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National Federation of Indian Railwaymen

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Affiliated to :

Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)
International Transport Workers Federation (ITF)

PASSENGER TRAIN OPERATIONS BY PRIVATE PARTIES

PASSENGERS, RAILWAYS, RAILWAYMEN AND NATION AT LOSS

The Ministry of Railways has since invited "Request for Qualification (RFQ) for private participation for operation of passenger train services over 109 Origin Destination (OD) pairs of routes. According to the Government, the objective of this decision is to introduce modern technology rolling stock with reducing maintenance, reduced transit time, boost job creation, provide enhanced safety, provide world class travel experience to passengers.

The Government's decision facilitates Private Operators to amass profits at the cost of Passengers and Railways. The implications of the decision are listed below:-

- (a) The private entity will enjoy the freedom to decide on the fare to be charged from its passengers.
- (b) As the configuration of each train as well as its coaches shall be determined by the private entities, the common people of the country will be deprived of Rail services. Combination of private trains will be available for only AC Upper Class travellers, thereby there will not be any non-AC Sleeper Class or Ordinary Class. These private trains will have only profit making AC Sleepers and AC Chair Cars. In the year 2018-19, out of 841 crore passengers originated, 55 crore passengers (only 6%) travelled in all reserved classes. Railways earned Rs. 32159 crore (63% of total income through passenger business from this 6% of all reserved passengers). It is evident that subsidized class of suburban, ordinary second class & sleeper are left with Railways, profit making upper class are being transferred to private operators.
- (c) Even affordable Upper Class travellers will have to face inconveniences due to the reason that freedom to decide on the fare will be a tool for private player to increase the fare by dynamic pricing, holiday pricing, weekend pricing etc.,
- (d) The other facilities now available free in Indian Railways trains will be charged by the private player on preferred seat option, luggage/baggage, Wi-Fi connection, bedroll etc.,
- (e) The private operator will not provide any concession as is presently provided by Indian Railways to the senior citizens, journalists etc.,
- (f) The Rolling Stocks presently made by Indian Railways Production Units can run at the speed of 160 KMPH. Indian Railways can reduce transit time without the involvement of private entities.

Government's decision stipulates that the maintenance of private trains shall be the responsibility of private entities. It however needs to be noted that the responsibility of certification before each trip lies with Railways, thus the Railway Supervisory Officials who certify the rolling stocks of private operators may be scapegoats for failures and accidents.

During last few years, the Railways have outsourced many coach maintenance related activities. This has resulted inadequate payment to the outsourced staff. Even for technical workers, there is no job guarantee although they perform skilled jobs. The Government's decision gives further scope to exploit workers by the private players. The Government's claim that the decision would boost job creation is a myth.

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EARLY DETECTION OF HIV / AIDS - PROLONGS QUALITY OF LIFE

Indian Railways and Nation will be put to heavy loss on account of decision to allow private operators to operate trains, because the profit making classes of AC Sleeper and AC Chair Car are given to them, while Railways will be left with the business of subsidized class of suburban, Ordinary Second Class & Sleeper Class. Added to this, Indian Railways cannot introduce a new similar scheduled trains between the originating and destination stations routes within 60 minutes of Private trains schedule i.e. 60 minutes before and 60 minutes after (total period 120 minutes).

With the train operations by private entities, the Railway Production Units & workshops will be major losers. Integral Coach Factory, Chennai has developed indigenous capability & capacity to produce semi high speed train sets, inaugurated enthusiastically by Hon'ble Prime Minister. Other two Coach Production units RCF Kapurthala and MCF Raebareli are already having state of art technologies to manufacture LHB coaches, which can run at a speed of 160 kmph. Loco manufacturing PUs at Varanasi, Chittaranjan and Patiala have come a long way to update their infrastructure to manufacture 3 phase IGBT electric locos. Not only these PUs, two well functioning wheel & axle plants will also lose their load. Workshops will not get their POH work load. All these PUs & workshops developed many clusters of medium & small industries around them as their suppliers and future of these industries will be very bleak. The Railway PUs may face serious setback, consequently the career of staff will be in jeopardy.

CLEAR BLUE PRINT TO BENEFIT PRIVATE PARTIES

The Government's decision seems to be a clear blue print to benefit private train operators as the assured business of passenger transportation, connecting all Metro and major cities across nation is offered to them. The 12 clusters are not concentrated only to cities the cluster is named, but the web is widespread. For example:- Clusters of Secunderabad, Chennai & Bengaluru, covers all main cities of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana & Pondicherry situated in Trunk routes. Benefits of Railways' focused investments on high density routes and highly utilized routes connecting these cities in recent years will directly benefit private entities. Track capacity released for passenger business due to commissioning of Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC) will be utilized to the advantages of private entities.

In short, it can be construed that the decision "benefits private entities at the cost of passengers, working class, Indian Railways and Nation".

21.3p
General Secretary
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