Standing Committee Report Summary
Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways

- The Standing Committee on Railways (Chair: Mr. Radha Mohan Singh) presented its report on 'Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways' on November 30, 2021. The Passenger Reservation System provides for online passenger reservation and ticketing system on the Indian rail network. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:

- **Reservation charts:** The Committee noted that tickets can be booked online or through the computerised counters till the second reservation chart is prepared. The second reservation chart is prepared between 30 minutes and five minutes before the scheduled time of departure of the train. The Committee observed that there are already a large number of waitlisted tickets booked or waiting for confirmation, therefore, there is no scope of getting these tickers confirmed. It recommended reviewing the need for preparation of second reservation charts, and prevent touts (middlemen who buy and sell tickets) from getting involved during the last-minute rush to prevent potential malpractice. Further, the Committee recommended that any seats which are found vacant after the first reservation chart is prepared (4-5 hours before the departure) should be allotted to the waitlisted passengers.

- **IT Infrastructure**: The Committee noted that the passenger reservation system processes over one crore transactions per day, involving about five crore passengers on an average. The system has been empowered to handle a maximum of 28,000 transactions, although the average transaction per minute for the year 2019-20 was about 8,711. However, it observed that majority of the tickets are booked through the IRCTC website or app, however, website is usually slow and particularly during rush hours, considerable time is consumed in booking a ticket through it. The Committee recommended: (i) strengthening the capacity of the server or website, (ii) exploring more robust ticketing systems in other similar countries.

- **Tatkal system:** The tatkal system was introduced to provide reservation to those passengers who have to undertake journey at a short notice. Tatkal ticket is booked on payment of premium charges on first come-first-serve basis. The Committee noted the possible involvement of touts, which may inhibit the passengers to avail the benefits of the scheme. Further, the Committee observed that most of the tatkal tickets are booked online. Passengers, who opt to book their ticket at the physical counters face availability issues. It recommended strengthening the tatkal monitoring mechanism and providing a fixed quota for tatkal reservations at reservation counters. This will help the passengers having no internet access.

- **Fare structure**: The Committee noted that a flexi fare scheme has been introduced in Rajdhani, Shatabdi, and Duronto trains since 2016. Under the scheme, the fare increases by 10% with every 10% of berths sold, subject to a maximum limit of 1.4 times the original price. The Committee noted that the flexi pricing system is discriminatory as fares of certain trains such as Rajdhani are already higher as compared to other mail and express trains and at times at par or higher than those of budget airlines. It recommended reviewing this fare mechanism and adopting a more balanced system of pricing of fares.

- **Concessions**: The Committee observed that as part of the social service obligations, the Indian railways extends concession in passenger fare to more than 50 categories of passengers. These include: (i) certain categories of divyang passengers, (ii) senior citizens, (iii) freedom fighters, and (iv) sports persons. Further, the Indian railways also provides concessions to railway employees by way of privilege passes/privilege ticket order, and complimentary passes. The concessions vary from 10% to 100% of the fare, depending on the category of persons.

- It observed that the quantum of revenue forgone in the passenger earnings segment as a result of concessions was Rs 1,670 crore during 2016-17, Rs 1,810 crore during 2017-18, and Rs 1,995 crore during 2018-19. It highlighted that there is an urgent need to assess the impact of these concessions on their finances. The Committee recommended: (i) reviewing the criterion for granting of concessions, and (ii) adopting an internal mechanism to exercise control over the misuse of privilege passes/privilege ticket order, and complimentary passes by their employees.

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