



## Red Ribbon Express in Karnataka

The Red Ribbon Express (RRE) is on a year-long journey across the country to spread awareness on HIV/AIDS. The RRE has arrived in Karnataka at Belgaum on February 2.

The RRE project, one of India's largest advocacy campaigns, is in a mission to "unite India against HIV/AIDS". It was flagged off at New Delhi on the occasion of World AIDS Day on December 1, 2009. The State Health Secretary of Karnataka, E.V. Ramana Reddy said that the train, arriving from Miraj in Maharashtra, will halt at 11 stations in Karnataka.

The train will head to Hubli from Belgaum on February 4. The train will then run through Hebsur, Koppal, Bellary, Raichur, Chikjajur, Birur, Tumkur, Kolar and Udupi before heading to Kasargod in Kerala via Madgaon on February 23.

"The Red Ribbon Express (RRE) has a special mandate this time. While educating people on HIV/AIDS, it will also create awareness on swine flu and the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) among the rural masses. The train will provide this information at all the 10,000 villages it will cover during its journey," Mr. Reddy said.

The train is equipped to hold training sessions for various health professionals. Apart from this there would be two sessions for common people as well. This time the train would be covering places which were not covered in phase I.

In order to mobilise people from villages two special buses have been organized. In addition there are exhibitions and folk performances specifically on the issue of HIV/AIDS. These performances help in attracting more people to the train.

The experience gained in the first phase helped in understanding the need to have testing facilities close by. The testing facilities in the current phase have been provided on the platform. The test results are handed over to the individual on the same day. Great measures have been taken to maintain confidentiality. If an individual is found to be positive he/she is promptly referred to a nearby ICTC.