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# **TRANSPORT OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

**MIAN GHAS-UD-DIN**

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*By*

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Man is greatly dependent on the transport industry for socio-economic growth and development. This industry overcomes physical barriers and facilitates socio-economic contacts and promotes better understanding and nation-wide unity. Productive sectors which are major components of GDP and GNP are closely linked with transport. The main objectives of Transport Planning are safe movement of the passengers and goods, and facilitating increase in the economic growth, rate of production and per capita income. It is, therefore, essential to determine the share of national resources that must be devoted to achieve the goals of projected transport needs.

The overall transport development policy should seek to improve various modes of transport, encourage increase in commercial activities, provide access to backward areas, encourage more private investment in transport sector, and upgrade transport facilities at the international terminals. The entire transport sector should be developed as a part of a Transport Master Plan detailing the time cum resource framework on yearly and five yearly basis. Policies for the development of national transport system should cater for domestic and international demands in passenger and goods movement, priority of investment on projects of higher and quicker economic returns, and long distance transport of passengers and goods for specific reasons. The Master Plan should have a viable undertaking of evolving a transport system for a span of 15 to 25 years and a promise of ideal transport service in the country after its complete execution.

In developing countries of Asia and Africa Roads and Railways are main surface transport modes. However, with the exception of Indian Railways and a limited success in some of the West Asian oil producing Gulf States, Iraq and Iran they have failed to fulfill their role as a rapid mass transport mode. Air transport has severe limitations for cargo transport as well as passenger movement due to cost and space considerations. The choice of developing a mass transport mode is thus confined to roads and railways.

The Railways have some inherent technical and economical characteristics such as an independent track, operation at prescribed timings, fast running multiple unit trains, long life tracks, powerful rolling stock and low direct costs. Average costs in case of Railways decrease substantially with increase in traffic and haulage, whereas the road costs remain static.

Road transport essentially involves the use of small capacity vehicles which results in problems like congestion, air pollution and frequent accidents. The railway transport is free from the handicaps inherently built in the road transport system. Obviously the only option available to the developing countries is to rely on the railways for most of the transport needs. A properly designed road transport system can be effectively used to supplement the railway transport. The ultimate solution lies in adopting a multimodal mix predominated by railways for long distance and bulk hauls. Waterways and coastal shipping can fill in the gaps in peculiar situations. Air transport should be developed for international travel and as an elite luxury transport within the country.

Each mode of transport should be developed as a part of the total integrated plan with close coordination at policy making levels. Experience of the developed nations may be shared. An important fact should, however, be kept in view that the foreign experts generally render their advice based on experience of their own countries which may not be applicable fully to the developing countries. There are frequent examples of loss of timely progress resulting primarily from slow decision making without any accountability. Closer communication and rapport with the scientists and technologists may be sought by the transport professionals. The developing countries have plenty of opportunities for a better economic growth which in turn would indicate a bright future for the transport industry.