

## Yet Another Committee on Passenger Safety

The Indian railways is employing devious methods to fleece the passengers by raising charges in the name of premium trains, tatkal reservation, raise of fares including platform tickets on heavy traffic season, more cuts on refund of cancelled tickets, full charges for the child passenger and so on. This is condemnable as it makes the cheapest travel for common man unavailable. Yet the Indian Railways pays scant attention to the safety of millions of passengers.

According to a reply in the Parliament, in the last decade 25,722 passengers fell from trains in Mumbai's suburban rails. Of these 6989 died. Across the entire country 14,973 deaths occurred on railway track in 2011, the number was 16,336 in 2012 and increased to 19,997 in 2013. Until October 2014, 18,785 died on rail tracks.

In 2012, a high level committee headed by Anil Kakodkar gave a detailed report on rail safety. It pointed out poor infrastructure, inadequate allocation of resources and lack of empowerment at functional level along with neglected maintenance of infrastructure are at the root of the problem.

The implementation of Kakodkar committee's recommendations needs Rs.1,00,000 crore in five year period. The amount may appear mammoth. But the same amount is being spent on Ahmedabad- Mumbai bullet train which may cater mainly elite section. This amount, if spent on the modernization of Indian railways, would have been helped a lot in improving the rail safety. But the implementation of these recommendations is kept in cold storage as it is not palatable to the powers at the helm of affairs.

When a 21-year old commuter lost his balance in the overcrowded compartment in suburban Mumbai, rail safety again came into focus. Predictably the railway minister announced the appointment of another committee. Appointing committees and not implementing their recommendations is a regular feature being employed to deflect the criticism faced by the government? The commuter continues to be a victim to the neglect of rail safety.

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