for semi-high speed trains (Vande Bharat) and high-speed trains (bullet train).

An official said the estimated cost of setting up a production unit is close to ₹1,000 crore, and that the tender is only open to Indian companies. The ministry earlier relied on imports from Europe for these specialised wheels.

The issue came to fore after the national

transporter recently placed an order for 39,000 semi-forged wheels with a Chinese company, citing disrupted European supply chains on account of the Russia-Ukraine war. Vaishnaw said the ministry had tried hard to ensure supply from Europe but had to end up awarding the contract to a Chinese firm. The ministry suffered a setback caused by a disruption at the RINL plant in Raebareli. "As of now, RINL has sorted out a lot of its issues at the plant," Vaishnaw said.

He said a condition in the forged-wheels tender is that the bidder must also be able to export these wheels, adding that potential markets such as Europe are currently being identified.

Forged wheels are specially-designed wheels, built at high-pressure for trains running at higher speeds than regular Indian Railways trains. The minister said there is no established forged wheels player in India

currently, hence the technical qualifications have been set in a way that only companies with extensive experience in manufacturing forged metals can qualify.

Vaishnaw also announced that the next step is for the ministry to develop better railway track infrastructure conducive for high-speed and semi-high-speed trains, and a tender for the same will be floated soon.

The ministry also completed testing of the light-weight Vande Bharat trains (VB-2), which are roughly 38 tonnes lighter than the first version, currently operational in the country. Vaishnaw had earlier shared a video of the VB-1 running at a speed of 180 kilometres/hour (km/h), 20 km/h higher than VB-1.

He announced that the VB-2 will come equipped with in-built air purifiers, content-on-demand, and recliner seats in both executive and non-executive classes.



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the next step is to build better railway track infrastructure conducive for high-speed and semi-high-speed trains