

Ensuring Rail Safety

What is the issue?

\n\n

The rising incidence of accidents on the Indian Railways (IR), calls for an assessment of the Indian Railways system.

\n\n

What are the problems in this regard?

\n\n

\n

- **Capacity utilisation** - This refers to the traffic flow in the available railway lines.

\n

- For optimal performance, utilisation should be 80% to 90% of the capacity.

\n

- However in India, in many routes, it ranges from 120% to 150% and sometimes exceeds this which poses risks.

\n

- **Maintenance** - IR carried out modernisation and upgradation of track and other infrastructure with a massive infusion of funds from 1985-2000.

\n

- This includes acquisition of new locomotives, coaches and wagons.

\n

- However after that, IR was not focussing on the last mile works that are essential for unlocking the full potential of an upgraded network.

\n

- This include works like easing of sharp curves, strengthening some bridges, improving track geometry to tighter tolerances, cab signalling, etc.

\n

- **Safety** - Over-utilisation of railway lines leaves little time for safety inspections and essential maintenance works.

\n

- Also, worldwide, reducing the speed differential between freight and passenger trains is done along with raising the speed of trains.

\n

- This is the key to increasing capacity and improving safety; however IR has

not met this.

\n

- As a result of all these, IR has one of the highest incidence of rail accidents due to material, equipment and human failures.

\n

- Besides, IR is planning for expansion through Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) and High-Speed Rail (HSR) lines.

\n

\n\n

What is to be done?

\n\n

\n

- Given the safety concerns with existing lines, these new plans require well planning before execution.

\n

- It is high time that IR shifts focus to the core network that carries more than 80 per cent of the total traffic.

\n

- Also, the last mile works for upgrading the trunk routes which were repeatedly deferred should be undertaken on a priority basis.

\n

- Only this will ensure a faster and a safer rail travel in India.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n

