

# Transit: impact on bangladesh essay sample

[Countries](#), [India](#)



## 1. Introduction

A debate has been raging in the country on whether transit facilities should be given to India or not through the land territory of Bangladesh. Some argue that it should not be given unless some core bilateral issues with India are resolved, while some have advanced the view that transit is an economic issue for trade facilitation and should not be politicized. Some have argued that what India wants is not a transit but a corridor. Whichever view one holds, the fact of the matter is that transit issue is a complex one. It is a multi-faceted issue. Is transit an economic issue? Some argue transit is an economic issue. It facilitates trade and therefore it may be perceived as such. I would argue that this is conceivable but for most of the cases political relations define economic relations. In other words, political relations cannot be separated from economic relations. History is replete with examples of friendly political relations providing the climate and the incentive for forging closer economic relations. It has been seen that in most case progression has been from close political relations to the deepening of economic relations.

For example, why does Bangladesh not have economic relations with Israel? It is because there is no political relationship with that country. Political relationships that are not characterized by mistrust or suspicion allow first steps in economic relationship which would then expand and generate vigorous inter-state economic activities. In that context, for creating an appropriate political climate, India has to come up with fair and just proposals to resolve some of the bilateral issues that affect Bangladesh people with “bread and butter issues”. The issues of top priority are (a)

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maritime boundary, (b) land boundary including the exchange of enclaves, (c) reduction of huge trade deficit and (d) equitable sharing and management of water of trans-boundary Rivers. Moreover giving transit facility to India will enhance economic competition between Bangladesh and India. Will Bangladesh be capable to compete with a country of large economy like India?

## 2. Background

Bangladesh lies astride the Indian mainland and its North Eastern Region (NER) comprising seven relatively small Indian states. Prior to the partition of India in 1947, the trade and commerce of the NER with the rest of India and the outside world used to pass through the territories of what is now Bangladesh. Rail and river transit across the former East Pakistan continued till 1965 when, as a consequence of the Indo-Pak war, all transit traffic were suspended. Although river transit was restored in 1972, no progress has been made on the issue of road and rail transit/transshipment. From the Indian point of view, transit or transshipment across Bangladesh is important because it will greatly boost the economy of the NER. While Bangladesh could greatly benefit from transit fees and potentially huge Indian investment in the transportation network, there are doubts in various corners in Bangladesh regarding the security implications of such a deal? The connotation of transit is to be distinguished from that of a corridor. In the corridor, a country gives some kind of rights or control on the land to the other country making it a defacto of its territory, while in transit there is no

question of rights involved in the land territory allowed for transit. It provides only transit facilities under certain conditions and can be withdrawn.

For example, under the Bangladesh-India 1974 Land Boundary Agreement, Bangladesh wanted a lease in perpetuity an area of India's territory 178 meters X 85 meters near Tin Bigha to connect enclave Dahagram with main land of Bangladesh. But eventually Bangladesh did not get "corridor" from India. In pre-partition days, Jinnah wanted a corridor from East Pakistan to West Pakistan through India but India rejected it because Pakistan would have control on the land territory of the corridor. Russia wants a corridor from its territory Kaliningrad to Russia's mainland through Lithuania but it has been rejected because of the same reasons. In the instant case, India wants to dispatch goods and other materials from western parts of India to its seven land-locked northeastern states through Bangladesh and no kind of rights exists on the land territory of Bangladesh. This is transit, an inter-country passage, like waterway-transit already provided to India since 1972. Transshipment is distinct from transit. Transshipment refers to the same inter-country passage using Bangladeshi-owned transportation, whereas in transit Indian -owned surface transport move through the transit from one end to the other. In Europe, Germany or Austria sends goods to Italy through Switzerland. Another instance of transit, Alaska dispatches goods to mainland US through Canada.

### 3. Objective

1. Examine the transportation infrastructure of Bangladesh to determine the possibilities of transshipment.

2. Examine whether transshipment strengthen the economy of Bangladesh.

4. Methodology 4. 1 Concepts:

It is said that the system of trade routes first originated with the nomadic people who along with their cattle, sheep, asses and goats had often moved from their places in search of fresh pastures. In course of time, the route was used by the traders as in the process asses, oxen, horses, yak were tamed and utilized for carrying goods. This was the beginning of this trade process, which was at first based on barter and exchange and later on money. Now-a-days the route has been an important element to fostering international trade. Based on security, sovereignty as well as involvement of the countries the route is commonly known as Transit or Transshipment or corridor.

Though these three words seem to be similar, there is a clear distinction among them. Generally in the corridor, a country gives some kind of rights or control on the land to the other country making it a defector of its territory, while in transit there is no question of rights involved in the land territory allowed for transit. It provides only transit facilities under conditions and can be withdrawn.

For example, under the Bangladesh-India 1974 Land Boundary Agreement, Bangladesh wanted a lease in perpetuity an area of India's territory 178 meters X 85 meter meters near Tin Bigha to connect enclave Dahagram with main land of Bangladesh. The transit for a country is mainly access through a country to the third one. For example, India has a transit to Afghanistan through Iran. So, Indian goods can board from Iranian ports and go through to Afghanistan. However, due to geographical complexity, in this case, the

transit refers to connectivity between North-East Indian seven sisters' states with mainland India, especially West Bengal. The goods carried from North-East, comes to mainland India through a strip of Assam and North Bengal, taking a route miles longer than what could have been a shortage through Bangladesh. Bangladesh government never allowed India to have a transit in return of a hefty transit fee offered by India. The transit, that could have been a win-win situation, has been refused as a threat to National security. The other point of interest here could be the transshipment. Here, transit refers to the passage across Bangladesh territory of Indian goods to and from the north eastern states of India using Indian owned surface transports, while transshipment refers to the same movement using Bangladesh owned transports.

#### 4. 2 Review of Literature

Dr. Diganta (January 2, 2006) studied about transit in prospect of Bangladesh. He indicated about the potential damages for Bangladesh in consequences of transit.

Dr. Kamruzzaman states about separatist movement in north eastern region of India in his paper " Transit security and sovereignty of Bangladesh".

Brig Gen. Shakil Ahmed, ndc, psc, made a paper " Transit and Transshipment: Implication for Bangladesh" for national defense staff college. He focused the history of transit between Bangladesh and India. He said about the Roads and Highway system. He was suspicious about the feasibility of Roads and Highway of Bangladesh for giving transit.

Nurul Mostofa Kazi wrote an article in “ The Daily Naya Diganta”. In his article he said about the infeasibility of Chittagong port for using our neighboring countries. He was concerned about the security of the country too.

Abul Bayas wrote an article in “ A Debate on Transit Transshipment” edited by Mukul Sikder. He also suspicious about transit and transshipment facilities to give our neighboring country.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid former Bangladesh ambassador to UN, Geneva analyzed the topic in his paper “ Transit Issue with India: A comprehensive approach”. He differentiated the definition of Corridor/Transit/Transshipment. He questioned is transit merely considered as an economic issue or political too?

Dr. Tarek Shamsur Rehman has written his book (Aforesaid Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh-An Assessment) transit not only depends on the relationship between two countries that is facility giving by a country and facility taking the other country. In that case politics and economics must be considered.

Dr. Ferdaus Ahmad Koreshi emphasized the geo-political condition of Bangladesh in “ About Sub Regional Alliances: Transit Issue and Exporting Gas” edited by Dr. Tarek Shamsur Rehman. Dr. Amaz Uddin Ahmed wrote an article in “ About Sub Regional Alliances: Transit Issue and Exporting Gas” edited by Dr. Tarek Shamsur Rehman. He actually emphasized the south asian development.

## 5. TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN BANGLADESH

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## 5. 1 Railways

At the time of the partition of India in 1947, erstwhile East Pakistan inherited the portion of Bengal and Assam Railway that fell within its borders. The track length of the railway then known as Pakistan Eastern Railway was about 2, 604 km long. This became Bangladesh Railway (BR) in 1971. BR is divided into East and West zones separated by the river Jamuna. East Zone has 1, 279 km of Meter- Gauge (MG) track, and West Zone has 553 km of MG and 936 km of Broad-Gauge (BG) track. The dual gauge system is complicated, time-consuming and inefficient. The two zones are connected by river ferries that take about 36-48 hours to ferry a goods train across the Jamuna. A railway line is fast nearing completion that would connect the two railway zones with a BG-MG dual track line across the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) eliminating the ferry crossing. BR is connected to the Indian railway system in the west at Benapole (Jessore), Darshana (Kushtia), Rohanpur (Chapai Nawabganj), Radhikapur (Dinajpur) and Chilahati (Nilphamari). In the east, it can be easily restored at Shahbajpur (Sylhet) and a link to Agartala can be laid down at Akhaura at reasonable expense.

Railway based transshipment can soon be done through Kolkata-Darshana-Ishurdi- JMB-Bhairab Bazar - Akhaura - Kulaura - Shahbazpur - Karimganj (India) route. This main route can use a number of alternative link variations mentioned below. The Kolkata - Benapole - Jessore - Darshana route can be a variation. The Radhikapur - Parbatipur - Ishurdi route can also be used. The Rohanpur - Rajshahi -Ishurdi - Santahar route may be used for goods originating in Malda (India). The traffic density over the proposed



transshipment route is generally quite low. The highest is between Akhaura-Bhairab Bazar, which is 39.21 trains per day of passenger and freight trains. This segment is only about 32 km in length and has double line compared to rest of the route which is single line. The rest of the route in the East Zone amounts to less than 24 trains per day. In the West Zone, along the proposed transshipment route, the average is less than 20 trains per day. The amount of freight carried and the number of wagons and coaches, which ply per day, is paltry. In 1969-70, this railway system clocked 144-million wagon km in the MG section, whereas in 1999-00, this dropped to little over 61 million. In 1969-70, BR carried 4.88 million tons of freight and this dropped to 2.89 million tons in 1999-00.

The actual amount of freight moved has remained static in the last thirty years in the East Zone. In the West Zone, it has reduced dramatically during the same period. Container traffic between Dhaka and Chittagong has doubled in the 1995-00 period whereas other freight traffic has reduced considerably as road based movement has proved more reliable and competitive. Once the railway link over the JMB comes into operation, train travel time between Kolkata and Assam via JMB will reduce by about 36-48 hours. The traffic density between Tongi and Bhairab Bazar is 37.32, which is high by BR standards. In the short term, this segment will be able to absorb some additional traffic. In the medium term, however, Tongi-Bhairab Bazar route has to be upgraded to double line, even to accommodate traffic growth on the Dhaka-Chittagong route. Meanwhile, some transshipment traffic can be diverted through the Joydebpur - Mymensingh - Bhairab Bazar

route, which has a traffic density of only 26 and can easily absorb fifty percent traffic growth.

However, this diversion will increase travel times by about six hours. The difference of railway gauges in the East and West Zone continues to be a serious bottleneck. Conversion of the entire network to BG will require a huge investment. BR is a losing concern; therefore, World Bank and other international financial institutions are not eager to invest in this sector. On the other hand, if Bangladesh desires to be part of the Trans-Asian Rail (TAR) network, it would entail the total conversion into BG. Paucity of land and population pressure will limit the amount of land available for highway development. Railways and IWT are much more environmentally friendly, cheaper and cost effective than road-based movement. Therefore, it is logical that Bangladesh should develop its railways and waterways for freight and passenger traffic. Better management of BR, including greater privatization of services and outsourcing of maintenance, management and security has the potential to improve financial performance. At present, it takes BR between 24-48 hours to shift freight from one gauge to the other using manual methods.

If container traffic is used for transshipment and mechanical equipment is used for inter-gauge transfer this time can be reduced to six hours. Once the JMB rail link is commissioned, mechanical equipment can be installed at both Ishurdi and Joydebpur to enable inter-gauge transfer of containers. Private operators can be contracted to install and operate these services obviating the need for BR's own investment. In the present system it will take 6-8 days

for a freight train to travel from Kolkata to Karimgonj in Assam. This can be reduced Transit and Transshipment : Implications for Bangladesh by a third or even halved when the JMB rail link is commissioned and if containerized cargo is used with mechanical handling equipment at intergauge transfer points. Once the JMB railway link is commissioned, it may be possible to employ about ten freight trains for transshipment traffic every day raising the daily tonnage to about 8000 to 10, 000 tons of containerized cargo. In the case of non-containerized cargo, the figure would be somewhat less. Thus, the annual capacity would be about 3. 5 million tons without a substantial expansion of railway tracks and infrastructure.

## 5. 2 Roads and Highway System

Bangladesh has over 27, 000 km of paved roads, of which there are 3, 096 km are national highways and another 1, 744 km are regional highways. The rest are feeder roads not suitable for heavy or sustained traffic.

The highway routes, which may be considered for transshipment, are given below:

- a. Route 1: Benapole - Jessore - Mawa - Sylhet - Tamabil/Karimgonj or Brahmanbaria - Akhaura/Kasba.
- b. Route 2: Benapole - Jessore - Aricha - Sylhet - Tamabil/Karimgonj.
- c. Route 3: Benapole - Paksey - JMB - Sylhet - Tamabil/Karimgonj or JMB - Brahmanbaria - Akhaura/Kasba.

d. Route 4: Rohanpur - Rajshahi - JMB - Sylhet - Tamabil/Karimgonj or JMB - Brahmanbaria - Akhaura/Kasba.

e. Route 5: Hilli - Bogra - JMB - Sylhet - Tamabil/Karimgonj or JMB

f. Route 6: Banglabandha- Bogra - JMB - Sylhet - Tamabil/Karimgonj or JMB - Brahmanbaria - Akhaura/Kasba.

Routes 1, 2 and 3 will be favoured as possible transshipment routes. Vehicles using these routes will have to negotiate the river ferry at Mawa, Aricha and Paksey respectively. The Mawa - Dhaka segment of Route 1 is a regional highway class road and traffic is already quite heavy i. e., over 5000 vehicles per day. Route 2 also has to negotiate the river ferry at Aricha and the quality of road between Faridpur and Rajbari is of regional highway class. Traffic density between Aricha - Dhaka - Narshingdi is very high. Route 3 has to use the river ferry over Padma at Paksey. The road from Paksey to Pabna is not suitable for heavy traffic. The Dhaka segment of the route already suffers from severe traffic congestion. Routes 4 and 5 are goods transported and moderate traffic until JMB. However, these routes are far from the major commercial centers in West Bengal. Route 6 is suitable for traffic emanating from Nepal and to a lesser extent, Bhutan. The river ferries at Mawa, Aricha and Paksey are major bottlenecks at present.

The construction of the bridge at Paksey is progressing well, but all highway routes have to pass through the greater Dhaka area, which already suffers from very heavy traffic congestion, and the system is unable to cope with the projected growth in domestic traffic. A Dhaka bypass highway system

and bridges at Mawa and Paksey will be needed before considering road-based transshipment. With the opening of the bridge over Meghna at Bhairab and upgrading of the Dhaka - Sylhet highway, Routes 3, 4 and 5 may be possible transshipment routes. Road based freight movement has the advantage of flexibility, but the national highway system does not have the excess capacity to absorb additional regional/ international traffic.

Creation of such capacity will require massive investment and given the paucity of land, effect on environment and projected growth of domestic traffic, may not be possible at all. Indian roads are built to higher axle load specification (10. 2 tons) than those in Bangladesh (8. 2 tons)<sup>25</sup> and therefore Indian trucks are designed to carry heavier loads than the load-bearing capacity of our roads. Therefore, sustained Indian truck traffic on Bangladesh highways is likely to cause damage in the order of 3. 83 times than the normal wear and tear at standard axle-load. <sup>26</sup> Major and sustained investment in the roads and highways system by India will have to be negotiated while negotiating transshipment proposals.

### 5. 3 Chittagong Port

Chittagong Port is attractively sited as a port of entry for transshipment to NER using rail or road extension. Chittagong Port is presently considered very inefficient and one of the most expensive ports in the world. It takes an average of 7-10 days to clear a ship. The highest traffic density along the Chittagong - Akhaura route is presently 37 trains per day with the Akhaura - Shahbazpur segment having a density of. Therefore, the railway link may be able to take some additional traffic but this will always be subject to traffic

growth on the Chittagong-Dhaka route. The Chittagong-Sylhet highway has extremely heavy traffic up to Comilla but thereafter the density is low. The Comilla-Sylhet highway needs up-grading from regional to national highway category. Therefore, in the present state of infrastructure, road transshipment from Chittagong to Assam has a very limited capacity.

#### 5. 4 Inland Water Transport (IWT)

IWT has historically been the most important mode of transport for the country. In Bangladesh, 30% of all cargo and 15% of passenger traffic (1989)<sup>27</sup> are transported by inland waterways. Waterways are the cheapest mode of transportation for both cargo and passengers. IWT is not only used for intra-country movement but a significant amount of import-export traffic is also routed through it. According to the Inland Water Transport Authority (IWTA), the total length of navigable waterways is about 6000 km of which about 1700 km are navigable throughout the year, and the rest are available only during the rainy season (3-6 months).<sup>28</sup> Possible waterways for river transshipment round the year are:

- a. Chittagong - Chandpur - Baghabari/Nagarbari - Chilmari - to Assam.
- b. Chittagong - Chandpur - Bhairab Bazar/Ashuganj - by road to Assam /Tripura.
- c. Kolkata - Barisal - Chandpur -Bhairab Bazar/Ashuganj - by road to Assam /Tripura.
- d. Kolkata - Barisal - Baghabari/Nagarbari - Chilmari - to Assam.

## 6. Traffic jam

### 6. 1 Traffic jam in Dhaka

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, has a great variety of tradition. Dhaka's eye-catching architectures and other famous installations are known and acclaimed at home and abroad. This is the city with historical background and loved by visitors at home and abroad for Shaheed Minar, National Museum, Lalbagh Kella, Dhaka University, Ramna Park, Suhrawardy Udyan, Mirpur Zoo and many other beautiful and historical places of interest. Being the capital city, Dhaka has many advantages for higher and specialised education, employments, trade and commerce. As such, Dhaka always attracts people from other parts of the country. Apart from many advantages, Dhaka is burdened with many problems also, namely - housing problem, sanitation problem and problem related to water logging, etc. Yet, among many other problems, Dhaka city has been experiencing severe traffic-problem which is a common phenomenon in the city. The city-dwellers, city-planners, policy makers, the experts and researchers who think about the city will unanimously agree that Dhaka is one of the most unplanned cities of the world. It is certainly a wonder how this megapolis manages to survive. Nonetheless, it manages to function somehow. The inhabitants living in this city are now approximately over 10 million, although there is perhaps no statistics about the exact number of population of Dhaka city.

Survey carried out randomly by different Authorities provided different data about the number of population in the city. However, it is estimated that

population of Dhaka will not be less than 15 million and yet the city is experiencing influx of population every day from different parts of the country due to the opportunities available and lack of opportunities in the areas from where they come. Dhaka city is lengthy in south and northern directions while its width consisting of east and western directions is few kilometers only. There is hardly any scope of its expansion in eastern and western side to a visible extent. Dhaka city situation is more alarming mainly due to vehicular movement and traffic jam. There are different types of vehicular namely, car, bus, jeep, truck, minibus, microbus, auto-rickshaw, tempo, mini-truck, motorcycles and innumerable numbers of rickshaws. Many of the vehicles that ply on Dhaka's streets daily are faulty and emit black smoke in excess of the prescribed limit. Black smoke is primary unburning carbon that is agglomerated into small particles caused by overload and faulty engine condition of vehicles.

Among others, notable causes of traffic jam include violation of traffic rules, deplorable road condition, random stoppage of vehicles, unauthorized parking and use of footpath illegally. Moreover, for growing urbanization and affluence, the number of vehicles is also rising, contributing to more and more traffic jams. Narrow roads and congestion are aggravating the situation further. To quote AKM Shahidul Haque, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner that one of the main reasons of traffic-jam is due to unauthorised parking of vehicles here and there. It is learnt that registered number of rickshaws available in Dhaka city is around 86, 000 but actual number of the rickshaws is likely to be many times more having no registration. This poses serious threat in the traffic system of Dhaka city.



There are three bus terminals in the city. These are: Mohakhali, Gabtoli and Sayedabad. There is a bus stand at Phulbaria, Gulistan. There are innumerable numbers of ticket counters adjacent to main traffic points. The worst traffic-vulnerable points include, among others, Jatrabari, Hatkhola, Shapla Chattar, Gulistan, Dainik Bangla, Paltan, New Market, Science Laboratory area, Shahbag, Bangla Motor, Sonargaon-crossing, Panthopath, Farmgate, Manik Mian Avenue, Asadgate, Shyamoli, Kalyanpur, Gabtoli, Mirpur-Goolchakkar, Mohakhali, Khilgaon, Banani, Mouchak, Kakrail and Malibagh. Now-a-days residential areas are also experiencing heavy traffic-jam. The areas include Dhanmondi, Banani, Gulshan and other prime residential locations. This is due to establishment of many schools, colleges, private universities and other educational institutions in those areas. Moreover, many offices, particularly private-owned offices and factories, are also located in the residential areas resulting in heavy traffic-jam. Anybody crossing the areas can easily visualize the situation is grave as students with their guardians are waiting and waiting to reach destinations and others going to their work places.

Everyday work-hours are unnecessarily wasted due to traffic jam. It has a great economic impact on production and thus on our economy. Traffic-jam causes untold sufferings to the people going to offices and various destinations.

Traffic-jam causes air pollution which affects the respiratory tract, causes irritation, headache, fatigue, asthma, high blood pressure, heart diseases and cancer. Experts say if this trend continues unabated, most residents of

the metropolis would become exposed to the risk of those ailments and different other health hazards and complications. The development of mental faculty of children would be impaired by lead pollution that could also affect the central nervous system and causes of renal damage and hypertension. The massive traffic congestion is taking its toll on human health, economy, environment and other anthropomorphic activities. This price tag is rather high when people have to spend hours unnecessarily on the road in sweltering heat, not to speak of the high humidity. The resulting misery generated by high heat and humidity takes its toll in human health. To add insult to the injury, the unpleasantness this high misery index generates slows down the productivity of a person. The traffic problem of Dhaka is hindering the growth of this city and, at large, Bangladesh both. On every intersection the drivers become quite unruly.

A first time visitor may think that people here are the most wild who have no respect for law of the land. This is indeed a serious matter. Behavioral scientists have long since done experiments to show that even insects demonstrate aggressive behavior when they are placed in a crowded situation. Therefore, it comes as no surprise to see that Dhaka's pedestrians, the rickshaw pullers, baby taxi drivers, van wallahs, and bus and truck drivers all vie for tiny spaces with noticeable aggression and utter disregard for others' right of way. This obviously creates serious problems such as unnecessary traffic holdup and some unhappy incidents. Serious vehicular-related accidents are growing at an accelerated rate for growing traffic problem.

By any calculation, if we note, Dhaka is not a city of vast areas. The width (east-west direction) is few kilometers. The city could have moved only in the North-South direction. This imposes a serious restriction on the availability of land. But this severe paucity of land had hardly diminished the growth rate of this city. Any legitimate city planner worth his merits would not recommend the city of Dhaka for people over 1-2 million. The ever-growing population had easily exceeded this capacity by 10 to 15 times already. And there is no sign that the population growth in this city is abating. The present road system of Dhaka, which is hardly adequate for moving vehicles for 1-2 million people, will virtually collapse when the population of this mega polis will increase further. It is hoped that urban planners of Dhaka are doing their clearheaded thinking right now or else the system will collapse right before their eyes.

## 6. 2 Traffic jam in Chittagong

Intolerable traffic jams at the important roads in the port city have made lives of citizen miserable here in Chittagong. No body can reach the destination with in schedule time due to the traffic jams every where in the city. But, traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) is doing nothing in this regard. According o the sources, there are traffic jams at Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) area, Katgor, Steel Mills Bazar, Cemen Crossing, Salt Golla point, Custom and Port point, Biswa Road Point, Barik Building, Agrabad, Pathantuli, Dewan Hat, Tiger Pass, WASA point, GEC point, Sholoshahar point, Bohadderhat, Chandgaon Thana point, Chawkbazar, Chittagong College and Mohoshin College point, Anderkillah,

Cheragi Pahar, DC Hill point, Enayet Bazar, New Market, Reajuddin Bazar points, Railway station point, Badamtoli, Kadam Toli, Kotwali point, Lal Dighi point, Pahartoli point, Bokshir Hat, Shah Amanat Bridge area, Foujdar Hat and premises of maximum schools and colleges. No body can reach his/her destination with in the scheduled time due to the random traffic jams here in Chittagong.

There is no bus stand in the city. As a result, the buses are used to wait at the roads for passengers. There is no taxi and tempo or rider stands. These vehicles are also used to stand in the road. Besides, there are several lakhs of rickshaws without registration which cause the traffic jam in the city.

Chittagong City Corporation used to give permission for rickshaws. But, there are many rickshaws which have no permission from City Corporation.

However, traffic department is not taking any action in this regard. Besides, some officials of CMP have alleged illegal cooperation for not using meters of CNG baby taxies. Sources said, around 60 thousand of trucks and 10 thousand of lorries and container movers use to run from Chittagong sea port area every day. Besides, thousands of vehicles including car, buses, taxies, tempos and riders have been running on the roads of Chittagong.

BRTA sources said, several lakhs of vehicles are running every day on roads of Chittagong. But, there are inadequate numbers of roads for running such huge numbers of vehicles.

The roads of Chittagong are not so wide and modern. Besides, Chittagong is a city of more than half crores of people. On the other hand, traffic department of CMP has no control over the situation. Most of the traffic

polices allege that they are doing their duties without any liability. They engage in taking bribes from trucks and Lorries. They never take any action for solving the problem of traffic jam. The officials of traffic department said that there was shortage of manpower in the traffic department and such small number of manpower cannot control the situation. But, the traffic jam is now under control, the officials added. The Mayor of Chittagong Alhaj A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury said, several projects cost around taka 244 crore are under process. Of these, we would re-carpet the damaged roads. Besides, we would construct some flyovers for smooth movement of vehicles by removing traffic jam in the port city.

#### 7. Security and Sovereignty of Bangladesh |

India is such a country to have been failed in every test of friendship, continuing to show the big brotherly attitude towards neighboring countries, remaining reluctant to consider dignity of its neighboring countries, stimulating unrest, creating suspicion and uncertainty between them. To this end, which country in the world would offer transit across its surface to such a country? We the people of Bangladesh do not consider India as an enemy or rival. Our expectation is only that India would show the same respect as we have as a sovereign country. It has been cleared by overseeing India's foreign policy towards Bangladesh over the years is to put pressure and meet the demand. This sort of foreign policy has been visualized again when two BDR men and two tenants of Bangladesh have been killed by the Indian boarder security force (BSF), most probably due to some comments made by foreign adviser of Bangladesh regarding not to give transit to India, just prior to the negotiations between the two countries in India.

7. 1 Why Bangladesh would not mull over transit offer by India? Is there any room for trust and faith that's firmly required between the two countries? No, certainly not. Rather, this faithlessness and lack of confidence is created by India only because of their big brotherly attitude from India. India articulates transit as an economic issue. Ok that's good. But, where is the certainty of economic benefit in the in returns for transit? Is there any assurance that we would not have to sit for a bargaining meeting to get a hold of money promised by India? Bangladesh is being experienced this sort of legacy from India. India is, time and again, infringing the treaties with Bangladesh. Sheikh Mujib has ratified the constitution as soon as he came back to the country from India following handing over the Berubari under Mujib-Indira boarder treaty. But, India has reneged on its promises to ratify the constitution of their own. Is Bangladesh being paid water in accordance with treaty? Answer is certainly not.

Attention from India to minimize the incredible US\$ 2 billion dollar trade deficit is being noticed at all? Not yet today. India is not making any venture to remove tariff barrier on commodities, is not ensuring the entrance of tariff free commodity, rather twisting unnecessary boarder problem by fencing instead of resolving 6. 5km unsettled boarder. They keep themselves implicated in captivating the possession of newly surfaced islands instead of solving the problem South Talpotti. 1400 Bangladeshi have been killed notoriously by the BSF throughout 2000-2007 according to Human Rights Organization Report. Crime like abduction has been daily event. No country in the world, in the wake of numerous problems, would not offer transit, accordingly, why Bangladesh? A lot of things including sovereignty of

Bangladesh must be taken into account prior to offering-transit. How much Bangladesh is all set relating to roads with 4 lens? And how much grounding it has for repairing the roads and also for long time security?

The most important thing is to be taken into account that the Bangladesh would have nothing to do against India having been a regional power with atomic weapons if it dispatches conventional arms and military weapons to north-eastern provinces through Bangladesh. Thus, Bangladesh would become an everlasting enemy and be targeted by separatist group of north-eastern provinces if transit is given. The separatist group may launch attack inside Bangladesh. Consequently, security measures would be impeded and a turbulence situation would be come into view. Patriotic BDRs and boarder-side farmers who have given their blood and sacrifice themselves to protect the country , the children who became orphan, the widow who lost her husband- these all will sacrifice themselves, but will not leave a bit room for transit. It appears to have been divided the territory of Bangladesh into two sides because of transit route if you observe in the view of security. This is being said that Indian commodity would be dispatched in the form of sealed, Bangladesh would have no control over the sealed thing.

India seems to have been created a ground for dispatching military weapons to north-eastern provinces in the name of transit system across Bangladesh if necessary. To this end, Indian forces may get down in soul of Bangladesh, that means through transit or corridor a crocodile is to be invited digging a canal by Bangladesh. The relation between India and China is much more related with transit across Bangladesh. As of today, boarder dispute between

India and China yet to be solved and apprehensions of war between the two countries having atomic weapons should not be denied. So, in that prospective war India would bring her troops to north-eastern provinces through Bangladesh as it is happened during Second World War in the fate of Belgium. If India-China war is took place, India will conquer Bangladesh by virtue of transit or corridor as Hitler conquered Belgium. Half of the total military of India has been deployed in the seven sisters region to tackle the unrest there. As India is required more troops there, it cannot be brought to a standstill if it utilizes the transit facility for the purpose of sending troops and military ingredients.

It might be presumed that if a war between India and Nepal is happened, the Shiliguri corridor would be closed and in that case Indian troops would have no other way but to march forward by transit route across Bangladesh. In that hasty moment a great military power like India could be defied. In 1996 the ULFA leader Poresh Borua has made it clear and said Bangladesh will be targeted and get attacked if it assists India that goes against our Liberation movement. So, transit and sovereignty cannot be departed. 7. 2 Nehru Doctrine, Transit and South Asia Demand for transit or corridor across the territory of Bangladesh and ascertaining of unilateral supremacy of India throughout the South Asia all these are integrally connected and based on Nehru doctrine. Nehru used to dream India to be in the same queue with USA, USSR and China, in the power politics. At the same time, India would be in a state of determinant and chief controller of South Asia is the main theme of Nehru Doctrine.



The theory is functioning behind making the South Asian countries dependent on India and ascertaining supremacy of India in this region is the Nehru Doctrine. The comment of Bhobani Sen Gupta in this context is worth mentioning it is as follows- India will not tolerate an external intervention in a conflict situation in any South Asian country, if the intervention has any implicit or explicit anti Indian implication. No South Asian government must therefore ask for external military assistance with an anti Indian-bias from any country. If a South Asian country genuinely needs to deal with a serious internal conflict situation, it should ask help from neighboring countries including India. The exclusion of India from such a contingency will be considered to be an anti-Indian move on the part of government concerned. If this is be the latent dream and state character of India, how much it will be the horrifying, awful, dire, calamitous and grim that is comprehensible to all.

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8. Seven Sisters don't want to be " Indian": Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and " Arunachal Pradesh" (South Tibet)

Seven Sisters - Unlikely ' Indians' in NE

Map of the North East States of India Map of the North East States of India.

The Seven Sisters of India are the seven relatively unexplored and isolated Indian states — Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh — which for many years was closed to foreigners. This land, better known to the world as the North-Eastern region of India, borders China, Tibet, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. India's remote northeast, the area comprising the seven states stretching from Tibet in the north to

Myanmar (Burma) in the south, among them Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Assam. In this area, rarely visited by foreigners, peoples scarcely known to the Western world continue a way of life steeped in ancient ritual. Extensive, complex patterns of violence continue in the seven states of northeastern India. The main insurgent groups in the northeast include two factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in Nagaland; Meitei extremists in Manipur; and the all Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) and the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in Tripura. The proclaimed object of many of these groups is to break out of the Indian union, creating new, independent nations.

The 7 states of the Indian Northeast: Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and South Tibet occupied by Bharat which calls it "Arunachal Pradesh" The 7 states of the Indian Northeast: Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and South Tibet occupied by Bharat which calls it "Arunachal Pradesh" Their stated grievances against the Indian Government range from charges of neglect and indifference to the endemic poverty of the region, to allegations of active discrimination against the tribal and non-tribal peoples of the region by the center. The oldest of these conflicts, involving the Nagas, started with India's independence in 1947. The insurgency was eventually quelled in the early 1980s through a mixture of repression and co-optation. Only after Independence and re-organisation of the States was a semblance of real Government authority and administration brought into these far-flung areas. This was strongly resented by the newly educated elite of the tribal societies, who construed the efforts of the Government as an encroachment on their tribal way of life

and freedom. Thus, on the basis of racial, cultural and religious differences from the majority stock of the plains, insurgency in the NE India came into being. Issues of ideology were by and large irrelevant to the insurgency movements of the NE region.

The single predominant factor that has withstood the test of time in this regard is either ethnic (such as in Assam and Tripura) or tribal as in Nagaland. It has also been seen that, within a particular State, insurgency by one set of tribals raises its head, finds roots and spreads and then dies with an agreement with the Government. Thereafter, in the same geographical area, another lesser tribe/sub tribe undergoes the same cycle. Thus in Mizoram, once Lushai insurgency came to an end, the Hmars were up in arms. In the same manner, the Naga insurgency once spearheaded by the Semas passed into the hands of the Konyaks in Northern Nagaland and the Tangkhuls in Southern Nagaland and NE Manipur with the once dominant Semas and Angamis relegated largely to the side lines. Similar to the Bodos, the Karbi Anglongs of Assam are showing all the signs of the itch to raise yet another movement. Thus it is evident that even if, at the point of origin ideology had any role to play, in the long run it is the ethnic and tribal perceptions that truly matter.

Insurrection India: India cracks map of insurgency: Naxalites, Maoists, Seven Sisters, Kashmir, Punjab, Tamil. Bangladesh map: Siliguri corridor is vulnerable to an expanding China map. The insurgency in the NE states first manifested itself in Nagaland and there after mushroomed to other areas. The insurgency in Nagaland has thus, in a sense, been an umbrella for all

other insurgencies in the region. It is essential to know the historical context leading to these insurgencies. The map of the NE has been altered with new lines drawn to recognize new political and administrative realities. The names of these entities have changed; the Naga Hills has become Nagaland, the Lushai Hills has changed to Mizoram and the North Eastern Frontier Agency, still known to many simply as NEFA, has become Arunachal Pradesh. The jungles of SE Asia sweep down from Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh across seven other nations - Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, Malaysia and Vietnam-spanning political boundaries regardless of physical frontiers. Ethnic coalitions, oral traditions and lifestyles based on respect for nature have mattered more in these regions than frontiers.

Here men and women, with common origins but different nationalities, share a racial, historic, anthropological and linguistic kinship with each other that is more vital than their links with the mainstream political centers, especially at Delhi, Dhaka and Rangoon, or Yangon, as it is known today. It is this affinity that has played a role in the unrest and insurgencies that have long troubled the NE of India. Affinity and Identity; these, more than any other factors, have represented the principal compulsions that triggered the Naga, Mizo, Meitei, Tripuri and Assamese affirmation of separateness from the non-Mongolian communities that dominate the India subcontinent. India's NE is a misshapen strip of land, linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor just 20 kms wide at its slimmest, which is referred to as the " Siliguri Corridor". This region has been the battle ground for generations of sub-national identities. The anthropological composition of the inhabitants of North Eastern India presents a kaleidoscopic variety. Descendants of Aryan

and Dravidian stocks co-mingle with the Indo-Burmese and Indo-Tibetan strains.

Owing to its geographical isolation from the rest of India and the relative primitiveness of the tribal societies existing here, the region remained virtually cut off from the rest of India. From time immemorial till the near eclipse of the British Raj, and even to this day, this situation of isolation has continued in one form or the other. To give a fair account of the feeling of non-“Indianans” of the tribal peoples, it is essential to understand that the phenomenon is more or less reciprocal with the rest of India being largely ignorant of the problems and privations of the peoples of NE India. One striking example of the psychological aloofness of the Indian people from this region is the massacre at Nellie in 1976. This incident in which over 3000 men, women and children were slaughtered in one go, could engage Indian media attention for barely two weeks. There is now a perceptible change in attitudes. The sheer scale and intensity of the ongoing political violence in Assam and the resultant continuous media coverage has brought about a situation where the rest of India is now aware of the existence of the region. Similarly, the opening of roads and related means of communication in the region has served, in conjunction with the spread of education, to bring about an awareness of the rest of India.

The veritable flood of Hindi movies and their popularity in the region have also assisted in no small measure in this slow but sure process of absorption in the Indian mainstream. In October 2002 a dozen underground organizations of the North East India constituted a platform to carry forward

their armed struggle together. The organizations had consolidated their bases in a common area of Burma — which they call “Liberated Burma” — with the help of Kachin Independence Army (KIA). An area of Burma bordering Nagaland of the North East India has been occupied by the militants, in which they have reportedly set up as many as 20 camps to provide training to their cadres. A stretch of Burma opposite of Mon District of Nagaland in the North East has been occupied by the militant groups, but the Burmese government cannot take action against them. Bhutan on 15 December 2003 launched a military crackdown on three Indian separatist groups – the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO). The three groups, fighting for independent homelands, had set up well-entrenched bases inside the dense jungles in southern Bhutan. The ULFA and the NDFB are rebel groups from the border state of Assam, while the KLO is from West Bengal. Bhutan claimed it had smashed all the 30 rebel camps, but admitted the militants were still holed up inside the kingdom.

## 9. Economic aspects of the proposed transit

### 9. 1 Background: bilateral trade and exchange rates

In 2004 India's officially recorded exports to Bangladesh were about \$1.7 billion but its imports from Bangladesh were just \$78 million. Since 1996/97 Indian exports to Bangladesh (in nominal US dollars) have been growing at 9.1% annually, just slightly above the general rate of growth of its total merchandise exports (8.4%), but India's imports from Bangladesh over the

same period have grown on average at only 3% annually, compared to average growth of its total imports of 9.2%. Consequently Bangladesh's bilateral trade deficit with India has been increasing rapidly, on average at about 9.5% annually. For India, trade with Bangladesh is a very small part of its total trade-just over one percent since the mid-1990s, and currently about 3 percent of its total exports and a miniscule share (0.01%) of its total imports. For Bangladesh, however, India has now become the largest single source of its imports (about 16% of the total, ahead of China and Singapore) and accounts for about a tenth of its total trade, despite exports to India which have declined to only slightly above 1% of total exports. Most Bangladesh imports from India come via the land border. According to incomplete Bangladesh data, during the 1990s about three quarters of imports were by land and river, but this proportion has declined since then to between 50 and 60 percent. Two reasons for the decline in the share of the land border trade are:

\* A requirement imposed by Bangladesh in July 2002 that two major imports from India-sugar and textile yarns-could henceforth only be imported by sea. The reason given for these measures was the control of illegal activities and smuggling at or near the land border Customs posts. \* Increasing congestion and delays at the land border crossings-especially at Petrapole-Benapole-as a result of inadequate infrastructure and administrative capacity on both the Indian and Bangladesh sides.

Studies of informal trade between India and Bangladesh have consistently found a similar pattern to the pattern of formal trade i. e. large volumes of

goods being smuggled from India to Bangladesh, but much smaller volumes being smuggled in the other direction. This general conclusion that there is also a substantial Indian trade surplus on informal account is confirmed once again in the studies done as part of this project. The appreciation of the real Taka/Rupee exchange by about 50% between mid-1980s up to about 1999, would have contributed to the expansion of both formal and informal Indian exports to Bangladesh, and retarded the growth of Bangladesh exports to India. However, recorded Bangladesh imports from India have grown even more rapidly since the exchange rate trend was reversed after 1999, and Bangladesh exports to India have continued to stagnate.

Two possibilities arise: (a) faster productivity growth in India increased the difficulty of Bangladesh exports competing there, offsetting the favorable trend in the exchange rate since 1999; (b) insurmountable tariff and non-tariff barriers constraining Bangladesh's major exports (RMG) or minor exports which have experienced rapid growth elsewhere. Bangladesh's trade deficit with India has been consistently offset by trade surpluses with other countries, especially with the US and the EU, and by worker remittances. These surpluses have in turn supported the exchange rate of the Taka with other currencies, including the Taka/Rupee rate, and have both enabled, and have been a consequence of, macroeconomic policies which have avoided destabilizing fluctuations in the balance of payments, domestic prices and the exchange rate. As in other countries, there is no economic logic in the idea that trade should be balanced with individual trading partners, and the real concerns behind contrary arguments are usually efforts to prevent or moderate import competition.



In Bangladesh it is often argued that the deficit is aggravated by India's protectionist policies that have hobbled Bangladesh exports to India. However, for the past 8 years India's imports from the world as a whole have been growing at over 9 percent a year recently, each year's increase in imports has been exceeding Bangladesh's total exports. Many of these imports have been coming in over considerably higher tariffs than the tariffs faced by Bangladesh exporters, owing to the extensive tariff preferences given to Bangladesh by India under SAFTA, and to the extent that there are non-tariff and bureaucratic barriers, they are probably more constraining than the ones that Bangladesh would face. This suggests that the low level and slow growth of Bangladesh's exports to India reflect fundamental comparative advantage factors, not discriminatory import policies.

This issue is also considered in the consultant studies in the light of what is likely to happen were there free trade between India and Bangladesh. The general finding of the studies is that some aspects of India's import regime are retarding Bangladesh exports, but that in the short and medium run the potential for expanded exports to India is not very great, even under an FTA or with the full implementation of SAFTA.

## 9. 2 Economic cost

India plays a major role in Bangladesh's trade sector. In 1996 about 25 percent (approximately) of total imports (both legal and illegal) in Bangladesh came from India. Bangladeshi products constituted only 0. 5 percent (approximately) of total Indian imports. The economic relationship between Bangladesh and India has the potential of being mutually and

rewarding. However, at present the situation is one of interdependence but of one sided dependence on the part of Bangladesh. The large bilateral trade deficit that exists in favor of India needs to be reduced before this scenario can be changed. Similar to India's denial of transit facilities to Nepal and Bhutan, Bangladesh has long denied India overland transit facilities, which would significantly reduce costs of transporting goods to India's north eastern state. However, now that India has acceded transit to Nepal and Bhutan, it is time to rethink alongside a number other issues, the issue of comprehensive transit for and through other nations as well.

### 9. 3 Trade deficit between Bangladesh and India

India's formal and informal exports to Bangladesh stand at around \$5 billion while Bangladesh's exports are about \$358 million during the financial year of 2007-2008. It is quite true that India's economy is large and there could be a reasonable size of trade deficit with India. The deficit so large that people are concerned that India should do something to reduce the gap. Otherwise it may be perceived by majority of people in Bangladesh rightly or wrongly, " economic exploitation" of Bangladesh by India. Such perception is not healthy for bilateral relations.

### 9. 4 Economics and Politics are related issues

Actually transit is not only an economic issue but also a political issue. In this sense, the government of our country should allow transit wisely. Because once the transit is allowed to India by Bangladesh, it will not be in a position to take it back. India is emerging as a powerful economic force, besides its

expanding political clout. It is also building war fleets to maintain its growing presence in the Indian Ocean up to Africa. India needs transit facilities via Bangladesh territories for its own national interests. Bangladesh will, no doubt, enjoy some economic gains by offering the same. But the question that comes here is whether transit is only a bilateral economic issue to the exclusion of the needs for promoting wider regional connectivity. If it is a bilateral issue, then the focus should also be placed and certainly in no secondary way, on resolving all other bilateral issues with India. Bangladesh has yet many unresolved bilateral problem with India and all concerned do know what these are. Without India taking a strong pro-active move to resolve such issues through actions and not words, the granting of the transit will have reasons to fuel suspicions and misunderstanding about India's goals and objectives.

If transit is given unilaterally to India, it will become a politically charged issue in Bangladesh. It will then tend to encourage here the "extremist" of all sorts, besides causing others to raise some concern in one way or other. From the Indian perspectives, it is not difficult for anyone concerned to understand or appreciate the situation about transit. Without the transit, it will be somewhat difficult to address the problems, some of which have been getting tougher and tougher for India in eight north Indian states. Also these Indian states will then, someday or other, have to depend on Bangladesh for manufactured goods. But with the transit, India can sell its own products to the region and, in that event, Bangladesh would lose a potential market. India does not want to allow Bangladesh land routes for its trade with Nepal and Bhutan. If allowed, Bangladesh gains from trade but a very little amount.

Because, very little volume of items are exported those two countries.

Besides other things, India thinks such a facility to Bangladesh could endanger Indian security. How then can Bangladesh allow transit facilities to India without considering other issues?

Bangladesh would not know what goods India would be sending to the troubled north east, if the transit is allowed. India could use it to step up its counter-insurgency operation in its north-east. It could then draw Bangladesh into an uncomfortable situation. In the process, Bangladesh could become the target of both India and the insurgent groups; It would mean increase security problems for Bangladesh. According to officials, on August 20, 2007 New Delhi gave to Dhaka a draft deal on transit for 5 years, to cover the movement of passenger and cargo. In the draft, New Delhi proposed allowing Indian vehicles carrying goods and container cargoes to enter Bangladesh at Benapole land port for going to the Indian provinces of Meghalay, Tripura and Mizoram through the Bangladesh border points of Tamabil, Bibirbazar and Khagrachori. Despite mounting pressure from New Delhi, Bangladesh did not allow India the transit for lack of infrastructure and logistics, absence of in-depth assessment of possible economic gains from it and its internal security implications. In its latest proposal, New Delhi tacitly avoided using the word transit, considering political sensitivity in Bangladesh.

Whatever the wording may be, the draft, if finally endorsed, would be facto mean allowing transit for India, according to informed circles. In this backdrop, it has to be appreciated by all concerned that transit in the way

the proposal has come from India, is not merely an economic proposition. It has political implications as well. Furthermore, it is to be noted here that the road infrastructures in Bangladesh on major sections of the related network are already under strains, not being in position to ensure smooth flow of traffic, inclusive of passengers and cargo. If transit is given under such circumstances to India, the Bangladeshi business will have to pay a heavy price for reasons of congestion, jam, delays and other related problems for transporting their own merchandise within the country.

## 10. Conclusion

Bangladesh and India are close geographical neighbors. While Bangladesh feels 'surrounded' by India, India also feels that her landlocked NER states are Bangladesh locked. Geography and common economic interests dictate that Bangladesh and India co-operate in the transportation sector. There is an economic case for transit/transshipment of Indian goods by road, rail and river across Bangladesh to and from NER. Road transport infrastructure in Bangladesh has limited capacity, indeed, in critical places like the Dhaka region, no excess capacity at all to accommodate transshipment traffic. Absence of bridges at Mawa and Paksey also severely limit the capacity for road-based transshipment. Road transshipment of Indian goods can be undertaken only after a massive and sustained investment by the user country i. e. India on upgrading and maintaining Bangladesh highways.

Fears have been voiced that transshipment will result in increased smuggling from India to Bangladesh. It has been stated earlier that over US \$ 1 billion worth of goods are smuggled from India into Bangladesh every year. The

separatist group may launch attack inside Bangladesh. Consequently, security measures would be turbulence situation would be come into view. The corridor through Bangladesh could increase Indian Intelligence Service activities in Bangladesh. It could lead to spreading of AIDS and could become a potential route for drug-trafficking. The road and ports of Bangladesh could get overcrowded, thus resulting in poor efficiency in domestic industries. A country is not made up of its economy only; it has its political, ideological and popular faces also. To sum up the whole condition, Bangladesh currently should not allow India the transit because of economic and non-economic reasons.

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