



Contributing Aspects of Indo Bangladesh Bilateral Relation with Special Reference to Tripura

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ABSTRACT

India Bangladesh trade relation is a subject in which people of northeast India and particularly people of Tripura is much interested to talk. The region is development of this region is considerably dependent on the relation between India and Bangladesh. However recent arrangements by Bangladesh Government for transportation of heavy machines to South Tripura's thermal power station at Palatana have added more reasons of optimism. But in the same time it is also true that the development of a particular state can be wholly dependent on mentality of another sovereign state (Bangladesh). So there are reasons to develop a alternative logistic. So the concept of Tripura Corridor is being viewed as new option for development of northeast as well as Tripura. In the same time cultural exchanges with Bangladesh is another aspect which must not be undermined. It is the human relation, which comes first then its economic and commercialities.

Keywords : India, Bangladesh, trade relation, Tripura Corridor, cultural exchanges

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh and India are two neighbors in Southeast Asia and have been sharing common cultural, economic and political history. The cultures of the two countries are similar; in particular Bangladesh and India's states West Bengal and Tripura. Tripura and West Bengal have population of Bengalis, speaks same language as it is spoken in Bangladesh. During partition of India in 1947, East Pakistan and West Pakistan came into existence and in 1971 Liberation war East Pakistan became independent nation, Bangladesh. During liberation war of Bangladesh many leaders of Bangladesh liberation war took shelter in Tripura and people of Tripura extended their help to Bangladeshi freedom fighters. Relations have improved significantly since Sheikh Hasina came into power in Bangladesh and visited India in January 2010, which sought to renew Indo-Bangla relations in the context of present world order. Both countries have undertaken strategic ties in developing regional infrastructure, counter terrorism steps, economic cooperation and so on.

Northeast India is lacking in industrialization due to its bottleneck in communication. A limitation of communication is due to hilly areas and long distance from Bay of Bengal. However Tripura is a northeastern state which is close to port of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. A communication network if developed as it has been planned under Trans Asian Highway Network; Subroom (Tripura's southern part) may become an entry point for north east India. On the other hand Capital Agartala may become a place of railway network, through which other states of northeast could possibly be connected. The infrastructural limitations became a major issue when a thermal power station was planned to install at Palatana, a place in Gomati District of Tripura. Subsequently Indian Government made a deal with Dhaka administration and heavy equipment's were transported from other Indian states via Bangladesh to Tripura.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The study is aiming to asses-

1. Viability of Trans Asian Highway.
2. Tripura as a gateway of Northeast.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This paper has been prepared on basis of secondary information. This information was taken from various articles, web-sites particularly Department of Commerce, Government of India and World Bank.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The most important source of information has been the UN-ESCAP. The Asian Highway network, a network of 141,000 kilometers of standardized roadways moving through 32 Asian countries and Europe. The Asian Highway project was initiated in 1959 with the aim of promoting the development of international road transport. Trans Asian Highway initiative is aimed at best utilization of existing highways and to avoid construction of new ones. But in place of bringing standardization in the quality of roads appropriate construction may be carried out. Trans Asian Highway is entering into Bangladesh via two routes. One route is Asian Highway No-2 and another one is Asian Highway No-1. Asian Highway No-2 is entering into Bangladesh through Bangla-bandha situated near North West Bengal border and Bangladesh. Asian Highway No-2 is then moving towards Dhaka touching Rangpur, Bogra, Hatikamrul, and Tangail. At Hatikamrul the highway is taking a diversion which is moving towards Jessore of Bangladesh via kushtia. At Jessore this highway which has been diverted from Hatikamrul is meeting Asian Highway No-1 as shown in **Picture 1**.

Asian Highway No-1 is entering into Bangladesh via Benapol of West Bengal border. However both Asian Highway 1 & 2 is splitting near Katchpur of Bangladesh. From this point one route i.e. Asian Highway No-1 is moving towards Sylhet, and then Tamabil of Meghalaya in India. Another route which is extension of Asian Highway No-41 is moving towards Chittagong and then to Cox's Bazar and then Teknaf of Myanmar. This Asian highway route No-41 is moving through adjacent areas of South Tripura District. It is stated that the route AH-1 is much favored by people of Bangladesh. But on basis of commercial viability Asian Highway No-41 is much viable for northeast India. The reason is the area through which Asian Highway No-1 is touching Tamabil's hilly area. Transportation cost and speed of movement are two important aspects, on basis of which Asian highway No-41 appears to be commercially viable.

Picture-1: Trans Asian High Way (North East India Bangladesh Segment)



Table-1: Distance between capitals of North East states and Kolkata via Chicken's Neck

	Distance and Travel Time					
	From	To	Road		Rail	
			Distance	Travel Time	Distance	Travel Time
1	Agartala	Kolkata	1680 km	170hrs	1565 km	120 hrs
2	Silchar	Kolkata	1407 km	146 hrs	1368 km	96 hrs
3	Guwahati	Kolkata	1081 km	75 hrs	972 km	48 hrs
4	Shillong	Kolkata	1181 km	80 hrs	No Rail Connectivity	
5	Imphal	Kolkata	1742 km	155 hrs	No Rail Connectivity	
6	Aizwal	Kolkata	1657 km	152 hrs	No Rail Connectivity	

Source: Das, G. (2013). "Cross-border cooperation for the development of peripheral regions: the case of India's Northeast and Bangladesh". Intellect base International Consortium, (pp. 231-240). Bangkok.

Gurudas Das of National Institute of Technology, Silchar, India wrote in his paper entitled "Cross-border cooperation for the development of peripheral regions: the case of India's Northeast and Bangladesh" that at present Northeastern region-Bangladesh trade of Rs. 400 Crore is expected to increase by 5 fold once the infrastructural issue are addressed. He also stated if Guwahati, Agartala, Silchar and Dawki are connect-

ed with Chittagong port more than 80% of the traffic presently going to Kolkata port is expected to divert to Chittagong port. He also stated that currently 2.25 million tones goods move to Bangladesh through various Land Custom Station in Northeastern region. If physical facilities are improved these volume of traffic will go up to 11.25 million tons within a span of 3 years.

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Meanwhile Prof. P. K. Haldar, Dept. of Commerce, Tripura University in his article entitled "New equation in Cross border trade", first conceived the viability Asian Highway route No-41. He however stressed upon development of inland water transport facilities of surrounding areas of Sylhet District of Bangladesh and lower Assam. He opined lower Assam is

under developed and for the purpose of economic development inland water transport system, which was in existence in ancient time, must be developed. But development of inland water transport is also another aspect where many steps are required to be taken. Present policy of Bangladesh Government to encourage communication system and logistic through

ports of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar may be viewed as a part of the new planning by Prof. P.K Haldar.

Table-3: Export Import India Bangladesh.(In Lakhs)

S.No.	Year	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
1	EXPORT	1,131,721.47	1,150,106.83	1,475,247.50	1,838,669.09	2,798,257.77
2	%Growth		1.62	28.27	24.63	52.19
3	India's Total Export	84,075,505.87	84,553,364.38	114,292,192.18	146,595,939.96	163,431,883.77
4	%Growth		0.57	35.17	28.26	11.48
5	%Share	1.35	1.36	1.29	1.25	1.71
6	IMPORT	141,846.07	120,528.14	203,138.64	279,636.10	346,792.73
7	%Growth		-15.03	68.54	37.66	24.02
8	India's Total Import	137,443,555.45	136,373,554.76	168,346,695.57	234,546,324.45	266,916,195.69
9	%Growth		-0.78	23.45	39.32	13.8
10	%Share	0.1	0.09	0.12	0.12	0.13
11	TOTAL TRADE	1,273,567.54	1,270,634.97	1,678,386.13	2,118,305.18	3,145,050.50
12	%Growth		-0.23	32.09	26.21	48.47
13	India's Total Trade	221,519,061.32	220,926,919.14	282,638,887.75	381,142,264.41	430,348,079.46
14	%Growth		-0.27	27.93	34.85	12.91
15	%Share	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.56	0.73
16	TRADE BALANCE	989,875.39	1,029,578.69	1,272,108.86	1,559,032.99	2,451,465.04
17	India's Trade Balance	-53,368,049.58	-51,820,190.38	-54,054,503.39	-87,950,384.49	-103,484,311.91

Source: Dept. of commerce, Govt. of India.

TRANSPORT SYSTEM OF NORTH-EAST INDIA:

Tripura appears to be the most viable gateway for a number of reasons. Agartala is nearest commercial Center of Bangladesh. All its trade centers including Chittagong are within 11 – 150 Km. the Land Custom Station at Akhaura is few Kms away from capital Agartala. Kolkata port is 600 Kms away from Northeast. The distance between Agartala and Kolkata through road network is 1680 Kms whereas the distance between Agartala and Kolkata through railway network is 1560 Kms.

According to Table-1 and Table-2 Meghalaya doesn't have any communication through Railway network with Kolkata and same in case of Manipur and Mizoram. Though Tripura and particularly capital Agartala having railway network with Kolkata, but its moves through over the territory Assam. On the other hand there is no direct railway communication with Kolkata and the service is limited because broad-gauge line could not possibly be established until now.

However Tripura is having bus service up to Kolkata via Bangladesh, but that service is also uncertain due to disturbances going on inside Bangladesh, otherwise that service is quite effective. In this context railway communication over Bangladesh to Kolkata may be effective provided the internal condition of Bangladesh is peaceful.

CURRENT STATUS OF INDO BANGLADESH STATUS OF TRADE:

According to world bank in 2004 India's officially recorded export to Bangladesh was about US\$ 1.7 billion, but it is import from Bangladesh were just US\$ 78 million. India's export to Bangladesh grew very rapidly during the 1990's and has to continue to grow since 2000. For India it seems trade with Bangladesh is a very small part of its total trade. But the scenario is different in case of comparison between Northeastern region and Bangladesh. India is one of the largest sources of Bangladesh import even the quantity is more than China and Singapore. Mostly Bangladesh imports to India reaches Bangladesh via the land border.

During 1990's about three quarters of input were buy land

and river, but this proposition has declined since then two between 50-60%. Bangladesh mainly imports input of textiles for Bangladesh's export industry from India. All these items arrived Bangladesh by the land border. But during July 2002 there was a decline in transportation of goods through land border due to restriction imposed by Bangladesh Government. It was stated from the Dhaka administration that transportation of goods through road network creates scope for smuggling.

So Bangladesh in July 2002 started to import 2 major import items such as sugar and textile yarn's the sea road. However due to accident in textile industry in Bangladesh these days is facing challenges. This will indeed hamper the quantity of goods imported for textile sector.

But if the problems are sorted out road network is also remain with associated uncertainties. According to Department of commerce, Govt. of India the total export to Bangladesh in the year 2012- 2013 up to now is 2, 798, 257.77 lakhs rupees, where import from Bangladesh is 346,792.73 lakhs. There is a growth of 11.48%. From that of export in the previous year i.e. during 2011-2012. It is mention worthy the growth rate in export is gradually decline from 2010-2011. In 2010-2011 growth percentage was 35.17, in 2011-2012 it was 28.26% and 2012-1013 up to now the growth rate is 11.48%. So the trend is downward. In this context it may be stated that Tripura is going to provide electricity to Bangladesh as it ensure earlier in return of the service rendered by the Bangladesh Govt. in transportation of heavy machineries for installation of a thermal power unit at Palatana in Gomati district of Tripura. Supply of electricity will impact Bangladesh industries and somehow their consumption of production input. Everywhere it is stated the trade and business comes first then social and cultural aspects between two nations. But it is somehow different in case of relation between northeastern region and in Bangladesh. Here socio cultural ties come first and it preside economic and commercial ties.

There are very less number of states in the world which co-habits with each other peacefully but India and Bangladesh are such two neighboring countries are closely associated

with each other and it has become contributing forces for business and commercial activities.

CONCLUSION:

A lot of things have been left to be done., with 96 percent of the borders of Northeast constituting international bound-

aries, and in explicit recognition of the need to break the fetters of the geo—political isolation of the region it is necessary to factor what the external affairs minister has described as “New inputs” in foreign, defense, internal security and international trade policy. The immediate priority is to build the required infrastructure right up to the border areas.

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