

Mr. Narendra Modi,
Hon. Prime Minister of India,
7, Race Course Road,
New Delhi

Date: 10.02.2015

Sir,

SUB: REDESIGNING INDIAN RAILWAYS

At the outset, we wish to extend my warm wishes for not only just taking up this esteemed post but also for having a deep vision for development of India and its lifeline – Indian Railways. The same can be seen with the improved growth and performance of our country ever since, the same has been taken over by your esteemed self.

Sir, as we sit down to pen down this letter to you, the first issue we discuss is the struggling railways and its absurd policies that are bringing it to a doom. Dozens of people have been sworn in and our hopes have now just vanished into thin air. We will keep this letter in brief highlighting the few important changes that are urgently required to be put forth to change the face of Indian Railways. We write this letter in the hope that the matter discussed there under will be viewed with seriousness and needful will be done.

1. Redefining the infrastructural requirement:-

It is become very urgent to revisit the basis on which the projects are being sanctioned in our Indian Railways System. It not only encompasses setting up of factories or providing up of jobs but the construction of lines, doubling and electrification etc. For example: Of the connectivity amongst our metro cities, Mumbai to Bangalore and Mumbai to Chennai are still connected by the single line non electrified section (Pune to Guntakal and Bangalore to Gooty). And literally, despite such heavy demand in this sector, there is no focus or fund allocation for doubling and electrifying these stretches. Same is the case with Konkan Railway Panvel to Roha to Mangalore. This Stretch witness heavy traffic movement of upto 60 pairs of trains every day but still the lame excuse of paucity of funds and feasibility planning is called for. Similarly, we are at a loss to understand why IR is pursuing manufacture of ICF coaches when the vision for IR is LHB rake for its entire fleet.

Please consider the need for urgent thrust on varied infrastructure basis on a Cost to Benefit ratio and expedite the process. Apart from this time bound follow-up and completion of work is need come what may which will save IR from escalation of costs.

2. Redefining movement of trains:-

Another important aspect which needs minute review is ensuing smooth movement of trains which is very much required. Off late punctuality of all trains have gone down and slacks have been infused to ensure that the train reaches its destination on time. In order to maintain this, important Junctions should facilitate proper movement of trains without affecting other traffic. For eg: Agra Cantt, Gwalior, Jhansi Jn, Allahabad Jn, Mughal Sarai Jn – Despite having many platforms and available, only a couple of platforms are used for train movements. Some of the platforms are just kept blocked with trains standing for hours together. The result – Following trains are kept waiting at outer. A smooth crossover from any line to any platform will ensure speedier movement of train traffic and increase savings on fuel, time and cost. It would be pertinent to mention that some stations like Kalyan Jn, New Delhi Jn and Mathura Jn comparatively offer quicker movement of train traffic.

3. Redefining clearance commission for IR projects:-

Sir, today every project on IR is delayed thanks to multi layered clearances. For eg. Sanction of train to run at 160 kmph. RDSO has already conducted trails of the track and the rake and has certified it to run at full MPS. But still the railway zone is required to obtain Railway Board approval and then finally CRS – Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) approval which takes atleast a year to sanction it. Moreover CRS doesn't come under Railway Board, Rather it is under purview of Ministry of Civil Aviation which is all the most absurd. Any project certified by one authority should be fine and the onus of risk and responsibility this will be with one authority. This will save atleast 1 year for every project and save cost outruns.

4. Redefining average speed of trains:-

Sir, today the average speed of Indian Trains is very low as compared with the trains running all over the world. The average speed is around 35 kmph for Passenger Trains, 45 kmph for Mail Express trains, 55 kmph for Super Fast Trains and around 65 kmph for Premier Trains like Rajdhani, Shatabdi, Duronto, Garib Rath and Jan Shatabdi This needs to be completely reviewed with even considering the safety of the passengers (which can be achieved by prioritizing infrastructure upgrade – Point 1).

The average speed infact should be upgraded for all trains and should be around 45 kmph for Passenger Trains, 55 kmph for Mail Express trains, 65 kmph for Super Fast Trains and around 80 kmph for Premier Trains like Rajdhani, Shatabdi, Duronto, Garib Rath and Jan Shatabdi to start with and can be increased with improvement in infrastructure.

5. Redefining Halt Policy:-

This will go a long way in cutting down costs of Indian Railways. At present, new halts are just sanctioned at the whims and fancies of the top people – ministers and others alike and demand of people just doesn't have any weightage. Similarly once a halt is given temporarily; it becomes 100% permanent halt for the train and no review is taken. As a result, IR sees its train stopping where it's not necessary and passing by where the halt is most important. For eg. Trains coming from Konkan Railway and proceeding to Western Railway and vice versa doesn't halt at Kopar Upper Station which is in fact the only station in the line connecting Central Railway. People from Far flung suburbs between Thane / Kalyan and beyond and hence have to travel about 50 kms to either Vasai Road on Western line or Panvel on Harbour line. If the demand is raised, the authorities just show the trash bin stating operational constraints. On the other hand, trains halt with an average of 15 kms gap alone in certain states like Kerala. This needs to be clearly looked into.

6. Redefining safety:-

Only thing that we wish to say in here is to redefine the standards of safety which will in turn ensure safety of the tracks and its trains. It will be better if the penalty being levied for crossing railway tracks, be increased manifold which will bring the level to zero. Similarly, in high traffic density sectors, level crossings should remain open only during predetermined intervals, say 3 minutes per hour. This will force Municipal Corporations and Panchayats to build ROBs at their own expense thus reducing the cost burden on IR. So complete focus can be given to safety on running trains.

Similarly, another danger point is height of train coaches and height of platforms that results in several people slipping in the gap between the platform and the train and lose their lives. And this also leads us to rusty nails and rods present in the coaches which may injure the passengers that needs to be taken care of

7. Redefining Catering Policy:-

We will highlight this head by saying that every train on Indian Railway Fleet should be given a rating based on food it serves and the rating will also cover the catering contractor. Ratings can be on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the best). Ratings should be given strictly on basis of customer feedback during every run. This will also enable IR to levy the fees based on contractor ratings.

8. Redefining introduction of trains:-

This is a very important issue that stands tall amidst all issues and is the forerunner for all problems. Many people have occupied the chair and have announced the trains at their whims and fancies and the requirement of the people, their demand is never reflected.

There are many social rail sites like IRFCA and India Rail Info where the people actually discuss about the requirement of trains in their respective areas. By adding a few quick filters and removing hypothetical demands, IR will actually get a readymade database of the trains and in most cases with customized time tables for them.

The foremost thing that is required is to clean up the mess by discontinuing those trains which have an average annual patronage of 40% or less. Those with an average annual patronage between 40% to 50% can be considered for slip trains. For those falling between 50% to 70% (in each of the directions) on any given time of the year, coaches can be removed. This will free up more slots, coaches and Loco Pilots for running demanded trains, save more fuel, increase the profits and most importantly save hefty maintenance costs.

We have jotted down in **Annexure 1** list of few required/ demanded but yet to be introduced trains in Central/ Konkan Railways for your consideration. For these trains, there is always a potential but citing operational constraints without actually thinking over them these requirements never materialized. On a similar note, introduction of few Rajdhani trains like CST Rajdhani / Goa Rajdhani express via Bhopal is always rejected citing reason of non operation of Rajdhani via longer route when shorter route via WR is available but at the same time, the board is contradicting itself as there many other Rajdhani in India taking a longer route For eg. Howrah Rajdhani via Patna, Bhubneshwar Rajdhani via TATA, Dibrugarh Rajdhani via Lucknow etc. We hope that many of these will be materialized in the upcoming Railway Budget for we are sure of that these will be super hits right from Day 1. We have with great difficulty carved out a schedule as well as the halts for these trains for your ready implementation.

We will also suggest taking a quick review of premium trains because except for the festive season, these trains have become a loss asset to IR which goes to say the drainage on revenues post regularization of these trains.

9. Redefining Cleanliness, Maintenance and Hygiene:-

Today Indian Railways have made themselves an image in the world in this aspect for almost every train except may be Premier ones have the problem of Rat/ Bug/ Cockroach menace which reflects the maintenance quality of the trains once it is shunted to the yard. Though Passengers too come into the picture for throwing food and other waste under the seats, many of the trains still have the problem of uncleaned coaches and stinky toilets with no water right before the commencement of the journey which needs to be addressed to. Increase in production of coaches alone will not suffice but increase in rake cleaning sheds is the necessity of the moment. Take this example. Just last week one of our members was onboard 22150 Pune Ernakulam SUF Express and got a confirmed Tatkal ticket in Sleeper Class but the sight of the coaches was horrible. For one, there were no seats on the Western Toilets and if you wish to pee in Indian toilet, you will only see a broken flush. So are the broken/ jammed windows and rusted fans. This clearly points out the lack of maintenance in these coaches. But the source of these problems is not just alone the tardiness shown in work but the illogical and impractical Rake Sharing Arrangements which prevent proper and full maintenance of these coaches.

Sir, if one keeps on writing the list is endless and there are numerous areas where the focus is to be drawn too. We rest this letter at your feet in the anticipation that it will actually be read and will not be shown the thrash.

Awaiting your positive reply on this letter at the earliest.

Wishing you all the very best

Yours faithfully,

MR. AMOL P NIKAM Email: amolpanditnikam@gmail.com	MR. AMIT PHATAK	MR. SRIRAM V. IYER
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CR Brigade Members:-

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Copy to:

1. Mr. Suresh P Prabhu, Hon. Railway Minister of India, Rail Bhavan, New Delhi
2. Mr. Sunil Kumar Sood, General Manager, Central Railways, Mumbai.
3. Mr. A. K. Mittal , Chairman, Railway Board

Encl: a.a.

ANNEXURE 1

LIST OF 12 REQUIRED/ DEMANDED BUT YET TO BE INTRODUCED TRAINS
IN CENTRAL/ KONKAN RAILWAYS

1. MUMBAI CSTM - NEW DELHI TRIWEEKLY "SIDDHIVINAYAK" RAJDHANI EXPRESS

Route: via Kalyan – Bhusaval – Bhopal – Agra Cantt

Halts: Kalyan, Nasik, Bhusaval, Bhopal, Jhansi and Agra

↓CSTM – NDLS ↓	STATION	↑NDLS – CSTM ↑
14:30	Mumbai CST	10:10
20:30	Bhusaval Jn	04:15
01:40	Bhopal Jn	22:40
09:40	New Delhi	14:55

Rationale: To meet the demand of passengers living in Central Suburbs, Harbour and Trans-harbour Suburbs and also to give the oldest railway zone of India its first dedicated Rajdhani Train. The existing 22109/10 LTT NZM AC Express can be dispensed with post introduction of this train. Rather it is an upgradation of 22109/10 LTT NZM AC SUF Express to Rajdhani Express This Train can be named "Siddhivinayak Rajdhani Express" after Lord Ganesha who is the most popular Lord of Mumbai.

As you might be aware, Central Railway is the oldest zone in Indian Railways and it was on this section between Mumbai CSTM and Thane that in 1853 first train of Indian Railways started its maiden journey. It's just surprising that not even a single premier category train service like that of Rajdhani originates from Mumbai CSTM

2. MADGAON - HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN BIWEEKLY "GOA" RAJDHANI EXPRESS

Route: via Ratnagiri – Panvel - Kalyan – Bhusaval – Bhopal – Agra Cantt

Halts: Thivim, Kankavli, Ratnagiri, Panvel, Kalyan, Nasik, Bhusaval, Bhopal, Jhansi and Agra

↓MAO - NZM ↓	STATION	↑NZM - MAO ↑
09:45	Madgaon Jn	20:55
17:20	Panvel	13:10
18:05	Kalyan Jn	12:15
04:45	Bhopal Jn	01:05
12:55	Hazrat Nizamuddin	17:15

Rationale: To meet the demand of passengers and tourists thronging to Goa as all trains run completely packed. The proposed Biweekly premium between Madgaon and Nizamuddin can be dispensed with post introduction of this train.

3. TRIVANDRUM CENTRAL - HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN BIWEEKLY "NEW" RAJDHANI EXPRESS

Route: via Ernakulam – Kozhikode – Mangalore - Madgaon – Panvel - Kalyan – Bhusaval – Bhopal – Agra Cantt

Halts: Ernakulam, Trichur, Shoranur, Kozhikode, Kannur, Mangalore, Madgaon, Ratnagiri, Panvel, Kalyan, Nasik, Bhusaval, Bhopal and Jhansi

↓TVC - NZM ↓	STATION	↑NZM - TVC ↑
19:15	Trivandrum Central	12:15
04:55	Ernakulam Jn	08:55
09:45	Mangalore Jn	01:55
17:20	Panvel	13:10
18:05	Kalyan Jn	12:15
04:45	Bhopal Jn	01:05
12:55	Hazrat Nizamuddin	17:15

Rationale: The Demand was for increase in frequency of 12431/32 Trivandrum Rajdhani Express but considering the 200% patronage of Mangala Express – the only train running in the proposed route, this new Rajdhani will exploit the fullest potential right from its maiden journey.

4. VASCO DA GAMA – MUMBAI LTT TRIWEEKLY SUPERFAST EXPRESS

Route: via Madgaon – Panvel - Thane

Halts: Madgaon, Thivim, Kankavli, Ratnagiri, Chiplun, Panvel, Thane

↓VSG - LTT ↓	STATION	↑LTT VSG ↑
20:30	Vasco Da Gama	07:00
21:30	Madgaon Jn	05:30
05:45	Panvel	21:35
07:00	Lokmanya Tilak Terminus	20:30

Rationale: The Demand for additional Over Night Superfast service will be met along with a dedicated train service to Vasco Da Gama

5. VASCO DA GAMA – NAGPUR BIWEEKLY SUPERFAST EXPRESS

Route: via Madgaon – Panvel - Kalyan – Bhusaval – Nagpur

Halts: Madgaon, Thivim, Sawantwadi Rd, Kankavli, Ratnagiri, Chiplun, Panvel, Kalyan, Igatpuri, Nasik Rd, Manmad, Bhusaval, Akola, Badnera, Wardha

↓VSG - NGP ↓	STATION	↑NGP- VSG ↑
20:05	Vasco Da Gama	07:55
21:00	Madgaon Jn	06:30
06:20	Panvel	21:50
07:32	Kalyan Jn	20:57
13:30	Bhusaval	14:20
20:05	Nagpur	07:55

Rationale: The Demand for dedicated Train service between Goa and the Orange City of Nagpur has been rusting down in the tables for decades. This train service will be a mega hit for sure.

6. VASCO DA GAMA – HYDERABAD BIWEEKLY SUPERFAST EXPRESS

Route: via Madgaon – Londa – Miraj – Solapur - Wadi

Halts: Madgaon, Kulem, Castle Rock, Londa, Belgaum, Miraj, Pandharpur, Kurduvadi, Solapur, Gulbarga, Wadi, Tandur, Vikarabad and Begumpet

↓VSG - HYB ↓	STATION	↑HYB- VSG ↑
12:10	Vasco Da Gama	08:25
12:45	Madgaon Jn	07:30
15:35	Londa	03:50
19:20	Miraj	00:20
23:45	Solapur	20:05
02:30	Wadi	17:23
05:50	Hyderabad Deccan	14:30

Rationale: The Demand for dedicated Train service between Goa and the Pearl City of Hyderabad is the need of the hour with the existing Link Express taking around 24 hours and the Bus operators effectively tapping the demand with the high rates and lesser running time of around 17 hours. This train service when introduced will be a mega hit for sure.

7. MUMBAI CSTM - RAMESHWARAM BIWEEKLY "SIVA SHANKARI" SUPERFAST EXPRESS

Route: via Panvel – Madgaon – Mangalore – Shoranur – Palakkad – Erode - Dindigul

Halts: Thane, Panvel, Madgaon, Murdeshwar, Udupi, Mangalore , Kannur, Kozhikode, Shornur, Palakkad, Coimbatore, Erode, Karur, Dindigul, Madurai, Manamadurai, Ramanathapuram, Mandapam

↓ CSTM - RMM ↓	STATION	↑ RMM - CSTM ↑
09:25	Mumbai CSTM	20:15
10:35	Panvel	18:45
23:30	Mangalore	04:20
05:20	Palakkad	22:50
08:00	Erode	20:50
11:00	Madurai	19:20
14:25	Rameshwaram	15:55

Rationale: A South connectivity that is highly demanded from Mumbai. The Konkan Route will cut short the distance by around 10 hours. This Train can be named "Siva Shankari" after Goddess Parvathy in Madurai and Lord Siva at Rameshwaram. It can even be rerouted via Palakkad – Pollachi – Palani – Dindigul section once the route becomes operational.

8. AHMEDABAD - MANGALORE WEEKLY SUPERFAST EXPRESS

Route: via Vadodara – Vasai Road – Panvel – Madgaon - Udupi

Halts: Vadodara, Surat, Valsad, Vapi, Vasai Road, Panvel, Roha, Chiplun, Ratnagiri, Kudal, Karmali, Madgaon, Karwar, Udupi, Suratkal

↓ MAJN - ADI ↓	STATION	↑ ADI - MAJN ↑
18:00	Mangalore	15:00
23:35	Madgaon Jn	09:10
08:30	Panvel	00:15
10:20	Vasai Road	22:45
16:15	Vadodara	16:45
17:45	Ahmedabad	15:30

Rationale: This super hit special still continues to be run as a special and the need is to regularize this service with a change in the timings.

9. MUMBAI CSTM - CHENNAI WEEKLY AC SUPERFAST EXPRESS

Route: via Kalyan – Pune –Solapur – Guntakal - Renigunta

Halts: Kalyan, Pune, Solapur, Gulbarga, Wadi, Guntakal, Gooty, Cuddapah, Renigunta, Arakkonam

↓ CSTM - MAS ↓	STATION	↑ MAS - CSTM ↑
12:05	Mumbai CSTM	07:45
15:30	Pune	04:20
21:30	Wadi	22:30
01:00	Guntakal	18:55
06:05	Renigunta	13:45
08:45	Chennai Central	11:15

Rationale: Another most demanded Train, rather a true superfast demanded in this route. A weekend run will ensure heavy waitlist in this train as it sets to join the fleet of its over burdened seniors in this route.

10. MUMBAI CSTM - BANGALORE WEEKLY AC SUPERFAST EXPRESS

Route: via Kalyan – Pune –Solapur – Guntakal - Dharmavaram

Halts: Kalyan, Pune, Solapur, Gulbarga, Wadi, Guntakal, Dharmavaram, Yelhanka

↓ CSTM - SBC ↓	STATION	↑ SBC - CSTM ↑
12:05	Mumbai CSTM	07:45
15:30	Pune	04:20
21:30	Wadi	22:30
01:00	Guntakal	18:55
02:45	Dharmavaram	17:00
05:55	Bangalore City	14:00

Rationale: Another most demanded Train, rather a true superfast demanded in this route. A timely run will even make the Bus operators (between Pune and Bangalore) run for their money.

11. BANGALORE CITY JUNCTION - HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN BIWEEKLY "NEW" RAJDHANI EXPRESS

Route: via Hubli – Pune – Kalyan – Vasai Road – Vadodara - Kota

Halts: Arsikere, Hubli, Londa, Belgaum, Miraj, Pune, Kalyan, Vasai Road, Surat, Vadodara and Kota

↓SBC - NZM ↓	STATION	↑NZM - SBC ↑
19:00	Bangalore City	05:55
02:25	Hubli	22:05
10:55	Pune	13:45
13:40	Kalyan	11:10
14:50	Vasai Road	10:05
18:45	Vadodara	06:02
06:55	Hazrat Nizamuddin	18:55

Rationale: To provide a Rajdhani type connectivity to major districts of Karnataka state (The present Rajdhani hardly covers any). This train was announced in 1997-98 budget but it failed to take off. Instead this region was given a pair of Karnataka Sampark Krantis which still excludes the premium travelling population who opt to travel by air. Besides, it will provide fastest connection to Pune, Mumbai and the state of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The dependency on bus operators between Bangalore and Pune / Mumbai will drastically reduce with the introduction of this Biweekly service.

12. PUNE- HAZARAT NIZAMUDDIN DAILY DURONTO EXPRESS

Route: via Pune – Kalyan – Vasai Road – Vadodara – Kota

Halts (For AC Express): Kalyan, Vasai Road, Surat, Vadodara and Kota

↓PA - NZM ↓	STATION	↑NZM - PA ↑
11:10	Pune	07:35
07:15	Hazrat Nizamuddin	11:20

Rationale: Conversion of 12263/64 Pune NZM Biweekly Duronto Express to Daily after allotting a dedicated LHB Rake to this train. The maintenance however should be handled by CR, Pune Division. Also, Triweekly Duronto and Triweekly AC SF Express and a weekly Premium running with same slot and Rake Sharing can also be considered.
