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PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY TRUCK OWNERS IN ROAD TRANSPORT

USMONOV AZIZBEK XXX

**Andijan Machine-building Institute,
Faculty of Transport and Logistics,**

3rd-year student

+998999937328

Introduction: The trucking sector in India is the backbone of the economy and contributes immensely to the economic growth of the country. Nearly 65% of freight is transported through road. However despite being of such importance as well as magnitude, the entire sector is operated and managed in a much unorganized manner.

If we take a close look into the ownership pattern, it crops up very interesting details, which suggest why the industry is shaped in the way it is. Here is the ownership pattern of trucks in India:

- 75% own less than 5 trucks
- 15% own less than 20 trucks
- 10% own more than 20 trucks

One of the biggest challenge that the industry faces is that the youngsters do not want to join their family business, and even though they have the education and support system to bring in the much needed change, they prefer using their education and skills elsewhere. In fact besides transporters, even the drivers' children do not want to be part of this vast industry.

They are happy doing more comfortable jobs, even if they are less paying. Despite being a good 75% of the industry, the small truck owners are the ones who suffer the most and their concerns never reach the concerned authorities. Most of these 75% are also truck drivers and they also engage their close family members to drive trucks, thus creating employment opportunities within the family as well. But truck driving is becoming increasingly frustrating and tiring because of the hardships posed on the highways, most of which are avoidable.

The harassment of truck drivers by authorities is making operations as well as life miserable for them. The larger impact is that it is killing the entire industry, since shortage of truck drivers would mean lesser trucks on road and more trucks standing idle – more NPAs. We have been seeing truck drivers posting videos of themselves and their brethren being harassed on the highways. However until now we have not seen any action against the authorities nor has the situation on ground changed for the drivers.

Nearly 75% group owns less than 5 trucks who are self-employment generators the family members or their relatives drives the trucks and earn for the living. The harassment of truck drivers is making operation and life



miserable corruption is killing the sector. I've seen many small operators sharing their videos of harassment on road.

I request all members from transport industry let's get united and break the corruption chain. While the truck drivers continue relentlessly with their efforts to make sure supplies reach across the country, here are a few problems that we all encounter on a daily basis:

- Daily hike in diesel prices
- Hike in tire and spare parts prices
- Hike in toll prices
- Large number of check post inter state.
- Harassment of drivers
- Poor highway conditions
- Unaffordable vehicle maintenance
- Lack of digital information
- Highway robberies

Unfortunately none of the above problems are being addressed and the drivers are left to fend for themselves and find a way out. And as mentioned earlier, corruption is something that has made life miserable for the truck drivers. They are pulled up and abused by official's of every rank – just to extract money from the truck drivers. We have been talking of digitization and other such major developments. Why not come up with a system where truck need not be stopped at every few hundred kilometers or at every check post or by every flying squad! Can we have a seamless system for movement of goods across the country? The road transport industry, despite being the backbone of the economy, is in very bad shape and in desperate need of a surgery to get rid of the cancers of corruption and harassment. Do we have the will and unity to confront the government to carry out this surgery?

Conclusions: Truck owners in the road transport sector face a myriad of problems and challenges, which can significantly impact their business operations and profitability. Here are some common issues they encounter:

Regulatory Compliance: Truck owners must comply with a plethora of regulations related to vehicle maintenance, safety standards, emissions, driver qualifications, and hours of service.

Meeting these requirements can be complex and costly. **Fuel Costs:** Fuel prices fluctuate frequently, impacting operating expenses. High fuel costs can eat into profits, especially for long-haul trucking companies. **Maintenance and Repairs:** Trucks require regular maintenance to remain in good working condition. Unexpected breakdowns and repairs can result in downtime and lost revenue. **Driver Shortages:** There is a shortage of qualified truck drivers in many regions, leading to increased competition for skilled personnel.

Recruiting and retaining drivers can be challenging for truck owners. **Insurance Costs:** Commercial truck insurance can be expensive, especially for



companies with a history of accidents or violations. Rising insurance premiums can strain profitability. Infrastructure and Road Conditions: Poor road conditions, congestion, and infrastructure deficiencies can increase travel times and fuel consumption.

Truck owners may also incur additional maintenance costs due to wear and tear caused by rough roads. Competition: The road transport sector is highly competitive, with numerous companies vying for freight contracts. Small trucking businesses may struggle to compete with larger firms that have greater resources and economies of scale.

Economic Factors: Truck owners are susceptible to economic fluctuations, such as recessions or changes in consumer demand. Economic downturns can reduce freight volumes and squeeze profit margins. **Technological Advancements:** While technology can improve efficiency and safety in the trucking industry, it also requires investment and adaptation.

Truck owners may face challenges in implementing and integrating new technologies into their operations. **Environmental Regulations:** Increasing focus on environmental sustainability has led to stricter regulations on vehicle emissions and fuel efficiency. Compliance with these regulations may require truck owners to invest in new, more environmentally friendly equipment. **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Events such as natural disasters, pandemics, or geopolitical tensions can disrupt supply chains, affecting the flow of goods and demand for transportation services. Truck owners must be prepared to adapt to sudden changes in market conditions.

Addressing these challenges requires careful planning, investment in technology and infrastructure, effective risk management strategies, and adaptation to evolving market dynamics. Additionally, collaboration with industry stakeholders and regulatory authorities can help mitigate some of the challenges faced by truck owners in the road transport sector.

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