

'Rail Bandhu': The railways' new literary avatar

Rail Day on April 16 will bring about the fulfillment of one of Railways minister Mamataa Banerjee's pet projects; the launch of "Rail Bandhu", the first magazine by the Indian Railways.

To be distributed for free to passengers in premier trains, including the Rajdhanis and Shatabdis, the editorial content of the inaugural issue is at an advanced stage of planning.

"A write up on how Rabindranath Tagore lost and found the manuscript of the "Geetanjali" in a London tube; vignettes of the saloon car travel during the British Raj, a story by famous novelist Ruskin Bond, these would be among the subjects that will be featured in the first issue", magazine project head Derek O'Brian said.

The inaugural issue will also feature stories on the struggles of the Commonwealth and Asian Games gold medalists from the railway family.

According to the parameters set out, the publication will need to devote a minimum of 30 pages to news, events or features concerning the railways, while a total of another 30 pages of advertisements can be published.

Based on business models of in flight publications, the proposed Rail magazine will have the publisher bearing all costs.

With a print order of one lakh copies as an initial target, the publication is also being expected to carry articles and features that generate and sustain tourism interest in the domestic and overseas markets.

If the pilot project proves to be successful then a further ten lakh copies will be printed.

After stagnating on the drawing board for an entire year, the project moved forward last December, when the Northern Railways floated tenders inviting an Expression of Interest (EoI) for the publication on a turnkey basis.

The magazine's editorial board will consist of Shuvaprasanna and Derek O'Brien, apart from senior railways officials.

"Previously, the governmental airways companies requested the passengers to leave behind the magazines distributed to them. But the Railways would like them to be carried back home by the passengers to magnify the image of Indian railways and grow confidence in their minds", O'Brian said.

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