



The Brahmaputra As The Lifeline Of Travel And Trade

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Abstract - Throughout the beginning of time, the North-East Region has been linked to the rest of the world by riverine routes for both people and goods trade. In North East India, the Brahmaputra and Barak Rivers play a significant role in transportation. These rivers were heavily used for trade and transportation between the northeast and Kolkata during British rule as too. The rivers made it possible to export tea and other items to Kolkata and other areas of the world as the tea business in Assam grew. In 1844, the Brahmaputra was utilised by the British East India Company to link Kolkata and Dibrugarh. At about the same time, the Barak-Surma-Meghna navigation canal connected Kolkata with Silchar in Assam. The current study aims to determine how Assam's greater economic connection with the rest of the globe through the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route was made possible by the river system (IBPR).

keywords - Key Words: Brahmaputra, Travel and Trade, Assam, Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route.

Introduction:

Over the years, the potential of river transportation has gone uncontested, and it now constitutes a sizable portion of global transportation. A number of nations are currently taking initiatives to make better use of the available capacity and making investments in inland water transport. These efforts are being motivated by the numerous benefits of inland waterways, including cost effectiveness, relative fuel efficiency, and importance of mobility in addition to welfare and development of remote countries.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the main issues and future of riverine trade in Assam.
2. To draw attention to legislative initiatives for the Brahmaputra's restoration as a vital route for trade and travel.

Analysis

Major Riverine Trade Problems in Assam:

The Brahmaputra River flows across the Assamese floodplains until it disappears into the distance. Over its course, it receives more than 30 tributaries. The river has historically served as an inland transportation network. Ships and other vessels could travel freely to Kolkata during the British colonial era from anywhere in the Brahmaputra basin. The mobility between India and East Pakistan (which became Bangladesh in 1971 after its liberation war) was restricted due to the area's division into Pakistan and India, and all such movement and trade was halted as a result of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan conflict. Despite the fact that river services have been restored

and the 890-kilometer section of the Brahmaputra from Sadiya to Dhubri, which is on the border with Bangladesh, has been designated as the National Waterway No. 2, the infrastructure needed to sustain trade and transit is still insufficient.

Prospects of Riverine Trade in Assam:

Geographically separate from the rest of India, the Siliguri Corridor, which is only around 200 km long and 60 km wide, connects the North East of India to the mainland. Just through this corridor does all land trade between the North East and the rest of the nation. Because riverine trade is not only the most affordable and environmentally friendly mode of transportation, but also enables the long-awaited connection for businesses in the northeast through the marine network with the rest of the world, it will have a lot of trade potentialities if we develop it as an alternative mode of transportation via the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers. The only way to transport the massive and extremely heavy materials required for any industry's expansion is via waterways. The cost of moving products by river is roughly half that of moving them by road and about one-third by rail. Although it takes more time, with improved route management, that time will also be decreased. If products are transported by waterways, there is also less theft of those goods. Assam might gain access to foreign ports like Chittagong in Bangladesh if the Brahmaputra is made into a navigable national canal. This would give Assam an exposure to international trade and commerce. The Brahmaputra National Waterway 2 would act as the economic corridor that would have direct access to Chittagong Port in Bangladesh and the Haldia Port in West Bengal and boost trade with Southeast Asian countries.

Policies for Restoring Brahmaputra as the Center of Trade and Travel:

There is still a long way to go, but a number of initiatives unveiled during and after the recent Namami Brahmaputra river festival aim to revitalise the river as a commercial and transport network. Assam might gain access to foreign ports like Chittagong in Bangladesh if the Brahmaputra is made into a navigable national canal. Assam would be exposed to international business and trade as a result.

Since the Indian government's "Act East" policy is highlighted, the state is ideally situated to serve as India's connection to the ASEAN countries. Trade with Southeast Asian nations would increase thanks to the Brahmaputra National Waterway 2, which would serve as an economic corridor with direct access to the ports of Chittagong in Bangladesh and Haldia in West Bengal.

In 1988, the River Brahmaputra was designated National Waterway-2 (NW-2) for the 891 km stretch between Dhubri (Bangladesh Border) to Sadiya. A fairway with the appropriate depth and width, as well as terminals and day and night navigational aids, are now being created for the waterway.

For a period of five years, from 2020–2021 to 2024–2025, the Government of India has approved two projects for the development of the Inland Water Transport (IWT) infrastructure on two NWs (NW-2 and NW-16).

Project	Cost(in Rs./Crore)	Completion
National Waterway-2	461	March 2025
National Waterway-16	145	March 2025

Conclusion:

The People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Republic of India have a long-standing and tried-and-true Protocol on Transit and Commerce via Both Nations' Inland Waterways, according to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways. This Protocol, which was initially signed in 1972 (shortly after Bangladesh gained its independence), is a symbol of the camaraderie and shared history between the two countries. It was most

recently extended in 2015 for another five years with a clause that provided for its automatic renewal for a another five years, giving diverse stakeholders long-term confidence.

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