

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2206
ANSWERED ON 13.12.2024

ENHANCING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF RAIL FREIGHT

2206. SHRI SANJAY RAUT:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the specific policy and regulatory reforms being considered to make rail freight more competitive, particularly when compared to road transport in the country;
- (b) investment allocated for the modernization and upgradation of existing railway tracks, terminals, and freight handling systems in the country;
- (c) whether Government is considering the integration of advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and automation in the freight operations of Indian Railways to enhance efficiency and reduce turnaround times; and
- (d) the expected timelines for implementation of these technologies?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, INFORMATION & BROADCASTING AND
ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

(a) to (d) To create competitive and future ready transport system, Indian Railways aims to formulate strategies based on both operation capacities and commercial policy initiatives to increase railway modal share in freight. The rail infrastructure augmentation plan inter-alia focuses on the network capacity enhancement, removal of bottlenecks, increasing average speed of trains, reduction in cargo transit time and cost etc.

As on 01.04.2024, 488 projects (187 New Lines, 40 Gauge Conversion and 261 Doubling) of total length 44,488 Km, costing approx. ₹7.44 lakh crore are in various stages of planning/approval/construction, out of which, 12,045 Km length has been commissioned and expenditure of approx. ₹2.92 lakh crore has been incurred upto March, 2024. The summary is as under:

Category	No. of Projects	Total Length (Km)	Length Commissioned till Mar'2024 (KM)	Total exp. Upto Mar'2024 (₹ in crore)
New Lines	187	20,199	2,855	1,60,022
Gauge Conversion	40	4,719	2,972	18,706
Doubling / Multitracking	261	19,570	6,218	1,13,742
Total	488	44,488	12,045	2,92,470

The details of commissioning / laying of new track across Indian Railways is given below:-

Period	New Track Commissioned	Average Commissioning of new tracks
2009-14	7,599 Km	4.2 Km/day
2014-24	31,180 Km	8.54 Km/day (more than 2 times)

Various steps taken by the Government for speedy approval and implementation of rail projects include (i) setting up of Gati Shakti units (ii) prioritisation of projects (iii) substantial increase in allocation of funds on priority (iv) delegation of powers at field level (v) close monitoring of progress of project at various level, and (vi) regular follow up with State Government and concerned authorities for expeditious land acquisition, forestry and wildlife clearance and for resolving other issue pertaining to projects. This has led to substantial increase in rate of commissioning since 2014.

To boost efficiency on cargo terminal, “Gati Shakti Cargo Terminal (GCT)” policy has been launched, wherein GCT are being developed. 91 GCTs have been commissioned so far.

Further a total of 2,741 Km out of 2,843 km of Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC) has been commissioned so far, which would provide higher freight speed, reduce cargo transit and lower carbon emission.

A number of Tariff rationalization measures have been implemented to remain cost competitive with respect to road. These include liberalized automatic freight rebate scheme for traffic loaded in empty flow direction, Station to Station Rate policy, short-lead concessions, discounts on a few commodities when loaded in specific type of wagon, and incentives for containerization, aim to attract more cargo.

To promote private sector investment in rolling stock, Indian Railway has implemented various schemes namely, General Purpose Wagon Investment Scheme(GPWIS), Liberalized Special Freight Train Operator Scheme (LSFTO) and Automobile Freight Train Operator Scheme (AFTO). Presently around 541 rake have already been inducted under various investment scheme.

Further, there has been a growing trend of introduction of high-capacity and higher axle load wagons, innovative container designs, and private investments in rolling stock and terminals also supports growth. Wagon with axle load capacity of 25T are plying on notified routes over IR and over Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) routes. New Automobile carrier wagons, Container flat wagons and Flat Multi-Purposed (FMP) wagons designs having higher capacities and speeds are being developed for transportation of different commodities.

Track maintenance, renewal and upgradation is a continuous and ongoing process on Indian Railways. During 2024-25, fund amounting to Rs17,652 cr have been allocated for track renewal works. For yard remodeling, up-gradation of terminal and freight handling systems and other traffic facility works, funds amounting to Rs8983 cr have been allocated during 2024-25.

Indian Railways is leveraging advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and Automation to enhance freight operations and reduce wagon turnaround times, Key innovations include Freight Maintenance Management (FMM), Real-Time Train Information System (RTIS), Control Chart Automation, Control Office Application (COA), Railways, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), and integration of train timing data via RTIS/Remmlot systems and Data Loggers. The integration of FMM and COA with IoT devices has been successfully implemented to improve operational efficiency.
