

ALL INDIA FORUM AGAINST PRIVATISATION (AIFAP)

AN ATTACK ON ONE IS AN ATTACK ON ALL!

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23/02/2024

To,
Chairman & CEO,
Railway Board,
Rail Bhavan
New Delhi

SUB: Closure of Printing press Howrah from 22.01.24.
REF: PCMM/ER letter No Prg & Sty / Clouser/2023 dated 17.01.24.

Respected Madam,

The All India Forum Against Privatisation (AIFAP) strongly opposes the decision by the administration to close the Howrah Printing Press from January 22, 2024. This decision is against the safe and smooth running of the Indian Railways.

This printing press was built 164 years ago during British rule. The colonial rulers realised it is necessary for the Railways to have its own printing press.

There were 19 printing presses in the Indian Railways before 2000. In 2007, this was reduced to 14, then in 2010 it was further reduced to 9. In 2017, the Railway Board further cut down the number of printing presses to 5.

In all these 5 printing presses, expensive Rotatek printing machines were imported and installed in 2014 at a cost of Rs 21 crores each.

Out of these 5, only 3 were functioning at the beginning of 2024, namely that in Howrah, Mumbai and Secunderabad. And now closure notices have been issued for all the three presses also at the beginning of this year.

Disposing all these useable and serviceable machines in the market as a scrap or on second hand basis is a tremendous loss to the Indian Railways as well as a big waste of people's money.

The Howrah printing press which currently employs 350 personnel, mainly prints PRS (Passenger Reservation System) tickets, UTS

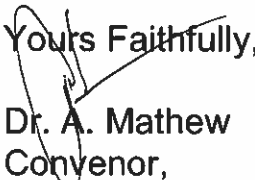
(Unreserved Ticketing System) tickets, thermal tickets, money value forms, line clearance forms, reservation forms, monthly concession forms PN Sheets, service record books and other important documents. Closure of the printing press will badly affect the supply chain of these materials and will ultimately affect the smooth and safe functioning of the Indian Railways.

The outsourcing of these items to private companies has been going on for some time. But the experience of outsourcing has been extremely disastrous for the Indian Railways. The private companies are not able to maintain the deadline for supply of these forms and in many such cases the printing press workers are forced to step in and supply the shortfall. Also, the cost to the Indian Railways of outsourcing is very high. For example, UTS tickets were being produced by the Howrah Printing press at Rs 38 per roll. The private company is charging Rs 64 per roll, The thermal tickets were being produced at the Howrah Printing press for Rs 110 per roll. The private company is charging Rs 170 per roll.

Engineers and workers of the printing press are highly experienced and skilled in this segment. Their utilization in other work/segment is a tremendous misuse of their skills and experiences, which in turn will ultimately result in huge losses of manhours and revenue.

Considering all these factors, the All India Forum Against Privatisation (AIFAP) strongly condemns the decision of the Railway authorities for closure of the Howrah Printing Press and urges you to stop its proposed closure.

Yours Faithfully,


Dr. A. Mathew
Convenor,
AIFAP

Copy:
Minister of Railways, Government of India
General Manager, Eastern Railway