

and road facilities of the ports of Calcutta and Bombay were the first matters to receive their attention.

27. *Transportation by Rail and Road.*

Arrangements were made to increase the capacity of the Assam line of communication railways to 7,300 tons of military stores daily by the 1st January, 1946. This included doubling the line between Parbatipur and Ledo, building a bridge over the Brahmaputra between Amingaon and Pandu, and constructing a chord line between Namrup and Margherita.

The development of rail service to steamer landings on the Brahmaputra continued, but was subject to special hindrance by the monsoon. In particular, the bridging of the Kakila River (three 60 foot and two 20 foot spans) on the access line to the new river port Neamati (North of Jorhat on the Brahmaputra) suffered from monsoon floods.

Severe flooding prevented the completion of the Dohazari railhead by the target date of the 1st September. It has, however, now been completed. The works to increase the capacity of the railway between Dohazari and Chittagong were finished.

The bursting of the banks of the Damodar River on the 18th July and the consequent cutting of the main rail and road communications North-West of Calcutta have already been mentioned. As a result of these breaches, diversions of traffic had to be made. Two-thirds of the total Assam stores lift, and all traffic for East Bengal and Chittagong (with the exception of fifteen metre gauge wagon loads daily) was sent via Bombay and the sea routes to Calcutta or Chittagong, as long as the interruption lasted.

Among other short term means to improve the rail capacity of the Assam line of communication were the improvement in efficiency of operation by United States military personnel running the railway. This comprised some 4,600 U.S. army transportation troops who assisted in operating the Bengal and Assam Railway, and the view was expressed that an increase of as much as fifty per cent. was obtained by improved operation. A request for these railway troops was sent to the U.S.A.

Another handicap has been the shortage of locomotives in India, deliveries of which from overseas were awaited. During the period under review thirteen broad gauge "Eagle" and ninety-two metre gauge "Mikado" locomotives arrived. A number of the latter were taken into use on the Bengal and Assam Railway.

To increase the capacity of mechanical road transport, experiments and trials were successfully carried out with trailers, and it was decided to introduce these at the rate of 25 per general purpose transport company equipped with 15 cwt. trucks.

28. *Docks.*

The development of Chittagong port to meet operational needs has gone ahead. Additional moorings for deep sea ships were got from Calcutta, and most of the cranes taken from Chittagong under the denial scheme in 1942 have been replaced.

Dock labour as a whole gave little cause for anxiety, although the position at Vizagapatnam for a time was not good.

A special joint investigation was held into the congestion in the Port of Calcutta. Relief measures included the provision of mobile cranes for heavy lifts, the improvement of rail facilities in depots, and the provision of tank transporters and additional motor transport for port operation.

29. *Inland Water Transport (I.W.T.).*

This service also has been handicapped by floods. Rapid erosion at several of the landing places on the Brahmaputra caused anxiety, but preventive measures succeeded in averting serious trouble.

In regard to river craft, India had requested the return from Iraq of certain river steamers which had been sent there from India earlier in the war. In addition to the arrival of these, ten paddlers, three screw steamers, and ten dumb craft were released from Iraq for use on the Brahmaputra. These craft began to reach India at the rate of two a month, the first pair arriving in October. Higgins barges also were brought into use on an increasing scale with good results.

For the transportation of oil in bulk by river, seventeen flats were converted for use as carriers on the Brahmaputra, to supplement the one solitary flat previously available.

Successful trials were carried out with "Airbags" for lifting sunken craft. An I.W.T. salvage unit was organised during the period and was equipped with a number of these bags.

30. *Supplies.*

The food scarcity in India* affected the supply to the Army of indigenous foodstuffs, and it was not possible to maintain reserves up to the normal level.

Early in November the situation was serious, especially in the Fourteenth Army area. Rice in particular was short, and the ration scale of rice was reduced by four ounces. This reduction was, however, replaced by an equivalent amount of other grain products. Stocks also of milk, ghee, atta, tinned vegetables and fruits, and fodder were very low. The shortage of tinned supplies was due to the difficulties in obtaining fresh supplies in the forward areas, so that more tinned substitutes had to be consumed than those for which provision had been made. The shortages of atta and ghee were due to the Food Department of the Government of India being unable to meet the Army's requirements; and that of fodder to the coal shortage, since coal is needed for baling purposes.

The supply situation in the Fourteenth Army improved latterly, but the stock position cannot return to normal until the Food Department can meet the Army's needs of atta and ghee, and until demands made to the United Kingdom for tinned supplies have been met.

Attempts to obtain by indigenous production, foodstuffs that are usually imported—e.g., cheese, dehydrated vegetables, jam, etc., have not proved as successful as had been hoped.

* See also [Part II, paragraph 32 The Economic Emergency.