

E-buses to earn BEST ₹45cr in carbon credits per year

Some environmentalists oppose carbon offset saying 'why should BEST absorb others' pollution'

Somit.Sen
mirrorfeedback@timesgroup.com
 TWEETS @MumbaiMirror

BEST has prepared a roadmap to earn carbon credits worth at least Rs 45 crore per annum and this will help curtail losses in future while at the same time ensure 10,000 environment friendly e-buses are plying on city roads.

BEST general manager Lokesh Chandra told Mumbai Mirror that there will be a reduction in CO2 emissions by over 40 lakh tons in ten years.

One carbon credit certifies that one metric tonne of carbon dioxide has been removed from the atmosphere. Carbon credits are created by offsetting carbon dioxide emissions with conservation – solar, wind, and waste conversion to energy and other technologies. The credits are then traded on both voluntary and compliance carbon markets.

Chandra said, "BEST is planning to convert 10,000 buses to electric in the next 3-4 years. BEST has also signed a power purchase agreement with Solar Energy Corporation of India to enable charging of buses using solar energy. As a result, it can expect to earn 55 carbon credits per bus every year."

He further said that for 10,000 buses it will amount to 5.5 lakh carbon credits. "Taking a value of \$10 per credit in the voluntary market, the revenue earned by BEST is expected to be



The first batch of 75 non AC hi-tech buses were inducted in the BEST fleet at Wadala depot on Tuesday APRIL 24, 2017.

\$55 lakh per annum or Rs 45 crore per annum," he added.

Ashok Datar from Mumbai Mobility Forum welcomed the move. "This will make a big difference to the undertaking. It is very important that we earn more credits so that it eventually reduces the cost of operation of buses

and ensures affordable fares for passengers. In future, with more carbon credit earnings, BEST can purchase its own fleet of electric buses which have low running costs," he said, adding, "The transport body should ideally have maximum air-conditioned, noiseless e-buses in its fleet offering cheaper

fares. They should be operated on dedicated corridors."

Environmentalist Sumaira Abdulali opposed the move by BEST to go for carbon credits. "I am in favour of electrification of the fleet and this will also reduce noise pollution to a greater extent. But, going for carbon credits is

not the right way for BEST as it gives an excuse to others to keep polluting."

Sources said that other companies whose emission levels of CO2 are high can purchase carbon credits (in the trading market) from BEST to offset their carbon footprint.

"We need to reduce pollution overall and BEST's electrification is just one of those measures. But BEST cannot absorb everybody else's pollution. What we should be concerned about is the quality of air we are breathing and this has to come down by a great deal – not just by buying or selling credits," she pointed out.

She added that on the air pollution front it should be ensured that the electricity for the buses should be from renewable energy and not coal (fossil fuel). At present, the BEST buses are charged with electricity which comes from thermal energy.

In the context of EVs, carbon credits are generated by replacing fossil fuel-based vehicles with electrified vehicles that have significantly lower emission levels and source electricity from renewable energy projects or less carbon-intensive fuels. In the 'voluntary market' (where companies volunteer to buy carbon offsets to meet their own net-zero emissions targets), each carbon credit could sell for \$10, Chandra said.

Carbon markets are on rise and many experts bodies, such as the Interna-

Reminding world of SS Tilawa tragedy



EMILE SOLANKI

BY INVITATION

mirrorfeedback@timesgroup.com

As we come to the end of 2022, I look back with fondness at how far my father and I have come over 15 years with our journey to bring greater awareness about the forgotten tragedy of SS Tilawa. In order to bring back the memories of this incident to present times, it was our aim to start with reminding the Indian people of a piece of their heritage and history from the Second World War.

With the support of the Maritime Mumbai Museum Society (MMMS), we were able to organise the first ever commemoration to officially acknowledge the tragedy, and memorialise the loss of 280 lives. The event was held at the Grand Hotel, Ballard Estate, South Mumbai on the 80th anniversary on November 23. The Ballard Estate was the perfect location for this historic occasion since SS Tilawa last left the nearby Ballard Pier on November 20, 1942, and the 678 survivors were brought back here on November 27. The iconic Grand Hotel was a fitting place to the commemoration since it was in use du-

ring the Second World War. The week of November 21, 2022 was action packed. Following a boat cruise tour of the Ballard Pier with Captain Kapildev Bahl, president of MMMS, we visited the Seamen's Club War Memorial. In the commonwealth war grave memorial book, we were able to locate several staff who worked on board SS Tilawa and sadly lost their lives during the Japanese twice torpedo attack. Next, we had two radio interviews, including Radio One, with Hrishikesh Kannan, as well holding a press conference at the Mumbai Press Club. It was also quite exciting to meet Mr Amitabh Bachchan at KBC Studio where he was shooting one of his episodes of Kaun Banega Crorepati. My father and I were able to present to Mr Bachchan a small memento plaque of the 80th commemoration.

The highlight of my five days in India of course was the commemoration itself on Wednesday November 23. The event was attended by over 100 people, including high-ranking retired Indian Naval officers, Commodore Koshy, Bollywood legend Mr Johnny Lever, and

chief guest the British deputy high commissioner Mr Alan Gemmell, OBE, and his team. It was a privilege to have one of three known survivors – Mr Arvindbhai Jani, now aged 83. He was three years old at the time of the incident and rescued by his mother, the late Mrs Vansantben L. Jani.

My father (aka Kash Kumar, UK radio broadcaster) was MC for the evening. Vice President Mrs Anita Yewale of MMMS gave an introductory speech on the role of the museum, its work, and how their leadership team became involved with assisting us organise this commemoration. I had the privilege to

SS Tilawa, the British Indian vessel, on a voyage from Mumbai to Durban in 1942, was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine during WWII. It went down with 280 passengers and crew members; there were 678 survivors

deliver the 40-minute keynote address which included moving interviews from families connected to Tilawa who could not attend including Mrs Tejparakash Kaur Manget (90 years old) living in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her daughter, Ronny Manget, contacted me a couple of days before the commemoration. Mr Mervyn Maciel aged 93 living in South London sent a video message. He lost his parents and three young siblings to the Tilawa incident.

The next speech was given by the British deputy high commissione, Mr

Gemmell. He commended our family for our efforts, mentioned the support of the UK Government, acknowledged the loss of life, and the rescue efforts of HMS Birmingham and SS Carthage. His comments included a pledge to place a Tilawa wreath at the Mumbai High Commission in November each year. His speech concluded with reading a moving poem written by Mr Maciel at age 14 about Tilawa's tragedy. After a moment's silence, my father interviewed Mr Jani, his wife, and daughter.

After returning to my home in Toronto, I received an encouraging letter from the UK Prime Minister Rishi Su-

notifying us that his father Mr Chotoo Khoosal, now aged 98, was a survivor of Tilawa. He was 18 at the time, and newly married. Mr Khoosal has moved back to Bardoli, Gujarat, to spend his remaining life in his motherland. We recently held a zoom interview, and heard some fascinating details of his recollections of the tragedy.

In all, 2022 has been a productive year. In 2023 we have several initiatives planned. We hope to hold the 81st commemoration in London. I am working on a movie script with an award-winning writer. I have been in contact with the Greenwich maritime museum in London, and also working with a team in South Africa to produce a documentary. I have already set up a Tilawa family WhatsApp group for many around the world to connect with fellow descendants of victims. It has been wonderful to read the many heartfelt expressions of appreciation, and see the group build a warm rapport.

Tilawa 1942 The Forgotten Tragedy and our website tilawa1942.com is beyond a one-time project. It has become a comprehensive resource and mission to increase awareness, memorialize the loss of life, help bring closure to hundreds of families, and continue to seek answers as to why this tragedy took place.

(The Toronto-based writer is the great grandson of Nichhabhai Chibabhai Solanki, a passenger who died in the SS Tilawa tragedy)

nak's office. The tragedy was acknowledged, our efforts commended, mentioning of the commemoration and Mr Gemmell's support, and commitment to the Tilawa wreath. In response to that letter, I asked Mr Sunak for his support with access to archives, featuring Tilawa in UK maritime museums, etc. I also wrote to the Prime Ministers of India and Japan to provide us similar support, and acknowledge the tragedy. We shall see what happens in 2023.

On December 20th, we received an email from Mr Pravin Patel of Canada