



BACKGROUNDERS
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Tracks of Transformation: Railways Redefining the Northeast

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A Rail Renaissance

In the mist-clad hills and deep valleys of India's Northeast, a revolution is unfolding on steel tracks. What was once considered a distant terrain is now being threaded together with ambitious railway projects signaling not just connectivity, but a new era of commerce, mobility, and integration for India's northeastern frontier. Over the past decade, the Northeast has seen its railway map redrawn at an unprecedented pace. Long-pending projects have moved from survey sheets to reality, with new stations opening in states that had none for over a century, and capitals finally being connected to the national network. Among them is Mizoram's 51 km **Bairabi-Sairang railway line**, inaugurated by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, a milestone that has finally put Aizawl on India's railway map. From the bustling hub of Guwahati to the serene borders of Mizoram and Nagaland, new lines are stretching across mountains, tunnels, and rivers, promising to transform not just connectivity, but also the very rhythm of life.



Railway Tracks between Bairabi- Sairang line in Mizoram

The Northeast's Expanding Railway Horizon

Once dependent on a handful of isolated stations, the region now stands at the cusp of a railway renaissance. Since 2014, railway allocations to the region have multiplied five times, touching **₹62,477 crore**. Of this, **₹10,440 crore** has been set aside for the current fiscal year. With projects worth **₹77,000 crore** under way, the region is seeing the largest wave of rail investment in its history. In Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, and beyond, long-delayed projects are finally linking capitals to the national grid. In Tripura, railway line has reached the borders, Meghalaya has seen its first railway station, while Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Assam push forward with new lines, electrification, and doubling works. Each state's journey shows how railways are shaping the Northeast.

Mizoram: Rails Reach the Hills

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 51 km **Bairabi–Sairang** line, built at a cost of over ₹8,070 crore, finally bringing Aizawl's grand debut onto the railway tracks.
- The state also witnessed the flagging off of three new train services, the Sairang -Delhi Rajdhani express, the Sairang-Guwahati Express and Sairang-Kolkata Express.
- Mizoram's railway journey began in the late 1980s with Bairabi station near the Assam border, as a Metre-Gauge station in the late 1980s.
- In **2016**, it was **upgraded to broad gauge** under the 83.55 km Kathakal - Bairabi Gauge Conversion Project, receiving its first freight train with 42 wagons of rice and a passenger service flagged off virtually by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Looking ahead, the ongoing **223 km Sairang–Hbicchhuah project** aims to extend tracks to Mizoram's southern border, opening **direct trade routes to Myanmar and Southeast Asia** via Sittwe port.

Nagaland: From One Station to a Capital Link

- Dimapur, opened in the early 20th century, remained Nagaland's lone railhead for over 100 years.
- In **2022**, **Shokhuvi** ended that isolation, becoming the state's second station.
- The 82.5 km Dimapur–Kohima new line is progressing with Dhansiri–Shokhuvi section commissioned in October 2021 and the **first passenger service**, the **Donyi Polo Express** rolling out in August 2022.
- The Shokhuvi–Molvom section was completed in March 2025 while the remaining section from Molvom to Zubza (near Kohima) is in progress.
- By October 2026, the Molvom–Pherima stretch (14.09 km) is set to open, followed by the Pherima–Zubza section (37.57 km) in December 2029, a milestone that will finally bring rail connectivity to Nagaland's capital, Kohima.

Tripura: Border Connect and Beyond

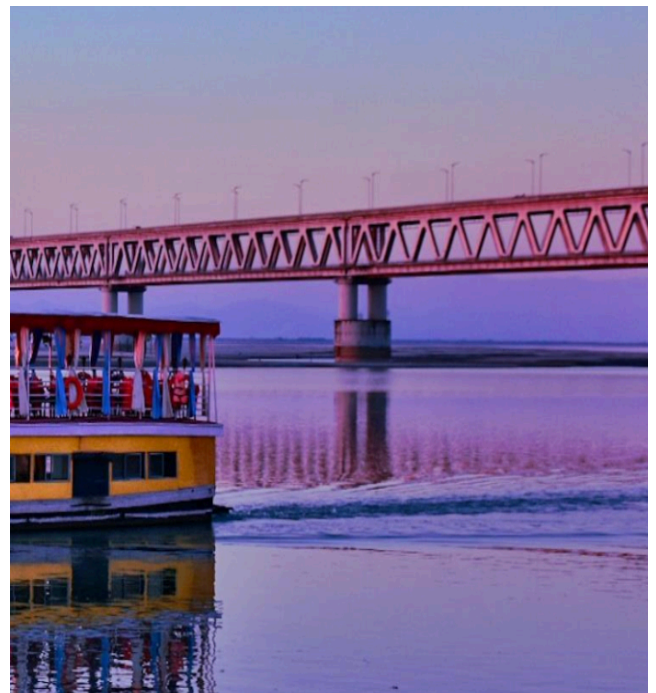
- The 152 km Badarpur–Agartala line was **converted to broad gauge** in April 2016.
- The Agartala–Sabroom line (112 km) extended railways till the southernmost part of Tripura, close to the Bangladesh border in phases between 2016 and 2019.
- Entire railway network in Tripura has been **electrified**.
- Doubling works up to Agartala are planned.

Manipur: Linking the Valley to the Nation

- Jiribam station, close to the Assam border, was converted from metre gauge to broad gauge in March 2016 under the 49.61 km Arunachal–Jiribam project.
- The 110.625 km Jiribam–Imphal line is under progress. The first section from Jiribam–Vangaichungpao (11.8 km) was commissioned in February 2017 followed by Vangaichungpao–Khongsang (43.56 km) section.
- **Upcoming targets:** Khongsang–Awangkhul (9.1 km) by March 2026, Awangkhul–Noney (9.15 km) by March 2027, Noney–Imphal (37.02 km) by March 2028.

Assam: Backbone of the Northeast Rail Grid

- **Gauge Conversion:** Between 2014 to 2017, 833.42 km of Metre-Gauge tracks in the Northeast, including 671.52 km in Assam, were converted to Broad Gauge. Major gauge conversions include Lumding–Silchar (210 km), North Lakhimpur – Sripani (81.46 km), and Katakhal - Bairabi (75.66 km) among others.
- **Extensive doubling projects:** Sections of Double Line Projects like Lumding–Furkating (140 km) will commence from 2026 while sections of Digaru–Hojai (102 km) have been completed between 2020–22.
- **New lines:** Completion includes sections of **Bogibeel bridge** and connecting lines (73 km, 2018), Tetelia – Kamalajari (10.15 km, 2018), and others.



The Rail and Road Bogibeel Bridge in Assam

Arunachal Pradesh: Rails to the Frontier

- Naharlagun station, connecting Itanagar, was commissioned in April 2014 under the 21.75 km Harmuti–Naharlagun New Line Project.
- The Balipara–Bhalukpong line was converted to broad gauge in May 2015 as part of the 505 km Rangiya–Murkongselek project.
- The Murkongselek–Pasighat line is under construction: Murkongselek–Sille (15.6 km) due October 2025; Sille–Pasighat (10.55 km) due February 2026.
- Final Location Surveys (FLS) completed for new lines to Tawang, Pasighat–Parashuram Kund–Wakro, and Bame–Aalo–Mechuka.

Sikkim: The Rail Chapter Opens

- The 44.96 km Sevoke–Rangpo line is under progress and targeted for completion by December 2027, providing Sikkim's first railway connectivity.

Meghalaya: First Steps on the Tracks

- **Mendipathar** became Meghalaya's **first railway station** in 2014 under the 19.62 km Dudhnoi–Mendipathar project which contains 8.67 km of railway tracks inside Meghalaya.



Electric Locomotive Train at Mendipathar Railway Station in Meghalaya

The Northeast on a New Track and Stronger Future

The story of railways in the Northeast is one of persistence and progress. In little more than a decade, the region has witnessed century-old Metre-Gauge lines upgraded, long-delayed projects revived, and capital cities like Aizawl and Imphal finally placed on the railway map. Assam has emerged as the backbone with electrification and doubling, while frontier states like Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh push tracks toward borders and trade gateways. Tripura has already reached Bangladesh, and Meghalaya and Sikkim await their turn. Together, these milestones mark more than engineering feats, they signal a Northeast steadily moving from isolation to integration, with steel tracks carrying the promise of growth, connectivity, and new horizons.

References

Ministry of Railways

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