

Letter to the Editor

WHO IS TO BE BALMED FOR TRANSPORTERS' PROBLEMS

Dear, Mr. Girish Mirchandani,

We take this opportunity to congratulate 'TRANSTOPICS' and its entire team for completing 39 years in circulation and that too in the transport industry which is neglected by every one including transporters themselves. Diwali, the festival of lights, is upon us, but is there any bright light for the transport industry to light 'DIYAS' when many of our transporter colleagues are forced to close down their shutters?

Our ongoing struggle for the imposing of service tax on transport industry can be considered as one more example of how we get pressured by authorities and are expected to collect 10% of service tax forcibly from the service acquirers entirely on our own or even risk paying the same from our already burdened resources.

As rightly said by you it is the transport industry itself that is to be blamed for this sorry position as we are never united under one single flag and fight against the injustices committed on us. At present we have many so-called representative organizations, which have as many different ideologies, but they have never attempted to go to the root cause of transporters' problems. Broadly the transporters in India can be categorized in three categories as below:

- 1- Big well-organized transport companies.
- 2- Medium and small organized companies and
- 3- Small time operators having one or more vehicles.

Since their style of functioning and economics differ greatly, they never unite and stand together and challenge the difficulties from the authorities. We often surrender to any kind of pressure including that of financial constraints and rate cuts just to keep our wheels rolling and meet our vehicle installments. Thus we always lose our battles before they begin as we sacrifice long-term goals for short-term myopic interests. I can compare our state to the small poor and unorganized farmer who toils hard all year but someone else reaps the benefits.

As we are aware, each industry goes through its economic highs and lows, each industry has its golden period that

repeats at regular intervals. However, it is only our transportation industry that seems to be perennially in the doldrums. Who is to be blamed for this? Is it the government for its nonchalant attitude towards the lifeline industry of the country or is it the users of this service who treat transporters with a total lack of respect or is it the transporters themselves whose lack of unity has denied a respectable industry status to us. While the tax burden on us keeps on becoming heavier, we continue to suffer from badly eroded roads, congested ports, increasing fuel prices and rate cuts from customers. The increased revenues from taxes should be for the benefit of that industry or class of industries from which it was collected. The transportation industry has never seen the benefits of increased taxes percolate down to benefit the big or small transporter.

My experience over the last twenty-one years has taught me that there is no proper platform to voice our common grievances openly and come together on a national level. I feel that since Transtopics has such a large and targeted subscription base, it is in the right position to unite our largely fragmented industry.

Finally, are we aware of what the new challenges of the future are that the transport industry would be required to face? In light of our country entering total globalization of the economy, are we prepared and fully geared up to face the competition from the other players entering from the other parts of the world?

Since Transtopics has been contributing towards the upliftment of the Indian transport industry for a period of almost forty years and has not only survived but also flourished over time, we feel that only Transtopics is qualified to bear the mantle of leadership and discharge its social responsibility towards the industry that it has helped give a common voice to. We feel that Transtopics must now rise to the occasion and live up to the extra-ordinary expectations that we have from your organisation. We have no other hope.

Dilip Naik,
Managing Director - Reema Transport Ltd.