

## Infrastructure push for Railways

### What is the issue?

The National Rail Plan prepared by Indian Railways along with other projects can have a transformative effect in the infrastructure of railway system.

### What are the recent optimisms in the railway sector?

- Indian Railways recorded the highest ever annual freight loading of 1,233 million tonnes (mt) in 2020-21, exceeding the preceding year's 1,210 mt.
- Railway staffs have operationalised the Oxygen Expresses, delivering more than 30,000 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen amidst the pandemic.

### What is the National Rail Plan about?

- National Rail Plan (NRP) for India aims to create a **'future ready'** Railway system by 2030
- Keeping the year 2050 as the horizon, NRP charts out a strategic grid for Railways to follow for the short term (up to 2024), medium term (up to 2031) and long-term.
- Intends to increase modal share of the Railways in freight to 45%.
- Reduce the transit time of freight substantially by increasing average speed of freight trains to 50Kmph.
- Identify new Dedicated Freight Corridors and new High Speed Rail Corridors.
- A cumulative outlay for the entire plan period 2021-51 is estimated at Rs.38,20,516 crore.

### Does the expectation in the document appear realistic?

- The aim to grab 45 % of the country's freight market by 2030 (from the current 26 %) which is predicated on its carrying capacity appears unrealistic.
- NRP's bold statement that the revenue surplus generated by the Railways would be adequate to finance future capital investment post 2030 is under question.

### How can the railways achieve the ambitious objectives set out in the

## **NRP?**

- Need to address productivity and efficiency indices in order to maximise resource utilisation and improve average system velocity.
- Need to cater to freight transport demand of other commodities (non-conventional as well as conventional high-value) through appropriate interventions for enhancing the modal share.
- A single window, end-to-end solution for logistics services as demanded by the customers.
- Partnering of Railways with logistics service providers to leverage their superior market access and flexible parcel sizes through consolidation services.

**Source: Businessline, PIB**

