

Economy

Railway link with Bhutan under study

Our Economy Bureau

New Delhi, April 1 The government plans to link through rail some towns in Assam and West Bengal with border towns in Bhutan. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) for conducting feasibility studies for such a rail network was signed between the Centre and the Bhutan government on January 25, 2005, during the visit of the Bhutanese king Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

According to the MoU, the public sector undertaking RITES would conduct feasibility studies for the extension of the Indian railway network from West Bengal and Assam, to the nearest border towns in Bhutan.

The studies would be financed by the Union government on grant basis. The final decision regarding establishment of rail connectivity between the two nations would depend upon the result of the feasibility studies.

The following links would be covered under the studies:

- * Hasimara (West Bengal)-Phuentsholing (18 km) and bifurcation to Pasakha.
- * Kokrajhar (Assam)-Gelephu (70 km).
- * Pathsala (Assam)-Nanglam (40 km).
- * Rangia (Assam)-Samdrupjongkhar via Darranga (60 km).
- * Banarhat (West Bengal)-Samatse (16 km).

Bhutan has as of now, no railway links with either India or with its other international neighbours like China and Nepal. In terms of transport infrastructure, it only has highways totalling 3,690 km, out of which 2,240 km of stretch is paved, while 1,450 km of it is unpaved.

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