



Policy Watch - Mission Raftaar

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Introduction:

- Mission Raftaar is an **Indian Railway's project**, to increase the **speed of trains on busy routes**, to reduce travel time. It was introduced in the Railway Budget of 2016-17 and approved by NITI Aayog in 2017.
- It aims to offer semi-high speed trains to passengers, by running trains at a speed of 160-200 km/h in the selected corridors of the country.
- The Railways has chosen nine such corridors, which carry 58 percent of freight and 52 percent of passenger traffic with a share of only 15 percent of total Rail Network.
- Busiest Routes chosen are: Delhi – Mumbai, Delhi – Howrah, Howrah- Chennai, Chennai – Mumbai, Delhi – Chennai and Howrah – Mumbai.

Why Mission Raftaar?

- **At present, the average speed of trains is low:**
 - Goods' Train: 25-27 km/h
 - Mail & Superfast Train: 55 km/h
 - Premium Trains (like Rajdhani & Shatabdi): 80-85 km/h
- Short Distance trains run at very low speed, even lower than freight trains.
- Due to low average speeds, Railways don't get time for the maintenance of trains.
- Quadrilateral Network remains 130-140% overburdened.
- A lot of traffic on roads.

Favorable Steps:

- **Dedicated Freight Corridor**, which has been already conceived, will help the Railways in getting relieved from its freight traffic on mainline so that the tracks, signals and the coaching stocks of the mail and express trains are able to support the speed of 160 km/h.
- **Mission Zero Accident:** This mission was announced in the 2016-17 budget as well. Accident-free atmosphere is needed for making Mission Raftaar successful.
- **Infrastructure Upgradation:** Railways are expanding lines, digitizing the work, unmanning the level crossings. Railways are continuously looking for new models, new technology and safer coaches. It seems that railway is in the mood to overhaul its system.
- **Participation of Different Countries:** Different countries are helping us in the way we can go with the mission.

Hurdles

- To make Mission Raftaar a success, Indian Railways need to double the speed of freight trains and increase the speed of Super fast express trains by 25 km/h in next 5 years, which is not an easy job.
- **Traffic Congestion** is a big problem. When a train enters in the areas like Delhi, Mumbai, speed declines and also it has to wait for the signal, to get a line and thus reach to the platform. Many other trains remain in the line for same. The situation is like: 'So close, yet so far'.
- Overstressed and old Bridges: More the speed, more the vibrations, more the stress on girders. Some bridges don't have the capacity to handle fast-moving trains.
- **Railways have not yet been able to address the 'safety issue'.**
- Poor Culture: Encroachment of railway tracks, trespassing railway tracks etc. makes railways prone to accidents.

Suggestions:

- Once we offload the main lines on the Dedicated Freight Corridor with the freight trains, then we would be able to improve the average speed of mail, superfast and express trains.
- **Not a single train, but the entire railway system has to be moved up in speed which requires an Intensive Planning that should start with small things for ex: making platform berths available on the stations.**
- Implementing the mission in slots like picking first 500 or 1000 km slot is another idea.
- Dedicated Corridor for the faster train is another solution, but firstly other things like railway infrastructure, safer journey needs to be taken care of.
- **The accident-free atmosphere can be developed by changing the current culture** (i.e. people are made to stop illegal encroachment and crossing of tracks) and improving the signal system by using the latest technology.
- **Special care is required in the winters.** Accidents can be avoided by proper risk management and by taking care of the rail fractures manually.

Way Forward:

- **Manpower needs to be trained** for completely transforming Indian Railways.
- It is high time now. **Railways should go for long term planning.** It should invest in its infrastructure in a way that the improved infrastructure will not only support faster trains but will also benefit country economic-wise and environment-wise.