

CM called for recruitment of people from Assam & NE States in 3rd & 4th grade categories in Railways

GUWAHATI, Aug 16: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today urged the Central government to create a separate railway zone exclusively for the Northeast region including Sikkim, besides asking for a railway bridge connecting Majuli from Dhakuakhana.

Speaking at a meeting convened by the Union Minister of State for Railways Rajen Gohain with the Chief Minister, MPs from Assam and senior officials of Railways and State government at Assam Administrative Staff College here today, Sonowal said, "For the overall growth of railway network and economic prosperity of the eight Northeastern states, a separate railway zone in the name of 'North East Railway' instead of North East Frontier Railway must be created." Portions of West Bengal and Bihar that come under the jurisdiction of NF Railways must be excluded from such a new zone, the CM added.

Sonowal urged the Railway MoS and officials for construction of a railway bridge to Majuli from Dhakuakhana, thereby imparting connectivity to the largest river island with the outside world.

Chief Minister Sonowal said connecting Majuli by rail will help to develop the river island economically and make it a hub of tourism. "Majuli will be exposed to the global society if the Railways build a bridge from Dhakuakhana in Dhemaji district," he exhorted.

The CM also called for recruitment of people from Assam and other NE States in 3rd and 4th grade categories in Railways. "People encompassing the greater Assamese society must get preference for 3rd and 4th grade posts in the Railways," he added. Sonowal pleaded with Gohain not to evict people residing on railway land for 30-40 years, calling for one-time settlement with them to resolve the matter once and for all.

"The eviction of people residing since long on railway land will create resentment. The Railways must opt for settlement by working out a compromise formula with them," he added.

In this context, the CM also urged Gohain to apprise the Centre about how the Railways plan to make use of the rest of the unused land for economic purpose through PPP mode. "The Railways must conduct a proper assessment of land

available in the State and develop projects that can fuel growth and create avenues for employment for educated unemployed youths,” he added.

Sonowal suggested for beautification of areas in and around the under-construction Bogibeel bridge to make it a tourism spot. “Large tracts of land in and around Bogibeel bridge, one of the longest bridges in Asia, can be beautified through landscaping to make it a tourism hotspot,” he pointed out.

Railways MoS Rajen Gohain said double tracking from New Jalpaiguri to Guwahati and Guwahati to Lumding is on at a revised estimate of Rs 650 crore. While assuring to clear all pending railway projects in the region, Gohain said his ministry is mulling surveys for parallel railway bridges at Saraighat and at Silghat, besides two others at Mariani-Jorhat and Sivasagar.

Gohain said the Railways would lease out railway land available in the State for commercial purposes that would help to generate revenue and create employment opportunities in a big way. However, he made it clear that encroachers would be evicted from the land adjacent to railway tracks to keep anti-social elements at bay.

The MoS for Railways said water vending machines would be given to unemployed youths and SHGs so they can provide pure drinking water to poor people at nominal price.

Gohain also assured to upgrade Guwahati railway station into a world class station, besides providing new coaches/bogies to improve train services in the region. He assured the Chief Minister and MPs that the concerns and issues raised by them would be taken note of seriously and addressed accordingly.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Secretary VK Pipersenia pleaded for connection of railway tracks with all district headquarters. He also requested for doubling of railway tracks from Cooch Behar to Dibrugarh, an alternate railway track to Barak Valley, a new parallel railway bridge at Saraighat, a new railway line connecting Silghat to Balipara via Tezpur with a bridge over the Brahmaputra, gauge conversion of Baraigram-Durlabcherra railway line and construction of by-pass at Mariani to enable Rajdhani Express to come up to Jorhat.

Earlier in the meeting, MPs Bijoya Chakravorty, Naba Kumar Sarania and Gaurav Gogoi raised a number of infrastructure-related issues concerning their constituencies and the State at large.