

# Standing Committee Report Summary

## Safety and Security in Railways

- The Standing Committee on Railways (Chairperson: Mr. Sudip Bandopadhyay) submitted its report on Safety and Security in Railways on December 14, 2016. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
- **Institutional framework:** The Committee observed that within Railways each department defines its own safety parameters for assets. Each department prioritizes its own concerns with regard to safety. However, for Indian Railways to ensure safety in the backdrop of inter department differences or intra-department prioritization on safety may be difficult. The Committee recommended that a separate department solely entrusted with providing safety and security. The Ministry of Railways should appoint a Member (Safety) to provide dedicated focus to the railway safety operations.
- **Under-investment in Railways:** The Committee observed that from 1950 to 2016, while Railways' route kilometres have increased by 23%, passenger and freight traffic over the Railways network has increased by 1,344% per cent and 1,642% respectively. Such slow expansion of rail network has put undue burden on the existing infrastructure leading to severe congestion and safety compromises. Further, under-investment in Railways has resulted in congested routes, inability to add new trains, reduction of train speeds, and more rail accidents.
- **Accidents at unmanned level crossings:** The Committee noted that unmanned level crossings (UMLCs) (or railway crossings) continue to be the biggest cause of maximum casualties in rail accidents. Currently there are 14,440 UMLCs in the railway network. In 2014-15, about 40% of the accidents occurred at UMLCs, and in 2015-16, about 28%. Between 2010 and 2013, the Ministry fell short of meeting the targets to eliminate UMLCs. Further, the target of eliminating UMLCs was reduced by about 50% in 2014-15. The Committee recommended that certain measures such as Approaching Train Warning Systems, Train Actuated Warning Systems for giving audio-visual warning to road users about an approaching train should be implemented. Further, additional road speed breakers should be constructed before the level crossing gates to reduce the speed of approaching traffic. Such measures should be provided at all manned and unmanned crossings.
- **Accidents due to derailments:** Between 2003-04 and 2015-16, derailments were the second highest reason for casualties. In 2015-16, around 84% accidents occurred due to derailments. One of the reasons for derailment is defect in the track or rolling stock. Of the total track length of 1,14,907 km in the country, 4,500 km should be renewed annually. However, of the 5,000 km of track length due for renewal currently, only 2,700 km of track length was targeted to be renewed. The Committee also noted that the Linke Hoffman Busch (LHB) coaches do not witness higher casualties in case of derailments as the coaches do not pile upon each other. It recommended that Indian Railways should switch completely to LHB coaches.
- **Accidents due to failure of railway staff:** The Committee noted that more than half of the accidents are due to lapses on the part of railway staff. Such lapses include carelessness in working, poor maintenance work, adoption of short-cuts, non-observance of laid down safety rules and procedures. The Committee recommended that a regular refresher course for each category of railway staff should be conducted. The course can cover case studies of accidents due to common errors, pattern of working, modernisation and technology upgradation.
- **Accidents due to loco-pilots:** Accidents also occur due to signalling errors for which loco-pilots (train-operators) are responsible. With rail traffic increasing, loco-pilots encounter a signal at every kilometre and have to constantly be on high alert. Further, currently no technological support is available to the loco-pilots and they have to keep a vigilant watch on the signal and control the train accordingly. Loco-pilots are also over-worked as they have to work beyond their stipulated hours of duty. This work stress and fatigue puts the life of thousands of commuters at risk and affects the safety of train operations. The Committee recommended that loco-pilots and other related running staff be provided with sound working conditions, better medical facilities and other amenities to improve their performance. The location of signals can be uniformly displayed and be linked with visibility, braking distance, and speed.

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