

BLAST ON TRACKS TO ALERT LOCO PILOTS MAY STOP SOON

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Railways

The Indian Railways may soon dispense with the decades-old practice of the crew using detonator signals to alert loco pilots of an approaching train to an obstruction or danger lying ahead.

During train accidents or inclement weather affecting visibility, the loco pilot, train manager or the stationmaster place detonators on the track at different locations that will cause explosions with a loud bang when a train passes on them.

This is to alert the loco pilot of the approaching train to an obstruction such as a derailed train, boulders, damaged track and so on to bring the train to a halt.

Advanced gadgets

In recent times, employees' unions have been calling for stopping the concept of detonating signals considering the advancement in technology and the use of gadgets such as anti-collision devices, train protection warning system, short circuiting clips, fog signal device and auxiliary warning system.

The argument of the staff is that the Explosive Substances Act prohibited them from possessing explosives in public places and they were being harassed by security personnel while carrying the detonators on duty in trains.

They also claimed that detonators had been hardly used during train operations for many years and hence may be dispensed from the general rules.

The railway employees said dispensing with detonator signals would also reduce the weight of the essential equipment carried by loco pilots and train managers.

Monetary savings

The Western Railway agreed with the contention of the crew and recommended that considering the redundant use of detonators and advancement of technology at field level, it would be prudent to dispense the explosives from the safety equipment of loco pilots and train managers. This would also lead to a huge monetary and manpower saving.

Acting on the proposal of the Western Railway, the Ministry of Railways has written to all Zonal Railways calling for their views on the operational and safety aspects of withdrawing detonator signals. "The concept of detonator signals is likely to be dispensed soon," a railway official said.

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