



# FEDERATION OF RAILWAY OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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New Delhi,  
Dated: 06-05-2013

Shri Ajit Seth,  
Cabinet Secretary,  
Government of India,  
New Delhi - 110 004

Dear Sir,

**Sub: Transfers and Promotions in Indian Railways and scope for wrongdoings.**

The latest incident of scandalous proportions that played out in the National media regarding bribery and pay-offs in promotions may have caught the government by surprise and shocked many. But, the events that unfolded in connection with Shri Mahesh Kumar, Member (Staff) and so called middlemen on May 3 and 4 do not surprise most Railway officers. They have deeper roots than what the media can see or the CBI can uncover. Sir, I request you to spend the next few minutes in reading this letter.

The postings of senior officers must follow certain norms laid down by the DOPT and also some healthy precedents. The Ministry of Railways, often plays by "different" rules or distorts/bends these beyond recognition. Some of the glaring flaws, by design or by default, that demoralise officers and force them to adopt unsavoury means are enumerated below (the list is not exhaustive):

1. Senior posts of General Managers are kept vacant for months (in some cases for over six months). Only when a sufficiently large pool of vacancies accumulates, proposals for filling them up are sent to the ACC. Quite naturally, there would be clamour and compromises for "prized" postings, since the pool that is now available has positions of all types, popular and unpopular. Even when proposals are sent to the DOPT/ACC, they are full of contradictions that necessitate to and from movement of files between the Ministry of Railways and the DOPT further delaying postings.
2. Even in the case of vacancies of Members in the Railway Board, proposals to the ACC are sent at the eleventh hour, and sometimes long after the vacancies have actually occurred. A Chairman, Railway Board actually kept a Member's post vacant for the entire duration of his Chairmanship and held dual charge!
3. There is a complete lack of transparency in the formation of panels for promotion as General Manager, to HAG and SAG positions and even in formation of the select list for posting as DRM. This is in stark contrast to the practice that DOPT follows, where each and every panel of say, Addl. Secretaries and Joint Secretaries are published on its web-portal. In the Ministry of Railways, there is such a veil of secrecy that even senior officers are reduced to begging favours from junior functionaries of the Railway Board, just to know whether they are on a

certain panel or not. Needless to say, this is not only a great blow to the personal dignity and feeling of self-worth of these officers, but also creates a sense of fear and uncertainty in their minds – a breeding ground for corruption and favouritism.

4. There is an artificially created class of General Managers, who are “not fit for open-line”. This may have continued for decades, but mere history cannot be a reason for perpetuation of an unhealthy practice. It is laid down that a non-open-line GM is not eligible for elevation to the Railway Board. So, pick and choose starts at the levels of posting as GM itself, when certain officers are posted to non-open-line and certain others to open-line. It is absurd to classify officers fit or not-fit for open-line, when one sees that even such officers, who have never or scarcely ever worked on open-line in lower grades, are certified fit for an open-line posting and vice-versa. The problem gets compounded when an open-line-fit officer is posted to a non-open-line post and is then denied elevation to the Board. Such discretion to pick and choose provides another avenue for unfair practices.
5. Posting of Executive Directors (JS level) and Directors to the Railway Board is to be done for fixed tenures. This is routinely flouted and officers transferred out by curtailing tenures to bring in favoured ones as replacement. This is a sword hanging on EDs and Directors, who are therefore unable to give free and frank advice to the government. In many cases officers in such positions also deal with large purchases and construction contracts. Keeping them on tenterhooks is again a tool to make them pliable – yet another fertile ground for dishonest deeds. Similarly, tenures in field postings too are violated routinely.
6. Rank favouritism is seen in retaining officers in prized locations, such as metropolitan cities. There are numerous examples, when select officers have been in Delhi/NCR or Mumbai etc. for twenty five years at a stretch, some with a sojourn outside for namesake. On the contrary, the officers of Customs and Central Excise and Income Tax departments, who face similar cross-country transfers, have a clear-cut and transparent policy laid down for them. Absence of a similar policy in the Railways not only demoralises the officers who have spent their entire service in small towns, but also requires the favoured ones to give up their firmness and compromise on principles.
7. Railway vigilance is increasingly being seen as a tool of retribution, to disfavour and bypass some and, as a result, to favour some others. It is common to kill the career of senior officers on trivial and frivolous complaints. Vigilance enquiries, once initiated, stretch on for years and the affected officer has no hope of a redress even if he is innocent since he does not have time on his side.

Sir, I have listed some areas which breed corruption and not specific instances of corruption. Indeed, it would be a waste of your precious time to burden you with tomes of data and stories. What I point to is areas where serious and quick system reforms are needed. Though I do not doubt that you will act in the best interests of public and the demoralised cadre of Railway officers, please allow me to suggest some areas where immediate correctives are needed:

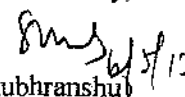
- a) The Railway Ministry must, repeat must, send all proposals for filling up vacancies of General Managers and Members of Railway Board, three months ahead of the vacancies actually occurring.
- b) All General Managers should be put on equal footing. There should be a single “fitness” for posting as General Managers. Eventually, whether an officer is posted as GM in open-line or non-open-line, his further career prospects, i.e. elevation to Member, Railway Board should not be affected. This will stop the clamour for open-line posts and eliminate scope for favouritism.
- c) There are several clauses in the rules for posting as Chairman or Member, Railway Board. One or the other is invoked suiting the candidate and his well-wishers. A uniform rule should be laid down and followed without deviations. This will kill machinations of persons, who hope to exploit the options that current rules provide.

- d) All panels for promotions as GM, HAG, SAG and even lower grades should be made in time and published in public domain.
- e) Tenure for EDs and Directors posted in the Railway Ministry should be honoured. Deviations should be sent to the DOPT for approval as is done in other ministries.
- f) A transparent transfer policy similar to that for officers of Indian Revenue Services should be created and implemented urgently. This will boost the morale of Railway officers all across the country.
- g) The posts of CVOs (designated SDGMs) in Zonal Railways and the Addl. Member (Vigilance) should be filled up by officers brought from outside Railway cadres as is done in most other organizations. Such officers will be neutral and will not do the bidding of senior management since their allegiance will not lie with any interest group in the Railways.
- h) All vigilance enquiries should be completed within the timeframe laid down by the CVC. There needs to be created a system to weed out frivolous complaints. This will enable senior officers to take decisions boldly. Currently everyone, who is awaiting an important promotion, acts extra cautious and decision making becomes the casualty.
- i) You may also consider entrusting the DOPT with the responsibilities of all personnel matters of promotions and empanelment of say, SAG level and above. The DOPT should be given a consolidated seniority *inter-se* seniority list of SAG officers and left to carry out impartial duties. This may actually be easier than it sounds. The Railway Ministry officials, who handle such activities, should be put under the DOPT. They may continue to sit in the Rail Bhawan, but report to the DOPT.

Sir, it is easy to blame an individual or a Minister – even media loves it, it simplifies debate and makes for juicy gossip. But, as responsible officers of the government of India we must diagnose and cure the deeper malaise that bedevils the system. Deliberate delays in promotion and postings and associated lack of transparency sends wrong signals even to eligible candidates that they need to “do something” and also to those, who are not eligible, that they have a chance if they “did something”. Systemic reforms, if taken up quickly will not only reduce litigation and representations, but will also improve the morale of Railway officers. Above all, it will greatly eliminate charges of corruption of the type we have recently witnessed. This communication affects over ten thousand officers of Indian Railways and begs your attention.

It is also requested that action be initiated at your level rather than making a reference to the Ministry of Railways, where it will only gather dust. Previous requests for such reforms to the Ministry by this Federation have always fallen on deaf ears.

Yours truly,



(Shubhranshu)

Hony. Secretary General/FROA

&

Chief Mechanical Engineer (BD)

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cc: Shri Pulok Chatterji,  
Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister,  
Prime Minister's Office

**With a request to help repair systems in Indian Railways and restore its old glory back. The Federation of Railway Officers' Associations will be with you in each step that you take in this direction.**