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ORISSA

August 9, 2005

**Rail traffic on track for big jump**

Tuesday August 9 2005 14:02 IST

**BHUBANESWAR:** A surge in industrialisation in the State is sure to push the rail traffic load further up. But what exactly would be the load?

A status paper prepared by Railways on four of its major routes that connect the industrial pockets says how the rail traffic will witness an astronomical jump in next couple of years.

Jakhpura-Jaroli, Angul-Sukinda Road and Haridaspur-Paradip, the three routes are slated to become lifeline for State's industrial boom.

Their proximity to iron, manganese and chromite ore belts along Sukinda Road-Daitari-Bansapani section, abundance of coal at Talcher and connectivity to Paradip are factors that have added to their advantage.

The last appraisal, during 2001, had put the rail traffic load at 52 million tonne a year on these three routes which worked out to about 83 trains, with an 80 percent empty movement.

However, if one takes into the proposed plants, the rail traffic skyrockets. The status paper reveals that rail traffic would range from 211 million tonne to 285 million tonne a year under different scenarios.

Going by the number of MoUs signed - 36 - till this paper was prepared, rail traffic would be 238 million tonne a year of which 191 million tonne would be inward traffic while the rest will be outward bound.

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The Railways have calculated the rail traffic in three different ways. The first scenario takes into account traffic from all steel plants excepting Posco, the Korean major.

The second scenario includes Posco but assumes that it would not take coal from Talcher and depend on imports. The third one is a scenario where Posco is taking coal from Talcher for use.

Under the first scenario, the status paper says, the three railway lines will witness a traffic of about 215 million tonne a year which requires movement of 371 trains.

Similarly, if Posco is included in the scheme of things, under scenario two, the rail traffic would jump to 277 million tonne while under scenario three, it would be 285 million tonne a year.

The latter two scenarios would require movement of 499 and 520 trains as projected by the status paper. This projection by the Railways poses a question, is it ready to take up the challenge of sudden spurt in traffic?

The status paper itself answers it. It calls for immediate double-lining of Haridaspur-Paradip and Jakhpura-Jaroli lines along with electrification. The need for a third line on Haridaspur-Jakhpura is also emphasised by the paper.

But the million dollar question - will these projections will ever be a reality?

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