

# Separate Rail Budget may go

**MUKESH RANJAN**  
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Centre is seriously thinking of doing away with the exercise of a separate Rail Budget and integrate it with General Budget presented every year by Finance Minister in Lok Sabha.

For the purpose, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assigned the task to the NITI Aayog to work out a “plan paper” and submit it to the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) within a month.

The trigger for such a “metamorphic change” in the financial management of Asia’s largest railway network came from Minister for Railways Suresh Prabhu, as sources said: “He had preliminary discussions with the Prime Minister and vice-chairman of NITI Aayog Arvind Pangarhiya and impressed upon them to do away with the practice of separate budget exercise.”

Though the proposal was originally mooted during the fag-end of the UPA-II led by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, it could not proceed further because of lack of time, sources added.

Sources say the Prime Min-

## Report within a month

- The PMO has asked a senior official of the NITI Aayog to submit a report in this regard within one month, say sources
- Minister for Railways Suresh Prabhu had impressed upon the PM and NITI Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Pangarhiya to do away with the practice
- The proposal was originally mooted during the fag-end of UPA-II, but it could not proceed further because of lack of time
- Several ‘revenue-earning ministries’ have expressed ‘annoyance’ over special treatment to the Railways



ister’s Office (PMO) has assigned the task to a senior official of the NITI Aayog and has directed him to submit the report in “next one month”.

“Following this an inter-ministerial discussion will take place and then a final decision on the issue will be taken at the highest level in the government,” a source said.

As it is evident that such a proposal has been pending with the government for long, the move got the “go-ahead” keeping in view Modi’s mantra of “minimum government and maximum governance”.

Sources in the government said several other “revenue earning ministries” have long

been expressing their “annoyance” over special treatment given to the Ministry of Railways on account of it having a separate budget.

Explaining further the reason for “annoyance”, a senior NITI Aayog official said: “No free-bees is available to the employees any other revenue-earning ministries — Petroleum, Telecom, Steel, etc. — on the products which they manage, except for the Railways, where employees have the facility of travelling free of cost.

Separate budget provides ample elbow room for the ministry to manoeuvre finances to offer such facility to its employees.”