



FEDERATION OF RAILWAY OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS

President

RAJIV CHAUDHRY

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**Minister of Railways
Railway Board**

FROA ,expresses its profound grief on the recent tragic accident at Khatauli and demands that the officials found guilty after due investigations be taken up in the most severe and exemplary manner.

An accident of the kind that occurred in Khatauli is due not just to a series of failures but also due to deep seated systemic flaws that have crept into an overworked system. Owing to demands of an ever growing population, the number of passenger trains has been increasing over time, especially over the last two decades. Since each passenger carried by the Railways actually increases the revenue deficit, the pressure on the Indian Railways to carry more freight at higher rates has also been increasing. While the network has not expanded in the same proportion as the increase in the number of trains, in the absence of adequate modernisation, the maintenance practices have not undergone the kind of overhaul necessary to cater to this increase. The maintenance set up of the Indian Railways aspires to provide prompt, reliable and safe output. This means that under the dwindling maintenance windows available tendency to adopt unsafe albeit immediate solutions comes to the fore.

The Safety Organisation of the Indian Railways is delinked from the Maintenance set up and perhaps has more of an auditory role instead of a participatory one.

It is these issues that need addressing in the wider sense than knee jerk reactions to every action on high-ranked officials for the sake of satisfying a populist urge."

However, FROA is of the view that the knee-jerk reaction, to take drastic action against the top most officials of the Ministry of Railways as well as Zonal Railways is uncalled for, is disproportionate to the actual cause of this unfortunate incident. Such actions, do not provide any solution to address the root cause of the problem.

FROA thus suggests that the Ministry of Railways should take hard look at the underlying causes which have led to the mistakes of the field staff which seem to be the cause of this accident. The field staff and officers of all departments are under great stress of working in managing over aged assets, flogged over the past few decades without commensurate increase in the manpower resources to maintain the same in a safe state. There are still



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more than 15% vacancies, mostly in the safety categories, to be filled up. Even the selections already held are kept in abeyance. Similarly, the newly created assets have not been provided with suitable manpower to maintain them.

The increase in the traffic in the saturated sections, making for utilization of the section to the almost impossible 150% in some cases, has resulted in perpetual reduction in the time available for maintenance of assets in traffic blocks. As a result maintenance of assets is almost crisis based and not preventive as it ought to be. In meeting one crisis after another the railway staff and officials, ingrained with the spirit of keeping the wheels moving at all costs, resort to unwarranted and unlegislated shortcuts, which are bound to lead to mishaps more often than not. However, it should also be appreciated that if they do not do this, the wheels of Indian Railways may slow down considerably, which is nobody's intention.

The salient recommendations of the many past Safety Committees addressing the above listed problems have been implemented in letter only rather than the spirit. The Ministry has been making commitments but not honouring them leading to the aforesaid stress in the system.

FROA thus reiterates that the Ministry of Railways should take immediate action to address the above mentioned and other related issues to ensure that safety gets our first priority, not only in our written commitments, but also in actual implementation. FROA also demands that the unheard of action on the senior most officials of Ministry and Northern Railway, not directly related to the prima-facie cause of the said accident, be withdrawn at the earliest. Departmental action if any warranted should follow after the enquiry is over by the Commissioner of Railway Safety.

Rajiv Chaudhry
President
FROA

P K Sinha
Secretary General
FROA

Dated: 22.08.2017

Copy for information to:

- I. MOS(S) and MOS(G), Ministry of Railways
- II. Chairman Railway Board
- III. All Members of Railways Board