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Pakistan Railways Raises Fares Amid Soaring Diesel Prices

July 18, 2025

– Categories: General News



In response to another sharp spike in fuel costs, Pakistan Railways (PR) has raised passenger train fares by 2%, effective July 18. The increase comes on the heels of a significant hike in the price of High Speed Diesel (HSD), further compounding the economic pressures facing millions of ordinary Pakistanis. The move also includes increases to freight charges, with coal transport rates rising by 3% and rates for rock phosphate and fertilizer shipments going up by 2% starting July 21.

An internal office memorandum, reported by *The Express Tribune*, directed the Director of Information Technology (IT) to immediately publish the revised fares on the PR website. This sudden adjustment follows the federal government's controversial decision to increase petroleum prices for the second half of July, a decision many see as yet another regressive step that burdens the public rather than addressing systemic inefficiencies.

According to a notification issued by the Finance Division on July 15, the price of petrol rose by Rs5.36, jumping from Rs266.79 to Rs272.15 per liter. More notably, High Speed Diesel (HSD)—the primary fuel used in heavy transportation, soared by Rs11.37, from Rs272.98 to Rs284.35 per liter. This dramatic increase in HSD has had a direct impact on PR's operating costs, adding an estimated Rs4 million per day and nearly Rs120 million per month to its fuel expenses. With PR consuming approximately 350,000 liters of diesel daily, the financial strain is substantial.

While PR justifies the fare increases as necessary to stay operational, the move is likely to further inflame public frustration. The hike affects not only passengers but also businesses reliant on freight services. These fare adjustments, passed directly onto consumers, are being viewed as a short-term fix rather than a sustainable policy response.

Critics argue that the government has repeatedly failed to shield the public from global fuel market volatility. Rather than reforming outdated infrastructure, streamlining costs, or investing in energy alternatives, the administration continues to shift the financial burden to working-class citizens. Meanwhile, the lack of transparency and absence of targeted subsidies raise serious concerns about priorities in economic governance.

This latest development adds to the growing perception that state-run institutions like Pakistan Railways are being mismanaged. Once a vital component of national connectivity and development, PR now struggles to maintain service quality while navigating constant financial crises.

Without a long-term strategy to reduce dependence on imported fuels and improve operational efficiency, fare hikes will likely become more frequent. As economic conditions worsen, public trust in national institutions continues to erode, yet the current leadership offers little in the way of meaningful reform or accountability.