

In the works: 50 Amrit Bharat trains

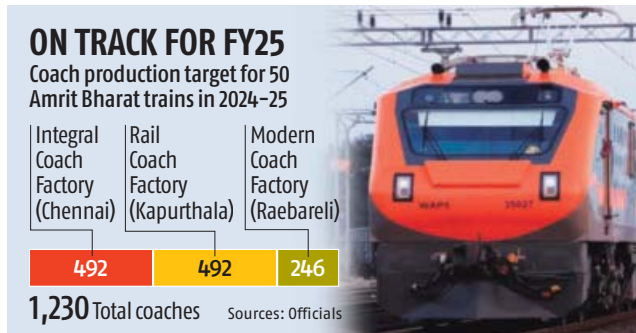
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To enhance the passenger experience on non-Vande trains, the Centre plans to introduce additional Amrit Bharat trains in 2024-25. It plans to manufacture 50 of these trains through the production units of the Ministry of Railways.

For this purpose, 1,230 coaches will be manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai, Modern Coach Factory (MCF) in Raebareli, and Rail Coach Factory (RCF) in Kapurthala, according to sources in the railway board.

ICF and RCF will manufacture 492 Amrit Bharat coaches each, while MCF will manufacture 246 coaches. Amid criticism by opposition and civil society over its alleged focus on only premium rail services like Vande Bharat, the ministry, in 2023, introduced the Amrit Bharat trains. These are fully non air-conditioned trains with upgraded design, con-



venience, and safety features.

The new trains will achieve two key railway needs: Meeting the rising demand for sleeper, general, and second class travel, which nearly reached pre-Covid levels in 2023, causing congestion during peak periods like Diwali and Chhatt Puja. Upgraded safety features in the trains like semi-permanent couplers and sealed gangways will allow for faster operation of these trains.

“On the surface, it is prudent to have 130 kmph as a standard

speed. Technically, if a train is moving as a segregated set of units, then it becomes aerodynamically unstable. Now, we have provided sealed gangways, semi-permanent couplers, and aerodynamically better trains with Amrit Bharat, which will be a safer train at higher speeds,” Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told *Business Standard* in December.

Railway production units have also been asked to explore features such as better aesthetics

of the berth with enhanced look and feel on lines of Vande Bharat sleeper, which is still in the works.

Improved design of toilets using Sheet Molding Compound (SMC) or better technology will also be explored, along with the provision of bio-vacuum toilets, additional fire safety provisions in general and sleeper coaches, provision of CCTV systems in all coaches and luggage rooms.

The ministry will also look to improve crash worthiness in coaches by providing a crash tube and onboard condition monitoring systems for crucial parts like wheel and bearing and remote diagnostic features, cushioned interiors for protection in case of accidents, and LED lighting.

The Railways may also acquire wireless data acquisition systems. The plan will be parallel to the interim Budget announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to upgrade 40,000 existing coaches to Vande/Amrit Bharat standards.