भारत सरकार (GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)
रेल मंत्रालय (MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS)
रेलवे बोर्ड (RAILWAY BOARD)

No. 2023/CE-II/TK/Inspection New Delhi, dated 27.01.2026

Principal Chief Engineer,
All Zonal Railways.

Sub: Focused Attention on Deep Screening and Maintenance of Turnouts

1. Turnouts are the weakest area of the railway track which require special and continuous maintenance attention to ensure overall track safety. Analysis of consequential derailments during 2024-25 indicates that a significant proportion of such incidents have occurred on account of turnouts, highlighting the need for sustained and systematic strengthening of maintenance practices for points and crossings.

2. Exercises carried out in the past to identify causes for poor condition of turnouts have consistently highlighted the following as major and widespread factors:

- Deficient ballast cushion and overall ballast deficiency
- Improper sleeper spacing
- Improper, defective and incorrect use of fittings

3. Zonal Railways are advised to accord focused attention to effectively tackle the above major deficiencies in turnouts, duly considering the following aspects:

(1) Deficient ballast cushion and overall ballast deficiency

(i) During interactions with field supervisors, it has emerged that recording of clean ballast cushion less than 150 mm in turnouts converts the condition into a “defect” on TMS. Since defects are monitored at various levels based on ‘time to attend’, supervisors tend to avoid entering correct data related to ballast cushion, as other turnout deficiencies can be rectified in short period, whereas improving ballast cushion requires deep screening by track machines as well as availability of ballast, which normally need longer period.

(ii) There may be some other defects also needing longer time period for compliance. Therefore, zonal railways are advised to offer suggestions for bifurcating the turnout inspection deficiencies on TMS into **short-term** and **long-term** categories, so that monitoring and compliance of defects can be handled in a more realistic and effective manner.

(iii) Due to above, the existing TMS data regarding clean ballast cushion in turnouts is less reliable, Zonal Railways are requested to assess the correct scope of deep screening of turnouts on **main lines and passenger running loop lines** for 2026-27. This exercise shall be completed within 15 days, and a comprehensive plan for liquidation of arrears of turnout deep screening during 2026–27 shall be forwarded to Board’s office.

(iv) It has been decided to wipe out arrears of turnout deep screening on main lines as well as on passenger running loop lines during 2026-27 by deploying following methods:

- Ballast Cleaning Machines
- Use of T-28 machines
- Use of cranes/hydra
- Adoption of any other innovative method

(v) For above purpose, correct assessment of ballast requirement shall be made well in advance. Attention is also invited to Board's letter No. 2023/CE-II/Safety/Instruction dated 19.12.2024, wherein instructions have been issued that Zonal Headquarter shall be involved in the annual Divisional planning of ballast, which shall be approved by the CTE.

(2) Improper sleeper spacing: Improper sleeper spacing has been observed to be a major contributor to incorrect gauge and non-sitting of liners in turnouts. Prescribed cumulative sleeper spacing for various turnout configurations has already been detailed in the Annexures to Chapter-3 of IRPWM. To facilitate ease of field checking, a measuring tape may be permanently marked with cumulative sleeper spacing. Cumulative sleeper spacing should also be marked on rail. Some Railways have also adopted the use of mechanical sleeper spacers, which is very handy in use. This device may be provided in the field as per requirement.

(3) Missing and defective fittings: Proper fittings and fastenings are essential for maintaining correct gauge, alignment and cross levels in turnouts under traffic loads. All fittings shall be complete, tight, corrosion-free and properly secured. Correct type of liners, as prescribed, shall be ensured at all locations, and improper use of liners shall not be permitted, as it leads to gauge variation. Regular monitoring and timely replacement of worn or missing fittings and liners shall be ensured to sustain safety and reliability of turnouts.

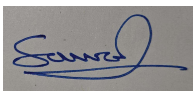
4. Light Weight Track Measuring Trolleys are being procured by zonal railways for measurement of track parameters of yard lines. Same should be used for recording of track parameters at turnouts also.

5. Zonal Railways are requested to ensure compliance of the above. Further, comprehensive planning for liquidation of arrears of turnout deep screening, as mentioned above, should be sent within next 15 days positively.

Suggestions regarding classification of turnout defects in short-term and long-term may also be sent.

6. This issues with the approval of AM(CE).

DA: As above.



Digitally signed by
SAURABH JAIN
Date: 2026.01.27 16:28:01
+05'30'

Director, Civil Engg. (Plg.)
Railway Board