

Science express to create awareness on biodiversity

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With a view to create awareness amongst masses in general and youth in particular about the exceptional biodiversity of India, the ministry of environment & forests (MoEF) in collaboration with department of science and technology (DST) and Indian Railway launched last year on World Environment Day (June 5, 2012) from Delhi Safdarjung, an innovative exhibition on rail called science express biodiversity special (SEBS) train.

Now yet again the various ministries including railways, science and technology, railways and environment and forests have joined hands to relaunch the second phase of SEBS on April 09, 2013 from Delhi Safdarjung. Dignitaries who are expected to grace the flag off ceremony include Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, minister of environment and forests, Mr Pawan Kumar Bansal, union minister of railways, Mr S. Jaipal Reddy, union minister for science and technology and earth sciences and Mrs Sheila Dikshit, chief minister of Delhi.

The present second phase run of the train is in the two phase programme envisaged to cover a minimum of 100 locations on Broad Gauge network of Indian Railway across the entire length & breadth of the country. Of the 16 coaches of Science Express- Biodiversity Special, 8 are solely dedicated to showcasing the myriad biodiversity spread across all the biogeographical zones of India through a variety of interactive exhibits, short films & videos that are shown on Plasma & LED TV screens, large format displays, kiosks, backlit panels, and so on. The rest of coaches have interesting & informative exhibits on Climate Change, Energy and Water conservation and topical issues in science.

The popular Joy of Science Lab is mounted in an exclusive coach in which students are guided to perform various experiments & activities to understand concepts of various themes projected in the train. In addition, on the railway platform where the train is halted, young visitors are encouraged to play several exciting games as well as participate in quizzes, painting competitions, elocutions, just-a-minute, etc. The window panes of the entire train have also been judiciously used to put up posters on the numerous species of flora & fauna found in India which keep the visitors engaged while waiting for their turn.

During its first phase, which ended on 22 December 2012 at Ahmedabad, it made halts of 3-4 days duration each at 51 locations and over 23 lakh people, including 6 lakh students and 32000 teachers from 7000 schools enjoyed learning in a fun filled way. The train was also stationed at Secunderabad during 9-19 October 2012 to facilitate visit of delegates to Conference of Parties (CoP-11). India hosted the CoP II meeting at Hyderabad attended by participants from more than 190 countries across the world. SEBS was the brand ambassador to showcase the rich bio diversity of India.

After flag off ceremony, the train will then leave for Pragati Maidan Railway Station where it will be stationed during 10-13 April. It will be open to visitors from 1000hrs till 1700 hrs and entry is free. Schools can fix appointments to visit the exhibition and also participate in Joy-of-Science lab by calling 09428405407/8 or by sending an e-mail to sciencexpress@gmail.com. A team of 40 young well trained and highly motivated post graduates in science, who remain on-board throughout the entire journey, will facilitate the visitors and explain the content of the exhibits and also answer their queries. Thereafter the train will halt at 60 more locations across India before returning to its base station- Gandhinagar capital on October 28, 2013.