

Standing Committee Report Summary

Performance of Rail Land Development Authority

- The Standing Committee on Railways (Chair: Mr. Radha Mohan Singh) submitted its report on 'Performance of Rail Land Development Authority' on August 8, 2023. Established in 2006, the Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) develops and commercialises vacant or under-utilised railway land. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
- **Leveraging vacant land for revenue generation:** Railways has about 62,068 hectares of vacant land. 60%-70% of vacant land consists of narrow strips along tracks, which are utilised for various operational needs. The Committee observed that 1,216 hectares of vacant land have been handed over to RLDA for redevelopment. However, only 67 hectares have been given by RLDA for commercial development so far. The Committee recommended the Ministry to ensure more land is utilised for commercial development. This will help in increasing the non-tariff revenue of Railways. It also recommended that the Ministry should establish a streamlined approval process for fast-tracking permissions, clearances, and permits for expeditious commercial development.
- The Committee observed that narrow strips of land along tracks may be utilised under the 'Grow More Food' scheme. Under this scheme, vacant railway land is licensed to railway employees for cultivation.
- **Redevelopment of railway stations:** RLDA has been entrusted with the redevelopment of 103 railway stations. The Committee observed that the redevelopment of two stations has been completed so far. The Committee recommended that the Ministry should encourage private sector participation to accelerate the redevelopment process. It also recommended a phased approach to redevelopment, with priority based on passenger footfall, connectivity, and strategic importance.
- **Encroachment of railway land:** The Committee observed that around 782 hectares of Railway land are under encroachment. It recommended the Ministry to: (i) conduct frequent field surveys, (ii) establish an efficient monitoring mechanism, and (iii) train field officers to deal with encroachment.
- The Committee observed that several encroachment cases are pending in courts. It recommended the Ministry to conduct a comprehensive legal review of all such pending cases. It also suggested improving coordination among the Ministry, law enforcement agencies, and local authorities to better enforce court orders and remove encroachment.
- **Coordination with state government and local bodies:** RLDA is required to consult local bodies before approving development plans. The Committee observed that RLDA often faces challenges in coordination with state governments and local authorities. For instance, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has disputed certain railway land plans, despite the fact that these plans are aligned with existing norms. The committee recommended the Ministry to coordinate with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for swift resolution through regular dialogue.
- **Cancellation of contracts:** The Committee observed that 16 contracts have been cancelled due to default on the payment of the lease charges by developers. The Ministry informed the Committee that changes are to be made to RLDA regulations so that developers can get loans more easily. The Committee recommended adding provisions for a transparent dispute resolution process in contracts. These should include provisions for mediation, arbitration, or other such alternative dispute resolution methods.
- **Capacity Building:** The Committee recommended the Ministry to implement training programs for RLDA staff at all levels. The program should focus on building technical expertise, project management, negotiation, and legal and regulatory knowledge.
- **Digitisation of land records:** Indian Railways has integrated a land module under its Track Management System for maintaining land records. The Committee recommended the Ministry to create a centralised database to store all land records in a digital format.

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