What are the advantages & disadvantages of railway transport?

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The advantages & disadvantages of railway transport.

Railway transport occupies a significant role in the transport system of a country because the development of trade, industry and commerce of a country largely depends on the development of railways.

Advantages:

- It facilitates long distance travel and transport of bulky goods which are not easily transported through motor vehicles.
- It is a quick and more regular form of transport because it helps in the transportation of goods with speed and certainty.
- It helps in the industrialization process of a country by easy transportation of coal and raw-materials at a cheaper rate.
- It helps in the quick movement of goods from one place to another at the time of emergencies like famines and scarcity.
- It encourages mobility of labour and thereby provides a great scope for employment.
- Railway is the safest form of transport. The chances of accidents and breakdown of railways are minimum as compared to other modes of transport. Moreover, the traffic can be protected from the exposure to sun, rain snow etc.
- The carrying capacity of the railways is extremely large. Moreover, its capacity is elastic which can easily be increased by adding more wagons.
- It is the largest public undertaking in the country. Railways perform many public utility services. Their charges are based on charge what the traffic can bear principles which helps the poor. In fact, it is a national necessity.

Disadvantages:

- The railway requires a large investment of capital. The cost of construction, maintenance and overhead expenses are very high as compared to other modes of transport. Moreover, the investments are specific and immobile. In case the traffic is not sufficient, the investments may mean wastage of huge resources.
- Another disadvantages of railway transport is its inflexibility. It routes and timings cannot be adjusted to individual requirements.
- Rail transport cannot provide door to door service as it is tied to a particular track. Intermediate loading or unloading involves greater cost, more wear and tear and wastage of time. The time cost of terminal operations are a great disadvantage of rail transport.
- As railways require huge capital outlay, they may give rise to monopolies and work against public interest at large. Even if controlled and managed by the government, lack of competition may breed in inefficiency and high costs.
- Railway transport is unsuitable and uneconomical for short distances and small traffic of goods.
- It involves much time and labour in booking and taking delivery of goods through railways as compared to motor transport.
- Because of huge capital requirements and traffic, railways cannot be operated economically in rural areas. Thus, large rural areas have no railway even today. This causes much inconvenience to the people living in rural areas.

Submitted to RB by Vipul Mehta