

## Performance of Indian Railways in 2023

### Why in News?

The Performance of Indian Railways in 2023 showed significant strides in infrastructure but reveals underwhelming freight loading and financial performance.

### How Indian Railways performed in 2023?

- **Near completion of DFC** - Dedicated Freight Corridors are nearing completion with ***more than 200 freight trains*** already running on the corridors.

#### Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC)

- It is one of the largest rail projects to date in India.
- **Aim** - To provide a *seamless freight transportation between eastern, northern and western India*.
- **Executed by** - Indian Railways
- **Implemented by** - Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL), a subsidiary of the Indian Railways.
- **Arms**
  - Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC)
  - Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC)
- **Route** - It passes along the *eastern and western arms of the Golden Quadrilateral*, the national highway network connecting Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai.

- **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL)** - It is symbolic for *connectivity and seamless integration of J&K* with India.
- But its poor progress reflects on IR's credentials in executing and implementing large projects.
- **Delhi-Srinagar train** - The 1<sup>st</sup> train is expected to run sometime next summer.
- **High-Speed Rail project** - It was mooted in 2014 between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, intending to complete it by 2021.
- But the goal post kept shifting, however, due to non-cooperation between the Centre and Maharashtra governments and is expected to be operational by 2028-29.
- **Vande Bharat** - It was success with large-scale deployment from a mere 6 at the year start and with nearly 50 trains at the end.
- It showed that there is the space for fast and comfortable trains even with higher fare.
- But some of the trains were *deployed on political merit* and some run with *poor occupancy*.
  - Example: Bhopal-Jabalpur and Bhopal-Indore fail to cut travel time.
- The *sleeper version is badly-delayed*.
- **Railway tracks** - Delay in upgrading the tracks for higher speeds.
  - Work on raising the speed of Delhi-Howrah and Delhi-Mumbai sections to 160 kmph has seen tardy progress.

- **Safety Issues** - On safety front, Indian railways has shown improvement in the last 5 years with the closure of all unmanned railway crossings and improvements in track maintenance.
- However, the **Balasore accident** dented IR's safety record and was followed by at least 4 more accidents with fatalities and injuries.
  - Delhi-Kamakhya Express **derailment** near Buxar.
  - **Fire cases** in Pataalkot Express near Agra and Delhi-Darbhangra Superfast Express near Etawah.
  - **Collision of two trains** near Vizianagaram.
- **Financial performance** - The rail freight and total revenue is only between 3-4%, leaving no surplus for investments, thus increased reliance on the Centre for the same.
  - In an economy growing nearly 7%, one would expect rail freight and total revenue to expand at a minimum of 10%.
- **Dismal roll-out of IRMS** - Indian Railway Management Service at the entry level is the lowest choice among Civil Services aspirants.
- Only 90 out of 150 vacancies could be filled up, as many candidates likely to qualify choose another service.
- **New Amrit Bharat Trains** - 2 Amrit Bharat Trains are to be launched.
- The Amrit Bharat train is a Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) push pull train having locos at both ends for better acceleration.
- It provides improved facilities for rail passengers with a maximum speed limit of **130 kmph**.

*Indian Railways has launched theme - based Tourist Circuit trains (**Bharat Gaurav Trains**) to showcase India's rich cultural heritage and magnificent historical places. 1<sup>st</sup> Bharat Gaurav Train (Shirdi Yatra) was launched in 2022.*

- **Record Amrit Bharat Stations** - 1,309 Amrit Bharat Stations have been identified across the nation to modernize passenger amenities and improve accessibility & inclusivity of railway stations.
- **One Station, One Product (OSOP) Outlets** - It promotes 'Vocal for Local' vision, providing a market for indigenous products and creating additional income opportunities for marginalised sections of society.

*Indian Railway has set a target of becoming Net Zero Carbon Emitter by 2030.*

### **What should be focused in 2024?**

- **Safety** - The shift should be strongly to improving safety of rail travel, including track and signalling upgrades.
- The progress of installation of **Kavach**, a unique safety system developed by IR engineers need to be paced up.
- **Address Issues** - While electrification of rails are promoted for greening railways it is silent on
  - The fate of more than 500 diesel locomotives

- The need for 'hydrogen trains' amidst electrification
- The requirement for airport-like stations
- **Prevent saturation** - The announcement to add 3,000 passenger trains to eliminate waiting lists should consider the saturated capacities into account.
- **Non-political deployment of trains** - Vande Bharat should be made after traffic surveys to reduce poor occupancy issues.
- **Future prospects** - IR should make efficient use of initiatives like [Gati Shakti](#) to improve its loading and revenue performance significantly.

*PM Gati Shakti is a National Master Plan for Multimodal Connectivity launched in 2021 to transfer India into a hub of world class infrastructure by providing integrated and seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services.*

## References

1. [Business Line| Evaluation of Indian Railways' performance](#)
2. [The Print| Dedicated Freight Corridor](#)

