

**Hon'ble Union Minister Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar ji,
Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Railways Shri R. Velu
ji, Distinguished Members of the North Eastern Council,
Officials from the Government of India, N.E.C., State
Governments and Friends,**

I am happy to participate at this 6th Sectoral Summit on Rail Connectivity in the North Eastern Region organized by the North Eastern Council & the Ministry of DONER at New Delhi. Under the able leadership of our Hon'ble Union Minister of DONER & Chairman, N.E.C, we have held Five important Summits pertaining to the sectors of (1) Power; (2) Roads; (3) Irrigation, Flood Control & Inland Water Transport; (4) Tourism and (5) Civil Aviation. We hope the resolutions are meaningfully translated in action at the earliest.

I am grateful to Shri R. Velu, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Railways for his presence to appreciate the problems of Rail connectivity in the North East.

As of date there is no railway line in Meghalaya. It is well known that Rail connectivity is important to give impetus to the economic activities. The North Eastern Region possess immense natural resources to become a vibrant economic hub of our nation, but for certain infrastructural constraints affecting the region as a whole. Poor rail connectivity in this frontier region is one of the major constraints. I would suggest at the very beginning that in view of poor connectivity of railway in the

region, all projects in the North Eastern Region should be declared as National project with a definite time frame and allocation of fund to complete the same.

With the objective of connecting all N.E. State Capitals by Railway, as reiterated at the 54th NEC meeting in Aizawl, I would like to reiterate that Meghalaya should be comprehensively covered under railway network as we have three distinct hill regions namely Garo Hills , Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills region which can be approached for railway lines from different locations in Assam.

I would like to put a few points to place before the Summit for discussions and consideration by the NEC/Ministry of DoNER/Ministry of Railways for inclusion in the perspective plan for railway in the region:

1. Azara - Byrnihat: The proposed Railway line between Azara in Assam and Byrnihat in Meghalaya which is 30.5 Kms. long will terminates at Byrnihat, a small industrial township of Ri Bhoi District by the side of NH-40 about 75 Kms. from Shillong the State Capital of Meghalaya.

The four proposed stations in the proposed new line are indicated below:

Sl. No.	Name of Station	Distance from take off point	Inter distances	Class	Facilities provided
1.	New Azara	0.50 Km.	0.00	'B'	3 lines
2.	Basistha	14.50 Km.	14.00	'D'	2 lines
3.	Hatimara	20.250 Km.	5.750	'B'	Single line

4.	Byrnihat	29.900 Km.	9.650	'B'	3 lines
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The proposal was included in budget 2006-07. But no time-frame has been indicated for commencement and completion. Ministry of Railways may kindly indicate a definite time-frame for sanction, initiation and completion of the project.

2. Railway line on Depa-Sarangma: The construction of the railway line extension from Dudhnoi in Assam to Depa-Sarangma in Meghalaya had earlier been sanctioned by the Ministry of Railways, Government of India. Subsequently, the State Government had requested the Railway Authorities to survey the possibility of locating the Railway head at Mendipathar instead of Depa-Sarangma as there is an Industrial Estate at Mendipathar and the alignment of railway line may not have to run through congested localities/areas. Due to some local difficulty, the location and alignment needs to be fine tuned with requirements of people's objections. The State Government would request the Railway Ministry to re-survey the line taking it through the outskirts of the town avoiding residential plots and paddy fields for the interest of the citizens. This needs to be expedited.

3. In line with the decision of the NEC to connect all the NE State Capitals by Railway and also considering the regional dispersal of three distinct people in hill areas namely the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills regions, the State of Meghalaya would

like to request the Ministry of Railways to consider sanction of the survey of the following Railway lines:

- I) Construction of Railway line from Bynihat axis up to Shillong via Nongpoh, Umsning and Umiam (Meghalaya).
- II) Construction of Railway line from Jogighopa (Assam) to Tikrikilla, Phulbari, Garobadha, Ampati, ZikZak, Purakhasia, and up to Dalu in West Garo Hills (Meghalaya).
- III) Construction of Railway line from the Silchar axis (Assam) to Jowai in Jaintia Hills District (Meghalaya).

4. I hope that the deliberations and decisions of this august House would be fruitful for the benefit of the people of the North East. We must find out ways and means to ensure the inter-connectivity of the North Eastern States within and outside through comprehensive railway network.

I would like to thank you once again for having given me this opportunity to place my views before this august gathering.

THANK YOU

JAI HIND