

Letter to the editor

Lack of industry status causes heartburns

- Dilip Naik

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Your article in your weekly issue dated 7th December 06 on transporters unprofessional approach towards their duties and behavior with customers made very interesting and educative reading. While it gives some insight into what you can expect from a transporter, as normally envisaged by a layman, a lot more needs to be said on this subject, since it involves several issues and factors that have a direct bearing on the behavioral aspects of a typical transporter and how it affects the industry as a whole. The subject has so much to discuss about, that it could well warrant a full-scale debate. The article gives immense food for thought and in a sense, is an eye opener.

It is true that the overall attitude and behavior of the transporter lacks decorum and etiquette and many a times is even disgusting to say the least, and more so, in an era of globalization of the Indian economy, which calls for advancement in not only the use of world class technology, but also in the quality of manpower who are expected to drive this technology. This factor is as important and crucial to the transport industry, as it is to other industries and can be ignored only to the detriment of the industry as a whole and the individual in particular. There is also this fact that, unlike earlier times, today no customer is at the mercy of the transporter and has a wide range of service providers to choose from who can meet their specific requirements to almost perfection. This is due to the fact that there is a consistently regular birth of new transporters each passing day who eat into the share of existing operators thereby offering the customer an ever-increasing choice. At the same time, several big players in the field, trusted for their name and

reputation since several decades, are calling it a day and have to close down their shutters due to their non-professional business approach.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Unprofessional, thoughtless and impractical approach to work by key personnel and also those at the helm of affairs invariably leads to such closures of even well established transport companies. The transport sector has been demanding industry status since a very long time, but to no avail. This lack of recognition by the Government has not only caused heartburns but has also given those transporters who do not want to be a part of the main stream and who resort to unfair and unethical means of business practices for the sake of fast bucks, a free hand to indulge in even more such practices since there is no yardstick worth the name to keep in check or regulate the functioning of such elements within the transport sector. Healthy and principled competition must be accepted by all operators regardless of their affiliation or otherwise to any particular association of transporters or to the umbrella organization. Despite all these inherent problems, most operators continue to be in business and survive.

One basic factor that leads to poor quality of manpower is the cheap employment that this industry offers. This is because there are no recognized or regulated norms for pay scales, even more so due to the fact that this sector is in total disarray. There is no such thing as Human Resource Development factor in our industry. Recruitment norms, criteria for employment, training, orientation and such other manpower development programmes are literally non-existent.

Employers either cannot afford or do not want to give reasonable salaries and hence what you get is obviously low quality personnel who accept such work more out of compulsions rather than any thing else. This results in very poor output and invariably one such result is unhealthy behavior, bad mannerisms, and indiscipline. But all is not lost though. There is a silver lining. Realization seems to have dawned on this industry and things are looking up and a distinct change is slowly but surely taking place. Our official representative bodies as well as our umbrella organization also have a major role to play in improving the image and status of our industry through various effective educational programmes and lead the industry by example. Professionalism is being given due regard by most major operators and work ethics is playing an important role in the organizations. The need and importance of quality manpower has begun to be felt by the employers and young blood is being infused to take charge of important portfolios at higher levels of the organizations. These youngsters must take a lesson from the past and ensure that the age old bad image of the industry is turned around to present a new dynamic and a thoroughly upbeat and professionally charged road transport industry to meet the challenges of the future. We were being looked down upon all these years, but now, we must be looked upto by the outside industry and this will happen sooner than later.

