

## Karnataka

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### President flags off Golden Chariot

Staff Reporter



*The train will embark on its first commercial run on March 3*

— Photo: Bhagya Prakash K.



**A GOLDEN CHAPTER BEGINS:** President Pratibha Patil flagging off the Golden Chariot at Yeshwanthpur Railway Station in Bangalore on Saturday. Governor Rameshwar Thakur (left), Devisingh Shekawath, President's husband, and Union Minister of State for Railways R. Velu (right) are seen.

BANGALORE: Golden Chariot, the showpiece tourism product of the State and South India's first luxury train, received a ceremonial presidential flag off at Yeshwanthpur Railway Station on Saturday.

The train will embark on its first commercial run on March 3.

At a ceremony here, President Pratibha Patil waved the green flag to the train, which is expected to raise Karnataka's tourism profile.

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She said: "The initiative (luxury train) should have a beneficial impact on promoting tourism in Karnataka." Delving on the contributions of dynasties that ruled Karnataka, the President said: "Promoting tourism to these great historical and cultural sites will give the world a chance to see the greatness and glory achieved during their reign."

Karnataka also had the opportunity to promote eco-tourism along with historical and religious tourism, she said.

#### Tourism growth

Stating that the country's effort in increasing the number of tourists to India must continue, the President said there had been a remarkable growth in the recent years, in foreign tourist arrivals to India.

She said: "We must encourage domestic tourism. Currently, over 380 million domestic tourists visit different parts of the country every year and return with a better understanding of the people living in different regions of the country. They have a better appreciation of cultural diversity of India." She complimented the role of Indian Railways in linking different parts of India.

Ms. Patil said: "Tourism is an instrument for economic development and employment generation, particularly in remote and backward areas.

It encourages preservation of monuments and heritage properties and helps in survival of art forms, crafts and culture." Tourism can provide larger employment opportunities for women, she said.

Governor Rameshwar Thakur, Union Minister of State for Railways R. Velu, Union Minister of State for Shipping, Road Transport and Highways K.H. Muniyappa, MP Ananth Kumar and senior South Western Railways and State Tourism officials were present.

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