

**10<sup>th</sup> June, 2023**

**Respected Prime Minister,**

We are a group of concerned citizens, retired senior civil servants as well as senior officers of the Armed forces and members of the highest levels of judiciary. Many amongst us rose to head the highest offices of our respective services. Some of us have worked and gained vast experience in the area of National Security. We have no doubt that under your able stewardship this nation has advanced to unprecedented heights.

We are increasingly concerned at the forces at work, increasingly active, doing all they can to undermine our national security and progress. We are greatly disturbed by the tragedy that has taken place in Balasore, Orissa involving our rapidly growing and modernizing Railways. Although investigation is still underway, as per initial media reports, there are reasons to suspect that the cause of the derailment could be deliberate human interference, a clear case of sabotage at the behest of terrorist outfits.

Some of us who have worked in counter-insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East have faced such situations of sabotage on the smooth plying of railway network. There were similar well planned attempts by terrorists to disrupt railway networks in these vulnerable areas, leading to sabotage, derailment and civilian casualties. In one of the many cases, J&K witnessed multiple attacks on railway lines from Pathankot to Jammu in 1990s and early 2000s where the tracks were severely damaged. Catastrophic accidents stopped only after proper deployment was made.

Indian Railways is the lifeline of transport of goods and humans alike. Forces inimical to the country's progress would like the network disrupted and create a catastrophe with massive human tragedy. Our view is that our entire Railway network is vulnerable and is particularly so in Eastern and Northeastern States, including the so-called 'Chicken's Neck'.

It is imperative that illegal squatters, along railway tracks, including illegal immigrants be removed and stringent measures be taken to secure the safety of our railway tracks.

We are confident that the investigation by the CBI would identify the perpetrators of this ghastly effort to undermine public confidence in our internationally renowned railway system, at a time when India holds the Presidency of the G 20 and the nation is celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> year of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'. We pledge our full support in these endeavors to safeguard our territorial integrity and our national security.

**With highest regards**

**Yours Faithfully**

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