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# **Logistical Spaces - I**

## **Logistics and Social Governance**



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**Ranabir Samaddar & Snehashish Mitra**

**2016**



# Bridge of Spaces: East by Rear East, Ah! The Northeast

Ranabir Samaddar and Snehashish Mitra \*

Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) was supposed to be a Hitchcock picture to end all Hitchcock pictures. Cine lovers know it did not; rather it became a new template to view the eternally intriguing story of crime, spaces, mistaken identities, accidents in life, incognito runs, bare wide fields, attacks by insidious agencies of life, therefore what else but an attack on the hero by a crop duster plane, and a narrative that could end only as consummation in a tunnel. The film became a commentary on flight and fantasy, discrete spaces and links, which could be bridged only by a narrative.

The spatial invocations in India's Look East and Act East Policy, the links of these two policies (perhaps the same with minor variation in emphasis), their implications for the Northeast, the supposed changes in the map of resources and infrastructure there as consequence of India's looking eastward – all these at one level are, or at least seem to be, connected logically. But a closer examination suggests two complications: first, these different parts of the Look East policy may be argued as disparate, held tenuously only by a geopolitical logic but in their life-worlds existing separately; second, as the geopolitical logic connects these discrete parts, these spaces make sense only when bridged. When bridged however we have a new game of spaces: Is the Northeast then the Rear East, or is it a case of East by Northeast? What are those unknown insidious agencies of material life that link spaces in their destinies? What then is the larger story that produces these shifting spaces, gazes, identities, and perceptions? This paper argues that it is in the larger story of extraction of resources, logistical vision, and infrastructural (material and social) programmes under postcolonial capitalism and its interface with the neoliberal mode of governance that we shall find clue to how spaces are bridged and in the process acquire new identities. This is where spatial identities will be made, and any illusion of sovereign spatial identity will be quickly cut down by the cold sword of capital. Spaces will be identified by the bridge. Yet and as consequence of this, as this paper seeks to suggest, there will be areas and hence spaces excluded from this bridging operation waiting for future logistical operation. That is how capitalism proceeded in the past, and will proceed now.

Over the last decade there have been multiple conferences and consultancies on Look East policy accompanied with literatures on the different facets of Look East Policy. This paper seeks to keep those literatures in retrospect and unravel what Look East means for Northeast India by bringing out the different contours of reactions among the people of the region attested to the

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changing governance patterns and social equations. The paper follows the following trajectory – the first section explores pattern of resource extraction in the region and the associated contestations. The next section maps the logistical development taking place or planned in Northeast India through roadways and railways along with the multiple challenges poised to the same. By detailing the financial infrastructure in the region, the section on banking sector interrogates the nature of capital in Northeast India through the prism of neo-Keynesian framework. The section on border trade points to the ongoing development of border trading centres and the different kinds of impediments associated with it. The final section probes into the new regime of social governance emerging in Northeast India with an overall attempt to shift from security centric governance to trade centric governance by riding on liberalisation involving intensified flows of goods, people, and capital. Migration, gender, health and education have been elaborated in this section to compliment the understanding of governance in Northeast India.

## **Background**

Following up on India's *Look East* policy introduced in the early 1990s by the Indian government,<sup>1</sup> the new Indian government announced *Act East* policy almost simultaneously with the US declaration of its policy of *Pivot of Asia*.<sup>2</sup> The Look East policy evolved into a tool for greater economic engagement with its eastern neighbours, and forging strategic partnerships and security cooperation with countries of Southeast Asia and Far East, such as Korea and Japan. Following up on that, the new Indian government decided to focus more on improving relation with ASEAN and the East Asian countries. Possibly the new policy besides containing an element of gesture signals a more proactive role for India in this region combining strategic, military, trade, and economic cooperation. It also signals the collaboration between India and countries like Japan and Australia to balance the increasing influence of China in the Southeast Asian region. Implementation of the *Act East* policy aims to bolster its ties with the region. At the 2014 India-ASEAN and East Asia summits, India stressed freedom of navigation with regard to the South China Sea. In June 2015, India also sent a four-ship naval flotilla to Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Australia, as part of a visit to the South China Sea. In fact the Look East policy from the beginning had security component. It was then more aimed at finishing once and for all the insurgency problem in the Northeast region (NER) by way of opening up the region to Southeast Asia beginning from Burma and stretching up to Vietnam and covering the archipelagos of Indonesia, Philippines, and other islands in the region. Sea and land in this way promised to become interlocked elements in India's thrust eastward. In short the *Look East and Act East policies* have had military, political, and economic components. It is noteworthy that although Look East Policy was initiated in 1991, Northeast India featured late in the policy. It figured prominently during 2008 with the launch of 'North East Vision 2020'. The Vision Document in three volumes scans the region, its socio-economic problems and suggests ways for ushering in development.

If pivot is the name of the game, this paper will argue that we must look into relevant aspects of northeast India, which may be pivotal in determining the feasibility of *Look East/Act East* policy in the region. The paper will primarily argue that the *Look East/Act East* policy is designed as a template for a particular mode of accumulation and economic development, whose three most important components are: (a) extraction of resources; (b) logistical development with focus on infrastructure involving among others mobility of labour, and finally (c) evolution of a new regime of social governance as a strategic measure of counter insurgency in the background of decades of insurgency in the region, where communities have hitherto fought against the Indian state or each

other, and the logic of capital faces insurmountable impediments. The analysis of the multiple fault lines predicated on socio-political and environmental issues of what has been called the “troubled periphery”<sup>3</sup> gains importance in a consideration of the larger question of accumulation and development strategy in and for the region. The three elements of the strategy mentioned above will make sense only in the background of the larger thrust of the Indian state eastward, known by now after the familiar phrase, *look east and act east*.

## **Northeast as a Frontier and the Extraction of Resources**

India’s northeast through the agenda of *Look East* became a frontier for the thrust eastward, both in terms of political imagination and logistical implications. The region comprises eight states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura) and shares border with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar. Over the decades since India’s independence the NER had been deemed as underdeveloped, backward, and strife torn with ethno-militant violence. The region is one of the six biodiversity hotspots of the world, given its possession of abundant natural resources. The resources have provided sustenance to both indigenous and migrant communities, while serving as objects of extraction for British and Indian states. Tea, timber, and crude oil were the main resources which went into colonial accumulation, while post independence focus has gradually moved to additional resources like water (for hydroelectricity), uranium, coal, rubber plantation and jatropha plantation. Given the geopolitical location of the region the recent focus of the Indian state on the Northeast hinges on its agenda of expansion of bilateral ties with its eastern neighbours. Such activities have serious implications on the use and extraction of resources of the region, occasioning changes in the composition of the labour market and mobility. Therein lies the need to understand the changes which the region would undergo, and locate the relation between recent events and the direction of changes.

Northeast India’s tryst with development trajectory of the British and later the Indian state has involved extraction of resources accompanied by altering environmental landscapes, land relations, and massive displacement of the indigenous communities. Monirul Hussain, a well-known analyst of Northeast, has commented, “Development paradigm pursued vigorously by the post colonial Indian state has been essentially colonial in character and consequence. Hence it is capable of perpetuating brutality and indignity on a large section of its citizens. Of course it benefits a smaller section”.<sup>4</sup> Others have noted how indigenous ecological practices practiced by the indigenous communities like shifting cultivation in the hills have been a sore point to the state. Also as weapon against insurgent activities, successive postcolonial regimes have sponsored various types of commercial forestry through institutionalized support leading to alteration of the shifting cultivation regime in states like Mizoram and Tripura.<sup>5</sup> This transition has taken place across the NER where pattern of resource extraction has shifted from self subsistence to accumulation in market economy.

Energy sources have crucial role in this transition in the region. Hydroelectricity is deemed to be essential in transforming the NER into an energy powerhouse. According to one report, NER has hydroelectric potential of around 36,000 MW at 60 per cent load factor; this constituting about 44 per cent of the country’s total hydroelectric potential and translating into something like 80,000 MW of high value peaking power.<sup>6</sup> Such considerations were reflected in approving and funding of 168 mega dams in Northeast India. The North Eastern Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) inaugurated their first hydro power project in 2012; Mawphu (stage 2) hydro electric project on the river Umiew river in East Khasi Hills with an estimated cost of Rs 450 crores. Banking institutions have also involved themselves for investing in the energy sector; Central Bank of India has allotted

Rs. 100 crores for a hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh and Rs. 85 crores to Meghalaya Corporation Limited. Lower Subansiri dam (Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border) and Tipaimukh Dam (Manipur) have faced protests and resistance from local communities and organizations, apprehensive of massive displacement due to the development projects in the region such as Umiyam Dam, Bongaigaon oil refinery, or the Indian Institute of Technology at Guwahati. Protests against hydroelectric dams in Arunachal Pradesh have seen the involvement of Buddhist monks from the Tawang monasteries and unfortunate bloodbath during a protest. On 2 May 2016, two people, including a Buddhist monk, were killed and 10 injured in police firing in Tawang, a town perched at 3,000 metres above sea level in Arunachal Pradesh in the Eastern Himalayas, on the China border. Involvement of the Buddhist monks in the organization named Save Mon Region Federation (SMRF) along with student bodies and environmental groups have intensified the agitation, which has also created different lobbies within the Tawang monastery.<sup>7</sup>

Resource extraction also impacts on the local communities if one takes note of the controversy relating to uranium mining in the West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya. The government-owned Uranium Corporation of India has for long been trying to get access to the deposits of uranium, but has failed due to local opposition. A reasonable proposition for some, there is also a strong opposition to this on grounds of public health, local autonomy, and indigenous rights. Meghalaya has been a notorious site for rat hole coal mining which brings up once more labour and environmental concerns; Margherita, a small town in Upper Assam is also infamous for similar reasons.

The pattern of resource extraction has continued since the colonial period. In the present context the marked difference however is in the assertion of peoples' demand and resistance with regards to the resource politics. Monirul Hussain has captured some of the case studies of the northeast region in his work *Interrogating Development: State, Displacement and Popular Resistance in Northeast India*, to which we have already made reference. Hussain discusses various instances where people were displaced, also where the people collectively thwarted the infrastructural projects by mobilizing themselves beyond the ethnic categorizations. The nature of governance in the northeast has created multiple autonomous councils which complicates the interplay of legal provisions over resource ownerships. As land is inextricably tied to the nature of a community's identity, one comes across the movements by the Meitei, Ahom, Moran, Koch communities for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. While deemed as validation of a community's backwardness, the ST status entails one with reservations in government sectors along with the permissibility to buy lands in states like Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh which were created out of concerns for the indigenous communities and their relative autonomy. The hilly topography of the northeast region has made the valleys of the region prone to denser population which has triggered demands among the valley dominating community like the Meiteis<sup>8</sup> in Manipur to gain access to land in the hills which they are presently barred from buying as the hills are mostly populated by the ST (scheduled tribes) communities and governed by Article 371(C), which disallows the non-scheduled tribe communities to hold any land ownership in the hills. Basically developing in recent history as what can be called an economy of market along the foothills, which bears the characteristics of an extraction economy organised around coal and limestone, and a plantation economy around tea and timber, the entire scenario represents today what Dietmar Rothermund had termed long back "an enclave economy"<sup>9</sup> Besides other resources mentioned above, we can get some idea of mineral holdings and plantation resources in the region from Tables 1-3:

**Table 1: Mineral Resources in Northeast India (2012)**

	<b>Estimated Reserve</b>	<b>Distributed (%)</b>
Crude Petroleum (million tonnes)	178.71	23.53
Natural Gas (Billion cubic metre)	178.14	13.39
Coal (billion tonnes)	1.60*	0.55

*Source: Energy statistics 2013, Central Statistical Organisation. Reproduced & Compiled from ‘ Basic Statistics of North Eastern States 2015’, p. 259*

*\*The estimated reserve for coal comprises proved, indicated, and inferred categories.*

**Table 2: Plantation (Rubber) in Northeast India**

Unit	2000-2001	2009-2010
Area (hectares)	19,960	1,01,685
Production (tonnes)	4736	38,600

*Source: Indian Rubber Statistics, Volume 34, 2011, Published by the Rubber Board, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India; Basic Statistics of North Eastern States 2015, p. 228*

**Table 3: Plantation (Tea) in Northeast India**

Unit	2000	2011
Area (hectares)	2,78,470	2,38,371
Production ('000 kgs)	4,57,066	5,21,085*

*Source: NE Data Bank & Tea Board, Kolkata and Guwahati; Basic Statistics of North Eastern States 2015, p. 224*

While we continue with a discussion on resource extraction in the NER, we must remember what has been previously suggested, namely that the political economy of extraction is bound up with the questioning of ownership in the region. Speaking of resources, property relationship cannot be far behind. And the story of ownership is only partly economic, it is partly political also. Let us see the situation in some details in three NER states – Nagaland, Manipur, and Meghalaya.

## **Nagaland**

As we know, the post colonial integration of large parts of northeast India was driven by models of governance laid down in provisions like Article 371(A) and Article 371 (C) of the Indian constitution, with varying levels of autonomy and reach of the state’s jurisdiction. Negotiations between the Indian state and different claimants of people’s aspirations and sovereignty such as the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA)<sup>10</sup>, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)<sup>11</sup> and others have continued off and on. The strategy of the Indian state’s strategy to minimize issues of conflict was evident in recent past when the repatriation of ULFA leader Anup Chetia from Bangladesh was

facilitated<sup>12</sup>, ceasefire with NSCN (K) was renewed, and now Nagaland is reportedly poised to have its own state flag as a part of the peace accord.<sup>13</sup> The politics of autonomy have been reinvigorated in the wake of renewed drive of the Indian state to extract resources and harness energy from the natural resources of northeast India which hinges on the question of ownership. The exploration and extraction of petroleum in Nagaland has especially been contentious.

While a section of politicians and businessmen in Nagaland has wallowed in the dream of “petro-dollars” reminding us of the Middle East rentier states, the nature of land ownership in Nagaland has however posed challenge to such dreams and designs. As noted by journalist Kumar Sambhav Srivastava

These tribal communities have traditionally controlled vast tracts of land and its resources, such as forests and coal, through well-established community institutions. They are now eager to exercise their ownership over oil. The Centre has for long protected their autonomy through various Constitutional provisions. The state governments have acknowledged this. But as the value of natural resources touch an all-time high; the governments turn their eyes to the largely untapped region, perhaps the most resource-rich landscape in the country. The hydrocarbon reserves in Nagaland may increase India's on-shore oil and natural gas production potential by 75 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

An early activity of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in Nagaland has been controversial in nature. ONGC started oil extraction in Changpang village of Lotha<sup>15</sup> dominated Wokha district in the 1980s. The extraction proved to be detrimental for Changpang's landscape, with sticky soils and dry tar covering large swathes of land. The profit sharing with the local communities was not just either.<sup>16</sup> Eventually ONGC had to leave Changpang in 1994 due to Lotha community's continued and collective protests along with threats from insurgent groups. The Changpang Land Owners' Union (CLOU) argued that Nagaland enjoys a special status under Article 371-A of the Constitution, which recognises customary rights of communities over land and its resources. The state cannot allow ONGC to exploit the resources without their consent. CLOU demanded that the company should sign a lease agreement with the village council (traditional decision-making body in a village) or Lotha hoho (the apex body of the tribe). Changpang now experiences affected soil quality and human health due to the hurried and inglorious exit of ONGC as they abandoned the establishment without decommissioning or capping the rigs properly, as cited by a petition a resident of Tsorri and non-profit DICE Foundation in Kohima in 2011 against ONGC in Gauhati High court.<sup>17</sup>

Nagaland Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulations (NPNG)<sup>18</sup> passed by the Nagaland state government in 2012 has given a new dimension to the debate over ownership of Nagaland's petroleum reserves as it serves as a double check over India's access to Nagaland's land resources notwithstanding Article 371(A). With NPNG in the backdrop, a new mode of governmentality has been attempted to be practiced in Nagaland. The Metropolitan Oil and Gas Private Limited (MO&GPL), formed in 2012, was awarded the license to explore 20 million tonnes of hydrocarbon reserves in Wokha district, bordering Assam under the NPNG Regulations. The officials of MO&GPL went to the Lotha chief in Wokha district with the license issues by the Nagaland state assembly. The response was furious; the officials were instructed to embark on a return journey to Kohima and excavate the site of Nagaland state assembly. Several organizations have stood up against the prospect of MO&GPL extracting petroleum resources in Nagaland including the influential Lotha Hoho which has filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the decision of the Nagaland state assembly to grant license of oil exploration to MO&GPL in the Gauhati Highcourt.<sup>19</sup>

Nagaland government has frequently cited Article 371(A) to lobby for the validity of NPNG and keep the Indian government out of the fray in the name of autonomy and safeguarding the interest of the indigenous communities. However, if one refers to protests by the local organizations of Nagaland such as the Naga Students' Federation, Naga Mothers' Association, Kyong Students' Organization along with the insurgent groups against the license allocation, one cannot but take into account the multiple fault lines in Nagaland's society, polity and ideology.

Allegiance towards the state bureaucracy in Nagaland has been partial. The nature of Naga villages' self sufficiency had made it a problematic affair for the kingdoms and states in the past to control and tax the Naga village. The various corrupt practices in Indian democracy have led to collusions of insurgents and politicians - an open secret - and people are often subjected to multiple regimes of taxation, making survival in the monetary economy precarious in nature for large part of the Naga populace. Therein perhaps we can locate the origin of desperation of Naga communities to hold on to the natural resources in their original and pristine form from where it would be possible to extract resources for sustenance. Petroleum extraction as seen in Changpang diminishes such prospect while such extraction accentuates the degradation of ecology and environment. Thus we see the disconnect between the local communities of Nagaland and other regions of northeast India with the post colonial structure of governance giving rise to contentions and conflicts.

## Manipur

In recent times, Manipur has witnessed sporadic expressions of dissent and discontent since mid 2015. Three bills passed on 31 August 2015 by the Manipur Legislative Assembly (the Protection of Manipur People Bill, 2015, the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms [Seventh Amendment] Bill, 2015, and the Manipur Shops and Establishments [Second Amendment] Bill, 2015) have furthered the divide among the tribal dominated hills and the non-tribal dominated Imphal valley of Manipur.<sup>20</sup> Interpretation and misinterpretations of the bills have resulted in fatal reactions among the people, wherein the death of nine people including that of a 16 year old boy named Sapam Robinhood led to a series of *bandhs* and curfews in Manipur. The demand of the ST status by a section the Meitei community has further deepened the fault lines of Manipur, which involves the important issue of land ownership. The clamour to reinstate the Inner Line Permit (ILP)<sup>21</sup> is growing in the valley.<sup>22</sup>

Away from the Imphal valley, Tipaimukh dam in Kuki dominated Churachandpur district has been in the headlines for a considerable amount of time, as it is poised to submerge large areas of Manipur and alter the course of the river downstream in Bangladesh with considerable ecological impact. The malfunctioning of some of the other dams of Manipur like Khuga, Khoupam, Singa and Loktak hydro power project has raised the practicality of bearing the opportunity cost for such infrastructural imaginaries.<sup>23</sup>

If all these were not enough, the government of India in 2010 allotted license of oil exploration to the Jubilant Oil & Gas Private Limited. According to a news report:

Government of India through its Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas granted license to Jubilant Oil and Gas Private Limited, based in Netherlands for exploration and drilling works<sup>2</sup> in two oil blocks in Manipur located in the Jiribam (Imphal East), Tamenglong and Churachandpur districts of Manipur. The contracts were awarded under the eighth round of New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) of the Government of India. The Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for the Manipur oil Block I codenamed AA-ONN-2009/1 and the Petroleum Exploration License (PEL) was granted by the Manipur Government already on 23rd September 2010. The PSC for Manipur Oil Block II

codenamed AA-ONN-2009/2 was signed on 19th July, 2010 and the PEL was granted by the Manipur Government on 20th September, 2010. The Deeds relating to the PELs were signed on 15th November, 2010 and the Production Sharing Contracts became effective on this date. The total area granted for oil exploration is nearly 4000 Square Kilometres and it is estimated that Manipur has nearly 5 trillion cubic feet of oil and the oil company, Jubilant Energy plans to drill from 30 oil wells in Manipur. Earlier, unknown to our people, the Government had undertaken series of promotions globally in 2003 and 2009 to promote the oil blocks in Manipur through road-shows in major cities worldwide, London, Houston, Calgary and Perth etc, inviting bids for Oil companies for exploration and drilling in Manipur.<sup>24</sup>

The drilling activities of the Jubilant group faced resistance from multiple organizations of Manipur and the underground protest and objections to the environmental public hearings for oil explorations at Jiribam, Parbung and finally at Nungba Town on 30 July, 8th and 17 August 2012 marked the three hearings. In a historical moment for Manipur, the environmental public hearing at Nungba was cancelled due to stiff community oppositions, who were also able to extract a written note of public hearing cancellation from officials of the Manipur Pollution Control Board, the Deputy Commissioner of Tamenglong District and Jubilant oil and Gas Private Limited, etc.<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that the railway line is making headway into Manipur through Jiribam, which creates the impression that the agenda of making population mobile is one among many. Imphal-Jiribam section of National Highway (NH 37) has several wooden bridges which are unable to bear the load of the heavy machine required for oil exploration.

The allocation of oil reserves has been entirely conducted by the government of India by avoiding the Manipur government, which unlike its counterpart in Nagaland has failed to resist the Centre's mechanism of allotment. The laws of land hold particular relevance in this matter as Manipur has a dual framework of land laws for the valley and in the hills. The hills predominantly inhabited by the ST communities are governed under the Article 371 (C), which offers certain avenues of autonomy for the local institutions in terms of governance and ownership. Tamenglong district is mainly inhabited by Naga tribes, by virtue of which it falls under the jurisdiction of Article 371 (C). Thereby it requires consultation with the Hill Action Committee (HAC) and its consent prior to any allocation of land as it had been done in favour of the Jubilant Group of Oil & Gas Private Limited.

It must be kept in mind that land in the tribal areas of the region are still governed and allocated in the name of the communities and demarcated by ethnicities, rather than legal ownership owing to the longstanding practice of what is known as common property resources. Thus we see how the forces of capital chasing the resources of Manipur have blatantly bypassed Constitutional provisions on multiple occasions creating socio-political unrest in the state. Subir Bhaumik in his book *The Agartala Doctrine* has commented that Manipur has taken a cue from Tripura and started engaging with Myanmar actively.<sup>26</sup> The Manipur government is pushing for flights and bus connection between Imphal and Mandalay in Myanmar. Manipur also aspires to have an active role in the Kolkata-Kunming (K2K) forum that seeks to have better ties between China's frontier province of Yunnan and states of eastern and northeastern India, so that Manipur can act as an active bridgehead for transporting products to China via Myanmar. However as we have seen, such logistical ambitions are now caught in the quagmire of ethnic divides, varying patterns of ownership of resources and thus property relations, frequent shutdowns of public life, discriminatory governance, and various expressions of dissent. The extents to which Manipur can deal, negotiate, and minimize the fault lines, will eventually determine its participation and benefit from the Act East Policy.

## Meghalaya

The discussion on resource extraction takes us to another state in NER - Meghalaya situated in the southern side of Assam. It was created out of Assam in 1972 to concede to the demands of autonomy made by the tribal communities of Garo, Khasi, and the Jaintias. Meghalaya and the other states in the north-east remain among the poorest in India. Most people still depend on subsistence agriculture, and typical of all such cases the region is richly endowed with natural resources like forests, water and minerals. The timber industry boomed during the 1980s and 1990s, depleting the forests to such an extent that the Indian Supreme Court imposed a complete moratorium in 1996.<sup>27</sup> The daily transaction of timber sale outside the state was nearly to the amount of Rs 20 lakhs.<sup>28</sup>

Meghalaya has witnessed two major debates over resource extraction – uranium and coal mining. The state sits on a coal reserve of 576 million tonnes. The topographic nature of Meghalaya does not allow open cast mining, which will be economically unviable in this case. This gave rise to rat hole mining where people would manually dig pits on the hills until the coal seam is reached. The lands and hills under the ownership of the villages have been dubiously allotted to coal miners in several instances leading litigations.<sup>29</sup> The coal extracted in Meghalaya has been exported to different parts of India and neighbouring Bangladesh through the border transit points of Dawki, Gasuapara and Borsora. In the period 1994-2006, an amount of 7431 thousand metric tonnes of coal was exported to Bangladesh. Rat hole mining has led to environmental degradation both within and outside Meghalaya. Work in these mines is dangerous. In 2014 the All Dimasas Students' Union of the adjoining Dima Hasao district of Assam filed a petition before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that acidic water from the mines and coal dump yards in East Jaintia Hills was polluting rivers downstream. Several studies, including those by government agencies, established this, following which in April, 2014 National Green Tribunal banned rat-hole mining. It has asked the state to propose a scientific mining plan for coal. There has been a further complication: While Meghalaya has the provision of being exempted from national law through President's consent through the provisions of sixth schedule, no effort has been made by the state government to invoke exemption. The wilful ignorance of the state government subjected the resources to national law and thereby posing a major threat to the ownership of communities and villages. The existing regime of property ownership, wherein the daughter of a household owns the land, is thereby compromised. The rat hole coal mining has caused deaths of miners at regular intervals; in 2012, thirteen miners lost their lives in a coal mine of South Garo Hills; on July 2012 fifteen miners were buried alive inside a coal mine in Nengkol quarry in Nangalbibra of East Garo Hills district.<sup>30</sup> The state government on the other hand has tried to normalize coal mining by amending the Mines & Minerals Development & Regulation Act of 1957 in 2011 wherein the coal mining companies are to share 26% of the profits earned with affected communities. The ministry of Environment & Forest is however yet to come up with a mining policy for Meghalaya which has maintained the ambiguous status over mining, explained above, in the state. For a state like Meghalaya which heavily depends on the central government to run its bureaucracy and administration,<sup>31</sup> royalty and cess collected from coal mining provide an opportunity to attain financial autonomy to some certain extent, for instance Rs 700 crore as royalty was collected from extracted coal from February 23, 2015 to April 15, 2016.<sup>32</sup> What remains to be seen is how well the quest of financial autonomy can sit well with issues of ethnic autonomy and indigenous rights.

In Meghalaya we also get to see how the resources of the region gain a vital status in India's security centric ambitions. According to plans, by year 2020, India is to generate 20,000 MW of nuclear power. It aims to supply 25% of electricity from nuclear power by 2050<sup>33</sup>. The major hurdle

in this endeavour is the shortage of uranium. The quality of uranium in Meghalaya is supposedly the best in India, if not in Asia. Meghalaya is the third uranium rich state in the country after Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh. The state accounts for 16 per cent of India's uranium reserves, with deposits estimated to be around 9,500 tonnes and 4,000 tonnes respectively at Domiasiat and Wakhyn, both in West Khasi hills region.<sup>34</sup> The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signed by India allows it to import uranium for civil uses only; thereby it becomes imperative to extract uranium within India if necessary for military purpose. Karlsson observes that although a reasonable proposition for some, there is also a strong opposition to this, usually on either health reasons or issues having to do with ethnic sovereignty and indigenous rights.<sup>35</sup> Allowing uranium mining, it is argued, would lead to the loss of indigenous lands and open the region to a large-scale influx of non-tribal people. Exploration of uranium took place in the 70s and 80s in the village of Dominsiat in the West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. The subsequent radiation from the mined uranium caused health hazards among humans and non-humans alike. After protests by locals, exploratory mining was stopped in the 1990s with 650 tonnes of mining waste left unprotected on the mining site; much like the unprotected oil rigs of Changpang village in Nagaland. For the activists taking stance against uranium mining in Meghalaya, Jadugoda in Jharkhand became a major reference point. Uranium mining in Jadugoda has reportedly inflicted health disasters – a pattern likely to reproduce itself in Meghalaya in continuance with the early after-effects of uranium exploration. In a letter to the Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Dino Dympep, the Secretary General of the Meghalaya Peoples's Human Rights Council (MPHRC) with Khasi Students' Union President Samuel Jyrwa and Hynniewtrep Environment Status Preservation Organization (HESPO) General Secretary S S Syiem, wrote that the villagers spoke about various health problems, above all congenital deformity, something the visitors could also see for themselves. They further claimed that there were no traces of the development facilities that UCIL had said at one time or another would come along with the mining. Instead, they asserted, the mining project would lead to a large-scale influx of outsiders, which would pose a "threat to our culture, customs and traditions". They concluded by stating:

We as organisations which have been opposing the proposed uranium mining from the very beginning of its inception, now after visiting Jadugoda and seeing the reality left behind are more convinced of our previous stand and...We will not part even an inch of our ancestral land to the foreigners who we consider that they are our enemies.<sup>36</sup>

Such statements echo the sentiments of the protestors who are yet to come to terms of the obligations of Indian citizenship. Public expressions of hatred towards the Indian state are often manifested through slogans like 'Khasi by birth, Indian by accident', painted on the walls of Shillong, capital of Meghalaya.<sup>37</sup> The economic logic of resource extraction has therefore several hurdles in the forms of indigenous rights, ethnic sovereignty, and environmental justice to overcome. Apprehension of "outsiders" have perpetuated a regular discourse in Meghalaya demanding Inner Line Permit where people from outside the state especially traders are targeted. In 2013, three traders, namely Vikash Nandwal, Vidya Dev Chokhani and Bibheshwar Das, were burnt to death by pro-ILP agitators.<sup>38</sup> While the Indian state continues its quest for resources in Meghalaya, the common people from outside Meghalaya face the brunt of disenchantment of the indigenous communities there.

Over the last few decades almost every state in the NER has seen a transformation in the regime of resource extraction. While in some cases the transformation has been predicated on consent and obvious prospect of benefit to at least some of the practising communities, in several

other instances the transformation has been contentious and gave rise to resistance and popular movements against displacement. Benefits accruing to the projects have seldom been shared with the local communities, and this has accentuated the apprehension of the communities over any new proposal of resource extraction. Degradation of the environment and threats to the livelihood are the central questions on which communities, social activists, militant movements, and political activists seek answers from the proposed projects.

Now let us problematize the communitarian analysis of issues in Northeast India a bit further. A flattening of all resource extraction in Northeast India to a Manichean battle between the preserving community of unsullied people outside the practices of governance and a relentless juggernaut of machinic capitalism is an analytical handicap. One can hypothetically ask of the architects of this Manichean scenario: What happens if the community decides to deal directly with the resource extraction and actually participate in it? Will that right the wrong? It is impossible to get out of this bind unless one takes recourse to an idea of a vanguard where, if the community decided to get its proverbial hand dirty, it will be 'misrecognizing' the dynamic of capital. Most importantly what happens to the collective opinion of a community when class differences emerge within it over time?<sup>39</sup> In the literatures<sup>40</sup> documenting the resistance of the communities against resource extraction, there are also voices which are in support of the same; this group comprises of government officials, elected representatives, tribal elites and at times sections of the insurgent groups. During fieldwork one of the co-author encountered a member of the Naga indigenous communities who responded that – 'it's foolish to sit on resources and not utilise it'. Dolly Kikon has shown how 'extractive economy' in Nagaland has fuelled the dream of prosperity among the powerful section of the state.<sup>41</sup> The linearity of arguments thereby gets challenged; the point is that while once upon a time, perhaps prior to the British rule over today's Northeast India it was possible to associate a whole community with a particular opinion, ideology or lifestyle, in no means it can be repeated today. That leaves us with the complex task of deconstructing the matrix of class and ethnicity on Northeast India; while this task is not within the ambit of the paper, let's depart by pointing out the importance of the same.

### **Material Infrastructure: Roads and Railways**

While the focus of *Look East* and *Act East* has been on developing links among nations on the east of India, several works point to the inadequate infrastructure within the different sites of northeast, which will eventually impede the broader goals of connectivity.<sup>42</sup> The agenda of India's Act East policy and the involvement of the NER within its ambit almost exclusively hinges around the development of infrastructures connecting and reconnecting different sites of NER among themselves and with sites beyond the borders. The colonial encounter transformed not only the social and political structures, several old trade routes to Southeast Asia and China were either closed down or gradually discontinued, while some new routes opened.<sup>43</sup>

The partition of India in 1947 severed accesses by land, river, and sea routes to the NER and further East; and NER found itself landlocked. Geopolitics also played a crucial role in determining the extent of trade and communication between NER and neighbouring countries due to the uneasy proximity to China and erstwhile East Pakistan, thereby limiting the scope of international exchanges. The post partition geographical isolation of the NER is considered as major factor behind the fall in the economic status of the region. At the beginning of the First Five Year Plan in 1951, the Northeast region's per capita income was 4 per cent higher than the national average but declined to 27 per cent lower than the national average by 1980 and was 46.38 per cent lower by 2008-09.<sup>44</sup> In

this context there has been a renewed thrust for infrastructural development in the NER in recent times. The emphasis on infrastructure of the region is through widening of roads, expanding air connectivity, extending railway networks, opening new and reactivating old dormant trade routes, and facilitating border trade and transit points. This section attempts to map different infrastructural initiatives planned and executed in the NER.

## Roads

We can begin with some discussion on roads. Asian Highway is one of the ambitious projects aimed to link the different nations of Asia, wherein the NER has a massive role to play due to its possession of international boundaries. Besides the much talked about Asian Highway the Mairang-Guwahati Airport Road, Phulbari Tura Road, broadening of Shillong-Guwahati highway are some of the infrastructural projects taken up or completed. To develop the roadway networks the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (North) has been paying special attention to the development of national highways (NH) in the region. The ministry has earmarked 10% of the total allocation for the NE region. The total length of NHs in the region is 8,480 km and these are being developed and maintained by three agencies: the state Public Works Departments, Border Road Organization (BRO) and National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). Of the total length of 8,480 km, about 2,118 km is with the BRO and 5,409 km is with the respective state PWDs. The remaining length of 953 km is with the NHAI.

There has also been a special thrust towards building what is known as road infrastructure. Funds have been allocated for building the road infrastructure in the NE states. The states have 2,473 km of NHs, 5,711 km of state highways, and 15,154 km of major district roads. The states have funds (from various agencies such as Asian Development Bank) to upgrade the worn out state roads.<sup>45</sup> The report of the working group of The National Transport Development Policy Committee has estimated that Rs 1, 55,000 crores would be required for the development of the transport infrastructure in the NER.<sup>46</sup> The report cites two challenges: completion of the project by 2025 and creation of a policy regime for free movement of goods and people within the region. According to the report, the requirements for roads, civil aviation, and inland waterways are respectively Rs 75,000 crores, Rs 60,000 crores, and Rs 10,000 crores. The focus on NER's infrastructure is evident also through the functioning of financial institutions like Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industries (FICCI), which has been holding North East Connectivity Summit since 2014. From a report titled "Emerging North East India" sponsored by FICCI, one gets an idea about the how the business enterprises are envisioning the region's infrastructure for facilitating trade & communication.<sup>47</sup> For instance the report proposes to form a North East Economic Development Corridor on the line of Delhi -Mumbai Corridor, Industrial and Economic Development Nodes, the Northeast Ring Road and operationalise non operational airports like those of Rupsi and Shella in Assam, Kailashar, Kamalpur, and Khowai in Tripura. The report also brings its focus on building of townships ascribing to the theme of smart city in the border localities. While Moreh in Manipur is on its way to become a township, the report proposes similar approaches in Dawki, Karimganj, Akhaura, Mankachar, and few other towns along with similar initiatives on the other side of the border in Bangladesh.

The major road programmes that are being undertaken in the region are as follows:

- National Highway Development Programme (NHDP) II proposes to link the east-west corridor beginning at Porbandar, Gujarat to the NE through a 678 km four-lane highway connecting Silchar to Srirampur via LumdingDaboka-Nagaon-Guwahati in Assam. This has

- been entrusted to the NHAI under the National Highway Development Programme (NHDP), Phase II;
- NHDP III proposes to widen 1,051 km stretches of various NHs to improve connectivity of state capital towns;
  - The Arunachal package envisages improving the connectivity to the Arunachal dramatically. The package incorporates the following: construction of public roads to link the hydel power project; four-lane connectivity to Itanagar; two-lane connectivity of district headquarters; and trans-Arunachal highway;
  - Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North East (SARDP-NE) Phases 'A' and 'B' will cover construction and improvement of 8,737 km of road length; major objectives of this programme include providing a two-lane NH connectivity to all state capitals with East-West corridor, providing connectivity to all district headquarter of NER by at least a two-lane road and providing inter-connectivity to all the state capitals by at least a two-lane NH.

Besides, there is a proposal to connect India and Myanmar through a single road running on either side of the borders. Earlier, the stretch of road in Myanmar was to start from Kaletwa, which will now start from Paletwa. The DPR (Detailed Project Report) for this new stretch is being prepared. In India, the road is to start from Lawngtlai in Mizoram. The technical specification of the road has been revised and consequently revised cost estimates are being worked out. International institutions such as the World Bank have also shown in the infrastructure of the NER. According to a news report the World Bank has sanctioned US \$ 320 million aid to improve road connectivity of Assam, out of which Rs 56 lakh had been allotted for development of the Garali road connecting Jorhat with Mariani & extending to Mokokchung in Nagaland.<sup>48</sup>

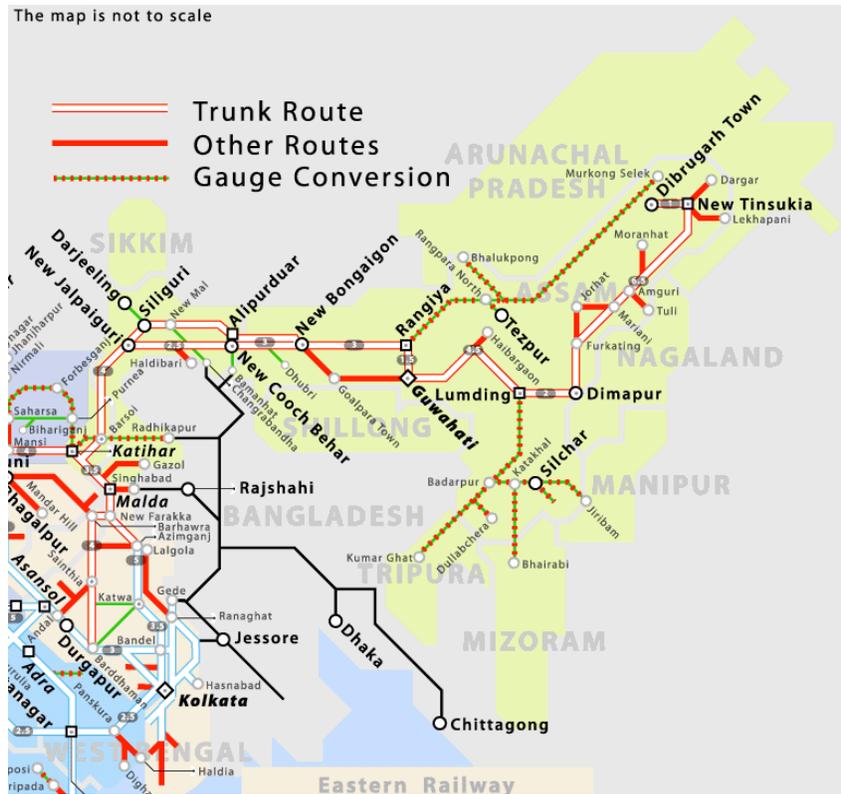
A major hindrance in expanding the road infrastructure in NER is the hilly terrain and the boundaries created in the wake of the Partition. Borders dismantled several routes linking places of today's NER with places outside the region. Railways and waterways through today's Bangladesh were used heavily for transport with Calcutta and other parts of the subcontinent. India's Act East Policy, along with its agenda of formulating new trade routes with neighbouring countries also moots the proposal of reopening old trade routes. Proposals have been made to overcome the impediments of border and cooperate in order to build alternate routes of communication. The transportation of goods to Tripura through roads and ports of Bangladesh is becoming a reality today; Tripura's chief minister Manik Sarkar had successfully lobbied for the transportation of materials for commissioning the 726 MW Palatana gas fired project in Tripura's Gomati district and delivery of 10,000 MT of foodgrains through the Chittagong-Ashuganj port route in Bangladesh. As an act of reciprocation 100 MW of power is supplied to Bangladesh from the Palatana project since 23 March 2016. In similar lines imaginations of alternate routes have emerged in other parts of the NER. For instance back in 2012 the Tawang district<sup>49</sup> unit of *Gaon Bura*<sup>50</sup> Association had sought the permission of the king of Bhutan to construct Lumla-Tashigang road which is supposed to pass through Bhutan and reduce the distance between Tawang and Guwahati by about 200 km and travel time by 6 hours. The route would serve as alternate to the Tawang-Guwahati route which goes through Bhalukpong and Tezpur. The Lumla-Tashigang road is envisioned to open the age-old border trade between the people of Bhutan & Tawang district. The idea is actively pursued by the present government as Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju raised the issue of Lumla-Tashigang connectivity in a meeting with Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay during a two day visit to Thimpu, Bhutan's capital.<sup>51</sup>

In the background of this discussion four comments are in order: First, the economic and other motivations behind the push to open up have evidently many layers. In some cases, local interests, in others state interests, in still others nationally determined interests decided in Delhi, and all these coupled with corporate, local bourgeoisie, and trading and other interests are playing roles, these at times overlapping. Second, the communication network is envisaged as linking with “outside”, and less “inside”. Third, the “outside” conceived as a part of a grid (thus the outside may be first a point in the same state in the region or in another state in the region to eventually link up with another country), in terms of logistical calculation therefore there is no inherent guarantee that this will democratize the communication scenario in the region and tackle divide within the region linking the far away villages in hills or the settlements regularly cut off from main centres due to annual floods and landslides. Fourth, because these are sought to be executed through public-private partnership, much of these plans may remain on paper only, because investments will hopefully come from private sources, thereby making it imperative that road expansion follow the logic of market and availability of capital.

## **Railways**

Railways till date had a relatively scarce presence in the NER, being mainly confined within the state of Assam. In the hilly terrains of the NER it is difficult and expensive to setup rail networks. This accounts for the absence or nominal presence of railway lines in hilly states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Railway networks are being reformed and expanded, broad gauge conversion of Lumding-Silchar rail track, rail tracks between Dudhnoi (Assam) and Mendipathar (Meghalaya) and rail tracks extension till Naharlagun (in Arunachal Pradesh) are some of the new developments. Jiribam in Manipur and Agartala in Tripura are also being connected with rail networks. The intent of India to spread the railway network in the NER is evident going by the recent cabinet reshuffle wherein Rajen Gohain, the long standing member of the parliament from Nowgaon constituency in Central Assam was made the minister of state in the Railways Ministry. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Hornbill Festival in Kohima in December 2014, citing the importance of travel infrastructure to bolster tourism in the region he promised a package of Rs 28,000 crores for developing railways lines. Elsewhere he emphasized the need to connect the NER with other parts of the country and neighbouring countries like Myanmar & Bangladesh. Acting on that brief, railway minister Suresh Prabhu, on 20 February 2016 inaugurated three trains from Assam’s Barak Valley: two goods trains - one from Silchar to Tripura and the other from Silchar to Jiribam in Manipur, and third one, a passenger train to New Delhi, the first direct link between the Barak valley and the national capital.<sup>52</sup> The Kanchanjunga Express was introduced between Silchar and Sealdah in Kolkata via Guwahati on 1 February 2016. The weekly Poorvottar Sampark Kranti Express between Silchar and Delhi started on 20 February 2016. These met a long-pending demand of the people to link southern Assam, with other parts of the country. The railway line from Guwahati passes through Lumding in Nagaon district in central Assam and southern Assam connecting land-locked Tripura’s capital Agartala and parts of Manipur and Mizoram with the rest of India. These states are heavily dependent on railways for steady supply of food grains, fertilisers, petroleum products, construction materials, and other commodities besides carrying of passengers.

**Figure 1: The Existing Railway Network in Northeast India & Neighboring Bangladesh**



Source: Wikimedia (Accessed from <http://thewire.in/22880/22880/> on 20 July 2016)

The 437-km Lumding-Silchar and Badarpur-Agartala gauge conversion work was sanctioned in 1996. It was declared a national project in 2004, thereby ensuring uninterrupted funding from the central government's general budget. The project was hit by insurgency from 2006 to 2009 and work could only gain speed after that turbulent period. In the first phase, the 210-km Lumding-Silchar gauge conversion project was completed last year. In the second phase, with the completion on 6 May 2016 of the 227-km Badarpur-Agartala gauge conversion up to Agartala, the capital of Tripura was now connected through Guwahati with the country's broad gauge railway network. The 600km long broad gauge railway line between Guwahati and Agartala cost the Northeast Frontier Railway an approximate Rs 2016 crores; the route has 233 minor and major bridges besides the 1,962-metre Longtharai tunnel, said to be the longest railway tunnel in eastern India, thus showcasing a successful overcoming of logistical impediments. The Tripura Sundari express connecting Agartala with New Delhi was flagged off on 31 July, which has been a longstanding demand of Tripura's populace. The next target is to connect Agartala with Sabroom in Southern Tripura by March 2018. The march of railways into Tripura has opened up the possibility of railway linkages with neighbouring Bangladesh. The Chittagong port is 75 km away from Sabroom which would reduce the dependence of Tripura and other Northeastern states on the 22 km wide Siliguri corridor for transport and trade. In June 2015, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the bridge over Feni river at a cost of Rs 110

crores in Tripura which would connect Sabroom with Bangladesh's hill town Khagrachari.<sup>53</sup> The 15.06 km rail link between Agartala in Tripura and Akhaura in Bangladesh is supposed to be completed by 2017 and would be a part of the Trans Asian Rail Network. In May 2016, the Tripura government had written to the foreign minister Sushma Swaraj to include the state in the 81,000-km Trans-Asian Railway Network by extending a rail route from Jawharnagar in the state's Dhalai district to Kalay in Myanmar through Darlawn in the neighbouring Mizoram state.<sup>54</sup>

A major impediment of expansion of railways in the NER is the scarcity of land. Even when land is available, the issue of ownerships proves to be the fly in the ointment; for instance in Nagaland where land may be under the control of a community as a whole. The introduction of railways has also fluttered the feather of indigenous and ethnic sensitivity as organizations fear that railways would bring in unaccounted migrants in their localities. Such sentiments are manifested through stopping of Guwahati-Barnihat link due to protests of student organizations. Similar protests in Arunachal Pradesh stalled the trains in Naharlagun for some time.<sup>55</sup> While rails and roads connect places and enhances population mobility, there is a sense of apprehension that such measures are executed with the agenda of siphoning off further resources from the region. The ongoing activities and the prospect of many more such projects have implications on local labour market which brings us to the issues of labour rights, labour security, mobility, and migration. It is also to be noted that railways in the northeast frontier has in it an important element of security. The lack of infrastructure in the northeast is often cited as major cause for India's humbling defeat in war with China in 1962. Even today if the level of infrastructure is compared, China has marched way ahead with railway networks in Tibet and plans to construct railway link through Nepal right up to the borders of Bihar, a state in eastern India, by 2020. It was in 2006, that India's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved construction of border infrastructure including road and airstrips along the Indo-China border. In December 2012, the defense minister of India had confirmed that 14 railway lines along the India's northern borders were strategically important for national security. In March 2014, the National Security Council of India identified 4 out of the 14 lines for "prioritised construction" out of which three are in northeast India: Misamari-Tenga-Tawang line, Pasighat-Parshuram Kund-Rupai line, and North Lakhimpur-Bame-Silpathar line. According to a media report, the major challenges faced by the projects are swift sanction of funds and the difficult terrain and high altitude of the Himalayas.<sup>56</sup>

In a related move to boost regional air connectivity the new Civil Aviation Policy of India has proposed Viability Gap Funding (VGF)<sup>57</sup> in the ratio 90:10 for the northeastern states. The policy has provisions to cap airfares at Rs 2,500 for a one hour flight which would make the travel by flight within northeast India economical. The policy also moots to impose a 2 per cent surcharge on all air tickets within India to fund regional connectivity scheme and sponsor the VGF which would inevitably benefit the air traffic infrastructure of northeast India.

### **Financial Infrastructure: Banking**

The tradition of common property resources and the domination of non-banking financial exchange (credit, loan, advance, etc.) system in large parts of northeast India made penetration of the banking infrastructure quite late when compared with rest of India.<sup>58</sup> Income generation of the states in financial terms has been particularly weak, with the entire region lagging behind the nation in industrial growth, power supply, fertilizer consumption, credit flow, communication facilities and transport networks.<sup>59</sup> Thereby the network of banking has been inadequate in the region, the long queues in front of the bank ATMs in the towns of the region are a testament to the scenario. In

1991, the per capita bank deposit in Assam, the largest state of northeast India, stood at Rs 2715 which was one of the lowest in the nation; the figure stood at Rs 21,798 in 2012 which is still in the lower rung. Northeast region's per capita deposit in 2011 is Rs 24,565 which fares better only than the central region of India.<sup>60</sup> Statistics in Table 1 shows the annual growth rate of the North-Eastern bank branches at 2.02 per cent which is much below the all India growth rate of 3.71. State-wise comparison of bank branches shows that relatively larger branch expansion has taken place in the state of Assam, accounting for 1331 branches in 2008 and 1382 branches in 2009 followed by the state of Tripura accounting for 207 branches and 215 branches in 2008 and 2009 respectively. Interestingly figures show that majority of branch expansion in NER has taken place in rural areas.<sup>61</sup> As of 31 March 2013, the number of branches of commercial banks in the northeast region stood at 2883. The total number of employees in the same period was 25,867 of them 4059 were female employees.<sup>62</sup>

**Table 4**

Year (As on 31 March)	Number of Banks	
	Northeast Region	All India
2004	1920	67313
2005	1952	68339
2006	2027	69417
2007	2076	71781
2008	2051	76891
2009	2133	80369
Growth %	2.02	3.71

**Source:** The figures are compiled from Reserve Banks of India (RBI) Report on Trends & Progress of Banking in India, 2004-09, reproduced in 'Banking in Northeast India vis-à-vis All India: An Overview' ([http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5308/10/10\\_chapter%203.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5308/10/10_chapter%203.pdf), accessed on 24 August 2016).

The situation can be understood better if we take note of a study by Indian Institute of Bank Management (IIBM), which said, "With the exception in Mizoram and Meghalaya, in all other states of the region bank branches cover a number of people that exceeds the all-India average of 15,539 persons per branch." The study revealed, "Almost all the districts in Manipur and Nagaland have a ratio far worse than the all-India average. For example in Mon district of Nagaland one-bank branch covers 86,884 persons. Even in relatively developed Assam, only three districts have better ratios than the national average." The average population per branch in the state is 19,470 as against the national average of about 16,000.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, the insurance density<sup>64</sup> of the northeastern states is lower than the national average of 514.0 except that of Sikkim with an insurance density of 639.7. The insurance penetrations<sup>65</sup> of the states are also low than that of national average of 0.66 except in Assam which has a insurance penetration of 0.98. Tables 5-6 are revealing.

**Table 5: Trend of Credit-Deposit Ratio (1995-2009)**

Year	Northeast Region	All India
1995	35.6	75
1996	34.5	74.4
1997	31.2	57.3
1998	29.9	72.6
1999	28.9	55.6
2000	27.7	61.9
2001	28.1	55.3
2002	26.9	54.8
2003	27.4	56
2004	29.8	56.7
2005	35.0	62.3
2006	39.3	59.2
2007	40.7	58.2
2008	40.7	66
2009	35.8	72.6
Growth %	1.49	-0.54

Source: RBI Report on Trends & Progress of Banking in India from 1995 to 2009.

**Table 6**

Year (As on 31 March)	Credit Deposit Ratio								Investment Plus Credit Deposit Ratio			
	2002		2007		2008		2009		2007		2008	
States												
Arunachal Pradesh	15.7	22.0	28	46	31.7	57.7	44.8	NA	36.6	54.7	40.3	66.3
Assam	31.4	50.3	42.8	52.5	42.4	49.8	38.3	NA	51.7	61.5	40.3	66.3
Manipur	25.5	64.9	55.1	55.6	48.4	50.3	38.7	NA	76.8	77.4	65.0	66.8
Meghalaya	18.0	33.4	35.7	41.2	33.2	41.1	27.6	NA	46.6	52.1	42.9	50.8
Mizoram	25.9	44.0	53.8	58.4	62.9	65.5	58.7	NA	74.7	79.3	83.2	85.9
Nagaland	12.5	45.3	29.1	31.9	34.0	43.9	30.7	NA	53.7	56.5	56.4	66.3
Tripura	22.3	39.2	35.3	36.2	36.8	29.8	29.8	NA	45.9	46.8	44.2	45.0

Source: NEC: Basic Statistics of NER-2006, Govt. of India.

Note: APS- As per sanctioned; APU- As per utilization

Commodification and increasing financialisation of natural resources in recent decades through changes in the resource extraction pattern has led to generation of cash income in the region which has seen consequently an expansion in banking. For example, the introduction of rubber cultivation in Tripura resulted in more than threefold demand deposit increase and twofold increase in credit accounts between 1981 and 2005. Per capita deposits increased in this period from Rs 208 to Rs 8200 and per capita credit from Rs 79 to Rs 2240. Figures relating to entire Northeast India increased along the same line.<sup>66</sup> In the 2000s conscious efforts were made by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). A committee was formed under deputy governor of RBI, Usha Thorat to draft a master plan for the

development of financial services in the region. The committee advocated great greater levels of information technology (IT) adoption and usage of intermediaries like business correspondents and business facilitators to serve people in remote areas. Since then the number of branches and banks operating in Northeast India has grown considerably. For instance the number of branches in the region increased from 1900 in June 2005 to 2100 in October 2009<sup>67</sup>. New banks in India like Bandhan have also started functioning in the region.

**Table 7: Deposit and Credit of Commercial Banks in NER (Rupees in Crores)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Credit</b>
2003	21606	5692
2004	24768	7315
2005	28958	10010
2006	34334	13585
2007	41880	17162
2008	50016	19531
2009	63247	22642

*Source: RBI: Statistical Tables Relating to Banks in India*

Table 7 shows a wide and persisting disparity between deposit mobilization and credit advancement in the region. In this perspective one cannot be sure of the impact of greater levels of IT and ITES (information technology enabled services) in broadening financialisation in the region. Newer software may be introduced, but this by itself will neither substantially increase the number of branches in small towns and villages nor improve the credit/deposit ratio there, nor even guarantee more bank finances for MSMEs (micro, small, and medium enterprises). The uncertainty is given the trend towards privatization of banks, liquidity crunch in public sector banks, and heavy load of bad assets. Indeed, the introduction of newer software may encourage the banks in such poorly financed region as the NER to keep transactions to minimum and attain or maintain profitability. We have here all the paradoxes of the need for a neo-Keynesian expansive monetary policy to boost expenditure in the infrastructural and other related developmental sectors and the wisdom of a tight monetary policy to control budget deficits and possible inflationary outcome of a greater expenditure on these “public works” (which of necessity must be carried with soft loans).

Presently, we may however note that with the growing industrialization and entrepreneurship in conjunction with commercialization in different parts of the region the demand for credit has witnessed more than threefold increase over the period of six years from 2003 to 2009 as against less than twofold increase in deposits. The different Government sponsored schemes have also contributed to the massive growth in the demand for bank credit. The banking figures are to be seen in the context of the state’s plan and finances in the region. The combined actual expenditure of the Northeastern states increased from Rs 724.3 billion in 2000-01 to Rs 2667.4 billion in 2009-10 – nearly 400 per cent increase. The approved outlay expenditure in 2013-14 was Rs 6,675.7 billion. The growth of financial infrastructure makes greater sense when viewed against the increase in the net domestic product and per capita income (Tables 8-9).

**Table 8: Net State Domestic Product (at current price) (Rs. in lakhs)**

States	2004-05	2013-14 (at 2004-05 prices)	2013-14 (current price)	Percentage change (at 2004-05 prices)
Arunachal Pradesh	318,793	554,858	1,246,846	74.04
Assam	4,718,074	7,737,597	14,619,921	63.99
Manipur*	460,328	662,015	1,091,897	43.81
Meghalaya	584,570	1,183,806	1,850,423	102.50
Mizoram**	239,960	468,828	1,183,806	95.37
Nagaland	542,146	1,052,220	1,632,759	94.08
Sikkim	151,066	527,057	1,113,658	248.89
Tripura*	8,16,969	1,558,473	2,245,260	90.76

Source: Compiled from Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015, published by North Eastern Council Secretariat, Shillong, pp153-168

\*For Manipur and Tripura the figures are for 2012-13.

\*\*For Mizoram the figure at 2004-05 prices are for 2012-13, while figures at current prices are for 2013-14.

**Table 9: Per Capita Income (in Rupees)**

States	2004-05	2013-14 (at 2004-05 prices)	2013-14(at current prices)	Percentage increase (at 2004-05 prices)
Arunachal Pradesh	26,721	37,767	84,869	41.33
Assam	16,782	24,533	46,354	46.18
Manipur *	18,640	22,395	36,937	20.14
Meghalaya	24,086	37,439	58,522	55.43
Mizoram*	24,662	39,347	63,413	59.54
Nagaland	30,441	49,963	77,529	64.13
Sikkim	26,690	83,527	1,76,491	212.95
Tripura*	24,394	42,315	60,963	73.46

Source: Compiled from 'Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015', published by North Eastern Council Secretariat, Shillong, pp.153-168.

\*For Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura the figures are for 2012-13.

## **Reorienting Border Trade and the Logistical Challenges**

Formal trade links between India and its two neighbours, Bangladesh and Myanmar, have remained at a very low level. While the share of Bangladesh in India's total trade was about 0.6 per cent in 2009-10, Myanmar had an even smaller share of about 0.3 per cent. In absolute terms, India's two-way trade with Bangladesh increased from US\$ 1.8 billion in 2005-06 to US\$ 2.6 billion in 2009-10. It

should be pointed out that the level of two-way trade between the two dipped slightly in 2009-10 from the record level of US\$ 3.2 billion registered in the immediately preceding year. In the same period, India's two-way trade with Myanmar grew almost three-fold between 2005-06 and 2009-10 to reach US\$ 1.5 billion. A two-year average (2006-08) of the NER-Bangladesh trade shows that the share of Meghalaya in the NER-Bangladesh trade is the highest. The contribution of Meghalaya to the total volume of the NER-Bangladesh trade stands at 63.83 per cent; the same for Tripura and Assam is 18.26 and 17.91 per cent respectively. While both Assam-Bangladesh and Meghalaya-Bangladesh trade are characterized by higher export and negligible import, Tripura-Bangladesh trade exhibits just opposite trends, i.e. higher import and lower export.<sup>68</sup>

The overall low levels of trade statistics of course do not tell us the volume of informal trade taking place through local trade points, which are not till date systematically recorded. People living in the border regions have had economic and cultural links with people on the other side of the border which goes back to several centuries and the drawing of the political boundaries has failed to sever such ties. The interdependence of the peoples on the two sides of the political boundaries has given rise to informal channels of trade in goods and services. In fact, much of the trade taking place through the borders is through informal arrangements, including through the border haats, whose importance seems to have hardly diminished despite the tightening of the borders through greater border policing and attempts to regularize border trade only through approved points - restrictions that have come into being in the past few decades.

In this context towns like Moreh on Indo-Myanmar border have become the nodes of a different kind of eastern connectivity which is getting attention, Manipur government has taken the initiative to build a market complex in Moreh with a budget of Rs. 22 crores. The number of items to be traded between India and Myanmar has increased from 40 to 62 in November 2012. Apart from Moreh, the Manipur government has approved two border haats in Konkan Thana & Tusom in Ukhrul district which would facilitate exchange with Myanmar's Saigan division.

Moreh in Manipur is the busiest land custom station (LCS), handling almost 99 per cent of the NER's trade with Myanmar. Exports through Moreh LCS increased from US\$ 0.1 million in 1995-96 to a peak of US\$ 13.5 million in 2006-07 and then declined to US\$ 1.5 million in 2009-10. Imports, on the other hand, witnessed relatively less fluctuations, increasing from US\$ 1.7 million in 1995-96 to US\$ 2.1 million in 2009-10. The interesting development is that the second half of previous decade witnessed a rise in Indian export through Moreh, compared to previous two periods, whereas import declined consistently from US\$ 72 billion in 1995-96/1999-2000 to US\$ 38 billion in 2005-06/2009-10. By any estimate the official volume is clearly paltry, and seems to belie the high talk emanating from official and strategic community. According to a report of DONER,

Informal trade is heavily skewed against India. Traders on the Indian side of the border report that the infrastructure facilities are well developed on the other side of the border at Namphalong (Tamu). About 700-800 well stocked shops form the basis for imports from Myanmar. The situation across the border in Moreh is in sharp contrast – there are less than 100 shops. There is clearly no momentum in India's exports to Myanmar...Informal/illegal trade is a feature of border trade taking place with both neighbours. This trade is taking place through well-established trade points that have historically been by the people of the region. The informal/illegal trade taking place through Moreh-Tamu is thriving on the back of the supplies being provided by both China and Thailand.<sup>69</sup>

The report goes on to cite the challenges of carrying out trade in Moreh due to inadequate infrastructure and security concerns which restricts trade only once a day. Due to disagreement between vehicle operators and the insurgent groups on the annual payment the road is closed several

times in a year. Besides this, any agitation in the districts through which National Highway 39 passes, will invariably block this highway to put pressure on the authority. Cross border issues also flare up worsening the situation in Moreh.<sup>70</sup> Places like Moreh also posits a contradiction for the Indian state, as trade in Moreh is a major source of funding for the insurgent groups of the region, but simultaneously sites like Moreh are crucial in bolstering trade with India's southeastern neighbours. Dulali Nag in her ethnographic work on Moreh, delves into the social world of Moreh which exhibits a unique convergence of ethnicity, citizenship, and market transformation.<sup>71</sup> For any study of the political economy of the region it would be crucial to see that how the expanding role of Moreh in the coming years through greater connectivity and investments would influence the contesting claims of different groups over Moreh's trade and logistics.

Likewise, the Land Custom Station (LCS) in Akhaura near Agartala town is functional now with the facilities of passenger terminal, warehouse, and entry gate. The Agartala-Kolkata bus service through Dhaka in Bangladesh has started operating from Akhaura. According to an official publicity note, since the inception of the Integrated Check Post the volumes of trade, movement of passengers & cargo have increased respectively by 61.67%, 68% & 58% respectively.

Of course, the prospect of development of border trade is perched precariously on the durability of social peace that the Indian state can maintain there. On one hand, decades long conflicts, insurgencies, and counter insurgency operations and heavy militarization of the region have acted as detriment to trade in NER, and border trade in particular has bore the brunt. Yet the particular type of logistical development this paper is trying to chronicle is a consequence of militarization and conflict induced economy, and quite frankly depends for its success not on any pure market logic, but in the way what is called social governance can maintain an uneasy peace in the region and provide room for such a logistics-infrastructure centric policy of development to play in the hope that it will lead up to an opening up of something till considered an enclave. This paper will turn soon to this paradox by way of concluding the discussion.

The border trade between India and Bhutan was alive for centuries. History texts state that Bhutanese would come down to the plains inhabited by Bodo villages to procure *eri* (specific kind) silk and cocoons. Bodo villagers in return procured goods offered by the Bhutanese like oranges, wine & honey.<sup>72</sup> This flourishing exchange was hindered when insurgents took control of the 267km long unfenced Assam-Bhutan border for almost two decades with members of ULFA, National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) & Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO) shuttling between their camps in Bhutan and their bases in Assam. Military operation and peace process over the last few years have enabled the border trade to resume in the Gelephu-Dadgiri border point in Chirang district, Assam. As a result traders and buyers from Bhutan are again visiting the towns of Bongaigaon and Kajalgaon to buy goods. In some of the markets along the foothills of Bhutan, Bhutanese currency is considered to be at par with the Indian currency. Some of the other challenges of border trade cited in the DONER report mentioned above are extortion of money by different security agencies like Border Security Forces (BSF), Assam Rifles, and 57 Mountain Division, non-proximity of testing laboratory, and lack of capital support from financial institution.<sup>73</sup> For example, while a huge infrastructure has been created at Zawkhathar border the staff managing them has been given residential accommodation almost 20 km away. The food testing facility created at Moreh is not operational. Foreign exchange and banking facilities in Dawki are almost 10 km away from the border. The recent arrest of an army colonel in Mizoram with charges of gold smuggling<sup>74</sup> is testament to the whims of security agencies in the frontiers of India, which often translates into resentment and dissent against and at the same time impediments for free flow of trade. Popular anger is often vented out in forms of unique protests, a common one being sowing paddy plants on

water logged roads. Another frequent way of protest in the region is burning of vehicles, especially trucks which ferry goods in and out of the region. The All India Road Transport Workers' Federation (AIRTWF) has urged both the state & central governments to take up urgent measures to provide safety and security to transport workers in the NER in the past. Some of the other demands of AIRTWF have been four lane highways & necessary steps to stop illegal collection of money at the check gates by police & government officials.<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, there have been instances where people had to take the initiative to build roads and infrastructure. In 2012 Armstrong Pamei, a young Naga civil servant from Tousem sub-division in Tamenglong district, Manipur had taken the initiative to build a 100 km road with support from fellow villagers. It is noteworthy that the government had sanctioned Rs 182 crores for the road back in 1982. A cursory glance in the editorials and letters of the readers of the dailies published from the NER, both vernacular and English, would indicate the dismal status of logistics in the region. As on April 2013, out of 40,377 village of the region 3515 villages are yet to be electrified.<sup>76</sup> The glamour of the connectivity promotions like ASEAN-India car rally often subsumes such reality with which the people of the NER have to negotiate on a daily basis.

Moreover the recurring cycle of floods devastates large swathes of northeast India almost every year. The floods of 2016 in Assam affected more than 1.6 million people across 21 districts. The flood-ravaged zones also become a hub of trafficking, with children being the most vulnerable group beside women.<sup>77</sup> Add to this, is the earlier mentioned fact of the natural resource management in the region being questionable and the dams doing little in controlling the floods. In several places, like the Barbhag block in Nalbari district of lower Assam, the dams and embankments on Pagladia river have been detrimental for the landscape, which has negatively influenced the livelihoods of marginal communities.<sup>78</sup> In the backdrop of the Assam floods, Assam Cabinet Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary stated in a press conference that 738 km of embankments had been repaired in Assam while 3700 km of embankments were yet to be repaired. Out of 31.05 lakh hectares of flood prone land in Assam, protective measures have been taken for 16.50 lakh hectares. Patowary added that while release of funds from Central government have been inadequate under the earlier regimes, an agreement has been reached with World Bank wherein the multilateral agency will provide Rs 1.500 crores to Assam for embankment related works.<sup>79</sup>

Rains, landslides, and other disasters frequently disrupt roads and railways in the region. One of the prominent highways facing disruption is the National Highway (NH) 44 which links the Barak valley<sup>80</sup> of Assam, Tripura, and Mizoram with rest of the country through Assam's Brahmaputra valley. Heavy rains frequently close down the road and allegations are galore against the Public Works Department (PWD) for their complacent handling of the NH 44.<sup>81</sup> The transit travesty of the Barak valley has given rise to the proposal of an alternate 360 km road route to connect the Barak Valley with Guwahati via Harangajao-Turuk & Nellie. The Rs 1,500-crore project aims to cut transportation time between Guwahati and Silchar by at least 50 per cent.<sup>82</sup>

Un-utilisation of funds is a common anathema in the NER. In 2013, the parliamentary panel on commerce had conveyed to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion through a report that barring Assam and Meghalaya, the states of the NER had failed to benefit from the schemes of Northeast Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy. The Special Accelerated Road Development in Northeast (SARDP-NE) scheduled to be completed by March 2015 is now targeted for completion by March 2017. According to a report placed by the parliamentary committee on transport, tourism & culture, the slow progress of work under SARDP-NE was mainly due to delay in land acquisition, shifting of utilities (like electric poles) and forest clearances by the state government departments. The committee found out non-expenditure to be a major issue in the

region; only 69 contracts were signed as against the targeted 1,980 during 2012-13. The SARDP-NE is supposed to cover construction, improvement, and preparation of detailed project report of 10,141 km road in three phases. Stoppage of projects due to political cul-de-sac in the northeast escalates project costs, for example the cost of mining uranium which was estimated at Rs 300 crores in the 1990s has escalated to Rs 862 crores in the late 2000s<sup>83</sup>. The 2000 MW Subansiri dam in Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border which had faced protests from local people and organizations had to stop construction work since December 2011. According to a media report, the project is now suffering a daily loss of Rs 10 crores, as cited by the executive director of the project. The initial cost of the project which was Rs 6.285 crores (2002-2005) had escalated by 2014 to Rs 1200 crores.<sup>84</sup>

Once again we have the same lesson: logistical planning and executions do not happen in social vacuum. Nature, economy, social and political conflicts, finance, credit, regime pattern, and popular attitude to the projects – all these make logistical planning centering around infrastructure a permanently precarious exercise. Pushing through all these imponderables the agenda of infrastructural expansion creates a reality, which may be quite removed from the desired and planned one.

### **Social Governance in NER**

If the successful execution of *Look East* and *Act East* (at least one part of it) through logistical expansion of the NER depends on maintaining social peace, even if unstable and fragile, then it is clear that governance becomes a key component in the game. The form of this governance is as we argued elsewhere will be *social governance*. Social governance as one of the co-authors of this paper explained elsewhere means an assemblage of several governing techniques towards reducing and managing social tensions and contradictions and establishing some sort of social peace, such as (a) a pressing strategy of counter-insurgency measures, (b) peace accords with insurgent groups, (c) limited autonomy, (d) territorial reorganization, (e) policies of cooptation of different groups including women in the framework of governance, (f) expansion of administration and banking, (g) encouraging business and proprietorship, (h) some amount of skilling of labour through expanding education and health opportunities; (i) encouraging cash liquidity; (j) and finally through encouraging resource extraction developing a rentier economy, which will thrive on what can be called “crony capitalism” and a fictive filial based social network that will guard and share the spoils. Of course there are other elements, but these are the major ones, at the core of which is the mix of a military and a social model of accumulation.

Three segments of governance, migration, gender, and education will be good indicators of the degree of effectiveness of social governance, because these are the segments where inequality (including gender inequality) can be viewed in pronounced manner, if we leave aside the even more fundamental issue of food security of the people.<sup>85</sup>

At the outset, we must note that migration becomes an issue of critical focus in any infrastructural expansion. Infrastructure enhances mobility - and that is its goal – of persons, groups, commodities, finance, information, and security forces. Yet mobility also means impinging on long secured property relations. The arguments of this paper are not complete with a detailed discussion on patterns of mobility in NER; hence readers are requested to read along with this paper the accompanying paper on migration in the region. In the context of neo-liberal resource development policies, which include extraction, new trade routes, and infrastructural works, migration has emerged as a contentious issue in the northeast region along ethnic lines and property ownerships. Early indicators of the impact of neoliberal capitalist development on property relations in a self subsisting

economy in the last twenty-three years have been around incidents involving several communities, especially Bengali Muslims and indigenous groups of people, who have repeatedly found themselves at the receiving end of ethnic violence (for instance, Nellie massacre 1983, Kokrajhar-Sonitpur killings of 2014). Clearly neoliberal governance and politics of violence tending towards ethnocracy<sup>86</sup> are compatible in postcolonial democracy. Again, issues of migration and mobility impacting on property relations characteristic of ethnic homogeneity are significant in this scenario. In the context of xenophobia, migration flows lead to spatial reorganization triggering ethnic animosities. Fears such as these have led to reinvigorated demands of Inner Line Permit (ILP) in Meghalaya and Manipur. Paradoxically, the region has also seen a surge in the outmigration of skilled and semi-skilled labour over the last decade, given the redundant traditional livelihood opportunities and lack of job-generating industries in the region, precisely at a time when the infrastructural push has led to in-migration of labour from outside. In this regard, *Look and Act East* policy seemingly holds a double edged sword, wherein on one hand it would presumably generate labour employment, on the other hand the consequential restructured labour market may facilitate migration disturbing fragile peace situation in the region.

Apart from ethnic divides, the region has also woken up to class conflicts in urban cities like Guwahati, where the settlements of the subaltern class on the hills around the city has led to intermittent conflicts between the settlers and the state authorities on the ground of ownership. Guwahati has seen a rapid appropriation of the urban spaces by the real estate and leisure industry with investments proliferating especially in the last few years. Peasant mobilizations and popular movements have sprung up against the marginalization of the subaltern class led by organization like Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) which also challenges the existing paradigm of resource extraction from the region. Migration also includes a surge in trafficking in labour, sex, human organs, weaponry, etc., once again suggesting a different kind of connectivity – the other site of official globalization today.

The changing role of gender becomes important in this analysis on the changes in the region. Women were in the forefront of popular movements against legal provisions like Armed Forces (Special Power) Act (AFSPA). The 16 year long hunger strike of Irom Sharmila in Manipur is testament to the popular resistance.<sup>87</sup> Yet it is also true that migration of men outside the Northeast region has reoriented labour relations as we see more women engaged in agricultural activities than before, while policies like Mahila Kishan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) are aimed at training women in farming activities<sup>88</sup>. The recurring unrest of the Northeast region, natural or political, besides prolonging micro forms of insecurity has reinforced patriarchy also. In some cases, men have imposed even more stringent restrictions on women's freedom of movement.<sup>89</sup> Assam and Meghalaya have become the epicenter of human trafficking due to floods, disasters & conflict. In 2013, nearly 400,000 people became homeless in Western Assam due to ethnic violence and had to take shelter in makeshift camps; these incidents added to the insecurity of the population, especially women.<sup>90</sup>

Available data suggests that in Assam cases relating to crimes against women and girls are on the rise. The number of rape cases increased from 1631 in 2009) to 1721 in 2010; during the same period, molestation cases increased from 1389 to 1611, and the number of reported trafficking cases also increased from 41 to 47. The increase of the total number of cases related to cruelty by the husband from 4355 to 5189 between 2009 and 2010 attests to a high incidence of domestic violence.<sup>91</sup>

Violence against women in Meghalaya, a matrilineal state in the country, remains equally worrisome in this golden age of infrastructural expansion. In April 2013, the home minister of

Meghalaya, Roshan Warjri informed the state assembly that rape is the highest reported crime in Meghalaya where the matrilineal system exists among the dominant tribes and that victims of over 65 per cent of those cases were minors - 118 of 179 cases.<sup>92</sup> The National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) *Crime in India 2011* ranked Kerala next to Assam with 33.8 per cent rate of crime against women.<sup>93</sup> The same report further stated that there were 228,650 incidents of crimes against women in the country out of which Assam registered 11,503 incidents. Nagaland has the lowest rate of crime against women among the north-east states with only 1.9%. The NCRB registered only 38 cases of crime against women in 2011. The Assam police statistics for 2011 highlight that among the various heads of crimes against women, the highest number was registered in the category of cruelty by husbands and relatives (5,745 cases compared to 2,998 cases of kidnapping and 2011 rape cases).<sup>94</sup> It is important to remember that the sex ratio is one parameter that reflects gender imbalance in society. The ratio is also an indicator of the health, nutrition, and survival status of women. A low gender ratio means both a lower social status of women and discrimination at various levels especially inside the home. As per the provisional population results of 2011 Census, the overall sex ratio (total population at all ages) at the national level is 940 females for 1,000 males. In the north-east, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim have a lower overall sex ratio than the national level as per the 2011 Census. This proves that there exists considerable gender imbalance in the society. Declining sex ratio in conflict affected areas like Manipur and Mizoram is disturbing as evident from the census data below (Table 10).

**Table 10: Overall Sex Ratio in NER (Total Population)**

States	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	894	861	862	859	893	920
Assam	869	896	910	923	935	954
Manipur	1036	980	971	958	974	987
Meghalaya	949	942	954	955	972	986
Mizoram	1009	946	919	921	935	975
Nagaland	933	871	863	886	900	931
Tripura	932	943	946	945	948	961
All India	941	930	934	927	933	940

*Sources: Human Development Report for North Eastern States, Ministry of DONER (2011), "Sex Ratio in India", Planning Commission report and Census India, available at – [http://planningcommission.gov.in/data/datatable/1705/final\\_123.pdf](http://planningcommission.gov.in/data/datatable/1705/final_123.pdf) (accessed on 3 May 2013).*

Turning to education in this complex scenario of neoliberal transformation of NER, let us note few facts. The states of NER have been provided grants under the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) to improve their infrastructure facilities. The Empowered Committee administering NLCPR has, since its inception in 1998-99, approved proposals worth Rs.480.68 crores for the development of educational infrastructure in the northeast. Funds amounting to Rs.392.81 crores have also been released as on 30 November 2005. Out of this, Rs.14.84 crores was released in 2005-06. Under the Central purview the proposals mainly relate to infrastructure development of Central institutions such as the ten central universities in the North East which include construction of staff quarters, academic buildings, library buildings, administrative buildings and purchase of lab equipments, books, etc. These projects are in various stages of implementation.

The important Central institutions in the region are the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati; North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST), Itanagar; National Institute Technology (NIT), Silchar; Regional Centres of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Central Universities of Assam, Tezpur, Mizoram, Nagaland and the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong. In addition to funds released under NLCPR, the Department of Secondary and Higher Education also released Rs.40.42 crores during 2003-04 from its own budget for meeting the committed liability under NLCPR for infrastructure projects of Assam University, Tezpur University, NEHU and JNU (for NER students' hostel).<sup>95</sup> In 2012, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) started functioning from Guwahati which has a reservation of 66% of the seats for students from the Northeastern region for its academic courses. TISS has started courses in vocational education by offering B.Voc degrees in Early Child Development, Child Protection and diploma in geriatric care.

The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan runs 86 schools in the North East Region. The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti is trying to achieve their goal of opening one Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) affiliated to CBSE in each of the 78 districts of the North Eastern States. Presently 76 JNVs have been sanctioned for the NE Region. However, during 2003-04, the Department of Secondary and Higher Education was able to spend over 10 per cent of its RE in the North Eastern States. During 2011-12, Meghalaya had the dubious distinction of having the highest number of private universities among the northeastern states i.e. 8. The number of universities, both public and private, in the region in the same period was 44, out of which 19 are private.<sup>96</sup> According to University Grants Commission (UGC) data, over five lakh students from eight states of the region ventured outside the region in 2013.<sup>97</sup> Significantly, the number of independent schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is low: 231 out of 7944 schools in the country in 2011. Likewise, the number of JNVs is 80 out of the all India figure of 553 and Kendriya Vidyalayas affiliated by CBSE is 103 out of the all India figure of 1087 in India in 2011.

These are random figures, but they tell us of the way education becomes an important part of social governance. Let us put these figures in the perspective by comparing the literacy rates of Northeast India in 2001 and 2011 in Tables 11:

**Table 11: State wise Literacy Rate in North East Region, (1991 & 2011)**

States	Literacy in 2001			Literacy in 2011		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	64.01	44.02	54.02	72.6	57.7	65.4
Assam	79.01	56	64.03	77.8	66.3	72.2
Manipur	77.09	59.07	68.09	86.1	72.4	79.2
Meghalaya	66.01	60.04	63.03	76.0	72.9	74.4
Mizoram	90.07	86.01	88.05	93.3	89.3	91.3
Nagaland	71.08	61.09	67.01	82.8	76.1	79.6
Sikkim	76.07	61.05	69.07	86.6	75.6	81.4
Tripura	81.05	65.04	73.07	91.5	82.7	87.2
All India	75.09	54.02	65.03	82.14	65.46	74.04

*Source: Figures are compiled from Census of India (2001) with respect to these states, reproduced in 'Higher Education in North East Region', (n.d.) and 'Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015', published by North Eastern Council Secretariat, Shillong, p.7.*

In NER, the enrolment of students in higher education is largely concentrated in social sciences due to shortage of other professional courses and limited of subject option in the region. Surveys show that majority of the students in the NER is enrolled in arts stream in undergraduate & post graduate level. Distinguished educationist from the NER Professor Gangmumei Kamei observed way back in 2000 that - “The extraordinary expansion of education has led to increasing enrolment in colleges and universities. But the graduates produced by the universities face difficulties employment in the region. Thus, there is no correlation between manpower requirement and the production of graduates in the region”.<sup>98</sup> In September 2010 there were 84,198 schools in Northeast India from pre-primary to senior secondary level.<sup>99</sup> In the same period total enrollment across school level was 9,855,137.<sup>100</sup> In Meghalaya the participation of women in teaching was greater than men at every level.

One noticeable fact: The pupil teacher ratio in the region is better than all India level in each state of the region at all level, except that in Meghalaya’s primary school (57 against national ratio of 43).<sup>101</sup> However in terms of gross enrollment ratio in classes XI-XII only Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram have better figures than the national one (47.5 & 40.7 against 39.3). In terms of Gender Parity Index almost all the states score better than national figure of 0.96, Manipur & Mizoram are marginally below the national figure which perhaps can be attributed to the declining sex ratio in both the states as pointed out in an earlier section.<sup>102</sup> A matter of concern is that excepting Manipur the dropout rates of the NER states are higher than the national figure of 49.3 in class I-X. Assam & Meghalaya tops the dropout rate with 77.4.<sup>103</sup> However, at college level, India has 25 colleges per lakh population and only Manipur fares better among the northeastern states with 28 colleges per one lakh population, while Tripura fares the worst with 10 colleges/lakh population in 2011-12. While Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh have better enrollment/college ratio than the national one of 699 in 2012-13, while that of Sikkim, Nagaland, and Mizoram fare worse.<sup>104</sup>

Clearly the model of social governance works only partially in governing migration, gender, and education. Of these three, migration seems to be most unruly and capable of upsetting the state of fragile peace that social governance aims to establish and maintain. As elsewhere in the world, migration possibly will prove to be ushering in recurrent crises in a logistical scenario, which assumes that greater circulation of men (these days women also), money, and goods can do wonder, and bring the frogs in the well into the light of the world.

Four words feature almost all publicity sites throughout NER and of DONER: planning, programme, policy, and project (4 Ps). While *Look East* and *Act East* as statements of a neoliberal vision suggest appropriate programmes, policies, and projects, yet we shall be completely out of our minds to assume a fit between the four. What software guides the planning, the time schedules of projects and their synchronization, their different financial returns and thus different turnover and turnaround times, and the interface of material, financial, and social infrastructure in the region? If goal is to make the 4 Ps the stuff of politics, then we must conjure a heavenly fine tuned form of politics, away from the rude realities of insurgency, ruthless counter-insurgency measures, heavy militarization, parallel regimes of taxation, floods and disasters, remorseless extraction of resources, the NH (national highway) centric governance, and insistent calls for justice and autonomy. What kind of software will the NER need to thwart the inevitable trend of the economy towards rental orientation accruing from toll taxes, IT parks, shopping malls and plazas, bridges and roads, transportation hubs like truck terminals, and trade checkpoints? After all will these not be the lucrative revenue earners for the near empty state treasuries, and hence catalysts and products of spiralling urban land prices and infrastructural projects? So, when night will fall on towns, villages,

and the national highways, and the power to rule the market will be taken over by a different regime of mobility (of girls, women, unaccounted cash, organs, arms, etc.), what kind of planning software will be needed to have a governance that can steer the economy from extraction, rent and interest to production, profit, and greater social expenditure on public health, education, food availability, improvements of the hills and valleys and the life and labour conditions of the vast armies of migrant workers, self-subsisting peasants, and poor indigenous communities? Is it not inevitable that rent and interest will be the key categories of a neoliberal future?

There will be of course attempts to lace the mission to transform the NER through *Look East* and *Act East* with a sense of social mission. The mission of social peace cannot be attained if there is no social legitimacy of the vision. Therein is the greatest challenge for the said vision in the Northeast.

Recent writings on the North-east tell us of various examples of an evolving governmentality along the line suggested above.<sup>105</sup> These commentaries are not classic commentaries on the insurgencies and economies only. They offer also unusual insights on the situation. With a neo-realist edge to their thinking they throw light on policies and possibilities of a new model of governance. The interesting point will be: in a regime of logistical expansion what will be the nature of the interaction between capital and society? Or, with the infrastructural push as narrated in these pages, will the region see even more dependence on corporate and metropolitan capital, and even more dissent perhaps in newer forms? In view of the increasing bad assets of the banks, the lack of public financial help to the micro, small, and medium level enterprises stares at the NER; one has to add to this the dismal failure of the neo-liberal strategy of creating growth centres (say, for instance promotion of a border trading town like Moreh, that should by neoliberal logic encourage economic development of Manipur, or a smart city that should promote development elsewhere to effect downward filtration of growth effects). In such condition, who knows, perhaps in this coming age newer subjectivities will emerge demanding dignity of life and labour, justice, and autonomy – not on the denial of mobility but shaped by mobility?

While we can leave the political analysis stemming from these questions for a later occasion, we can at least say this: We must take in consideration the myriad details demonstrating the contradictions in the *Look East and Act East* vision and the policies. It is in the details - details of micro-lines of boundary, micro-insecurities, micro-events, and micro-instabilities of economy, finance, and politics – that we shall have to read the future of a region, which is sought to be redefined once more through bridging it with other spaces. These other spaces are not only outside the region, they are being created internally also through connecting exercises. It is in these details that we shall find the various circuits of capital sought to be harmonised under postcolonial condition through a logistical game. Northeast was made *northeast* through the epochal Partition of India, particularly in the east, and other geopolitical events following it. Now the nearly seventy years old identity as *northeast* is sought to be displaced or subsumed in a reconstructed identity of the *east*, in which the northeast will once again be a frontier, now to an extending east in the imaginary of capital. In that advanced imaginary of a region called the East, the northeast will be the *rear*, from where supplies will be sent forward, the front being the ever reachable limit of capital eastward.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> There is a good amount of literature and commentaries on the *Look East* policy. For instance, Sanjib Baruah, “Between South and Southeast Asia: Northeast India and the Look East Policy,” CENISEAS Paper 4, Guwahati Centre for Northeast India, South and Southeast Asia Studies,( 2004); Samir Kr. Das, “India’s Look

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East Policy – Imagining a New Geography of India’s Northeast,” *India Quarterly*, 66 (4), December 2010: 343-358.

<sup>2</sup> The Pivot of Asia remains a nebulous concept. Owen Lattimore, a geographer on Mongolia, conceived Inner Asia as the pivot of the continent. His historical-geographical outlook was prominent in his famous book, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia*. (Boston: Little, 1950); in his works the idea of pivot is enmeshed with historical cradles of conflict, desert roads, Mongol journeys, and frontier narratives, that crisscrossed regions and peoples moving across borders rather than nations and nation-states, global economy, or geo-economic strategy. In recent time, the “pivot” acquired new meaning as the US military and diplomatic effort to rebalance its priorities toward Asia. In 2011 Hillary Clinton, then US Secretary of State, authored the famous commentary, “America’s Pacific Century” (released by the US State Department on 11 October 2011 for the November 2011 issue of the magazine *Foreign Policy* –

<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2011/10/20111011161233su0.8861287.html#axzz30Ph1DmRw> accessed on 18 August 2016), wherein she emphasised the importance of the Asia-Pacific, noting that nearly half of the world’s population resided there, making its development vital to American economic and strategic interests. She wrote, “open markets in Asia provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology. Our economic recovery at home will depend on exports and the ability of American firms to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia. Strategically, maintaining peace and security across the Asia-Pacific is increasingly crucial to global progress, whether through defending freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, countering nuclear proliferation efforts of North Korea, or ensuring transparency in the military activities of the region’s key players”. The pivot in this case meant case re-balance, shift, and reorder of priorities.

<sup>3</sup> Subir Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: The Crisis of India’s North East* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Monirul Hussain, *Interrogating Development: State, Displacement and Popular Resistance in North East India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Sajal Nag, “Disciplining Villages and Restoring Peace in the Countryside”, in R. Samaddar (Ed.), *Government of Peace: Social Governance, Security and the Problematic of Peace* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015),70.

<sup>6</sup> “Tapping river resources key to power in N-E: Experts,” *Shillong Times*, September 23, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> “In fact: Behind the firing and deaths in Tawang, anti-dam protests and abbot-lama tussle,” *The Indian Express*, May 4, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/in-fact-behind-the-firing-and-deaths-in-tawang-anti-dam-protests-and-abbot-lama-tussle-2783149/>, accessed July 4, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> The Meitei community is mainly concentrated in the Imphal valley of Manipur belonging to the ‘general’ unreserved category.

<sup>9</sup> Ranabir Samaddar, (ed.), *Government of Peace*,(Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> ULFA was formed in 1979 to carry out an armed struggle against India to form a socialist Assam. Currently there are several factions of ULFA.

<sup>11</sup> NSCN formed in 1980 to form a sovereign Nagalim comprising of the areas inhabited by Naga tribal groups in India and Myanmar. NSCN has undergone several splits, now the two most influential groups are Isak-Muivah and Khaplang.

<sup>12</sup> “Ulfa leader Anup Chetia handed over to India,” *The Indian Express*, November 12, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/bangladesh-hands-over-ulfa-leader-anup-chetia-to-cbi/>, accessed June 20, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> “Nagaland may get separate flag as part of final accord with Centre,” *Hindustan Times*, January 30, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/nagaland-may-get-separate-flag-as-part-of-final-accord-with-centre/story-gtaBiSGy262efMkz4qToaI.html>, accessed June 20 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Kumar Shrivastava, “Battle over oil, coal and forests,” *Down to Earth*. October 31, 2014.

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/battle-over-oil-coal--forests-46903>, accessed June 20, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Lotha is one of the tribes under the Naga ethnicity.

<sup>16</sup> “The official statement of the Government at Changpang on 21st July ’14 that ONGC had ‘betrayed the trust and confidence reposed by the people and the State’ by extracting beyond the agreed amount to the tune of 1.3

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million tons worth Rs. 329 crores but only Rs.33 crores, as royalty, was paid to Nagaland Government and out of which a meagre Rs. 63 lakh was given to the landowners is an eye opener’, See “What is the credibility of Metropolitan Oil & Gas Private Ltd.?” *Eastern Mirror*, July 23, 2014, <http://www.easternmirrornagaland.com/what-is-the-credibility-of-metropolitan-oil-gas-private-ltd/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

<sup>17</sup> We are grateful to Aheli Moitra working with Morung Express based in Dimapur for helping us to understand the debates over oil in Nagaland and providing further helps with the research.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Nagaland Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulations (NPNG) 2012 bill document, it resolves to restate the customary practices of Nagas in regard to “ownership of land and its resources” particularly in relation to petroleum and natural gas within Nagaland.

<sup>19</sup>“NSCN(I-M) rejects Metropolitan Oil & Gas Pvt. Ltd,” *Nagaland Post*, August 18, 2016, <http://www.nagalandpost.com/ChannelNews/State/StateNews.aspx?news=TkVXUzEwMDA2MzQ1Mw%3D%3D>, accessed June 22, 2016.

<sup>20</sup>For details see – “Manipur Violence : Why the protests and what are the demands,” *Indian Express*, September 6, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/blogs/summer-of-revolt-why-manipur-is-one-of-the-worst-conflict-affected-states-in-south-asia/>, accessed September 5, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Before the merger of Manipur to India on 15 October 1949, the entry into Manipur was regulated by imposition of a permit system. The permit system was abolished with effect from 18 November 1950 by a notification issued by the then Chief Commissioner of Manipur. . If we were to relook at the historical background of ILP Bodhisattva Kar’s article “When Was the Postcolonial?: A History of Policing Impossible Lines.” In *Beyond Counter- insurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*, ed. Sanjib Baruah (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49-77 would help us in this regard. ILP was supposed to demarcate some areas inhabited by communities rendered as ‘savage uncontrollable communities’ by the British administrators. ILP was supposed to enact a split between capital and pre-capital. We are grateful to Debarati Bagchi for pointing out the historical perspective of ILP through her comments as a discussant in the research workshop on August 30-September 1, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> We are grateful to Amar Yumnam, Vijaylaxmi Brara, John Pamei & Dhanabir Laishram for their inputs and support during fieldwork in Manipur.

<sup>23</sup> Jiten Yumnam, “Failed Dams in Manipur, Any lessons learnt?,” *E-PAO*, August 18, 2016, [http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news\\_section.opinions.Opinion\\_on\\_Building\\_of\\_Tipaimukh\\_Dam.Failed\\_Dams\\_in\\_Manipur\\_Any\\_lessons\\_learnt\\_By\\_Jiten\\_Yumnam](http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.opinions.Opinion_on_Building_of_Tipaimukh_Dam.Failed_Dams_in_Manipur_Any_lessons_learnt_By_Jiten_Yumnam), accessed June 28 2016.

<sup>24</sup> “Oil Exploration: Boon or Bane for Manipur,” *The Sangai Express*, August 30, 2012, <http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/18742-oil-explorationboon-or-bane-for/>, accessed July 10, 2016.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Subir Bhaumik (Ed.), *The Agartala Doctrine: A Proactive Northeast in Indian Foreign Policy*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 324.

<sup>27</sup> Bengt G Karlsson, “Nuclear Mining: Uranium Mining, Indigenous Peoples, and Development in India,” *Economic & Political Weekly*, 44.34 (2009):47.

<sup>28</sup> Samaddar, Government of Peace.

<sup>29</sup> For a case study see Shrivastava, Battle over oil.

<sup>30</sup> “Deaths continue in mines of Meghalaya- 4 miners killed over past week, government has little say as most mines are privately owned,” *The Telegraph*, March 18, 2013, [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130318/jsp/northeast/story\\_16687267.jsp#.V711OZH97IU](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130318/jsp/northeast/story_16687267.jsp#.V711OZH97IU), accessed August 22, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> The share of central grant-in-aid to total revenue receipts in Meghalaya in 1990-95 has ranged between 55 and 60 per cent. The figure is from report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) with respect to Meghalaya, reproduced in Gurudas Das, “Liberalisation and Internal Periphery’ – Understanding the Implication for India’s Northeast,” in Gurudas Das and R.K. Purakayasta, *Liberalisation and India’s North East*, (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1998), 146-49.

- <sup>32</sup> “State seeks meet on mining policy,” *The Shillong Times*, July 31, 2016, <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2016/07/31/state-seeks-meet-on-mining-policy/>, accessed 4 August 4, 2016.
- <sup>33</sup> “Nuclear Power in India,” *World Nuclear Association*, August 2016, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/india.aspx>, accessed August 2, 2016.
- <sup>34</sup> Supratim Dey, “Uranium Mining Keeps Meghalaya on the Toes,” *Business Standard*, September 21, 2009, [http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/uranium-mining-keeps-meghalaya-on-toes-109092100022\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/uranium-mining-keeps-meghalaya-on-toes-109092100022_1.html), accessed August 4, 2016.
- <sup>35</sup> Karlsson, “Nuclear Mining”.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter to the Chief Minister, Government of Meghalaya, dated 18 March 2004. See Karlsson, “Nuclear Mines”<sup>46</sup>.
- <sup>37</sup> “Politics of identity and location,” *The Hindu*, April 26, 2014. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/politics-of-identity-and-location/article5948473.ece>, accessed September 5, 2016.
- <sup>38</sup> “Tea stall owner succumbs to burn injuries,” *The Shillong Times*, December 5, 2016, <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/12/05/tea-stall-owner-succumbs-to-burn-injuries/>, accessed August 4, 2016.
- <sup>39</sup> We are thankful to Anandaroop Sen for pointing out these perspectives through his comments as a discussant in the research workshop on August 30- September 2, 2016.
- <sup>40</sup> Karlsson, “Nuclear Mining”, Hussain, *Interrogating Development*.
- <sup>41</sup> Dolly Kikon, ‘Coal Fuels Dream of Naga Prosperity’, *Asian Studies Association of Australia* (<http://asaa.asn.au/coal-fuels-dreams-of-naga-prosperity/>, accessed 26 September 2016)
- <sup>42</sup> Laldinkima Sailo, “Look East Through Northeast,” in *The Agartala Doctrine*, ed. Subir Bhaumik (New Delhi: Oxford, 2016), 83.
- <sup>43</sup> Sanjay Barbora, “Autonomy in the Northeast,” *The Politics of Autonomy*, ed. Ranabir Samaddar (New Delhi: Sage, 2005), 200
- <sup>44</sup> “North Eastern Region Vision 2020,” Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (M/o DoNER), 2008, 5.
- <sup>45</sup> “India’s North-East: Diversifying Growth Opportunities,” Indian Chamber of Commerce, 2013, [https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/publications/2013/north-east\\_summit-2013.pdf](https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/publications/2013/north-east_summit-2013.pdf), accessed July 7, 2016.
- <sup>46</sup> “Rs 155,000 crores estimate for transport infrastructure,” *The Telegraph*, October 8, 2012.
- <sup>47</sup> “Emerging North-East India,” The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, November 2015, <https://www.kpmg.com/IN/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/KPMG-FICCI-North-East-India-2015.pdf>, accessed July 4 2016.
- <sup>48</sup> “Rs 56 lakh to develop Garali,” *The Telegraph*, September 10, 2012.
- <sup>49</sup> Tawang district is situated in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, a constant bone of Indo-China geopolitical contention.
- <sup>50</sup> Gaon Bura is a colloquial term used to refer to the village headman across Northeast India.
- <sup>51</sup> “India-Bhutan discuss possibility of road linking Tawang-Assam,” *The Indian Express*, July 4, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-bhutan-discuss-possibility-of-road-linking-tawang-assam-2893136/>, accessed July 7, 2016.
- <sup>52</sup> Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, “Getting the Railways to Look & Act East,” *The Wire*, February 27, 2016, <http://thewire.in/22880/22880/> accessed July 20, 2016).
- <sup>53</sup> “Tripura to Construct bridge on River Feni to Connect Chittagong Port,” *The Hindu: Business Line*, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/tripura-to-construct-bridge-on-river-feni-to-connect-chittagong-port/article8050454.ece>, accessed August 5, 2016.
- <sup>54</sup> Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, “Hope Blooms for Landlocked Tripura Through Rail Connectivity,” *The Wire*, August 3, 2016, <http://thewire.in/55973/hope-blooms-landlocked-tripura-rail-connectivity-now-delhi-soon-bangladesh/>, accessed August 5, 2016.

- <sup>55</sup> Pisharoty, “Getting the Railways to Look & Act East”.
- <sup>56</sup> “Borders Without Railways: The Missing Strategic Link,” *Indian Express*, July 6, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/borders-without-railways-the-missing-strategic-link-2896395/>, accessed August 8, 2016.
- <sup>57</sup> Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Means a grant one-time or deferred, provided to support infrastructure projects that are economically justified but fall short of financial viability. The lack of financial viability usually arises from long gestation periods and the inability to increase user charges to commercial levels.
- <sup>58</sup> On the history of monetary transformation in Northeast India see – Debajit Dutta, “King Nara Narayana’s Military Campaigns in North-East India: An Analysis through Numismatics,” *The North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) Journal*, 11.1 (2013):35-43.
- <sup>59</sup> Samaddar, Government of Peace,39.
- <sup>60</sup> Data Table: State-wise Distribution of Deposits and Credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks in India – 2011 and 2012. Planning Commission of India, Government of India, [http://planningcommission.nic.in/data/datatable/data\\_2312/DatabookDec2014%2096.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/data/datatable/data_2312/DatabookDec2014%2096.pdf) , accessed August 22, 2016.
- <sup>61</sup> “Banking in Northeast India Vis-à-vis All India: An Overview,” (n.d.), [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5308/10/10\\_chapter%203.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5308/10/10_chapter%203.pdf), accessed August 22, 2016.
- <sup>62</sup> Cited from “*Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015*,” North Eastern Council Secretariat, Shillong.186 & 199.
- <sup>63</sup> The figure is cited from report of Indian Institute of Bank Management, reproduced in Sunaina, “Boosting Banking in the Northeast,” *Eastern Panorama*, January 2010, <http://easternpanorama.in/index.php/web-special/53-2010/january/838-boosting-banking-in-the-north-east>, accessed August 10, 2016.
- <sup>64</sup> Insurance density is calculated as the ratio of premium to total population.
- <sup>65</sup> Insurance penetration is measured as the percentage of insurance premium to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- <sup>66</sup> Cited from Reserve Bank data compiled by Swapnendu Sen , “Banking Institutions,” 220-221, *Resources and Economy of Tripura*, ed. Indranil Bhowmik et al. (Guwahati: EBH Publishers, 201) 206-235.
- <sup>67</sup> “North East Banking on Fast Track,” *The Economic Times*, October 15, 2009, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2009-10-15/news/28460522\\_1\\_bank-branches-public-sector-banks-banking-business](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2009-10-15/news/28460522_1_bank-branches-public-sector-banks-banking-business), accessed August 10, 2016.
- <sup>68</sup> “*Expansion of Northeast India’s Trade and Investment with Bangladesh and Myanmar : An Assessment of the Opportunities and Constraints*,” Research and Information System for Developing Countries, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region Northeast and Northeast Council, October 2011,32, [http://www.mdoner.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo4\\_content/REPORT%20STUDIES%20ON%20THE%20NORTH%20EASTERN%20REGION/RIS\\_Border\\_Trade\\_Report\\_%20final.pdf](http://www.mdoner.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo4_content/REPORT%20STUDIES%20ON%20THE%20NORTH%20EASTERN%20REGION/RIS_Border_Trade_Report_%20final.pdf) accessed July 20 2016.
- <sup>69</sup> Expansion of Northeast India”,5.
- <sup>70</sup> One of the co-authors was unable to visit Moreh from Imphal due to a strike in Moreh after two fishermen from Manipur who went for fishing in Moreh did not return. The incident coincided with a transport strike as well. Shutdowns in Manipur are a frequent incident.
- <sup>71</sup> Dulali Nag, “Local Dynamics, Universal Context: Border Trading through Moreh, Manipur,” <http://www.mcrg.ac.in/PP31.pdf> accessed August 16, 2016.
- <sup>72</sup> “Border Bazaar in Chirang District is Buzzing Again,” *The Times of India*, April 14, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Border-bazaar-in-Chirang-district-is-buzzing-again/articleshow/19535947.cms>, accessed August 25, 2016.
- <sup>73</sup> ‘Look East Policy and The North-Eastern States’, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India, (February 15, 2011).
- <sup>74</sup> “Colonel arrested for robbing gold smugglers in Mizoram,” *Times of India*, May 6, 2016. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Colonel-arrested-for-robbing-gold-smugglers-in-Mizoram/articleshow/52138907.cms>, accessed July 19 2016.

- <sup>75</sup> “Transport workers’ body raises pitch for security in northeast,” *The Times of India*, December 16, 2012, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Transport-workers-body-raises-pitch-for-security-in-northeast/articleshow/17632099.cms> accessed August 23, 2016.
- <sup>76</sup> Cited from Central Electricity Authority, Ministry of Power, reproduced in “*Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015*,” 241.
- <sup>77</sup> “No child’s play: Assam’s flood hit children face uncertain future,” *Economic Times*, August 15, 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/no-childs-play-assams-flood-hit-children-face-uncertain-future/articleshow/53707441.cms>, accessed August 17, 2016.
- <sup>78</sup> Hussain, Interrogating Development.; also, Snehashish Mitra, *Relating Resource Extraction Pattern with Disasters: Political Ecology of Barbbag Block, Nalbari*. Special Volume on Disaster Risk Reduction and Community Resilience in North East, (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, forthcoming 2016).
- <sup>79</sup> “No repair work done for 3,700 km dykes: Patowary,” *Assam Tribune*, August 3, 2016, <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/mdetails.asp?id=aug0416/at057> accessed August 16, 2016.
- <sup>80</sup> Barak valley refers to the three districts of Silchar, Karimganj & Hailakandi in Southern Assam.
- <sup>81</sup> “The Highway Horrors,” February 6, 2011, <http://concernforsilchar.blogspot.in/2011/02/highway-horrors.html> accessed July 15, 2016.
- <sup>82</sup> “Highway tag sought for 360 km road link,” *The Telegraph*, January 23, 2016, [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140123/jsp/northeast/story\\_17848063.jsp#.V4iyurh97IU](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140123/jsp/northeast/story_17848063.jsp#.V4iyurh97IU), accessed July 15, 2016.
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- <sup>84</sup> “Lower Subansiri Project incurring daily loss of 10 crores,” *The Indian Express*, June 23, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/lower-subansiri-project-incurring-daily-loss-of-rs-10-crore/>, accessed August 8, 2016.
- <sup>85</sup> On the issue of health of women readers are requested the read another co-authored paper on NER.
- <sup>86</sup> An ethnocracy is a type of political regime in which the state apparatus is appropriated by a dominant ethnic group (or groups) to further its interests, power and resources. On ethnocracy, see *Partions : Reshaping States and Minds*, ed, Ranabir Samaddar (Oxon:Frank Cass, 2005), 22.
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<sup>99</sup> Compiled from “Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015,” 275.

<sup>100</sup> “Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015,” 278

<sup>101</sup> “Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015,” 280

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