SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL LAUNCHES RAIL HERITAGE DIGITISATION PROJECT OF INDIAN RAILWAYS IN COLLABORATION WITH GOOGLE ARTS & CULTURE

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Ministry of Railways

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Minister of Railways and Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal has launched "Rail Heritage Digitisation Project" of Indian Railways in collaboration with Google Arts & Culture here today through video-conferencing. The project can be accessed through link:"https://artsandculture.google.com/project/indian-railways". The project is a landmark effort, first of its kind in this part of the globe, to showcase country's Rail Heritage to National and International audience in an online story-telling platform. Chairman, Railway Board, Shri Ashwani Lohani, other Railway Board Members, Vice President, South East Asia and India, Google, Shri Rajan Anandan, Director, Google Cultural Institute, Shri Amit Sood, other Railway Board Officials, Dignitaries from Google, UNESCO representatives and Railway Enthusiasts were among those

present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Piyush Goyal said "*At the outset, let me congratulate the Indian Railways and the Google Arts and Culture Association for this wonderful initiative, which has taken over 2 years of hard work, research, inquiry and execution. It is often said that civilisation is built over millenia by countless generations, with each generation leaving its footprints in the sands of time. A culture must reserve these footprints to remember what it was and where it came from. Whenever we look at the evolution of the transport system in India, all these rich traditions, history and culture will play an important role in understanding how the Indian Railways has evolved. Being a 165 year old organisation, the Railways has a lot of material which we need to preserve and leave behind for posterity. Mark Twain had once said, "Our most valuable and instructive materials in the history of mankind are treasured in India". The Indian Railways has a lot of treasured moments for the world to see how technologies evolved over time: Mumbai has a special place in the Railways, being the first Railway line to be set up in India. It was way back on 16th April, 1853 when the first train ran between Bori Bunder and Thane. We will be setting up 22 digital screens across different locations in India for showcasing this historic project*".

The Minister further added, "This partnership between the Railways and Google also has the dimension of the Wi-Fi, which we have proliferated to over 400 stations in India. This shows the potential of collaborations to serve people. The Wi-Fi that has been set up in 711 stations now, have faster Wi-Fi access than any other system in the nation. I would like to compliment the Google and RailTel team for this feat. When I was in Raipur Station, I found loads of people particularly the youth who flock to stations to enjoy the service provided. This confirms my desire that we should take Wi-Fi to over 6,000 stations to provide it to people who cannot afford Wi-Fi. We have already offered around 5,000 odd stations for public-private partnership through "Rail Sahyog" (http://RailSahyog.in) where we have invited people to come and make offers to pick up stations so as to expand it throughout the Railways".

Shri Goyal further said that this project is the largest cultural heritage digitization project not only in India but possibly the Asia Pacific Region. He expressed the hope that collaborative efforts will continue to expand the project further and possibly make it the largest such endeavour to preserve Railway Heritage in the world. Shri Goyal described this project as the gift from the 13 Lakh Railways employees to the 130 crore citizens of India".

Chairman, Railway Board, Shri Ashwani Lohani said that collaboration with Google Art & Culture, has enabled Indian Railways to digitize National Rail Museum, Rewari Steam Centre, three World Heritage Railways, CSMT Mumbai building and other prominent aspects of country's rail heritage. He appreciated the monumental efforts which went into this project of digitising the invaluable railway heritage. During the event, Shri Lohani also felicitated few of the railway heroes associated with the conservation of World Heritage Railways and said that Railway is a human centric organisation and it is the railway heroes who make it run.

Introducing this collaborative digital project between Indian Railways and Google Arts & Culture, Shri Rajan Anandan, Vice President, South East Asia and India, Google described it as an extension of their partnership with Indian Railways of providing public with Wi-Fi at 400 railway stations. He described it as an endeavour to bring incredible Indian Rail Heritage online.

Director, Google Cultural Institute, Shri Amit Sood, said that Google is committed to preserving and breathing new life into artistic and cultural treasures around the world. He added that the extraordinary wealth of heritage, history and culture that Indian Railways inherits, is truly fascinating, and a treat for both the young and the old. This project is all about the iconic moments, the movements, and the making of Indian Railways, which today is the backbone of the country in many ways.

Backgrounder:

Railways in India started its journey on 16th April, 1853 between Bori bunder and Thane. Since then Railways India not only expanded to be one of the largest network in the world but also significantlycontributed to social, technological and economic development of this country.

Today we have three World Heritage Railways: DHR, NMR, KSRand two World Heritage Buildings (CSMT, Churchgate), still unique feat in this part of the Globe (The other two World HeritageRailways are in Europe). In collaboration with Google Art & Culture, IndianRailways have been able to digitize National Rail Museum, Rewari Steam Centre, three World Heritage Railways, CSMT Mumbai building and other prominent aspects of country's rail heritage.

Indian Railways has also created one of the largest repositories of industrial heritage in the World. Glimpses of Railway history and evolution are captured in 33 Rail Museums & Heritage Galleries, four World Heritage Sites, hundreds of buildings, bridges, locomotives, coaches, other rolling stocks, artefacts etc.Conservation of these industrial relics also helps in promoting tourism, preserving traditional skills and communication with people.

Digitization of rail heritage provides immense opportunity to contextualize artefact and other heritage assets with the stories thus becoming more meaningful to next generation. Digital heritage also removes bottleneck of being physically there and thus providing universal access to the large repository of knowledge.

With over 151,000 kilometres of track, 7,000 stations, 1.3 million employees and 160 years of history, the Indian Railway is one of the most celebrated railway networks in the world. Bringing this journey to the forefront, Google Arts & Culture's new online collection is a story-telling marvel, and will make India's rich rail-heritage and legacy digitally accessible to people in India around the world. The 75 online exhibition, 3500+ images and 200 videos, will offer an in-depth exploration of the sights, sounds and significance of India's railways. Heritage routes with a 360-degree panoramic

view of iconic railway stations, including Kalka-Shimla, Nilgiri Mountain Railway Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, and Kangra Valley Railway. The exhibition will also bring alive the lost stories and heroic efforts of people like the track-man, station master, and workshop engineers, to celebrate their contribution.

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