Capt. Solanki described the scope and challenges as well the importance of skilled manpower requirement in infrastructure development. Mr. Himanshu Hota from Sudarshan Aviation focused on amphibian air services to help strengthen the Indian tourism and transport industry. Dr. Garimella’s presentation on inland waterway facilities in West Bengal and Assam for leisure tourism, emphasized the regular jetties and fuel related issues being faced by various water boat corporates in India, while suggesting some initiatives to be taken by IWAI and concerned departments.

The IWAI Chairman Mr. Verma, explained that Inland waterways has till recently been relegated to the background; railway bridges and roads were indiscriminately built across waterways without leaving sufficient clearances, vertical or horizontal, for navigation purposes, which has killed the potential for navigation. The cost of logistics in India is on the high side at 13 percent whereas in Europe and Japan the figures are 8 percent. Inland Waterways, for that matter despite only being around 7 percent of the logistics sector as opposed to rail at 30 percent and road at 60 percent, is the more efficient. IWW is also a sustainable mode of transport; inland water transport with 1 Horse Power can move 4000 kgs of cargo, while the figures for rail and road are 500 kgs and 150 kgs respectively; additionally air pollution, land acquisition and rehabilitation is the least for inland waterways; and the capital cost is least among all forms of transport. The Government policy towards the transport sector has changed; the Jal Marg Vikas Project with an outlay of Rs 4200 crores, with Rs. 800 crore budget allocated; the 106 National Waterway Bill has been enacted, as well as the rewriting of Indian Vessel Act of 1970, and the government does not charge any service tax on inland water transport.

With the expanding population and congested road and rail networks, passenger traffic tends to be prioritized over cargo. The growing economy has put additional pressures on the movement of cargo, with more steel, coal, oil and containerized goods.
Mr. Ashish Wig, Chairman, Infrastructure Committee, IACC - NIC welcomed Hon’ble Minister Mr. Nitin J. Gadkari; Mrs Rita Singh – Chairman & Managing Director, Mesco Steel; Mr. Dillon Banerjee, Deputy Senior Commercial Officer, US Embassy and Mr. Sanjay Mehta, Regional Vice President, NIC at the Inaugural Session during the 2nd Indo – US Infrastructure Summit.

Mr. Dillon Banerjee went on to laud the efforts put in by IACC with its partners for organizing such meaningful meetings to further strengthen the business and economic relationship among business houses of both countries. While he went on to describe how processes of doing business between both nations are easing day-by-day, he also emphasized to take note of related processes to ease out the regulatory pressures and requested to put forward suggestions to his office for more flexibility in the bilateral relationship.

Ms. Rita Singh put across issues faced by large manufacturers due to poor infrastructure support in our country and how that is affecting manufacturing industries. She requested Hon’ble Minister to intervene and find out ways to eradicate such issues by increasing infrastructure development factors to a maximum. The success of ‘Make in India’ for example, can be scripted on the back of strong infrastructure; there is a need to have independent regulators, transport regulators for ports, waterways, highways and railways, stipulated freight rates for railway, waterways and trucks, resolve disputes, and ensure seamless movement of goods.

Hon’ble Minister for Road Transport and Highways, outlined the immediate focus of the ministry over the next year; the objective is to add 25 to 30 Kms to the network daily, with the quantum of addition to go up with every passing year, and spending to touch Rs 3 lakh crore in road construction in a much needed boost to the road and highways sector in India.

Additionally, of the total road network in the country, 80% would become National Highways in due course of time, through the conversion of two lane roads into four lanes, construction of more expressways and access corridors across the country, examples of which he mentioned the Delhi – Jaipur, Bengaluru – Chennai, and Delhi-Meerut expressways.

The Minister affirmed the Ministry has enough funds to finance projects either through its own funds collected though toll, funding from multilateral organizations or investment by foreign investors. In this regard, he disclosed that through toll collection itself the Ministry mobilizes Rs 10,000 crore yearly, and generates deposits worth Rs 15,000 crore.

He went on to present a clear picture of current development statistics in various infrastructure sectors viz. roads, ports, highways, docks etc. and promised to look in to each issues that were brought to his notice during this session.

Mr Sanjay Mehta thanked the dignitaries for their valuable insights, and presented the mementos.
Mr. Ashish Wig – Chairman, Infrastructure Committee, IACC - NIC welcomed Hon’ble Minister Mr. Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu and Mr. Ravi Wig Past Regional President, IACC – NIC during the post lunch session on Railways.

Mr. Ravi Wig opened the session with his welcome note referring to his friendship with Mr. Prabhu during his stint with IACC as the Regional President, before handing over to the minister.

Hon’ble Minister Mr. Suresh Prabhu, outlined the way forward for the Railways: capital expenditure of the network at Rs 1.39 lakh crore is at an all- time high, the ministry is in talks with the US transport authorities to concretize areas of cooperation between the two countries, the Railways has already signed contracts worth Rs 40,000 crore with major global corporations, including companies like GE and the French industry major Alstom, and the sector hopes that more companies would express their willingness to invest in the Indian Railways.

The minister highlighted the need for feedback on how to improve the efficiency of the railways, decentralization measures as well as transparency in decision making. In that vein, general managers and others have been empowered to take expeditious decisions, involving the minister only with policy decisions and macro issues; and e-tendering has been introduced for procurement and bidding, making decisions more objective and transparent manner. The minister stressed the need to augment investment, reduce cost and decongest networks as key objectives of his ministry.

Mr Ashish Wig thanked the Minister and presented the mementos.
Mr. Ashish Wig – Chairman, Infrastructure Committee, IACC - NIC welcomed the esteemed panelists
Mr. Harsh Mehta, Director, Communication and Public Affairs Transportation, Bombardier Transportation India Pvt Ltd; Mr Kishore Desai, Regional Marketing Leader, GE Transportation; Mr Pawan Agarwal, President & CEO, YES BANK; Mr Sivadasan, Former Member Railway Board.

Mr. Pawan Agrawal, outlined the challenges and opportunities in PPP Projects in Indian Railways: the structural issues constraining private finance of railway projects, the concession agreements of Railways, and claimed the redevelopment of stations is an emerging growth segment.

Mr. R Sivadasan claimed that given the business and financial performance of Indian Railways, it is one of the better managed Rail Systems in the World. To create more opportunities it is necessary for the railways to explore collaboration with TTC (FRA) and TTCI developed Heavy Haul Freight ecosystems in USA, particularly when it comes to designing and operating Dedicated Freight Corridors in India. The challenges to the Railways is the dependence on the bread-winner “King Coal” which will likely create future predicaments, and the need to develop railway land & stations.

Mr. Harsh Mehta elaborated on the role of Multinationals in the Infrastructure Domain (Railways), and appreciated the efforts of the railways to move towards a more transparent process.

Mr. Vishnu Sudarshan shared a presentation of participative models of domestic and foreign investment into the railways sector in India. He described prevalent regulatory models in the infrastructure sector in India, the emerging infra-regulatory landscape in India and the learnings from past infrastructure projects in India, from a legal perspective.

Mr. Kishore Desai – GE being a global leader in Rail Technology is highly excited about the Indian Railway market. As an investor and a key stakeholder, the developments initiated by the Government are particularly noteworthy. He informed that the Minister in his last budget formally acknowledged the problem of underinvestment and laid out an ambitious investment plan of ~130billion USD by 2020; which opens up opportunities for GE to partner the Government in transformation of Railways. This is a bold & transparent move as it showcases that Government is not merely announcing initiatives & plans, it is also serious about implementing them in a time bound manner, as Railways is a unique segment where several schemes such as Make in India, Skill India, Swacch Bharat, Digital India etc. converge. This means that Ministry is able to utilize various initiatives of the Government of India and create more opportunities for transforming railways.

IR should launch a comprehensive mission on “Digital Railways” to embrace Digital solutions in a much more holistic manner and to help increase train velocity, optimize asset performance, reduce operations & maintenance costs, save fuel and improve safety; in line with IR’s vision to become a truly world class rail operator by 2020.
Session on Roads & Highways was chaired by Mr. Ashish Wig – Chairman, Infrastructure Committee, IACC - NIC welcomed Mr. Raghav Chandra, IAS, Chairman National Highway Authority of India; Mr. Sudhir Hoshing - Joint Managing Director, IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd; Mr. Sista Prasad - Executive Vice President, APCO Infratech Pvt Ltd; Mr. Prashant Shukla –National Technology Officer, Microsoft

Mr Sista Prasad highlighted some of the major challenges in implementing tunnel projects, and the geological challenges; the difficulties during tunnelling posed by the geological features like thrust zones, shear zones, folded rock sequence, rock cover, geothermal gradient, high level of seismicity etc. have been experienced on different project sites in Himalayan region, as well as the remote locations and harsh climatic & living conditions. There is also difficulty in mobilising resources, dearth of experienced manpower, difficulties in mobilisation of specialised equipment, and ensuring uninterrupted supply of construction materials because of restricted resources and poor logistics.

Mr. Sudhir Hoshing gave an interactive presentation on traffic movement and safety issues in Indian transport, in comparison to western countries.

Mr. Prashant Shukla highlighted the need to enhance the Digital Infrastructure in the railway sector.

Mr. Raghav Chandra said that NHAI was planning to award projects worth INR 11,000 crore over the next few years to enhance safety on national Highways in a bid to curtail road accidents. The “Roads and Highways Ministry has given an in- principle approval for awarding projects worth INR 5,000 crore every year to install safety features on highways.

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