

High-tech work for bullet train project to be done by Indian firms

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR

NEW DELHI, JUNE 30

A NUMBER of high-value, technical work for the bullet train project, earlier slated to be done by the Japanese, will now be done by Indian companies, providing a major boost to Indian engineering capability.

India is in discussions with Japan to explore if the highly technical work of laying the track of the bullet train can be done by an indigenous engineering firm.

The 27 steel bridges on the 508-km stretch of the corridor between Ahmedabad and Mumbai — earlier thought to be the sole domain of expert Japanese firms — will be done by Indian companies.

Considering no Indian player has worked on laying Shinkansen track capable of carrying trains at 320 km per hour, the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) has reached out to Indian industry to assess the requirement and capability of domestic players in order to get this highly specialised engineering job done.

As part of this exercise, the NHSRCL hosted a webinar last Wednesday to sensitise Indian

Officials said Indian companies laying the track would be a major capability upgrade for domestic engineers and go a long way towards Atmanirbhar Bharat in the engineering space

companies and consultants about the job. Sources said training for upskilling Indian players is also being planned.

Officials said that Indian companies laying the track would be a major capability upgrade for domestic engineers and go a long way towards “Atmanirbhar Bharat” in the engineering space.

The Indian side has convinced the Japanese that Indian engineers are more than capable of making complex steel bridges. Sources said they cited the Chenab bridge in Kashmir, which is coming up as the world’s tallest rail bridge.

The work for 65,000-ton steel fabrication for the 27 bridges in the bullet train corridor will be certified by Welding Research

Institute in Tiruchirapalli, sources said. They told *The Indian Express* that the cost of the work could be “slightly cheaper” with Indian companies than with Japanese firms.

Signalling, control systems and rolling stock would, however, be from Japan.

Sources said that earlier this year, Indian officials were seized of the concern that the cost of some works by Japanese-only players tended to have escalated beyond what they had been given to expect.

Sources said that for a tender for the undersea tunnel — part of the 21-km underground stretch in Maharashtra — India is learnt to have held its ground that escalation of the cost after accounting for inflation would not be acceptable beyond a level. India is learnt to have discussed that the cost of the work should be based on estimates of 2015 and the calculated inflation, not more than that. The 21-km underground stretch from Mumbai’s Bandra Kurla Complex to Kalyan has 7 km under the Thane creek, with 1.8 km under the sea bed, and the remaining under mangrove marshland on either side of the creek. The tender for the tunnel is likely to be opened next month.