

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION

6TH SECTORAL SUMMIT OF NORTH EASTERN COUNCIL ON 'RAIL
CONNECTIVITY' PROGRAMMES IN THE NER, 19TH JUNE 2007 AT NEW DELHI
ISSUES & CONCLUSIONS

CURRENT STATUS:

1. Rail network is minimal. It is about 2578 kms rail-route length in NER which constitutes only 4% of the country.
2. In the last 10 years, double line connectivity from Howrah to Guwahati has been provided by commissioning New Jalpaiguri-Siliguri to New Bongaigaon gauge conversion, new line from New Bongaigaon to Jogighopa to Guwahati, doubling of Eklakhi-Harishchandpur
3. The total expenditure incurred in the North Eastern Region during last five years (2002-03 to 2006-07) is more than 10% of Railways' GBS. The outlay planned for 2007-08 is Rs. 990 crore.
4. Since 1992-93, about 1079 Kms of gauge conversion and 163 kms of new lines have been completed in the Region.
5. Presently, work is in progress on 14 projects. These are 8 New lines, 5 Gauge Conversion, 1 Doubling of line. Besides, survey works are in progress on projects in the North Eastern Region. These projects are given as under:
 - **New Lines:**
 - Kumarghat to Agartala
 - Jiribam to Tupul
 - Dimapur to Zubza
 - Azra to Byrnihat
 - Dudhnoi to Deepa
 - Harmuti to Itanagar
 - Mahilaguri to Jogighopa
 - Bogibeel Rail-cum-Road Bridge
 - **Gauge Conversion:**
 - Lumding - Silchar
 - Rangiya-Murkongselek
 - Kathakal - Bairabi
 - Haibargaon - Mairabari
 - Senchoa Junction - Slighat Town

- **Doubling Project:**
 - New Guwahati - Digaru
 - **Surveys:**
 - Bairabi to Sairang (Aizawl)
 - Siliguri to Rangpo (Sikkim)
6. In order to complete all the ongoing projects as indicated by Ministry of Railways will require about Rs. 10,000 crore. The Railways need to allocate between 1200-1300 crore every year for projects in the NER. The Railways had provided Rs. 750 crore in their annual budget of 2006-07 apart from Rs. 200 crore spent as an additional outlay.
 7. With the ongoing works under gauge conversion it is expected that the entire meter gauge will be converted to broad gauge during the 11th Five Year Plan.
 8. The throwforward of these projects is of the order of Rs. 6500 crore. Railways expenditure in NER is about Rs. 500 crore annually, which is inadequate.

STATE SPECIFIC ISSUES:

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

9. The issue of land acquisition for the proposed new line project from Harmuti to Itanagar needs to be expedited by the State Government.
10. The Rangiya-Murkongselek gauge conversion has been declared as a 'National Project'. However, the funding of the project has not been tied-up. There is also a proposal for extending the line from Murkongselek to Pasighat. The survey for this line has been completed. M/o Defence have indicated interest in extension of line upto Pasighat.

ASSAM

11. The current status of the Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge: (a) the south link line from Moranhat to Dibrugarh is planned for completion during 2008-09. (b) Ninety five percent of the land has been acquired. (c) Out of the total requirement of 20 lakh cubic meter boulders, 17

lakh has been collected for guide bund and protection work. (d) The tender for sub-structure of main bridge is being re-invited.

12. Work is in progress in all the sub-sections of the Lumding-Silchar-Kumarghat section. The overall physical progress is 54%. The critical activity is tunneling for 15.8 kms of which the progress has been only 1.8 kms. Major tunneling activity has come to a standstill due to security concerns. Out of total 76 sites identified for security cover, MHA has agreed for security cover for 45 sites; 23 sites are already covered and additional deployment of 4 companies of CRPF has been indicated.
13. The overall physical progress on New Mainaguri-Jogighopa new line project is only 18%. The work on the major bridge over Gangadhar is in progress. However, land acquisition for 227 ha in Dhubri District and 72 ha in Bongaigaon needs to be expedited.

MANIPUR

14. The Jiribam-Tupul line has been declared as a 'National Project'. The cost of the project has increased from Rs. 728 crore to Rs. 1850 crore due to raising of the alignment, which is needed to negotiate the submergence zone of proposed Tipaimukh Dam and to finally connect Imphal. During feasibility study it has been found that there is a possibility of extending the line from Tupul to Imphal.

MEGHALAYA

15. The Azra-Byrnihat line has been declared as a 'National Project' and the feasibility study for extending the rail line upto Shillong is under process. The land acquisition from Dudhnoi to Medhipathar needs to be expedited and also the confirmation for alignment from the State Government.

MIZORAM

16. The Railways have indicated that the broad gauge connectivity to Aizawl, i.e., Kathakal to Bairabi (gauge conversion) and Bairabi to Sairang proposed new line should be declared as 'National Project' and funds should be provided as an additionality to the Railways Budget.

NAGALAND

17. The Dimapur to Zubza new line project has been included in the Railway Supplementary Budget 2006-07 and the final location survey is being taken up. The project has been declared as a 'National Project', however, the mode of funding has to be finalized. As there is a demand to extend the line upto Kohima, the same will be examined during the final survey.

SIKKIM

18. There is an ongoing survey from Sivok to Rangpo for providing the rail linkage to the State of Sikkim. The State Government requested extension of the project to Singtam and finally to Gangtok.

TRIPURA

19. The Kumarghat-Agartala new line has been declared as a 'National Project'. The Manu-Ambassa (23 kms) line is targeted for completion by August 2007 and the Ambassa-Agartala (65 kms) section by December, 2007. Major part of the tunneling in this project has been completed.
20. The Agartala rail link should be extended to Sabroom. A formal proposal was forwarded in 2000. The rail link once extended to Sabroom will ensure connectivity from North to South in the State and will provide a hope for connecting the State to the rest of India through Chittagong sea port sometime in future. The Government of Tripura can partake by sharing part cost of the project but not 50%.

REGIONAL ISSUES

21. Railway Sector requires accelerated development to provide alternative mode of transport in the region. It offers bulk movement of freight and passenger traffic.
22. Lack of funds, inspite of projects being declared as 'National Projects'. Ministry of Railways are unable to tie-up source of funding and depending entirely on Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance for additional resources.
23. Government of India is committed to financially supporting projects which have been declared as National Projects. Though funds are

only being provided at RE stage, funding is inadequate. Adequate and timely funding at B.E. stage.

24. Comprehensive Transport Plan is being prepared by the Planning Commission.
25. Planning Commission would prefer to release funds through GBS, which would ensure 'Assured Funds' and enable long term planning.
26. The Planning Commission is not looking at projects in the North Eastern Region on the basis of viability. The projects should not be based on rate of return but should be developed for the overall economic upliftment of the Region.
27. As far as Railways are concerned there is no capacity problem for the North Eastern Region to absorb major inflow of resources and implement projects. It should be ensured that funds allotted to rail projects in the North East are spent timely.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. There is an immediate need to identify source of funding for the 'National Projects' by the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance.
2. The Ministry of Railways has the capacity to implement projects in a given time-frame, provided funds are available. The allocation of funds to the Railways for these projects should be made at the B.E. stage which is more appropriate and is a distinct advantage to the Railways who are planning implementation of projects.
3. A Mission Mode needs to be adopted so as to ensure timely implementation of projects. Therefore, a monitoring mechanism needs to be in place. The Ministry of DoNER and NEC should be involved at all levels of decision making with regard to planning of rail projects in the North Eastern Region.
4. Given the progress of the ongoing projects and the commitment of the Government of India to provide necessary funds for the ongoing projects, it is expected that the Ministry of Railways will implement 14 approved projects in the 11th Five Year Plan.

5. To cut down delays, it must be ensured that alignments for rail projects which are once firmed up should not be altered. Issues such as land acquisition and environment & forest clearances should be sorted out at the beginning of the project.
6. Security concerns at project sites should be addressed by State Governments and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The security protection provided by Tripura Government at rail project sites is exemplary and worth emulating. Issues of providing security, forest clearances, land acquisition are leading to 'wastage of capacity'. Therefore, the State Government would resolve these issues expeditiously.
7. A special Meeting on rail projects in Meghalaya and Nagaland will be organized in Shillong/ Kohima.
8. All State capitals need to be connected by rail. In cases where the rail links are being terminated short of the capital such as Jiribam to Tupul (Imphal), Dimapur to Zubza (Kohima), Sivok to Rangpo (Gangtok) the Railways should conduct feasibility studies for extending the railway links upto the State capitals.
9. A special session on 'Look East Policy' needs to be organized by Ministry of DoNER.
