Issues with Indian railways

What is the issue?

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Recent CAG report on railways pointed out that the service provided by railways lacks quality in the present competitive market.

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What are the issues with service quality?

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- **Food -** Reports submitted by CAG on the quality of food served to passengers by the Indian railways was not satisfying.
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- The CAG also found the blankets supplied to passengers in AC compartments were dirty.
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- There are rising complaints over unclean toilets and sanitation accessories provided to the passengers.
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- **Charges -** Railways were levying a surcharge for journey on “superfast” trains when these often ran late.
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- **Redressal mechanism -** The complaints raised by passengers on different issues are not addressed properly by the authorities.
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What are the challenges to Indian railways?

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- **Competitors -** An internal study on railways shows there is declining passenger rate due to bus and air services.
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- The share of intercity passengers are also in a threat due to poor service

and cheap private bus services.
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- Business class passengers who used to travel in elite coaches were now turning to air travel, due to poor services and introduction of schemes like UDAN.
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- **Role of industries** - Industrial slow down as contributed to the drop in the railway freight business.
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- At a time of industrial slowdown, shipment of bulk commodities will be sluggish.
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- The total tonnage carried also actually went down, compared to the 2016.
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- **Renewable energy -** The Railways is particularly vulnerable because around half of the freight traffic comes from carrying coal.
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- India has stopped conceiving new coal-fired power projects to addresses global warming concerns over burning of fossil fuels.
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What measures are proposed?

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- **Freight -** New operational setups in logistics like private players will improve the business.
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- Smaller cargoes need to be targeted and door to door delivery with the cooperation of logistics companies will help.
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- Dedicated freight corridors will simultaneously address both the needs of freight and passenger traffic.
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- **Tariffs -** The passenger services should be made affordable by raising Industrial freight rates.
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- There is a need for a regulator to recommend fare rises and pricing decisions.
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- **Food -** To immediately address the issue of poor quality food, food can be made optional so passengers can bring their own food and get a discount.

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- **Amenities -** On blankets, a pilot has been launched to raise minimum temperatures under air conditioning and stop supplying blankets.
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- There are also reports that the National Institute of Fashion Technology will design light blankets which can be cleaned easily but the immediate reaction is to downgrade the product.
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Source: Business Line

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