

Setting up of Railway Development Authority

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Source: *PIB & The Hindu Businessline*

Union Government has approved the constitution of Rail Development Authority (RDA) in April, 2017. The role/mandate of RDA inter-alia includes **providing expert advice (regulatory & Development Functions) to Government to make an informed decision on:**

- **Pricing** of services commensurate with costs
- Measures for **enhancement of non-fare Revenue**
- **Protection of consumer interests**, by ensuring quality of service and cost optimization
- **Promoting competition**, efficiency and economy
- Encouraging **market development** and participation of stakeholders in the rail sector and for ensuring a fair deal to the stakeholders and customers
- Creating a **positive environment for investment**
- Promoting efficient allocation of **resources** in the Sector
- **Benchmarking of service standards** against international norms and specify and enforce standards with respect to the quality, continuity and reliability of services provided them
- Providing a framework for **non-discriminatory open access to the Dedicated Freight Corridor** (DFC) infrastructure and others in future
- Suggesting measures to absorb **new technologies** for achieving desired efficiency and performance standards and
- Suggesting measures for **human resource development** to achieve any of its stated objectives.

Other features

- The Rail Development Authority will **do all kinds of sums and lay down all kinds of norms but at the end of the day it will be an advisory body**. It will be up to the railway minister of the day to accept the authority's advice or not. As ministers and governments come and go the threshold of willingness to accept advice will rise and fall.
- Among the power of the authority, the concept paper mentions "**dissemination of information**". It **will publish reports and investigations** and, in particular, convey its decisions through publicly available documents. What is important is a public discussion on an issue before a decision on it is taken.

Composition

- The authority will have five members, including a chairman, who will be identified by a search and selection committee headed by the cabinet secretary and three others, all from within the Government.
- Among them will be the chairman of the railway board who will in a sense find persons from whom he will take orders up to a point.
- The chairman and other members of the authority will naturally have special knowledge in fields like infrastructure, railways, law and even consumer affairs.
- But, it is to be noted, none of the selectors will be an eminent non-government person in the field of consumer affairs.