

Kavach to add a layer of security to freight corridors

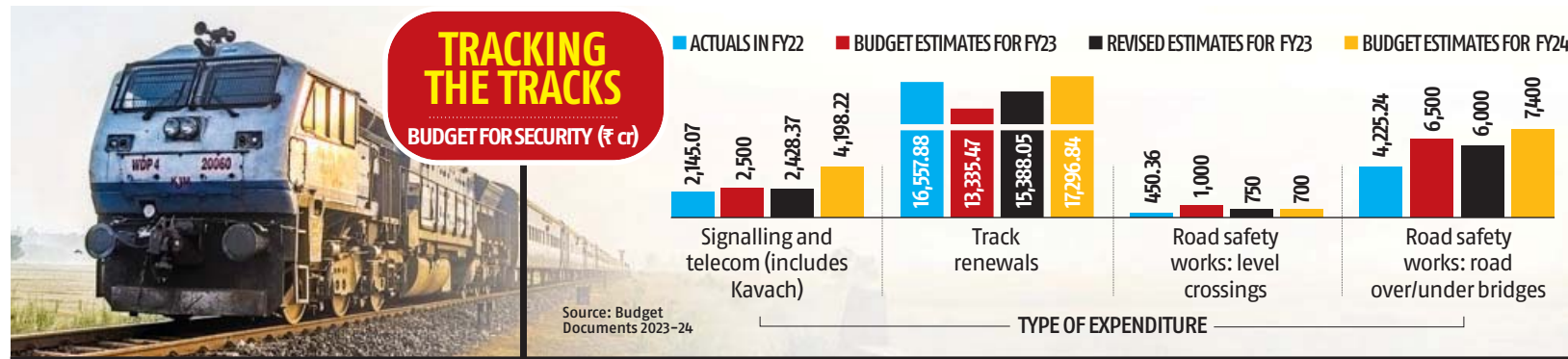
Railways plans to install anti-collision system on entire DFC network

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As safety concern about train travel looms large, the Central government has plans to install Kavach, the advanced anti-collision system, on its entire dedicated freight corridor (DFC) network, Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCC) Managing Director R K Jain has said.

“Safety is the top priority for the Railways and we are cognizant about making freight corridors safe. Currently, safety issues or accidents on freight corridors are at a bare minimum ... Now we have plans to install Kavach on the DFC network too,” Jain told *Business Standard*.

Of the work on the two dedicated freight corridors -- western and eastern -- 77 per cent, or roughly 2,200 km, has



been completed.

Currently, not a single route km of the DFCs has the Kavach network installed because the Centre is focused on doing so on passenger tracks.

As of March 31, the national transporter had installed the system on 1,465 route km on the South Central Railway (SCR), and the target is to install it on a further 3,000 route km in the coming year.

The system, developed by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO), costs around ₹50 lakh per km, and it triggers train brakes without having to rely on the loco pilot in the case of a “signal passed at danger” (SPAD) situation, where a collision would be likely.

The need for safety is again getting attention after the recent Balasore train accident.

There were two derailments on the eastern DFC in 2022. However, government officials said while such incidents were few and far between, they would need to be reined in because completing the corridors would mean a shift of the freight network to the DFCs, entailing greater pressure on the network and a higher safety risk.

Accidents involving freight trains occur frequently, but most are seen as

either “non-consequential” or “not serious” because there are no casualties in most cases.

However, *Business Standard* had reported earlier this month “consequential” rail accidents had increased 37 per cent in FY23.

Safety of freight trains was brought up in a review meeting in April, where several issues, including long duty hours of the staff involved in rolling stock oper-

ations, were flagged by the Railway Board.

Jain said the current shift of one team on DFCs was around eight hours, and the transporter planned to reduce this to check pilot fatigue.

As a safety arrangement on the western corridor, DFCC has provided loco pilots with a handset that has a “panic button”. When there is an accident or derailment, the loco pilot would press the button, which would send a red alert to all trains in the area. Following this the control room will stop trains near the site of the accident.

From an industry perspective, stopping accidents of freight trains is a vital component in achieving the Centre’s logistics goals under the National Logistics Policy.

Private players often complain the decreased safety of their cargo has been one of the key reasons that industrial goods and finished consumer goods are sent by road despite the mode of transport being more polluting and expensive.