

FIFTY-FOURTH REPORT

COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

(SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA)

**MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)**

(Presented to Lok Sabha on 3.8.2018)



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**COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS
(2017-2018)**

Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari -*Chairperson*

MEMBERS

2. Shri Suresh C. Angadi
3. Shri Om Birla
4. Shri Jitendra Chaudhury
5. Shri Ram Tahal Choudhary
6. Dr. K. Gopal
7. Shri C.P. Joshi
8. Shri Chhedi Paswan
9. Shri Kamlesh Paswan
10. Shri Arjun Charan Sethi
11. Shri Kodikunnil Suresh
12. Shri Dinesh Trivedi
13. Shri Rajan Vichare
14. Shri Dharmendra Yadav
15. Vacant

SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. Shri Shiv Kumar | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. Shri Raju Srivastava | - | Additional Director |
| 3. Shri G.C. Dobhal | - | Deputy Secretary |
| 4. Shri Anand Kumar Hansda | - | Executive Assistant |

(iii)

FIFTY-FOURTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

(SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA)

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Committee on Petitions, having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Fifty-Fourth Report (Sixteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee to the House on the representation received from Shri Jiten Sundi and others and forwarded by Shri Jitendra Chaudhury, M.P., Lok Sabha regarding extension of broad gauge line to Tezpur Railway Station.

2. The Committee considered and adopted the draft Fifty-Fourth Report at their sitting held on 31 July, 2018.

3. The observations/recommendations of the Committee on the above matters have been included in the Report.

NEW DELHI;
31 July, 2018
9 Shrawana, 1940 (Saka)

BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI,
Chairperson,
Committee on Petitions.

(v)

REPORT

REPRESENTATION RECEIVED FROM SHRI JITEN SUNDI AND OTHERS AND FORWARDED BY SHRI JITENDRA CHAUDHURY, M.P., LOK SABHA REGARDING EXTENSION OF BROAD GAUGE LINE TO TEZPUR RAILWAY STATION.

Shri Jiten Sundi and others submitted a Representation forwarded by Shri Jitendra Chaudhury, M.P., Lok Sabha regarding extension of Broad Gauge line to Tezpur Railway Station. (**Annexure-I**).

2. Shri Jiten Sundi and others, in their Representation, *inter alia* submitted:-

- (i) *Tezpur Railway Station is almost 120 years old. Since 1895, it has been functioning under a British Company in the name and style of Tezpur Balipara Light Railway (TBLR), however, in the year 1952, it was handed over to Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) free of cost and since then it is functioning under NFR.*
- (ii) *It serves as an important link for the people living in north bank of river Brahmaputra and neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh. Besides becoming a part and parcel of social life of Tezpur and an important contributor to the economy of the region, it has played its strategic role during Chinese aggression in 1962.*
- (iii) *In the year 2009, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) initiated the gauge conversion work, from Medium Gauge to Broad Gauge, in the region. From Rangapara to Dekargaon, the work of gauge conversion was completed by the year 2014 and subsequently railway service was started up to Dekargaon. However, the gauge conversion was not extended till the Tezpur Railway Station, which is merely 8 kms away.*
- (iv) *The present Tezpur Railway Station is situated at a convenient location for the commuters and therefore, shifting the Station to Dekargaon would cause unnecessary inconvenience to them. Besides, the Station is equipped like a modern railway station with its existing infrastructure and also holds a historical legacy.*

3. In this regard, the Representationists had alleged connivance between some Railway officials and businessmen for their vested interest to grab the railway land

and property in the area, as a reason for not extending the Broad Gauge Railway line till Tezpur. The Representationists had, therefore, sought the intervention of the Committee on the matter and requested to examine the instant case in detail.

4. While forwarding the instant Representation of Shri Jiten Sundi and others, Shri Jitendra Chaudhury, M.P., Lok Sabha stated that on his visit to Tezpur on 30 December, 2014, he had interacted with a group of people, comprising of veteran Doctors, Lawyers, Academicians, Retired Judges, Sports Persons, Artists and Traders etc., who had strongly expressed their anguish for not linking Tezpur Railway Station with Broad Gauge line, which is causing immense inconvenience to the city population, and therefore, requested Hon'ble Chairperson, Committee on Petitions, Lok Sabha for taking cognizance of the matter.

5. The Committee took up the Representation for examination under Direction 95 of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha. Accordingly, the Representation received from Shri Jiten Sundi and others and forwarded by Shri Jitendra Chaudhury, M.P., Lok Sabha was forwarded to the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) for furnishing their initial comments on the issues raised therein.

6. Clarifying on the issues raised in the Representation, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply *vide* their Office Memorandum No. 2010/W-I/Genl./Petitions Committee dated 11 June, 2015 submitted:-

"The Gauge Conversion of Rangapara North to Tezpur was sanctioned as part of Gauge Conversion Project of Rangiya - Rangapara North - Murkongselek at a cost of Rs. 3019.17 crores. The Project has been completed. The project initially sanctioned was for the Gauge Conversion of entire stretch from Rangapara to Tezpur. In order to realize full potential of Broad Gauge line and to overcome the severe constraint in Tezpur Yard (present yard could accommodate only 9 coaches) land had to be acquired for easing of curves and yard remodeling of Tezpur yard in densely populated residential area. Furthermore, encroachments on existing Railway land had also to be removed. Acquisition of land and removal of encroachments required active support and involvement of District administration. Due to persistent demand of the District Administration to terminate the Railway line at Dekargaon, Railways could not proceed further.

Ever since the sanction of the Gauge conversion projects in 2003-04, District Administration has been demanding termination of railway line at Dekargaon and remove the Rail Track between Dekargaon and Tezpur to facilitate construction of a wider and better main approach road to Tezpur town and construction of an Inter District Bus Terminus at the existing location of the Tezpur Railway Station subsequent to the shifting of the Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon. This demand of District Administration has been reiterated by Government of Assam.

Details of such correspondences by District Administration and Government of Assam are as under:-

- (i) Deputy Commissioner/Sonitpur, Tezpur's letter No. SMJ. 25/2002/1401, dated 24.8.2004. **(Annexure-II)**.*
- (ii) Deputy Commissioner/Sonitpur, Tezpur vide letter No. DC/PA.II/2010/387 dated 13.12.2010 requested Principal Secretary, Government of Assam, Transport Department, to ask Railway Ministry to terminate track at Dekargaon. **(Annexure-III)**.*
- (iii) Government of Assam vide letter No. TRY.15/85/Pt/181 dated 6.1.2011 addressed to General Manager, N.F. Railway reiterated the recommendation of Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur. **(Annexure-IV)***

Accordingly, Gauge conversion work has been carried out upto Dekargaon and Railway line has been terminated and terminal facilities were developed at Dekargaon. Work has been completed and opened for passenger traffic in January, 2014."

7. In the meantime, the Committee decided to undertake a Study Visit to Guwahati, Kolkata and Port Blair from 3 to 8 May, 2017, wherein, it was also decided to hold an informal discussion with the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) at Guwahati on 3 May, 2017 to have a realistic assessment of the issues raised by the Representationists and the action taken/proposed to be taken by the concerned Authorities of Indian Railways.

8. During the Study Visit, the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) again reiterated their position as deposed during their oral evidence taken by the Committee on 12 June, 2016. The representatives of the Ministry of

Railways (Railway Board) informed the Committee that the Gauge Conversion of Rangapara North to Tezpur was sanctioned as part of Gauge Conversion Project of Rangiya - Rangapara North - Murkongselek at a cost of Rs.3019.17 crore, which has already been completed. The representatives further informed that the project initially sanctioned was for the Gauge Conversion of entire stretch from Rangapara to Tezpur, however, in order to realize full potential of Broad Gauge line and to overcome the severe constraint in Tezpur Yard, which presently could accommodate only 9 coaches, land had to be acquired for easing of curves and yard remodelling of Tezpur yard in densely populated residential area; furthermore, encroachments on existing Railway land had also to be removed. The representatives, thereafter, also informed that acquisition of land and removal of encroachments required active support and involvement of District administration, however, due to persistent demand of the District Administration to terminate the Railway line at Dekargaon, Railways could not proceed further.

9. Elaborating further on the issue of terminating Railway line at Dekargaon, the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) informed the Committee that, ever since the sanction of the Gauge conversion projects in 2003-04, District Administration of Sonitpur, has been demanding termination of Railway line at Dekargaon and removal of rail track between Dekargaon and Tezpur, to facilitate construction of a wider and better main approach road to Tezpur town and construction of an Inter-District Bus Terminus at the existing location of the Tezpur Railway Station, subsequent to the shifting of the Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon. The representatives also informed that this demand of District Administration has also been reiterated by the Government of Assam through their various correspondences to the Railways.

10. Thereafter, the Committee were apprised of the fact that Gauge conversion work has been carried out up to Dekargaon, where the Railway line has been terminated and terminal facilities were developed at Dekargaon. The representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) informed the Committee that the relevant work has been completed and the Station was opened for passenger traffic in January, 2014. The representatives of the Ministry further informed that, a new Broad Gauge line project from Tezpur – Silighat (25 km) has been included in the

Budget 2017-18, at a cost of Rs. 2025 crore subject to requisite Government approvals.

11. On being enquired about the specific reasons and the latest position as obtaining in regard to shifting of Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon, the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) informed the Committee that, while the Gauge Conversion Project of Rangiya - Rangapara - Murkongselek Gauge Conversion Project of Rangiya - Rangapara North - Murkongselek was in progress various representations and memoranda were received from various individuals/organizations/public authorities/MPs and local MLA for shifting of Tezpur Station to Dekargaon, during the period from 2004 to 2011. The representatives of the Ministry further informed that, consequently, Gauge Conversion work was executed up to Dekargaon and Dekargaon Station has been developed as Terminal Station with Goods and Coaching facilities; following that, Train services from Dekargaon have commenced since January, 2014.

12. The Committee, thereafter, desired to know the broad reasons owing to which the Government of Assam adopted a resolution on 13 June, 2014 for shifting of Tezpur Railway Station, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

“The said resolution was adopted at a meeting convened by Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur. The District Administration has elaborated the following reasons for proposing to shift Tezpur Railway Station:-

- (i) The present Tezpur Railway station is not located in the centre of the Town but is situated in the southern most corner of Tezpur town on the bank of river Brahmaputra;*
- (ii) The purpose for which the Railway station by the British Company on the banks of river Brahmaputra has not been able to serve their purpose at present. At that time road communication network in the northern bank was not as developed as today. Hence, steamer services were the main mode of transportation in those days. The company selected the present location of Railway station for the purpose of transportation of tea, jute etc. though steamer services. As road communication has improved considerably and the steamer*

services in no longer in vogue, the station is no longer is required at the bank of river Brahmaputra;

- (iii) The existing Railway lines runs parallel to PWD road over a long distance with level crossing at important and crowded locality which is a major impediment for planned development of the town;*
- (iv) There are above 25 unauthorized Railway crossings within a stretch of 5 KM;*
- (v) The Goods services of Rangapara – Tezpur section, centres around Defence and FCI requirements which are situated around Dekargaon Railway Station;*
- (vi) Air Force Station and Tezpur airport are also near Dekargaon; and*
- (vii) If Tezpur Railway station is not shifted, several flyovers will have to be constructed.*

Further, the aspect of shifting of Tezpur Railway station to Dekargaon was to facilitate construction of better main road to Tezpur Town and construct an Inter-District Bus Terminus at the location of Tezpur Railway Station.”

13. On being specifically enquired as to whether it is a fact that Gauge Conversion between Dekargaon and Tezpur undertaken by the Railways was put on hold due to the intervention of the Government of Assam, the representatives the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

“The Gauge Conversion project was initially sanctioned up to Tezpur Railway Station, however, due to the intervention of Government of Assam, various public organizations and resolution of Tezpur Municipal Board, the work between Dekargaon and Tezpur was not executed.”

14. The Committee, thereafter, desired to know as to whether the proposal mooted by the Government of Assam in the year, 2004 for the construction of a wider and better main approach road, and an Inter-District Bus Terminus at the existing location of Tezpur Railway station, etc., has since been implemented, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

“The proposal for permanent closure of Railway line from Dekargaon to Tezpur has been approved by the Railway Board on 23.11.2016, however, formal notification has not been issued as Railway Board has directed the concerned authority to obtain consent of Government of Assam to take the land at market rate.

In this connection, Deputy Commissioner, Tezpur, District Sonitpur, Assam had already been approached vide letter No. W/214/Vacant Land/DGTB-TZTB/RNY/W-4 dated 12.07.2016 to communicate consent for taking over the vacant Railway land between Dekargaon – Tezpur section (7.14 KM), i.e. approx 16.6 acres for infrastructure development of Tezpur Town, at current market rates, however, response from the District Administration is still awaited.

After getting the consent of Government of Assam, necessary action will be taken for permanent closure and dismantle the railway line.

Construction of wider main approach road to Tezpur Town and Inter-District Bus Terminus at the location of Tezpur Railway Station, could be taken up after completion of the due process involved.”

15. On being categorically enquired by the Committee as to whether the District Administration apprehended 'major outburst of public resentment' in case Gauge Conversion was extended beyond Dekargaon up to Tezpur, besides the demands made by leading citizens/NGOs on infrastructure development in Sonitpur District for terminating the Gauge Conversion work at Dekargaon, the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

“Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur, vide letter No.SCM/35/2010-11/721 dated 17.10.2011 addressed to Principal Chief Secretary, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam has stated that the Railways have taken up the Gauge Conversion up to Dekargaon and if the same work is extended to Tezpur Railway Station, there is every likelihood of major outburst of public resentment”.

16. On the aspect of proposal of the Government of Assam with regard to the shifting of Railway Station from Tezpur to Dekargaon, the Committee were informed by the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) that, on the basis

of resolution adopted at meeting convened by Divisional Commissioner, North Assam Division, Tezpur on 13.06.2004, the Railway station was to be shifted from Tezpur to Dekargaon. Further, on the aspect of proposal of the Government of Assam with regard to the termination of Gauge Conversion at Dekargaon, the representatives of the Ministry informed that Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur, *vide* letter No. DC/PA.II/2010/387 dated 13.12.2010 addressed to Principal Secretary, Transport Department, Government of Assam had forwarded the proposal for termination of Broad Gauge line at Dekargaon.

17. Thereafter, on the aspect of appearance of Tezpur, as a Railway Station in the list of Railway Stations brought out by the Indian Railways and its existence in the Railways Map/Directory, the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) informed the Committee that, presently, Tezpur Railway Station with Station code TZTB still figures in the Railway System Map even after Gauge Conversion has been opened up to Dekargaon in 2014, however, it would not appear in the list of Railway Stations neither will exist in the Railway System Map, after the formal notification of closure is issued on completion of the due process involved.

18. On being specifically questioned by the Committee as to whether the Government of Assam has re-visited their proposal of shifting of Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon and whether the said Government has already made any proposal or intend to propose requesting the Indian Railways to re-start the Gauge Conversion work between Dekargaon and Tezpur Railway Stations, the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) replied that the restoration of Tezpur Railway Station has been mooted by the Government of Assam, Hon'ble Representatives and various Public Organizations through various correspondences on the subject, during the period from 2014 to 2015.

19. The Committee, thereafter, specially desired to know as to whether the Government of Assam have also received request(s) for restoration of Tezpur Railway Station, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

“From the Representations made by the Public and submitted to the Government of Assam, it is evident that the Government of Assam have also received request for restoration of Tezpur Railway Station.

Northeast Frontier Railway has also observed that, the existing Railway lines run parallel to PWD road over a long distance with level crossing at important and crowded locality and there are more than 25 unauthorized Railway crossings within a stretch of 5 kms. between Dekargaon and Tezpur Stations. The Goods services of Rangapara – Tezpur section, centres around Defence and FCI requirements which are situated around Dekargaon Railway Station. Air Force Station and Tezpur Airport, which are also located in near Dekargaon. Extension of Broad Gauge Railway Line to Tezpur Station would involve construction of several Road Over Bridges.

A new line project, 'Tezpur – Silghat (25 KM)' has been sanctioned in the Works Programme, 2017-18, and as per Reconnaissance Engineering cum Traffic Survey Report, the proposed Railway line would be connecting the existing Broad Gauge Terminal at Dekargaon with Silghat. The alignment would be passing through the Eastern part of Tezpur Town. A new Railway station has been proposed on the North bank of river Brahmaputra, which is suitably located to serve the Railway users of Tezpur Town."

20. In the matter, the Committee, thereafter, took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) on 12 June, 2015.

21. During evidence, the Committee desired to know the specific reasons for non-completion of the Project vis-a-vis termination of Broad Gauge Line to Dekargaon. The representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), while reiterating their earlier position, submitted:-

"The Gauge Conversion of Rangapara North to Tezpur was sanctioned as part of Gauge Conversion Project of Rangiya - Rangapara North - Murkongselek at a cost of Rs.3019.17 crores. The project has been completed. While the work was in progress, Government of Assam vide their letter No. SMJ.25/2002/1401 dated 24.8.2004 submitted an extract copy of resolution adopted at meeting on 13.6.2004 for shifting of Tezpur Railway station.

The resolution was passed in a meeting convened by Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur, Government of Assam attended by leading citizens/NGOs on

infrastructure development in Sonitpur District wherein it was requested to terminate railway line at Dekargaon and remove the rail track between Dekargaon and Tezpur to facilitate construction of a wider and better main approach road to Tezpur town and construction of an Inter District Bus Terminus at the existing location of the Tezpur Railway Station subsequent to the shifting of the Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon.

District Administration persisted with their demand. Vide letter No. DC/PA.II/2010/387 dated: 13.12.2010, Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur, Tezpur again requested Principal Secretary, Government of Assam, Transport Department, to ask Railway Ministry to terminate track at Dekargaon. This was followed by recommendation of Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur based on the resolution of Tezpur Municipal Board, Tezpur Jana Manch and representation from Tezpur Chamber of Commerce and student bodies in October, 2011. Government of Assam vide letter No. TRY.15/85/Pt/181 dated 6.1.2011 addressed to General Manager, North Frontier Railway reiterated the recommendation of Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur."

22. The Committee, then, specifically desired to know about the progress made, so far on the Broad Gauge Line Conversion Project to Tezpur, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

"The Gauge Conversion work has been terminated at Dekargaon based on the resolutions of various bodies and organizations forwarded by Government of Assam. This was supported and recommended by the District Administration in the interest of people of Tezpur and development of fast expanding Tezpur town. Furthermore, the District Administration apprehended 'major outburst of public resentment' in case Gauge Conversion is extended beyond Dekargaon up to Tezpur.

23. On the aspect of shifting of Railway Station(s), the Committee specially enquired as to whether the Railways have shifted any existing Railway Station during the last 10 to 20 years from its original place, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

"Railways have not shifted any Railway Station in last 10 to 20 years. However, certain Stations have been closed down due to closure of uneconomical branch lines. So far, Indian Railway have closed down 21

uneconomical branch lines, of these two branch lines viz. Senchoa-Silghat and Haibergaon-Mainabari have been closed in Northeast Frontier Railway."

24. The Committee thereupon asked about the reasons for not giving an opportunity to the local populace to express their opinion on extension of Broad Gauge Line to Tezpur, the Ministry Railways (Railway Board), in their written reply, submitted:-

"The District Administration had recommended termination of the line at Dekargaon on the following grounds:-

- (i) The existing Railway Lines running parallel to the PWD road over a long distance with Level Crossing at important and crowded locality is a major impediment of planned development of the town.*
- (ii) There are over 25 unauthorized Level Crossings in stretch of 5 kms.*
- (iii) The goods services of Rangapara-Tezpur section centers around Defence and FCI requirements which are situated in and around Dekargaon Station. The Air Force Station and the Tezpur Airport is also situated near Dekargaon.*

In order to realize full potential of Broad Gauge line and to overcome the severe constraint in Tezpur Yard (present yard could accommodate only 9 coaches) land had to be acquired for easing of curves and yard remodeling of Tezpur yard in densely populated residential area. Due to persistent demand of the District Administration to terminate the Railway line at Dekargaon, Railways could not proceed further. Accordingly, Railway line has been terminated and terminal facilities were developed at Dekargaon. Work has been completed and opened for passenger traffic in January, 2014."

25. On being enquired by the Committee as to whether the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) had received requests from other stakeholders for not abandoning the existing Tezpur Railway Station, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in their written reply, submitted:-

"Representations from State Governments, various representatives and other organizations etc. are received at Divisional Offices, Zonal Offices and in the Ministry from time to time. As receipt of such proposals is a continuous and

dynamic process, compendium of such requests is not maintained. However, as per available records, two such requests have been received. One request has been received from Shri Ram Prasad Sarmah, Hon'ble Member of Parliament of Tezpur Parliamentary constituency, in June, 2014 (enclosing a letter of Public Interests Protection Committee, Tezpur) for extending the Broad Gauge line from Dekargaon to Tezpur on the ground of difficulties being faced by daily commuters and second request was received from Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Hon'ble Minister for Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India in September, 2014 (enclosing a letter of Public Interests Protection Committee, Tezpur) for extending the Broad Gauge line from Dekargaon to Tezpur on the ground of difficulties being faced by daily commuters requesting.

In view of the apprehension of the District Administration and their persistent demand for termination of Railway line at Dekargaon, reiterated by Government of Assam, Railway administration had no option but to terminate the railway line at Dekargaon."

26. Further, on being specifically asked by the Committee as to whether it was originally planned that rail tracks up to Tezpur Railway Station be converted into Broad Gauge line and whether the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) proposes to extend the Broad Gauge line up to Tezpur Railway Station, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

"The Project initially sanctioned was for the Gauge Conversion of entire stretch from Rangapara to Tezpur. The Gauge Conversion was carried out and converted only upto Dekargaon. Because of the representations by various organizations, bodies and the persistent demand by the District Administration during intervening period and other constraints such as acquiring of land for easing of curves and yard remodeling of Tezpur yard in a densely populated residential area etc., the Gauge Conversion could not be carried out beyond Dekargaon."

27. The Committee, thereafter, desired to know as to whether the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) have received Representations for introduction of Inter City Express to Tezpur, in view of the difficulties being faced by the common people of the area – while travelling to and fro Guwahati, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), in its written reply, submitted:-

"No representation for introducing Intercity Express to Tezpur has been received in the Ministry, till date."

28. The Committee further desired to know the specific reasons for not completing the conversion of Broad Gauge Line from Dekargaon to Tezpur Railway Station, the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) submitted:-

"They have no problem in completing the conversion of Broad Gauge Line upto Tezpur Railway Station. As a matter of fact, the District Administration and the State Government of Assam had requested the Ministry of Railways a number of times for terminating the conversion of Broad Gauge at Dekargaon Railway Station citing reasons of a massive outburst of public resentment. Therefore, the Railways discontinued the work of conversion of Broad Gauge Line between Dekargaon Railway Station and Tezpur Railway Station."

The witness further submitted:-

"Three prominent members of public had also filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Hon'ble High Court in this regard. Keeping in view the public outcry of that area, the Hon'ble High Court decided not to interfere in the matter."

29. In the matter, the Committee again took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) on 26 September, 2017. During the evidence, the the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) submitted before the Committee as under:-

- (i) *The Gauge Conversion of Rangapara North to Tezpur was sanctioned as part of Gauge Conversion Project of Rangiya - Rangapara North - Murkongselek at a cost of Rs.3019.17 crore in 2003-04. In order to realise full potential of Broad Gauge line and to overcome the severe constraint in Tezpur yard, land had to be acquired for easing of curves and yard re-modeling of Tezpur yard in densely populated residential area besides removal of encroachments on existing Railway land and put up boundary walls around new railway line during construction causing unnecessary inconvenience to public.*

- (ii) *After the decision taken by the Railway Board in 2016 to close the Dekargaon-Tezpur MG Railway line, the representations were received again to construct the railway Line in this sector. Accordingly, District Administration took a meeting with all stakeholders and citing various reasons/factors, it was decided that the Railway Line should be terminated at Dekargaon.*
- (iii) *Ever since the sanction of the Gauge conversion project in 2003-04, District Administration has been demanding termination of railway line at Dekargaon and remove the rail track between Dekargaon and Tezpur to facilitate construction of a wider and better main approach road to Tezpur town and construction of an Inter District Bus Terminus at the existing location of the Tezpur Railway Station subsequent to the shifting of the Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon. The request of District Administration forwarded by the State Government of Assam was acceded to by the Railways and the Gauge Conversion work were, accordingly, carried out upto Dekargaon and railway line has been terminated and terminal facilities were developed at Dekargaon and opened for passenger traffic in January, 2014.*
- (iv) *As per Committee's directions during the Study Visit on 03.05.2017 in Guwahati, an extensive survey of all aspects, by the N.F. Railway, was prepared and a self contained Report had been submitted to the Committee vide Letter No. Z/341/10/Committ. on Petitions/S/2017 dated 20.07.2017. The Report recommended that the decision of not extending line up to Tezpur Station is right, as it will result in several benefits viz., Tezpur Town Link can be widened to facilitate quicker movement of city road traffic to NH and to Dekargaon; would avoid acquisition of land and consequent sufferings to the owners; difficulties in acquisition of land and non-feasibility of extending the line across Brahmaputra; Railway land can be handed over to State government after paying at market rate for development of road network, etc., and Tezpur Station can be utilized for development of a City Bus Terminus and remaining land could be disposed of as per requirement of Railway; and, local road transport can easily cater with the wider link road having 3.5 Km distance from middle of Tezpur city to Dekargaon.*
- (v) *The Silghat Tezpur line will join at Dekargaon and also meet Goods Terminal demand at Dekargaon and, therefore, 7 km. line from*

Dekargaon to Tezpur will be a total drain on railway finance to a tune of around Rs.700 crore.

- (vi) The option of an elevated track on the lines of Metro Rail is also not feasible as it would involve more land to acquire as elevated type of track needs commencement of civil work covering 10 km. to cover present 3.5 km. distance. Similarly, underground option is not found as viable.*
- (vii) Another 22 km. Rail Line has already been sanctioned between Silghat and Dekargaon via Tezpur (outside) with an additional station before Dekargaon and it would be convenient to the locals.*

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Finalization of Detailed Project Report (DPR) with due diligence

30. The Committee note from the submissions made by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) that the Gauge Conversion from Rangapara North to Tezpur was sanctioned as part of Gauge Conversion Project of Rangiya - Rangapara North - Murkongselek at a cost of Rs. 3019.17 crore. The Committee also note that the said Project was initially sanctioned for the Gauge Conversion of entire stretch from Rangapara to Tezpur. In order to realize full potential of Broad Gauge line and to overcome the severe constraint in Tezpur Yard (*existing yard could accommodate only 9 Coaches*), additional land had to be acquired for easing of curves and remodeling of Tezpur yard in the densely populated residential area. Furthermore, encroachments on existing Railway land had also to be removed for which active support and involvement of District administration was required. However, due to persistent demand of the District Administration of Sonitpur to terminate the Railway line at Dekargaon, the Railways could not proceed further.

31. The Committee further note that ever since the sanction of the Gauge Conversion project in 2003-04, the District Administration of Sonitpur had been demanding termination of Railway Line at Dekargaon and remove the Rail Track between Dekargaon and Tezpur to facilitate construction of a wider and better main approach road to Tezpur town and construction of an Inter District Bus Terminus at the existing location of the Tezpur Railway Station subsequent to the shifting of the Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon. The proposal of the District Administration had also been reiterated by the Government of Assam.

32. While examining the instant Representation forwarded by Shri Jitendra Chaudhury, M.P., the Committee went through the extensive deliberations they had with the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) during oral evidence as well as during Study Visit of the Committee in June, 2016. The Committee are also aware of the fact that the Gauge Conversion of entire stretch from Rangapara North to Tezpur was not completed despite sanctioning of the Project owing to some Technical Constraints and persistent demand of the Local Administration of Sonitpur to terminate the Railway Line at Dekargaon. The Committee also take note of the fact that Representations from State Government of Assam, various public representatives and other organizations, etc., were received at the Divisional Offices, Zonal Offices and in the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) from time to time in regard to extension of Broad Gauge line up to Tezpur. One such request was also received from Shri Ram Prasad Sarmah, Member of Parliament of Tezpur Parliamentary Constituency for extending the Broad Gauge line from Dekargaon to Tezpur, primarily, on the grounds of difficulties being faced by daily commuters. Similar request was also received from Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, the *then* Minister for Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India in September, 2014.

33. Although there had been divergent views regarding termination of Railway Line at Dekargaon or extending the Broad Gauge line from Dekargaon to Tezpur, nevertheless, in this context, the Committee would like to categorically point out that before taking any Policy Decision in all such matters of public importance, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) should have taken into consideration not only the views of Local Administration and

sentiments of local populace but also operational requirements and topographical bottlenecks. In this regard, the Committee are well aware of the fact that sanctioning of Railway Projects are always preceded by formulation of a Detailed Project Reports (DPRs). However, in the instant case, the Committee are surprised to find that even after sanctioning of Gauge Conversion Project from Rangapara North to Tezpur by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), the Project had encompassed major midway changes, i.e., termination of Railway Line at Dekargaon. The Committee wish to express their displeasure over the unprofessional approach adopted by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) for not taking the aspect of sanctioning of said Project with due diligence it requires. The Committee, therefore, recommend that, in future, prior to sanctioning of any Railway Project in any region of the country, the DPRs should be formulated after taking into account the views/opinion of all the stakeholders. For this purpose, if required, a Public Notice, thereby, inviting views/suggestions of various stakeholders could be invited. The Committee would like the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) to take necessary action on these lines and apprise the Committee accordingly within three months of presentation of this Report to the House.

Alternate Connectivity from Dekargaon to Tezpur

34. The Committee note that ever since the sanction of the Gauge Conversion Project which was conceived way back in 2003-04, the District Administration had been demanding termination of railway line at Dekargaon and remove the Rail Track between Dekargaon and Tezpur to facilitate construction of a wider and better main approach road to Tezpur town and construction of an Inter District Bus Terminus at the existing location of the

Tezpur Railway Station subsequent to the shifting of the Tezpur Railway Station to Dekargaon.

35. The Committee are unhappy to note that the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) appears to be in a dilemma as to whether the Broad Gauge Conversion Project is to be confined to Dekargaon by dismantling the existing Tezpur Railway or the Project is to be extended from Rangapara North to Tezpur. The views of the Committee are further reinforced by the fact that the District Administration and the public representatives/other organizations have diametrically opposite views in extending or not extending the Broad Gauge Conversion Project to Dekargaon. However, in case, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) had shelved this Project, primarily, on the grounds of Technical Feasibility, the Committee do not consider this factor as a cogent reason in view of the fact that various technological advancements have recently been witnessed in the country in the field of Engineering, Civil Works and Urban Planning on the basis of which massive Projects have been executed within the most congested parts of urban agglomeration without even resorting to large scale relocation of houses/hutments, acquisition of land, etc.

36. Even though the Committee do not subscribe to the arguments put forward by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) to shelve the Project of dismantling the Tezpur Railway Station and shifting all the wherewithals to Dekargaon, the Committee are also not inclined to impress upon the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) to revive their earlier sanctioned Project of conversion of Broad Gauge Line to Tezpur. The moot point the Committee wish to emphasize is broadly confined to formulation of a working model for

developing an alternate route of connectivity from Dekargaon to Tezpur for the convenience of local populace. The Committee, therefore, urge the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) to take a final decision of either extending the Broad Gauge Line to Tezpur or scrapping the Project of extension of Railway Line from Dekargaon to Tezpur along with permanent dismantling of the Tezpur Railway Station. Concurrently, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) should also come forward with an alternate proposal of connectivity between Dekargaon and Tezpur, in consultation with the Government of Assam. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) in the matter.

Proposed Silghat - Tezpur - Dekargaon Railway Line

37. The Committee have also been given to understand that for the convenience of local populace, the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) had already sanctioned a new Broad Gauge Line project of 22 kilometres, with a Railway Bridge at river Brahmaputra, between Silghat and Dekargaon via Tezpur (outside) with an additional Station before Dekargaon. As a matter of fact, this Project was included in the Budget of 2017-18 at a cost of Rs. 2025 crore.

38. Though the Committee fully acknowledge with appreciation the initiative taken by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) for sanctioning a Project of connecting Silghat with Dekargaon via Tezpur (outside), yet the Committee feel that the Projects conceived and sanctioned by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) very often surpass the target date of completion. The Committee have observed that the even sufficient funds allocated for commencement of Railway Projects are not released on time due to which

there are cost overruns, avoidable litigations with the Contractor(s) and other technical problems not conceived at the planning stage. The Committee hope that the Project of connecting Silghat with Dekargoan *via* Tezpur (outside) would not going to encompass any such bottlenecks and the Project would be completed within the prescribed schedule. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken by the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) on this count as well separately within three months of presentation of this Report to the House.
