

# Railway records highest ever passenger earnings at ₹490 bn

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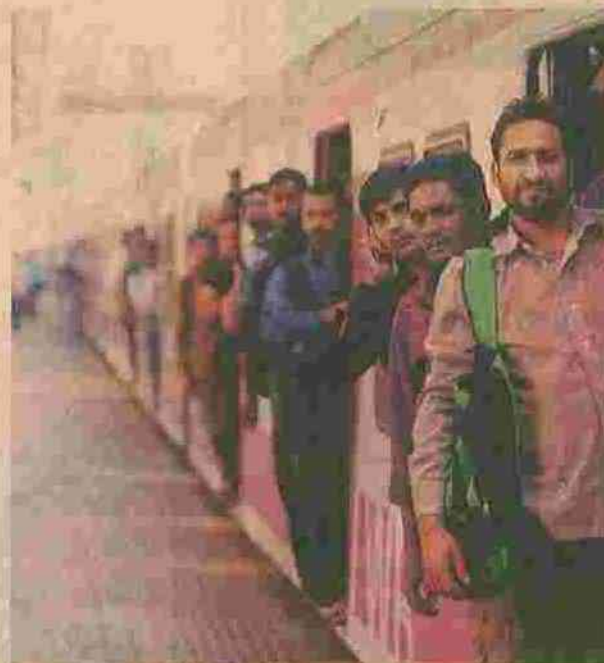
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The Indian Railways' passenger earnings in 2017-18 have been the highest ever, and clocked a 4.2 per cent increase to ₹490 billion from ₹470 billion during the previous financial year.

In the last two fiscal years, the railways was able to reverse the trend of a drop in the number of passengers, which increased 0.82 per cent in 2017-18 over the previous year. In 2016-17, growth was 1 per cent, against a drop of 3 per cent in 2015-16, 2.5 per cent in 2014-15, and 3 per cent in 2013-14.

Despite facing criticism owing to the flexifare system for premium trains, the figures show that the number of tickets booked in 2017-18 through the passenger reservation system increased by 6.5 per cent over the previous year to 556 million. "We have got additional revenues of around ₹8.6 billion on flexifare. Moreover, there was a considerable increase of 19.35 per cent on revenues from ticket checking too," said Mohammed Jamshed, member traffic, Railway Board.

Meanwhile, during 2017-18, the railways loaded freight of 1,161.66 million tonnes (mt), up 4.7 per cent from 1,108.79 mt last year. The loading of coal, at 555 mt in 2017-18, was the highest ever, and is expected to increase by 20 mt in 2018-19 owing to rising demand from the power sector. The originating freight earnings in the fiscal year have seen an increase of



8.09 per cent over the previous year to ₹84.61 billion. The average number of container rakes loaded per day has increased from 103.4 in 2016-17 to 116 in 2017-18.

Jamshed said the following helped the railways post good numbers: Providing freight concessions for double-stack containers, liberalising the automatic freight rebate scheme in empty flow directions, rationalising distance slabs in the range 1,500-3,500 km, withdrawing port congestion charges, offering short-lead concessions and discounts for loading bagged consignment in open and flat wagons, concessional station-to-station

rates, and rationalisation in the classification of commodities. The railways' freight numbers are coming down at a time when the carrier is planning to treble its freight traffic to 3 billion tonnes by 2030 on the back of the Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridors, which will be commissioned by April 2020.

The strategy is to increase the railways' share in the goods movement to 50 per cent from the current 35 per cent approximately. In 2018-19, the railways is set to invest around ₹318 billion in rolling stock, which includes diesel and electric locomotives, wagons, and passenger coaches.

## LOOKING UP

- Railways loaded 1,161.66 million tonne (mt) freight, up 4.7% from 1,108.79 mt in 2016-17
- 2017-18 saw the highest-ever loading of coal by railways at 555 mt
- Number of passengers carried by railways increased by 0.82% in 2017-18 and 1% in 2016-17 over the previous years
- However, there was a drop in passenger numbers in 2015-16 by 3%, 2014-15 by 2.5% and 2013-14 by 3%