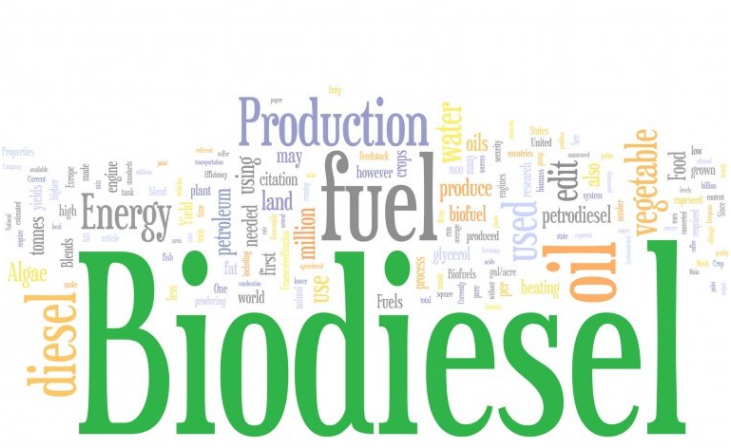
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Indian railways set to increase its bio-diesel consumption

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Indian Railways has decided to promote use of alternative fuels like bio-diesel in a big way for powering vast fleet of over 4000 Diesel locomotives. This was stated by the Minister of Railways Mr D V Sadananda Gowda at the inauguration of Bio-Fuels - 2014 Conference with a theme 'Energize growth & Business opportunities in Biodiesel sector in India' organized by Bio-Diesel Association of India (BDAI) recently, Mr Gowda said that Indian Railways, is the single largest bulk consumer of diesel in the country and as mentioned in Railway Budget 2014-15, Indian Railways will start using Bio-Diesel up to 5% of the total fuel consumption in diesel locomotives. This will save precious foreign exchange substantially.

Diesel locomotives cater to a large segment of rail traffic in the country, hauling both passenger and freight trains. Indian Railways consume over two billion litres of diesel every year. For this Railways have to foot a bill of over Rs 15000 crore annually. Therefore, even a small reduction in fuel consumption through blending with bio-diesel will result in a substantial savings in the fuel bill. In addition, the attendant benefits of a cleaner environment would also accrue on account of lower carbon emission, without requiring any change in the locomotive design. Extensive trials have already been conducted by RDSO using bio-diesel in different proportions on railway locomotives and results have been found very encouraging, Mr Gowda said.

Railway minister said that Indian Railways initially attempted blending of High Speed Diesel (HSD) with Bio-Diesel extracted from the Jatropha plant. Jatropha oil had been used in India as biodiesel in remote rural and forest communities; Jatropha oil can be used directly after extraction i.e. without refining in diesel generators and engines. However, these forays by Indian Railways met with limited success. Indian Railways have also set up an Indian Railways Organisation for Alternate Fuels (IROAF) to promote Bio-Diesels and other environmentally benign alternate fuels. They have also been given the mandate to facilitate setting up of trans-etherification facilities for converting plant residues into Bio-Diesels. These facilities could be set up in the country on the PPP mode.

Mr Gowda further said that Bio-fuels also have a role to play in our efforts to address environmental concerns, particularly where we cannot otherwise easily decarbonise, like in the transport sector. However, it is crucial that the bio-fuels used must be genuinely sustainable and cost effective. Unless these two imperatives are met, we would not be able to proliferate Bio-Diesels in the manner we intend to. Mr Gowda hoped that the deliberations in this conference would bring out solutions needed to chalk out a path, both by the policy makers and the industry to make this environmentally benign natural resource our fuel of the future.