

is provided by the rail link between Lumding and Badarpur, but the capacity of this link is limited owing to the gradients.

(c) *The Arakan Line of Communication*, which supplies 15 Indian Corps southwards from Chittagong.

The following paragraphs give a brief general description of these lines of communication, the difficulties which have been encountered and the measures taken to overcome them.

177. *The Assam Line of Communication*. This line of communication has four main routes:—

(a) The metre gauge rail route from Mokameh Ghat* to Amingaon, across the Brahmaputra by wagon ferry, and onwards to Dimapur and the American bases in the Ledo area. Stores arrive at Mokameh Ghat by broad gauge railway from depots in Northern and Central India.

(b) The broad gauge route from Calcutta to river ghats on the lower Brahmaputra and to transshipment stations of the metre gauge route. The stores carried come from the Calcutta Base Area and from Southern and Western India.

(c) The river route. This includes an all water route up the Brahmaputra from Calcutta and, also, lifts between intermediate rail-served ghats on the Ganges and Brahmaputra.

(d) A road, known as the Assam access road, from Siliguri where it connects with the broad gauge railway, to Bongaigaon on the metre gauge route.

The control of the Assam line of communication rests with General Headquarters, India.

178. Communications in Assam are complicated and rendered unreliable, by both operating and physical difficulties. The operating difficulties are due to the fact that a far greater load has been imposed on the railway than could be handled by the normal civil organization. The physical difficulties are due to the seasonal liability of both road and rail communications to serious flooding, and also to the vagaries of the Brahmaputra. At some places, sudden rises in the river will wash away ghats, with all their connected installations, completely; while at others, sand banks will form and render them unapproachable by river craft.

The operating difficulties have been overcome to a great extent by the employment of military transportation units to assist the civil staff. The control of a considerable section of the metre gauge main line has been taken over by the United States Transportation Corps which has resulted in a great increase in traffic. The physical difficulties are being met by the provision, where possible, of alternative means of communication.

179. Very extensive measures have been, and are being, taken to improve the capacity of this line of communication. They include the doubling of certain sections on both the broad and metre gauge lines, the conversion of one section from narrow gauge to metre gauge, the construction of additional ghats and ferries, the improvement of existing facilities, and the provision of more river craft.

A proposal to erect a railway bridge across the Brahmaputra at Amingaon was rejected on the grounds that it would take too long to build. The alternative was to increase the capacity of the Amingaon—Pandu ferry, and this has been done.

180. *The Eastern Bengal Line of Communication*. This line consists of three main routes:—

(a) The sea route from Calcutta and Vizagapatam to Chittagong.

(b) From the Calcutta area to the Eastern Bengal metre gauge railway system, either by rail (via the Tistamukh wagon ferry), or by inland water transport, or by a combination of both. This railway system converges on Akhaura, and from there divides into two branches. The northern branch serves the Surma Valley airfields joining up with the Assam line of communication across the hill section of the railway between Badarpur and Lumding, and the southern supplies the Chittagong area.

(c) The road running south from the Assam trunk road, through Shillong, Sylhet and Comilla, to Chittagong.

181. The difficulties encountered on this line of communication are, as regards the railways:—

(a) The Eastern Bengal system is unable adequately to cope with the increased lift to airfields used for air supply.

(b) The capacity of the hill rail link between Badarpur and Lumding, which is limited to only nine trains a day each way, with a nett load of 140 tons each.

182. The principal developments of the railways in Eastern Bengal have been made with a view to providing a supplementary rail route for the Assam line of communication. These include:—

(i) The provision of additional crossing stations between the wagon ferry terminal at Bahadurabad and Badarpur.

(ii) Re-laying the hill section between Badarpur and Lumding to permit of the use of more powerful locomotives and longer trains.

In June, an investigation was carried out by representatives of 11 Army Group; General Headquarters, India; Headquarters, Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia Command; and the United States forces. Their recommendations, which are already being adopted, will increase line and terminal capacity throughout the whole system.

183. *Chittagong Port*. The limited capacity of this port originally restricted the use of the direct sea route, but steady increase has been obtained by improving the railway serving the wharves, providing additional moorings and jetties, building more storage accommodation, re-erecting equipment dismantled and removed under the denial scheme and by the supply of more lighters.

The working of the port has also improved as a result of its reorganization when Fourteenth Army assumed control on the 1st February.

The stores imported have increased by 150 per cent. since November 1943.

* "Ghat" means a landing stage.