Railway Reforms - Intra Organisational Synergy

What is the issue?

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- Safety in the Indian Railways have always been a challenge.
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- Compartmental functioning of various departments of the railways has been identified as the major reason.
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What does the Khatauli derailement say?

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- Track repairing staff didn’t get a permitted block by the traffic department.
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- So they took the risk of carrying out their work without stopping movement of trains.
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- This led to the derailment of Uttkal express at Khatauli in UP – killing 23 people and injuring many
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- This has highlighted the lack of co-ordination among departments within the organisation.
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What is current status of the railways?

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- Indian has over 90,000 km of railway tracks and hundreds of trains hurtle across, carrying millions of passengers.
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- The traffic load on the Indian Railways is ever increasing with some routes nearly reaching saturation level.

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- This leaving little cushion for maintenance.
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- Also, the tracks are currently under great pressure after the 2005 increase of the permissible loading capacity for each wagon.
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- Large projects to relieve the pressure, like the construction of dedicated freight corridors are in the pipeline, but will take time.
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What are the issues with ‘Debroy Committe’ suggestions?

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- In 2014, Debroy Committee was set-up suggest reforms and break the compartmentalisation of operations in the railways.
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- Its final report suggested big structural changes and called for the introduction of ‘management generalism’ as against specialisation.
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- One suggestion even called for the merger of all Group ‘A’ ngineering & civil services of the railways into one unified service.
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- **Drawbacks –** These suggestions are immature as present system was evolved to handle the enormous size of the Indian railways.
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- It is also rooted in the belief that specialists are too technical to have a strong vision, which is fundamentally wrong.
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- Also, reducing departments for better co-ordination in a massive organisations like the railways is not desirable.
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- If accepted, this could lead to the erosion of accountability and would be disastrous for railway safety & management.
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What is the way ahead?

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- A mechanism for departments to flourish and voice their genuine concerns is what is needed for enhancing co-ordination.

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- Use of new techniques for assessing aptitudes, capabilities and cohesion are to be developed.
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- Ultimately, appropriate powers should be vested in the DRMs, GMs and the Railway Board for hazzle free decision making.
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Source: Indian Express

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