Subject: Proposal from Ministry of Railways regarding declaration of 19 rail sections in North-East as Strategic Lines.

Ministry of Railways may kindly refer to their O.M. No. 2013/W1/NFR/Strategic Lines dated 25th November 2013 and D.O. Letter dated 16th September 2014 from Addl Member (Works) to Defence Secretary on the above mentioned subject.

2. In this connection it is stated that the matter has been considered in Ministry of Defence in consultation with Dte Gen of Ops Lgs & Strat Mov, AHQ. It has been observed that these 19 rail sections in the North East are not part of 14 Strategic Railways Lines proposed/approved by MoD, and are out of purview of the Armed Forces. These lines have associated fund/revenue related issues and do not directly support (other than Bogibeel Bridge & Line Sevok-Rangpo) Army's strategic requirements.

3. Therefore, it may not be possible for Ministry of Defence to declare these 19 rail sections as strategic lines as proposed by M/o Railways.

(Raj Kumar)
Director (Q)
Tele No. 23011372

To,

Shri V.K. Jain
Addl. Member (Works)
Ministry of Railways
Rail Bhawan, New Delhi
D.O. No. 2013/WI/NFR/Strategic Lines

September 16, 2014

Dear Shri Mathur,

Sub: Declaration of 19 rail sections in northeast as Strategic Lines

Ref: Railway Board’s O.M. of even number dt. 29.07.13 & 25.11.13

Indian Railway is operating and maintaining large length of Railway lines in Northeast region. Due to geological problems it is a very difficult and costly task to maintain these lines in safe and efficient manner. Most of these lines are financially unviable and Indian Railway is not only losing heavily on operational costs but the Railway is forced to pay dividends on the amount spent for construction of these lines. It is becoming difficult to sustain this. Therefore, a proposal was sent to you vide above referred letters to declare 19 lines as strategic lines which are very important for movement of defense personnel in the region. This will also exempt Railways from payment of dividends as well as reimbursement of operating losses. More than one year has passed but nothing has been heard from your side. It is, therefore, requested to kindly expedite the same.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(V.K. Jain)

Shri Radha Krishna Mathur,
Defence Secretary,
101, South Block,
New Delhi.

Copy to: (i) ED/Project Monitoring for information and necessary action. The subject may kindly be taken up in the next Coordination Committee meeting.

(ii) Adviser Fin(X) for information.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)

No. 2013/WI/NFR/Strategic Lines

New Delhi, dated: 3.11.2013

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Sub: Declaration of 19 rail sections in northeast as Strategic Lines.

Ref: Railway Board’s O.M. of even number dated 29.07.2013.

Vide Railway Board’s O.M. under reference above (copy enclosed), proposal for 19 lines proposed as strategic in nature giving full details, has been sent to your office seeking approval of MoD. Being strategic in nature these lines qualify for exemption of payment of dividend as well as reimbursement of operating losses. While National Projects under construction are yet to be completed but ‘in principle’ approval to treat them as Strategic Lines will enable Railways to its better planning and clear accountal.

Treating these lines as Strategic Lines, approval of Ministry of Defence is still awaited. General Manager, Northeast Frontier Railway vide his DO No. B/General/2012-13(Loose) dated 29.10.2013 (copy enclosed) has requested Railway Board that this issue be pursued with MoD & MoF so that NFR is compensated for the strategic nature of its operations.

May I request you to kindly expedite the approval of MoD on above issue.

DA: As above.

(V.P. Dudeja)
Executive Director (Works)

Shri Radha Krishna Mathur,
Defence Secretary,
101, South Block,
New Delhi.

Copy to General Manager, N.F. Railway, Maligaon, Guwahati for information.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)

NO.2013/W1/NFR/Strategic Lines

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Declaration of 19 rail sections in northeast as Strategic Lines.

Indian Railways undertake construction of newlines as well as gauge conversion and doubling projects on several considerations including strategic reasons. Such rail links not only benefit the States through which they pass in terms of economy and tourism but also facilitate fast movement of men and material in times of natural calamity and meet defense needs. As the construction and operation of these lines is not on commercial considerations, it results in operational losses. Taking note of this compulsion, Government has agreed to reimburse operating losses to Indian Railways on six such rail sections in various parts of the country including Punjab, Gujarat, Northeast and Rajasthan in addition to waiver of dividend payable by Railways into General Revenues.

2. A Note on Strategic Lines in the Northeast Region is placed at Annexure-I.

3. While only six sections have been notified as Strategic Lines currently, railways continue to construct and operate several more sections on essentially strategic considerations. Rangpara-Mukongslek and Siliguri-Jogighopa sections of Northeast Frontier Railway were classified as strategic lines earlier. However, four sections, as detailed in Para 3(i), (ii) and (iii) of Annexure-I which are offshoots of these lines and were constructed purely for strategic reasons, are yet to be classified as strategic lines. Further, four MG/BG sections of Northeast Frontier Railway which are in close proximity to the international border as detailed in Para 3(iv) to (vii) of the Annexure and eleven sections of National Projects under execution, as detailed in Para 3(viii) to (xvi), which have also been taken up on strategic considerations to improve connectivity in Northeast region need to be classified as strategic lines.

4. All the above proposed 19 lines are strategic in nature, as explained in detail in the Annexure, and hence they qualify for exemption of payment of dividend as well as reimbursement of operating losses. While National Projects under construction are yet to be completed but 'in principle' approval to treat them as Strategic Lines will enable better planning and clear account.

5. Ministry of Defence is accordingly requested to convey their approval for treating these lines as Strategic.

Encl: As above

[Signature]
Additional Member (Works)
Railway Board

Shri Radha Krishna Mathur,
Defence Secretary,
101, South Block,
New Delhi

(29-07-2013)
Annexure I

Subject: Strategic Lines in the Northeast Region

1. Presently, following six operational lines only have been categorized as strategic railway lines on Indian Railways:

   (i) Pathankot-Mukerian (Northern Railway)
   (ii) Rangapara North Lakhimpur-Murkongselek (Northeast Frontier Railway)
   (iii) Siliguri-Jogighopa including BG conversion of Siliguri-Haldibari (Northeast Frontier Railway)
   (iv) Jaisalmer-Pokaran (North-Western Railway)
   (v) Bhatinda-Suratgarh (North-Western Railway)
   (vi) Bhuj-Naliya (Western Railway)

2. Apart from the above, there are other lines which are located in the border areas and serving the strategic needs of Defence and Paramilitary forces. Some of the projects have been taken up as National Projects from strategic point of view in the northeast region. Indian Railways is maintaining these services essentially for strategic reasons despite steep operating losses.

3. The details of these sections/projects are discussed below.

   i.  Rangpara-Tezpur (26 km) and Balipara-Bhalukpong (34 km) are branch lines taking off from strategically declared Rangpara-Murkongselek section and form part of this strategic line but were inadvertently left out while classifying strategic lines.

   ii. Siliguri-Jogighopa including Siliguri-Haldibari converted section has already been categorized as strategic line, but the double line part section of Samuktala-New Bongaigaon (127 km) and New Jalpaiguri-Ambari Falakata (8 km) sections are yet to be declared as strategic.

   iii. Senchoa-Silghat (71.37 km) : This meter gauge section was long abandoned by Railways but has been restored and converted into
BG purely for strategic purposes with contribution from Ministry of Defence as a Deposit Work. Section has been opened for Traffic in April, 2009 and is primarily serving Defence requirements.

iv. Katihar-Jogbani section is 146.24 TKM long connecting Nepal border. This single line BG section is opened recently and carries predominantly only passenger traffic. Since this line connects international border with Nepal, is considered strategically important.

v. Barsoi-Radhikapur Section is 74.33 TKM long connecting the Bangladesh border on western side and used predominantly for passenger traffic. The expenditure on this single line BG section is approx. Rs.45.41 crore per year against the approximate earnings of Rs.8.50 crore and therefore resulting in a net loss of Rs.36.91 crore per year.

vi. Eklakhi-Balurghat Section is a single line BG section of 96.61 TKM connecting Bangladesh border taking off from Katihar-Malda Section. This line serves the traffic moving from India into Bangladesh and is strategically located for security/safety considerations. The annual expenditure of this section is Rs 59 crore against approximate earnings of Rs.1.01 crore, resulting in a net operational loss of Rs.57.99 crore.

vii. Alipurdur-New Coochbehar-Bamanhat Section is single line BG section connecting Bangladesh border on northern side, over 80.26 TKM. This is predominantly passenger traffic section close to international border. The annual expenditure on this section is Rs.49.0 crore against the approximate earnings of Rs.21.90 crore resulting in a net operating loss of Rs.27.10 crore.

Ongoing strategic National Projects in Northeast region

viii. Lumding-Silchar gauge conversion National Project is presently in advance stage of execution and is planned to be completed by December, 2014 and is located all along international border and provides vital connectivity to South Assam besides being the only linkage line for Tripura-Mizoram and Manipur. After conversion, the line will predominantly be used for strategic reasons. Project
covers three sections and considering the strategic importance of these sections, it is proposed to be included as strategic lines. Details of these sections are:

a. Lumding-Badarpur Jn - Karimganj-Mahishashan section of Assam towards Bangladesh border (eastern side). The section Mahishashan is on Bangladesh eastern border. Total TKM of this section is 286.17. This section connects Lumding with Cachar in south Assam through the North Cachar hills. The section is at present Meter Gauge and is under conversion to Broad gauge at an anticipated cost of Rs.2500 crore as National Project. It will not be out of place to mention here that this is the only Railway line to connect three States of Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur with the Indian Railways and any disruption in services leads to severe constraints besides isolating these areas completely with the nation. In absence of proper roads in this region, the Railway line has become strategically important for movement of troops/paramilitary forces to combat insurgency in this region which is marked with frequent disturbances. Even at present, rail services are being run under heavy security and patrolling with on-board bunkers on trains to protect them. Hence this section is recommended for inclusion as strategic line which incurs annual losses of about Rs 150 crore.

b. Karimganj-Dharmanagar-Kumaraghat-Manu Agartala section: This 240.65 TKM section is in continuation of above section, which is running on eastern side of Bangladesh border. The section is MG line, and the first line to link Tripura state with Indian Railway system. In fact, Kumaraghat-Agartala section is opened only last year. The line runs very close to Bangladesh border on long stretches and is the only mode to move forces/goods to the strategic locations. At present, the line is incurring a recurring loss of Rs.136.73 crore per annum. Since the line runs almost parallel to the international border, it is considered a strategic line for the country.

c. Baraigram-Dullabchar (Off Karimganj-Dharmanagar section): This is a small MG section of 52.17 TKM and an integral part of the section mentioned at (b) above. The expenditure of this section is approx. Rs.31.87 cr. and the approximate earnings from
this section is only Rs.0.7 cr. per year and thus incurring a net loss of about Rs.31.80 crore per year. This spur is south of Cachar in Assam and Bangladesh border and cannot be isolated, hence considered strategic.

ix. **Bogibeel Bridge:** It is a National Project across river Brahmaputra along with linking of lines between Dibrugarh on South Bank with Rangiya-Murkongselek North Bank line (73 km). Latest anticipated cost of this project is Rs 4,996 crore and expenditure of Rs.2760 crore has been incurred up to March, 2013. Project is planned for completion by December, 2015. Bogibeel bridge is considered strategically very import project as it will provide alternate route to North Bank line via South Bank and Bogibeel and will virtually mean doubling of Rangiya-Murkongselek section which is running all along North Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Bridge will also facilitate logistic movement across Brahmaputra in strategically important Northeast region. During review meetings by DGMO and in Central Permanent Coordination (CPCF) emphasis is given for early completion of Bogibeel which is considered most important ongoing National Project. It is therefore, proposed to include Bogibeel bridge with linking lines (73 km) as strategic line. These lines will provide connectivity from Muralghat on South Bank to Sisibargaon on North Bank.

x. **Jiribam-Imphal:** Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal (125 km) new line national project will provide connectivity to Capital of Manipur. Project is located adjoining international border and is important from strategic considerations especially in light of poor road infrastructure in that area. State/National highways in that area are frequently blocked by various extremist organizations and new line will provide a continuous and reliable mode of transportation. Anticipated cost of the project is Rs 4,478 crore and Rs 1,230 crore have already been incurred up to March, 2013. Project is planned to be completed by March, 2017.

xi. **Dimapur-Kohima New Line** – Dimapur-Zubza (Kohima) (88 km) new line national project will provide connectivity to the Capital of Nagaland which is not only disturbed area but is also strategically important located near international border. Road network in this
area is also inadequate and BG Railway line will provide continuous and reliable mode of transport.

xii. **Teteliya-Byrnihat (21 km)** - Presently, border state of Meghalaya is not having any rail network. Project has been taken up to provide connectivity to capital of Meghalaya as National Project since Meghalaya is also a border state and strategically important. As part of this connectivity, Teteliya-Byrnihat (21 km) new line has been taken up as National Project. Anticipated cost of this project is Rs.385 crore and expenditure of Rs.153 crore has been incurred upto March’13. Project is planned to be completed by March’15.

xiii. **Byrnihat-Shillong new line (108 km)** is a National Project and will provide connectivity to capital of Meghalaya which is strategically important border state. Project is presently delayed due to opposition by Khasi Students Union due to which target date for completion has not been fixed. Anticipated cost of the project is Rs.4,083 crore.

xiv. **Bhairabi-Sairang new line (51 km)** new line has been taken up to provide connectivity in border state of Mizoram. Sairang will be the nearest Railway point to capital of Mizoram i.e. Aizwal. This project will provide important connectivity to strategically located Mizoram state having international border with two countries. Anticipated cost of this project is Rs.2,393 crore and project is in preliminary stages of land acquisition/forestry clearance. Project is planned to be completed by March, 2017.

xv. **Agartala-Sabroom (110 km)** new line National Project will augment Railway network in strategically located border state of Tripura. Network of Indian Railway with Bangladesh Railway is also being developed through Agartala-Akhaura link and on completion, will provide much shorter route to Tripura and other states of N.E. Region. Anticipated cost of Agartala-Sabroom is Rs.1142 crore and expenditure of Rs.498 crore has been incurred on this project. Project is targeted for completion by Dec.’15.

xvi. **Sivok-Rangpo** new line: Presently, Sikkim which is strategically very important and sharing borders with three countries is not having any rail connectivity. Sivok-Rangpo (44 km) new line
national project will provide this missing rail connectivity to strategically important areas of Sikkim. Further, proposal to extend line up to Gangtok is also under consideration. Anticipated cost of sanctioned Sivok-Rangpo project is Rs 3,358 crore and presently, preliminary activities have been taken up.

****
(A) Six operational lines categorized as strategic railway lines on Indian Railways

1. Pathankot-Mukerian (Northern Railway)
2. Rangapara-North Lakhimpur-Murkongselek (Northeast Frontier Railway)
3. Siliguri-Jogighopa including BG conversion of Siliguri-Haldibari (Northeast Frontier Railway)
4. Jaisalmer-Pokaran (North Western Railway)
5. Bhatinda-Suratgarh (North Western Railway)
6. Bhuj-Naliya (Western Railway)

(B) Strategic Lines in the Northeast Region

1. Rangpara-Tezpur (26 km)
2. Balipara-Bhalukpong (34 km)
3. Samuktala-New Bongaigaon (127 km) and New Jalpaiguri-Ambari Falakata (8 km)
4. Senchoa-Silghat (71.37 km)
5. Katihar-Jogbani section (146.24 km)
6. Barsoi-Radhikapur Section (74.33 km)
7. Eklakhi-Balurghat Section (96.61 km)
8. Alipurduar-New Coochbehar-Bamanhat Section (80.26 km)
9. Lumding-Badarpur Jn-Karimganj-Mahishashan section (286.17 km)
10. Karimganj-Dharamnagar-Kumarghat-Manu Agartala section (240.65 km)
11. Baraigram-Dullabhar (Off Karimganj-Dharmanagar section) (52.17 km)
12. Bogibeel Bridge along with link lines (73 km)
13. Jiribam-Imphal (125 km)
14. Dimapur-Kohima New Line (88 km)
15. Teteliya-Byrnihat (21 km)
16. Byrnihat-Shillong new line (108 km)
17. Bhaireabi-Sairang new line (51 km)
18. Agartala-Sabroom (110 km)
19. Sivok-Rangpo (44 km)