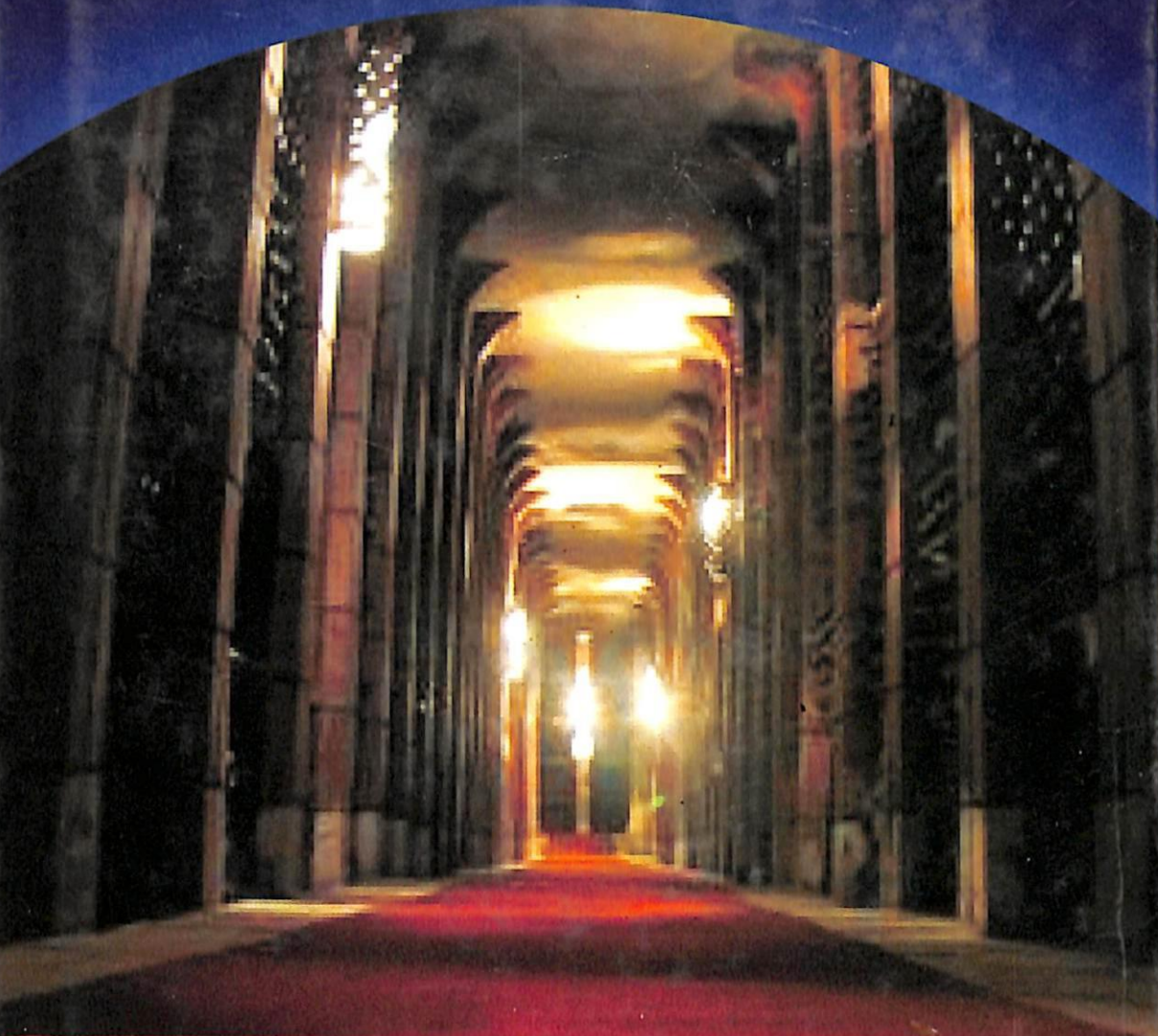


A Mittal Publication



THE GREAT INDIAN CORRIDOR IN THE EAST

Phani Deka



THE GREAT INDIAN CORRIDOR IN THE EAST

PHANI DEKA



MITTAL PUBLICATIONS
NEW DELHI (INDIA)

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and the publisher.

First Published 2007

© Phani Deka

All rights reserved

ISBN 81-8324-179-4

Call No. 327.5416
Acc. No. 8860

Published and printed by Krishan Mittal for Mittal Publications,
4594/9, Daryaganj, New Delhi - 110002, India.
Phone: 23250398, 25351493 **Telefax:** 91-11-25351521
e-mail : mittalp@ndf.vsnl.net.in
Website : www.mittalbooks.com

A commemorative volume
in honour of
**Dr. H.P. Das, my teacher and research guide,
Professor and founder Head,
Geography Department, Gauhati University
And founder President, North-East India
Geographical Society**

PREFACE

Any reference or any discussion about the growth and development of Geographic Education and research specially in the North-Eastern Part of India appears to be incomplete without a mention about Late Dr. Hari Prasanna Das. Dr. Das was the founder Head and Professor of the Post-graduate Department of the Gauhati University and also the founder President of the North-East India Geographical Society. He was intimately associated himself with the Geography education in the region since he came out from the University of Calcutta in 1946 till his retirement from the University in 1984.

Dr. Das was a very close disciple of Late Professor L.D. Stamp, an internationally reputed Geographer of the London School of Economics and Political Science under whose guidance he completed his Ph.D on "The Forest of Assam — A Study in Economic Geography". Through his research, he could throw new lights in to the forest resources of the state. He remarked—

"The position of Assam as regards to forest wealth is very misleading as all the waste lands owned by the government are classified as forest. Common people are under the impression that too much land is put under forest and sooner it is cleared for agriculture and settlement, the better for all. The result of this misconception is now manifested in continuous deforestation all over the state".

Part III of his thesis was devoted to the Forest Based Industries which among other things highlighted the Potential for Forest Based Industries. The observations made by Dr. Das during mid fifties still hold good and ob-late the stakeholders have started showing interest on judicial exploitation and management of forest resources of the region.

Another land-mark contribution of Dr. Das was his Presidential Address in the First Annual Conference of the National Association of Geographers, India held during january, 1980 at Chandigarh. There,

he for the first time brought the problem of immigration of Assam which has still been a cause of great concern not only for the region but also to the country as a whole, to a national platform. In the last part of his address he emphasized

“Like the earlier immigrants who have integrated with the host society and is now an integral part of it, all other immigrants instead of creating cultural islands or outposts should strive for socio-cultural assimilation and integration with the rest of the society”.

In the present volume, an attempt has been made to re-emphasize Dr. Das' findings and concern drawing evidences from the past from the point of view of Historical, Geo-Geographic, and Socio-Cultural as well as exploring some unexploited potentials of the region and to project it as a corridor for development and investment. The region, though strategically located in the Trijunction of the world's three biggest and most vibrant economies, many people have a negative perception about it. It is hoped that the book will be in a position to remove such perceptions and to view it as a spring-board to enter to the ASEAN, South East Asian and Chinese markets. All the SAARC nations are expected to derive benefits of the region's strategic location on one hand and its investment potential on the other.

The editor takes the opportunity to express gratefulness to the North-East India Geographical Society for entrusting the responsibility of compiling the Commemorative volume and also to all the contributors for their valuable contributions.

PHANI DEKA

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	xiii
<i>List of Figures</i>	xvii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xix

————PART-ONE————

Introducing the Corridor

- ✓ 1. **The Great Indian Corridor in the East — A Land Bridge between SAARC, China and ASEAN** 3
—*Phani Deka*
General Information
North East India : Gateway to the ASEAN
Export from the NE : Potential and Prospects
India's "Look-East" Policy
SWOT Analysis

————PART-TWO————

Historical Perspectives

2. **Importance of North-East India to the SAARC Nations** 15
—*Sarat Kr. Phukan and Supriti Phukan*
Introduction
Source Materials for Ancient Assam
Early Demography
The Spread of Indian Influence
✓ South East Asia's Connection with NER
Materials from Early Indian References
India and Asia : Religious Contacts
Ancient Trade Routs to China and Burma

————— **PART-THREE** —————
Socio-Cultural Perspectives

3. **The Corridor and its Relationship with South, South-East Asia and China** 87
—*Dilip K. Medhi*
4. **Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Population of SAARC Nations** 129
—*Bimal Kr. Kar*
Introduction
Ethnic Composition
Religious Composition
Linguistic Composition
Population and Vast Expanding Market
Literacy and Occupational Pattern
Human Development Pattern
Conclusion

————— **PART-FOUR** —————
Geo-Geographic Perspective

5. **Geo-physical Basis and Physiographic Framework of the SAARC Nations** 149
—*Ashok Kr. Bora*
Introduction
Geo-Tectonic Evolution
Physiographic, Geomorphology and Drainage
Climate
National Vegetation and Forest Resources
SAARC Countries : A Regional Block
6. **Agriculture under a Common Economic Framework—Trend and Issues** 179
—*Abani Kr. Bhagabati*
Introduction
Economic Background
Agriculture
Major Crops
Production
Foreign Trade
Sustainability of Agriculture

————— **PART-FIVE** —————
Process of Regionalization

- 7. Formation of a Frame for Regional Co-operation** **201**
 —*Phani Deka*
 Introduction
 Outlines of the SAARC Charter
 Profile of the SAARC Countries
 SAARC : A Triangle for Fostering Growth Process
 Resource Base and Infrastructure
 Economy
 Industry, Trade and Commerce

————— **PART-SIX** —————
Road Map to Prosperity

- 8. Historical Opportunity for the NE Region** **311**
 —*Phani Deka*
 The Vision and the Strategy
 Investment Potential Identified in Select Sectors
 Major Connectivity
 Power
 Cold Chains
 India-ASEAN Trade
- 9. A Look into a few Unexplored Frontiers** **329**
 —*Phani Deka*
 Border Trade
 Tourism
 Floriculture
 Medicinal and Aromatic Plants
 Ornamental Fish

Annexures **377**

Index **397**

LIST OF TABLES

4.1	Area, Population, Population Density and Population Growth of the SAARC Countries	130
4.2	Religious Composition of Population (as percentage of the country's total population) of the SAARC Countries, 1998-2001	136
4.3	Population Growth Pattern in the SAARC Countries, 1975-2015	139
4.4	Urbanization Level, Literacy Rate and Life Expectancy in the SAARC Countries, 1975 & 2001-2002	140
4.5	Fertility Rate, Infant Mortality Rate and Age Composition of Population in the SAARC Countries	141
4.6	Occupational Composition in the SAARC Countries, 1999-2000	143
4.7	Life Expectancy, Adult Literacy Rate, Gross Enrolment Ratio and GDP Per Capita, and Human Development Index in the SAARC Countries, 2002 & 1975	144
6.1	Arable Land as Percentage of Total land Area	183
6.2	Irrigated Area as Percentage of Arable Land	184
6.3	Agricultural Production Index for the Countries of Indian Subcontinent	190
6.4	Food Production Index for the Countries of Indian Subcontinent	191
6.5	India's Exports of Selected Agricultural Products	193
6.6	India's Imports of Selected Agricultural Products	194
7.1	Demographic changes between 1980-2000	245
7.2	The Pattern of Population	247
7.3	Land Use Pattern	250
7.4	Incidence of Poverty in SAARC (Head Count Ratio)	253
7.5	Other indicators of poverty (High Life Cycle Risks, Vulnerabilities, Incapacities etc.)	255
7.6	Unemployment Rates in SAARC (Currently Daily Status)	258
7.7	Education	259
7.8	Health	262
7.9	Economic Indicator of the SAARC Countries, Year 2000	264
7.10	Agricultural Performance in SAARC Countries	267
7.11	Minerals and Forest Resources in the SAARC Region	270
7.12	Roads	270
7.13	Power	270
7.14	Telecom	271

7.15	Civil Aviations	271
7.16	Railways	271
7.17	Ports	272
7.18	Waterways	272
7.19	Economic Performance of SAARC Countries	273
7.20	Major Sectors and Composition of Labour Force in PC	276
7.21	Per Capita Income	279
7.22	Growth Rate	280
7.23	GDP	281
7.24	Growth rate of GDP per Capita Income%	281
7.25	Forex Reserve	282
7.26	Exchange Rate Movement	282
7.27	External Debt	283
7.28	Major Export Markets of SAARC Member Countries 1989	284
7.29	Major Suppliers to SAARC Member Countries 1989	284
7.30	Structure of Production in 1998	285
7.31	Structure of Manufacturing Output (in Percentage)	287
7.32	Share of SAARC Member Countries in World Trade	287
7.33	Share of Trade in GDP 1988	288
7.34	Share of SAARC Member Countries in the GDP of the Region and in the Total Trade of the Region 1988	288
7.35	Structure of Merchandise Exports of SAARC Countries	290
7.36	Intra-SAARC Trade in Relation to World Trade of SAARC Countries	291
7.37	Intra-regional Exports of SAARC Countries and their World (WD) Exports	292
7.38	Intra-regional Imports of SAARC Countries and their World (WD) Imports	295
7.39	Intra-regional Trade	298
7.40	Percentage of Imports of Each Member Country from the Region in Relation to its World Imports	299
7.41	Percentage of Exports of Each Member Country from the Region in Relation to its World Imports	299
7.42	Share of Bilateral Imports as Percentage of Total Imports from the Region	300
7.43	Share of Bilateral Imports as Percentage of Total Exports from the Region	301
7.44	Classification of Trade Partners in the SAARC Region	307
8.1	Total Installed Capacity in the North-Eastern Region (1997-98)	324
8.2	On Going Projects Under Central Sector	325
8.3	New Projects in the North-Eastern Region (Under Central Govt.)	325
8.4	Demand and Supply of Power in the N.E. Region	326
9.1	States, Potential Areas and Flowers Recommended	349
9.2	Recommended Collection Centres	349
9.3	Area Under Floriculture (Hectares)	350
9.4	Land use Classification in the North-Eastern States	351
9.5	Distribution of Monthly Rainfall (mm) in North-Eastern Region	352

9.6	Inland Water Resources of Various Types (Lakh ha)	353
9.7	Total Water Potential of North-Eastern States	353
9.8	The Turnover of Top 10 Cut Flowers at Dutch Auction (VBA, 1999)	354
9.9	Direct Investment Proposed for Developing Commercial Floriculture	356
9.10	Estimated market for the Pharmaceutical Industry 1998-99 to 2007-08 (Base 1994-95)	361
9.11	Estimated Size of Herbal Drugs Industry 1998-99 to 2007-2008	361
9.12	Demand Estimates for Cosmetics and Toiletries 1998-99 to 2007-2008	363
9.13	Herbal Cosmetics Market as a Percentage of Total Cosmetics Market (1998-99 to 2007-2008)	363
9.14	Market Size for Herbal Products (1998-99 to 2007-2008)	364

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Map of Pauranic Dvipas	38
3.1	Western Extension of South-east Asia	89
3.2	Lake Rih (<i>Rih Dil</i>)	97
3.3	Orchids of Assam	116
3.4	Choppers from Champhai, Mizoram	118
3.5	Tagin Ornaments	119
3.6	Mizo Ornaments	120
3.7	Assamese Traditional Ornaments (1) Jonebiri, (2) Dugdugi, (3) Dhulbiri, (4) Golpata, (5) Keru and (6) Gam-kharu	120
4.1	Population Density in the SAARC Countries, 2005	140
4.2	Major Cities and Urban Agglomerations in SAARC Countries, 2005	142
6.1	Origin and diffusion of agriculture as propounded by Carl Sauer (1952)	180
6.2	Rice Producing Areas of Indian Sub Continent (SAARC)	185
8.1	Road Map of NE Region	316
8.2	Power Map of NE Region	326
9.1	Proposed Collection Centres, Auction Centres for Domestic and Export Markets for Flowers in the North-East	350

CONTRIBUTORS

- BHAGABATI ABANI K.** (b. 1957), Professor and Head of the Geography Department of the Gauhati University is a recipient of the Commonwealth Nuffield Fellowship who visited England and Scotland received training in the field of Geography Education and Environment. He has brilliant academic career, an University Gold Medalist for standing first class first in his masters degree and a popular writer in the field. He has so far published seven books, and several research papers in national and international journals. He is the editor of a geographical magazine Bhougolika and the Research journal Northern Geographer and served as the General Secretary of North-East India Geographical Society. e-mail : gugeogl@rediffmail.com
- BORA A.K.** (b. 1958) is presently Reader in Geography, Gauhati University. He has published so far as many as 43 research papers in national and international journals, attended a number of national and international seminars in countries like China, Japan and Bangladesh. He has published school text books and reference books, has 15 years teaching and 10 years research experiences and has been a member of a number of national and international organizations. So far two Ph.D. scholars have completed their doctoral research under his guidance. e-mail : gugeogl@rediffmail.com
- KAR B.K.** (b. 1964), A Reader in Geography, Gauhati University has with his brilliant academic carrier obtained Ph.D. degree from Gauhati University in 2000. His fields of interest are population geography, gender geography, cartography and remote sensing and GIS. He has authored and edited a few books on Geography. Women Population of North-East India : a study in Gender Geography published by Regency Publications, New Delhi in 2002 is one of his widely acclaimed books. Dr. Kar is associated with a number of Professional Organizations as life member and a few research scholars are doing Ph.D. under his guidance. Presently, he is the editor of the North-Eastern Geographer, a research journal published by the North-East India Geographical Society. e-mail : bimalkar@yahoo.com
- MEDHI D.K.** (b. 1951), A dedicated pollster in Anthropology and Archaeology of South Asia and Southeast Asia has dedicated himself in

exploration and promotion of history and culture of North-East India, a little known territory of the world. Currently, Dr. Medhi engages himself in teaching and research in the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University in the capacity of a senior faculty. In October 2004, he has been selected as one of eight executive members of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association from South East Asia.

He has been working with Dr. Richard A Engelhardt, UNESCO Regional Advisor for culture in Asia and the Pacific and Professor Mike Robinson of centre of Tourism and Cultural Change, Sheffield Halam University, U.K. on promoting research and heritage culture in North-East India.

In the current article, Dr. Medhi outlined extensive experiences he gained through travel to the Philippines (1985), Japan (1987), Hawaii (1990), Indonesia (1991), Malaysia (1998), China (2001), Honkong and Singapore. e-mail : dkbharati@sancharnet.in

PHUKAN SARAT K. (b. 1951) is a M.Sc. in Geography and LLB from Gauhati University and Ph.D. from Dibrugarh University. An IPS officer now serving as Superintendent of Police, Assam, is a Life Member of the North-East India Geographical Society, Indian Social Science Congress, Epigraphic Society of India, Place Names Society of India and Honorary member of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Names. Phukan is working on various aspects of Onomastics since 1975. He has authored several books like *Toponymy of Assam*, *Surnames of Assam*, *A few aspects of Placename study with special reference to Assam*, *Hydronymy of Assam*. He along with his wife Ms. Supriti Phukan edited several books including **Anthroponomy** of Assam. He has presented a good number of research papers at both National and International Seminars. Dr Phukan is associated with the American Name Society, and Canadian Onomastic Society. Presently, he is working along with Supriti Phukan on Onomastics in Folk Literature of Assam. e-mail : skphukan@rediffmail.com

PHUKAN SUPRITI (b. 1956), had her early education at Tezpur, Assam. She did her graduation from Dibrugarh University and Master in English from Gauhati University. Ms Phukan obtained Ph.D in 2004 from Dibrugarh University, on *The Tai-Phakes of Assam*. She has edited and authored *The Phakes*, edited *Kritanjali* jointly with Sarat Kumar Phukan edited *Padmeswar Barthakur Rachanavali*, *Anthroponymy of Assam* and *Onomastics in Folk literature in Assam*. She has published a few articles, research papers in various Research Journals, News Papers and Magazines. Ms Phukan is associated with Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, Directorate of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Place names Society of India, and Tai-Sahitya Sabha, Assam etc.

PART-ONE
INTRODUCING
THE
CORRIDOR

In this part the author tries to introduce the North-East India as Gateway to China and ASEAN and identified the region as the Great Indian Corridor in the East keeping in view its potential and prospects and also the India's Look East Policy.

THE GREAT INDIAN CORRIDOR IN THE EAST

—A Land Bridge between SAARC, China and ASEAN

PHANI DEKA

General Information

The great Indian corridor in the east is a land mass bordered by the countries like-Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and is connected with the Indian subcontinent by a narrow strip of land not more than 26 km wide. Politically, the corridor consists of the seven Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. These states are popularly called as *Seven Sisters, North-East India (NEI)* or *North-Eastern Region (NER)*. Therefore, the terms *Corridor, NEI and NER are considered to be as synonymous and have been used in this book interchangeably.*

Flanked by hills and with the Brahmaputra River slashing a central path between its North and South, the North-East consist of the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura with Assam comprising the heart. Arunachal Pradesh lies to the north, bordering China, Tibet and Bhutan. Bangladesh and Myanmar lie to its Southwest and east.

The Macmahon line separates North-East India from Tibet. This region is connected with the rest of India only through a narrow strip of land in North Bengal, having an approximate width of 33 Km on the eastern side and 21 Km on the western side. This narrow strip is

popularly known as the "Siliguri neck" or the "Chicken's neck". NE region lies between Latitude: 21.57°N-29.30°N and Longitude 89.46°E-87.30°E covering an area of 2.55 lakh Sq Km.

The region accounts for 7.8% of the total land space of the country. Hill ranges forming part of the Himalayas guard the northern side of the region. The area is made up of mountains above the snow line and plains a little higher than sea level.

The region is of strategic importance for the country on account of the fact that nearly 90% of its borders form India's international boundaries.

North-East India is mostly hilly; it has plains on both sides of the river Brahmaputra and the Himalayan range around it.

About 70% of the region is hilly, and the topography varies within each state. Mountains and hills covered most of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and about half of Tripura, one-fifth of Assam and nine-tenth of Manipur. The flora and fauna of this region is numerous and varied.

The plains of the region are mainly made up of separate landmasses-the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak Valley in Assam and the Tripura plains in the South. In Manipur, the Valley is small, comprising only about 10% of the total area of the state.

The Brahmaputra Valley stretches longitudinally for about 730 Km, from Dhemaji to Dhubri district in Assam. The Barak Valley, formed by the river Barak and its tributaries covers the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of South Assam. The Tripura plains are an extension of the Ganga-Brahmaputra plain. The topography of the hills is generally ragged and vast areas are inaccessible.

The rainy season in this region generally commences from March and lasts till the middle of October. The total annual rainfall varies significantly in the region. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the annual intensity of rainfall reaches the maximum of about 1080-cm around Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram (having highest rainfall in the World). It is significantly low in the rain shadow area of Nagaon district in Assam. About two-thirds of the annual total rainfall occurs during the four monsoon months of June to September.

Though the North-East reflects ecological and cultural contrasts between the hills and the plains, there are also significant elements of continuity. Available medieval and modern records indicate interdependent and interaction between the hills and the plains.

North-East-India : Gateway to the ASEAN

North-Eastern India (NEI), though landlocked, is ideally positioned, both in the geographical and commercial sense, to build the bridge between India and the ASEAN. This hardly needs any elaboration to say that, besides being the land bridge, the North-East also provides cultural bridge between India and the ASEAN. For various reasons, but mainly political, the bridge could not be activated and utilized for mutual benefit, all these years. The end of the Cold War era led to a thaw in bilateral relations. In 1992, India had made the right choice toward the ASEAN in her 'Look East' policy. Recent development such as India-Singapore CECA, Indo-Thai FTA, BIMSTEC FTA, and also signing of the agreement on SAFTA, provide unique opportunities to build a new bridge, and a sound basis for a new 'Indo-ASEAN partnership for the 21st Century'.

What implies is that the time has come for developing a new perspective for economic development of NEI, which continues to remain an undeveloped region, in spite of its vast potential and several inherent strengths. A new vista has now opened up for globalization of NEI, making it an integral chain in the link between India and the ASEAN. Needless to say, a new development horizon can emerge over the North-East, potentially a road to Asianisation of the Indian economy. The INDI-ASEAN car rally is symbolic of that.

In India's 'Look East' policy, there is a new opportunity for growth and a new development paradigm for the North-East. It is through the trade route that NEI can unshackle itself from the evils of poverty, unemployment and economic backwardness. The states of NEI, with necessary support from the government of India, should be able to build their development plans, in tune with emerging opportunities and dedicate themselves to the implementation of their plans. The vision is clear: Asianisation of NEI through trade. The ingredients are plenty. The vision needs to be accepted by the governments and the people of the North-East.

Exports from the North-East: Potential and Prospects

Talk of export potential of any region, or a country, is usually about exploring the exportable items of that place. In other words, it is about comparative advantages of the place. This, however, is a limited way of looking at the export potential. Experience of many exporting countries show that a country or a region need not necessarily have comparative advantages. In the era of globalization, comparative

advantages can be traded. Similarly, it is also not necessary that it should have raw materials that can be processed into finished products for exports. The scope of exports is also not limited to locally available commodities and products alone. In today's context of world trade, where trade in services has emerged as an important component, it is also possible to create export potential in invisibles or nonphysical products. Similarly, imports also provide opportunities for export production.

The North-Eastern States are, however, well endowed for large scale export of products as well as services. As has been mentioned elsewhere, the regional economy is primarily agrarian. But agriculture here is significantly different from rest of the country. There are three broad streams of agriculture, namely food grains, plantation (including bamboo and cane) and horticulture and floriculture. Export potential of the latter, in particular, is largely unexploited. The agro climatic conditions of the region are particularly suitable for high quality horticultural products like pineapples, oranges and several other products, besides flora and fauna. So far, hardly any attempt has been made to undertake any organized and planned development of horticulture in the region. Similarly, forest products such as medicinal herbs, cane, bamboo etc. are other items that have vast potential in the world market. China, incidentally, dominates the world market for bamboo products which is growing at a phenomenal rate. Similarly, sericulture is also a natural product of the North-East, but very little has been done to develop sericulture.

It is an interesting paradox of the North-Eastern economy that the very resources that could be the basis for initial developmental activities; the region continues to remain neglected. The structure of agrarian production of the region is well-poised for employment-intensive industrialization. There is ample scope for development of Chinese-type rural industrialization activities in the region. The agrarian economy of the region is an economy with multiple possibilities. One of the reasons for lack of adequate initiatives for development, and especially private investments, has been the lack of local entrepreneurship and markets. Lack of effective logistics and its high cost also prevent access to markets in the rest of the country, while poverty and underdevelopment are responsible for lack of growth of the regional market. Emergence of FTAs around North-Eastern India can provide the much-needed markets, and open up opportunities for export-led growth of the region. Since the national Foreign Trade Policy encourages establishment of facilities for export

production in every state, the North-Eastern states should be able to recast their development plans centering on export promotion. Existing industrial policies of the states can be re-oriented to encourage production for exports.

In this, the states need not always depend only on locally available resources, but can also take advantage of the liberal import policy that permits duty free import of material for export production. FTAs with Thailand, BIMSTEC and ASEAN will also enable the facility of duty-free/low-duty import of various raw materials from the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar.

This again opens up opportunities for export-led manufacturing activities in the entire region. Among others, the followings offer vast scope for export-oriented investments and production.

- Products of handicrafts.
- Horticultural products and processed/semi-processed fruits, flowers etc.
- Cane furniture and bamboo products.
- Other products of forestry e.g. honey, herbal medicines etc.
- Health care products and aromatic oils.
- Products of sericulture (especially muga silk).

In addition to export promotion based on locally available materials, the investors from the rest of the country and the members of SAARC as well, can also take advantage of locational advantage of the North-East (e.g. proximity to China South and South East Asian markets) and invest in this region. Being an economically backward area, both Central and State Governments can provide reasonable policy support to units located in the North-East that can provide comparable investment climate in relation to Nepal and Bangladesh. Some of the areas where the Indian investors can look at, for the purpose of exports from the region, are

- Floriculture.
- Processed fruits and horticultural products.
- Forest products e.g. bamboo and bamboo based furniture and handicrafts.
- Health care products (including indigenous system of medicines).
- Consumer goods of mass consumption (especially to low-income South East and South Asian countries)

Bajan in Myanmar, more modest scenarios that came to the mind are that North-East supplying hydroelectric power to its cross border Asian neighbours, and tourists from the Asia-Pacific region coming in through the Eastern doors. This is certainly an attractive proposition. Now the North-East region is canvases as a "Thriving and integrated economic space" linking the SAARC nations with the neighbouring South-East Asia.

China and India are actively working on plans to reopen Still well road through Myanmar which would reduce the distance between the two nations from 6000 km to just 1300 km. The Still well road, a strategic supply route between Assam and China's Yunan province via Myanmar built during the World War II will soon reopen. The Still well road is junction point of East, South and South-East Asia. Consequently, the road possesses geographic importance in linking the three regions.

China's foreign trade with India now makes up only one percent of its total import and export value though bilateral trade volume increased from 200 million US dollars during 1990s to 13.6 billion dollars in 2004.

Today, India is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing economies of the world. It constitutes not only a vast and growing market, but also a competitive source of technologies and knowledge-based services. Countries across the globe are beginning to see India as an indispensable economic partner and seeking mutually rewarding economic and commercial links with our emerging economy. The growing recognition of India as a dependable partner is reflected in India's emergence as a compulsory destination in the itineraries of the world leaders.

Recently, Prime minister of India while flagging off the first ever INDIA-ASEAN car rally on 22nd November 2004 at Guwahati has said "The development of the North-East and its integration with the larger regional processes is one of the determining factors of India's engagement with regional groupings like ASEAN and BIMSTEC." Today even the west has accepted that the 21st century belongs to Asia. In an era of Globalization, inter connectivity has to be comprehensive covering all dimensions-human, Infrastructural, Economic and cultural. "Historically we belong to an integrated region with many complementaries. Our cultural and civilization ties run deep in time. These are being further strengthened by economic and trade links" he said.

Keeping all the above in view, specially the emphasis laid by the Prime minister of India, an attempt has been made to present the Great Indian Corridor in the East comprising the seven North-Eastern states as a natural land bridge strategically positioned geographically to act as a Gateway to the ASEAN and China. The corridor is positioned itself at the junction of the three most important markets (SAARC, ASEAN and China) of the size of half of the total population of the World and having most dynamic economies. The corridor has been presented in a book-form in six parts. Part-I highlights the strategic positions, Strengths and Weakness of economic development of the region and also the present status of India's "Look East" policy. Part 2 narrates the linkages from the ancient times under Historical Perspective. In part 3, the Socio-Cultural relationship of the region with the ASEAN and China and also the Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the population of SAARC Nations have been presented. The Geo-Physical basis of the SAARC Nations has been established to form a regional block under part 4. It also describes the Trend and Issues of Agriculture of the Sub Continent under a common economic framework. As a result of the Globalization, opening up the economy specially under the WTO regime it becomes a necessity for the small countries to take advantage of the bigger neighbors and the process of Regionalization has been started. This aspect of Regionalization is given in part 5. The corridor (North-East Region of India) is relatively under developed with less accessibility even though it has vast development potential most of which are still untapped. The Ecology of the region is very fragile and it is one of the very few Bio-diversified Hot Spots of the World. Therefore, any development activities need to be based on the principle of least interference with the environment. The status of infrastructure facilities and also the vast potentials of some of the selected sectors of economy have been described in part 6.



Mittal Publications

PUBLISHERS OF SCHOLARLY BOOKS

4594/9, Daryaganj, NEW DELHI- 110002
Tel.: 23250398, 25351493, 25351976

Telefax : 91-11-25351521

E-Mail : Mittalp@ndf.vsnl.net.in, Website : www.mittalbooks.com

ISBN 81-8324-179-



9 788183 241793