

**100 DAYS ACTION PLAN OF INDIAN RAILWAYS:
What It Means – To the Railway Employees
To the Common People**

Prime Minister Modi and the BJP government are very busy. They have promises to keep. Not to the people. They have not made any promises to the common people in the last Parliament elections. It is to the corporates, who have made big donations to the BJP. They are not like common people who are prone to forget their demands and get diverted by rhetoric. When Corporates make donations they demand returns. They are here to make profits; not for charity. They want prompt and immediate action. The BJP government has to show immediate result.

Prime Minister Modi directed all the Ministries to prepare plans to be implemented within 100 days. The Indian Railways, like all the others, prepared a 100 days' action plan and started implementing it.

What is the plan?

1. Handover running of trains to private players
2. Increase passenger and freight charges by withdrawing subsidies to provide 'level playing field' to the private players
3. Privatisation of the railway production units, the jewels of Indian Railways, through corporatisation
4. Destroying the indigenous production capacity by buying trains from private companies and keeping our production units idle

Private trains on public tracks

Private operators will be allowed to run trains on our railway tracks. The government has decided to hand over ticketing and on board services in trains in some routes including the Golden Quadrilateral and Diagonal to private operators. To start with these will be handed over to the IRCTC within 100 days. Further, the Action Plan says that 'the routes where private parties would like to run trains will be explored'. What does it mean? It means that the profit making routes will be handed over to private operators while Indian Railways will be operating in loss making routes and ultimately these will be stopped on that pretext. Time Tables will be reorganized according to the preference of these private operators. Train fares will become 'dynamic', unaffordable to the common people.

At present railway passengers pay for 53% of the fare while 47% of the passenger fares are provided as subsidy. Now the government has decided to withdraw this subsidy. Private operators will not provide subsidy. Withdrawal of subsidy in passenger fare means that the fares will just get doubled. Handing over fare management to private hands means there will be unregulated increase in fares. They want to maximise their profits. By withdrawing subsidies, the government provides 'level playing field' for them so they can squeeze the passengers and earn profits. Thus the government wants to run away from its responsibility of providing cheap and affordable transport to its citizens, particularly the common and poor people, who comprise overwhelming majority of the passengers today. Already the government has decided to hand over two trains to IRCTC. And IRCTC having no operational manpower on their roll, entire

operation of those trains will be done by contract workers from private sources. The concerned running staff are destined ultimately to lose their livelihood.

Privatisation of Our Production Units

Indian Railways' production units, described as 'jewels', have the capacity to manufacture the required diesel engines, coaches, wheels etc. Recently the Integrated Coach Factory has manufactured the high speed Vande Bharat express with modern facilities.

As per the Action Plan these production units will be corporatised under a corporation called 'Indian Rolling Stock Company'. It has also decided to hive off the workshops. Corporatisation of production units means that the Railways cannot automatically place order to the corporatised entities, or procure and maintain locos, coaches, wheels etc from the corporatised units registered as separate companies. It has to call for a global tender as per the WTO rules. The corporatised railway production units have to compete globally to get orders. Indian Railways is reportedly contemplating buying readymade trains from private companies instead of building them in our production units. Ultimately our production units and workshops will be starved of orders, forced upon low capacity utilisation, which they are already suffering from, become sick and closed down or sold out to private entities along with their huge asset base. Being a corporation, it will be listed in the stock exchange; shares will be sold off to private companies in the name of disinvestment.

This is the attitude of the BJP government, which claims to be the ultimate 'nationalist', towards the public sector, the wealth of the nation, created by its people. This will ultimately lead to destruction of our indigenous manufacturing capacities in favour of the foreign companies like Alstom. GEC etc supplying rolling stocks to Indian Railways at higher prices and push up the railway fares, freight charges etc on the plea of increase in operational cost. The people will suffer and the country's economy will suffer; foreign companies and their Indian partners in private corporates and also those concerned in the political governance will make illegitimate gains. The statement made by the Railway Minister that there will be no privatisation is an absolute bluff to deceive the people.

Railway Stations in Private Hands:

Not only private trains, both passenger and freight, corporatisation and ultimate privatisation of production units, but even the railway stations will also be handed over to private players, on the pretext of 'redevelopment'. Already two railway stations, Habibganj and Pune have been handed over to private companies. The Action Plan identified further 50 railway stations including Howrah, Secunderabad, Chennai Central etc for such 'redevelopment'. The private players will have control over the station buildings, ticketing, parking of vehicles, catering and many other activities. They will employ their own staff; the present staff will be transferred to other places or rendered surplus.

This 100 Days Action Plan is Only a Starting Point. It is meant to convert Railways into a profit making private enterprise utilising Govt-owned infrastructure and network virtually free without any investment of their own. It will snatch the only

affordable means of transport putting millions of people into insurmountable difficulties. It is an effort to throw out thousands of railway employees including the contract workers out of their jobs and means of livelihood.

It is time all the railway employees irrespective of affiliations, all sections of people who feel proud of Indian Railways, world's largest railway network, and the common passengers come together to fight these measures outlined in the 100 days Action Plan. The BJP government has already started belying the expectations of the crores of workers and common people who have voted for it.

CITU appeals to all the railway employees, common people, all patriotic people of the country to come together and strongly oppose these policies. It calls all committees of CITU and its affiliated unions to hold powerful demonstrations in front of the railway stations and railway zonal and divisional headquarters across the country.