

Railways fine tuning 'zero based' time table to speed up movement of trains

H thehitavada.com/Encyc/2020/6/19/Railways-fine-tuning-zero-based-time-table-to-speed-up-movement-of-trains.html

Railways fine tuning 'zero based' time table to speed up movement of trains

Date :19-Jun-2020



By Sagar Mohod :

Railway Board is working on two fronts with a view to speed-up movement of passenger carrying trains for maximising capacity utilisation of its assets. The idea is to cut down the expenses and also take on the increasing competition from road sector that is eating into passenger as well as goods segments. Though the idea sounds good but there is a catch, the idea involves doing away with trains that have less occupancy and secondly curtailing

unviable stoppages. In past Indian Railways had tried to eliminate some stoppages but it invited political backlash forcing the transport behemoth to shelve the proposal. The idea that time was to have only one stoppage after every 150 to 200 kms as it would have meant trains can run at minimum specified speed. Faster travel also results in various other advantages like more utilisation of rolling stock owing and lesser clogging on tracks.

Now again a serious thought is on at Rail Bhawan wherein zero based time tabling concept is sought to be pushed forward to rejig the operations that are dragging on its exchequer. The concept is that in every year time table year, trains with less than 50 per cent occupancy would be discontinued. Separately stations where earnings are very less or volume of ticket sales not satisfactory the stoppages would also be eliminated, said the officials familiar with the development. Board has constituted a multi-disciplinary team involving senior railway officials from Coaching and other directorates and they are working with Operation Research wing of IIT Mumbai in giving shape to the idea. The team is shifting through voluminous details to devise a zero-based time table on the rail network, it is learnt.

The concept of rationalising the stoppages has been debated since long in corridors of Rail Bhavan. Sometimes back Board also carried out a study wherein they asked divisions to carry out cost analysis for each stoppages of Mail/Express trains. A formula was also sent to help field officials to arrive at the clear picture. But then what happened is well known, when the time came to push Railways faced pressure as elections were around the corner in some States and the move was shelved.

But post COVID-19 experts are predicting drastic changes in travel world and hence Railways is keen to streamline its operations. A noticeable change is being noticed in travel mode as people are keen on private vehicle over railways. Now health is top priority as given the fears of travelling with 200 persons and going in one's own vehicle, the latter idea is fast picking-up. Therefore officials feel even if some unviable trains are dropped there won't be much fuss as the pandemic impact is going to provide buffer as people are unlikely to even notice it. Ultimately for the exercise to make any real sense would require political stamp of approval.

200 passenger trains identified for upgradation as Express Railway Board has listed 200 passenger trains, DEMU, MEMUs, that it wants to upgrade to Express standards, in terms of their speed and sought comments from Zones. Average speed of passenger trains is 35 km/hr, that of Express trains 60 kms/hr. The Board has sought opinion on measures to ensure that speed of passenger trains are upgraded. The one way is to cut down some of the stoppages that would increase their speed in the section. Another way is to cut down the time of stoppages. But most important point in this move involves ensuring that passenger train maintain average speed while on run in sections. The move of Railways is to increase track capacity that would translate into faster running of trains. Every year in annual time table, the exercise is focused on decreasing travel time and for

this huge exercise is undertaken by planners. In every section ample time is provided for every train so that in case of any technical problem or unforeseen situation the train can cover-up the loss of time. Sometimes the time available within one section is nearly 40 to 50 minutes. As part of the exercise to speed-up passenger trains, in Central Railway's Nagpur Division two trains are identified, Wardha-Bhusawal and Nagpur-Bhusawal. The criteria prescribed by Board is that the train should be running 200 km or more per day. The distance between Nagpur and Bhusawal is about 342 kms and travel time by early morning train is nearly 10 hours and its average speed is 39 kms but in reverse direction the time taken to reach Nagpur from Bhusawal is about 13 hours as average speed drops to around 30 km/hrs. The distance between Wardha and Nagpur is about 294 kms and around eight hours. At South East Central Railway's Nagpur Division two trains are identified as Itwari-Raipur passenger takes about 10 hours to cut the distance of 297 kms. Another train of division figuring in 200 list is Gondia-Jharsugda that travels 432 km and taken about 13 and half hours time to reach destination.