

## *Saraighat Bridge on Brahmaputra in Guwahati*

One **two lane road cum rail steel bridge built 52 years back**, just after the Chinese aggression in 1962, is at present the only link between NE and rest of the country via Guwahati and its outskirt. It is on National Highway 31. The National Highway now being made four lane, an additional bridge on the side of the present Saraighat Bridge is under construction.

The construction of the bridge was allotted to Gammon India Ltd. and they started the work in 2006. The bridge was supposed to be completed and handed over **in 2012**. By the look of it, it is doubtful whether it would be completed even after 3 more years and hand it over in 2017.

This being the only link between the Northern bank of Brahmaputra with Southern in which Guwahati city is situated, thousands of cars and buses, school buses and trucks ply on this road over the bridge everyday. Heavily loaded trucks, 10/20 wheelers, bulldozers, containers are a regular features of this highway crossing the bridge. Everyday, for a long time, a fully loaded bridge with trucks and buses on both lanes over the bridge as well as the approaches for miles, come to a stop. Daily commuters take 2 to 3 hrs to reach their destinations. Students are late for their classes or they reach home very late in the evening while going back practically everyday. Some of them are very young, unable to bear the strain, get sick in their school buses or cars. Miseries are unlimited. **Yet nobody is bothered. Is there anybody who can do something?**

The bridge is also taking the toll of this heavy traffic burden. Recently there were wide gaping holes in the bridge floor when traffic had to be regulated to repair the bridge. The schools and some businesses had to be closed down because of this. We are afraid that the bridge may collapse very soon and NE will be cut off from the rest of the country completely.

There should be a thorough investigation on the functioning of Gammon India Ltd. Those who commute everyday observe that in such an important and urgent project only a handful of people keep working. Nobody is seen working on Sundays or festivals. This is not the speed at which they should have been working. Isn't the project a time bound one? If there is delay are they getting penalized? Are they getting price escalation benefits while constructing the bridge? Many questions arise in our mind.

We want our Prime Minister to pay some attention to this monumental problem of NE India and the Guwahati city. We feel that he should appoint a Minister of State under Ministry of Surface Transport, solely for this Brahmaputra Bridge and its connecting road network. Gammon India Ltd. and the others concerned should be taken to task for their apathy and should be given a deadline. **Ministry must monitor every step of their work.**

**Now this part of the highway is the root cause of a national wastage by way of loss of man hours and fuel. Please do something.**

*The Students of Faculty Higher Secondary School.*

# Gamon India taking its own sweet time

*Construction of second bridge over Brahmaputra near Saraighat*

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER

**GUWAHATI, October 25:** Projects in the Northeast, especially in Assam, are never complete as scheduled. The construction companies take their own sweet time to do project works even when the situation demands early completion of such projects. Such situations, it is said, lead to cost escalation but more profits to the construction companies. The commuters, however, have to bear the brunt of the delay.

The second bridge over the Brahmaputra near the

existing Saraighat bridge had been started way back in 2007 with a total project cost of Rs 238.34 crore. Gamon India, the construction company doing the project, failed to complete the project as scheduled. The company then revised its schedule as March this year. They failed to meet the revised schedule too. Strangely enough, not even 30 per cent of the project work has been done. The concrete constructions at either end of the bridge are yet to be complete. This apart, the works of post Nos 9, 10,

11, 11 and 14 are still at preliminary stage.

What could be the reason behind this abysmal delay? The existing Saraighat bridge was completed in September 1962. Hindustan Construction that had constructed the bridge could complete it in less than four years, that too, with the technology of 1960s.

However, the validity of the existing Saraighat bridge has expired. On September 28 this year, a portion of the bridge collapsed. This apart, traffic snarls are very regular over the bridge.

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