Chapter IV

INDO-BANGLADESH BORDER MANAGEMENT AND INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC DYNAMICS
The challenges to the border management and national security are numerous and very complex in nature. This chapter attempts to discuss and analyse the socio-cultural and economic challenges to the national security. These challenges have been categorised as (1) illegal migration; migration caused violent conflicts, socio-economic and cultural conflicts, (2) trafficking of human, animal, plants, birds and narcotics, and (3) smuggling, crimes and informal border trade.

Migration, Border Management and National Security Problems

Illegal migration from Bangladesh is one of the most serious challenges facing the eastern border of India while safeguarding its national security. This is primarily a product of economic and political crises that push people to leave their homelands usually involuntarily, though natural disaster also creates migration. The issue of illegal migration is one of the unresolved issues between India and Bangladesh. The porous border and the corrupted security personnel are mainly encouraging and easily facilitating the movement. The origin of migration from the eastern side of Bengal to the western side is not a new matter. This is going on since long time even before the partition of Bengal in 1947. This was the cruelest partition ever happened in the history of the world where nations, people, families and their livelihood was separated and divided simply by a political boundary. Interestingly, while one part is in India another part is in Bangladesh which make people to move and cross the border for their daily work and livelihood (Butalia 2000; Pandey 2001; Schendel 2002: 115-147) (the Picture, No. 3).

The border between Bangladesh and India was demarcated in 1947. But, for cultural and historical reasons, free movement of people across the border has become a common phenomenon. Coupled with under development of Bangladesh, this free movement has resulted in large-scale undocumented migration of poor people into India. However, demographers argue that such out migration of people from poorer regions to the neighboring less poor ones are bound to occur like water seeks its own level. According to newspaper reports there are about 15 to 20 million Bangladeshi nationals living in India illegally. This massive undocumented migrant poses a grave threat to the national security.  

1 These challenges basically are non-military in nature.
security, social harmony and economic well-being (Nath 2003). According to an estimate conducted by the Border Police Department, about one thousand people are crossing the border everyday and entering into West Bengal and other northeastern states of India (Mukherjee 2003: 1-2).

Bangladesh was liberated after long and painful rule, first by the British and then by West-Pakistan. Geographically, historically, and culturally, Bangladesh forms the larger and more populous part of Bengal, the remainder of which constitutes the neighboring Indian state of West Bengal (Basak 2006). From 1947 to 1971, Bangladesh was a province of Pakistan. As such, its official designation was changed from East Bengal to East Pakistan in 1955. On March 26, 1971, leaders of East Pakistan declared the region independent as Bangladesh (Bengali for “Bengal nation”), and its independence was assured on December 16, 1971 when Pakistani troops in the region surrendered to a joint force of Bangladeshi and Indian troops (Sisson and Rose 1991). Bangladesh is characterized as one of the poorest country in the world with an area of 144,000 Sq. kms having population of 120 million (12 crores) with 90% Muslims. Its density per square km is 763 as per 1991 census (highest in the world). It is the third largest Muslim country in the world and first in the South Asian region (Osmani, Sen, Dagdeviren and Seth 2003; Adams 1998: 66-88).

1. Migration—Period and Phases

Before 1971, massive migration took place, especially during 1948-52. Main reasons were (a) Partition of India and (b) Hindu backlash. During 1964-65, migration was due to Indo-Pak war. In terms of quantity, migration was highest before 1971, most probably during 1948-52. But later on, all migration was considered legal by the Indian Government. But, if the largest single stream of movement is considered, the peak period was during Bangladesh liberation war in 1971 (BD 1971). Again after Mujibur’s assassination on 15th August, 1975, migration took place extensively.

But, it should be borne in mind that undocumented migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal and Assam is a continuous process. During 1990’s the cause of migration was economic needs. Both Hindus and Muslims migrated, but Hindus migrated most. During the regime of Khaleda Zia (1991-1996), Muslim fundamentalism has become
more powerful and threatened Hindus. So, out of fear and insecurity, mostly Hindus fled to West Bengal and Assam and also spread to entire northeastern and other parts of India (Datta, Bhattacharyya and Majumdar 2003).

2. Migration—Routes

Among the innumerable border crossing routes, Jhaukutty on the West Bengal side is mentioned as a major corridor. Five rivers, including the Sunkosh, the Kaliganj and Tursha, divide the flat plains making it another easy route. However, instead of crossing all the streams, Bangladeshis are using other routes like Jhaukutty, Satrassal and Agomoni from the Kuegam. Bangladeshis also come to Mancachar for their weekly shopping. While river channels are the referred route (there is no barbed wire fencing along the river border) to enter India, the laxity in the detection system in West Bengal has rendered cross-over to be a relatively simple task. Truckload of illegal goods moves out on a daily basis from Dinhata and Shahebgunj in Cooch Behar. Illegal migration also takes place along South Salmara, Kedar and Binachorra.

3. Migration—Reasons

The starting point is a consideration of “pull” factors as well as “push” forces. According to economic theory, migration is a normal response to the mismatch between the spatial distribution of people and opportunities. The presumption is that free mobility of labour has a similar logic to the argument for Free Trade. Free Trade is considered to maximize economic opportunities and wealth in the long run, although the benefits are often unevenly distributed in the short term (Castles and Miller 1998). There are basically two types of reasons viz., political, economic, social and also due to natural disasters.

About 80% of the respondents hold the view that the main reasons of this massive migration were (a) Political instability in Bangladesh due to independence war in 1971, (b) Lack of safety and securities of the Hindu families mainly, due to war, (c) Religious issue and communal tension affecting mainly Hindus during regime of Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981), (d) Friends and relatives giving shelter in West Bengal to those displaced undocumented migrants, (e) Economic instability in Bangladesh, and (f) Curtailment of facilities enjoyed by Hindu minority group (Datta 2004: 335-358).
It is useful to consider the economic factors that make border crossing profitable. Pull factors like job avenues, access to India’s vast Public Distribution System in the region and elsewhere, free education, relatively unhindered acquisition of immovable property, enrolment in the electorate, as also a compatible socio-cultural arena, attract mass illegal migration into India. The pressure of population in Bangladesh is also a compelling push factor for a large number of illegal immigrant crossing over to India. Bangladesh’s density of population per sq. kms is three time that of India. In terms of area, Bangladesh is 1/25th of India’s size, but in population it is 1/7th. Bangladesh is the world’s most densely populated country, with a density of 969 per sq. kms. A 2.2 per cent per annum growth rate of population, moreover, means that its population is growing at the rate of 2.8 million per year. Worse, each year, nearly one-third of the Bangladesh landmass is inundated by floods, displacing approximately 19 million people. Some 15 billion dollars are reportedly earned annually by Bangladeshi migrants, significantly boosting the country’s GDP (IBMR 2007).

The problem has been made complex because people living in low lying areas along rivers often move up towards the mainland during floods and this internally displaced population is often termed as illegal migrants. On the other hand, there have been instances of Bangladeshis augmenting their numbers especially in the char region by the practice of giving the names of relatives in Bangladesh at the time of enumeration. When their names appear in the voters’ list, they inform their relatives in Bangladesh to enter Assam. By and large Muslims are economic migrants who are seeking better economic opportunities across the border. Often both the kinds of migrants create the problem. Therefore, it is a win-win situation for the labourer as well as the contractor in India. Bangladeshi labour can be hired at cheaper rates and also it is profitable for them to work in India due to the wages they earn in Indian rupees.

Besides, the economic reason, there are Hindus affected by communal violence, who are forced to cross in to India to escape threats to their lives. There are Hindus who despite having lived in India even for the last four decades insist that they are refugees and be treated accordingly. The state governments of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal have embarked on the task of overlooking these claims. Instead of expelling them, West Bengal Trinamul Congress leader Mamta Banarjee has stressed the indeed to treat the
new entrants differently from other economic migrants from Bangladesh and to ensure their safe return to and resettlement in Bangladesh (The Hindu 2005). Meanwhile, Hindu population, in Bangladesh has been reduced from 30% to less than 10% in last six decades. The reasons the terrible religious persecutions, political terrorism, snatching of private properties (Barkat, Zaman, Ahman and Poddar 1997; Barkat, Zaman Khan, Poddar, Hoque and Uddin 2008).

Some other natural reasons are natural disasters like natural calamite, cyclone, earthquake, deforestation, saline of soil, drying of land, and man-made disasters like war, ethnic conflict terrorism insurgency, communal violence military rule religious fundamentalism and poverty compels thousand of Bangladesh to cross illegally into Indian soil in search of food and shelter. A third reason may be the massive urbanization of India, economic booming, becoming more secular and democratic country and last but not the least the historical relationship of Bengalis across the border (Swain 1996; Gaan 2001: 189-204, 151-176). There are also reasons for their survival in the country like human right institutions NGOs, and refugee protection organizations lobbying for their security is in a long way helping these migrants to be surviving in the countries.

4. Migration—Types

There are several types of migrants flowing from Bangladesh into India since long time. The International migration theorists categorised migrants broadly into three categories which could also be considered in the case of Bangladeshi migrants into India. These are as follows: (1) permanent, (2) temporary, and (3) seasonal. However some other theorists divided them into several subcategories: (i) temporary labour migrants, (ii) Highly skilled and business migrants, (iii) irregular migrants, (iv) refugees, (v) asylum-seekers, (vi) forced migrants, (family members), and (vii) return migrants (Mishra 2001: 34). However, there are some subcategories should not be considered in this case.

5. Migration—Statewise Estimation

According to newspaper reports there are about 15 to 20 million Bangladeshi nationals living in India illegally (Nath 2003). According to an estimate conducted by the Border Police Department, about one thousand people are crossing the border everyday and
entering into West Bengal and other northeastern states of India (Mukherjee 2003: 1-2). Ever since the partition of the subcontinent and formation of East Pakistan and later Bangladesh, their nationals came to India with or without valid documents. Up to 1971, over 4.7 million Hindus had sought refuge in India, mostly in West Bengal. The volume of opposite flow of Muslims to East Pakistan is nominal. The terror let loose by the Military Junta of Pakistan compelled about 10 million more to cross over to India in 1971. Many went back after the end of the Liberation War in 1971, but a sizable number stayed back and assimilated with Indian population (Roy 2003) (the Table, No. 7).

Nowadays, the problem of illegal migration is more prevalent on Indo-Bangladesh border than any other border of India. All the Indian states bordering Bangladesh—Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and West Bengal—have a high population growth rate and add 2.8 million people every year (the Table, No. 7). A task force on border management reported in August 2000, that the number stood at 15 million (The Indian Express 2003). According to the Group of Ministers’ Report there are more than 15 million Bangladeshi nationals residing in India who have migrated illegally and settled mostly at northeastern states, West Bengal and far away cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, New Delhi, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, etc. A report on illegal migration into Assam, submitted to the president of India by the Governor of Assam, Mr. SK Shinha, in November 1998 mentions the factors contributing to migration. In January 2003, the then Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani put the number of Bangladeshi migrants in India at around 20 million (The Herald 2003). The intelligence bureau puts the overall number at 16 million (The Hindustan Times 2003). Though, there a lack of similarity in the reports on illegal migrants residing in India still the story of migration into India is an unavoidable truth.

6. Migration—Destination in India

West Bengal, an Indian state and a place of destination for most of the poor Bangladeshis, is bounded by Bangladesh in the eastern side with nine border districts e.g., Kolkata, 24 Parganas (north and south), Nadia, Murshidabad, Maldah, West Dinajpur (north and south), Darjiling, Kooch Behar, and Jalpaiguri. Just after partition in 1947, massive refugee and migration took place illegally and later all migrants were
considered legal by Indian Government (Pramanik 2006; Godbole 2006: 137-147, xv-xviii). But the problem undocumented Bangladeshi migrant means those who have entered West Bengal and other states without valid document after 25 March 1971. The cut-off date was decided on the basis of a national consensus arrived at the all-party meeting in New Delhi on March 1980 (Datta 2004: 335-358).

A report on illegal migration into Assam, submitted to the president of India by the Governor of Assam, Mr. SK Shinha, in November 1998 mentions the factors contributing to migration. At the time of the liberation war, illegal migration was due to communal/religious factors. But, during the last 30 years other factors have come into play important role such as search for better economic opportunity; pressure on land on account of high density of population; Bangladeshis provides chief sources of labour; vote bank politics of local politicians; cultural and ethnic affinities and the porous border makes it easier (Sihna 1998).

EN Rammohan, a former Director-General of the Border Security Force (BSF), notes that, over the years, continual illegal migration of both Hindus and Muslims from Bangladesh has completely changed the demography of the borders in South Bengal. Illegal settlers from Bangladesh now dominate the border belt in South 24-Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, Malda and West Dinajpur, up to a varying depth of one to five kilometers. Unsurprisingly, Hindus and Muslims, according to Rammohan, have invariably settled in homogeneous and exclusionary groups in such areas (Rammohan 2002; Rammohan 2003: 495-503, 59-68).

The Census Report of 1991 observed that when the average density of population in the country rose by 51 persons per square kilometers over the 1981 level, West Bengal recorded a quantum increase at 151 persons per sq. Kms. The Muslim presence is high in the eastern districts bordering Bangladesh. West Dinajpur, Malda, Birbhum and Murshidabad have a Muslim population of 36.75, 47.49, 33.06 and 61.39 per cent respectively. Nadia and North and South 24-Parganas districts below Murshidabad and bordering Khulna division of Bangladesh have a Muslim presence of 24.92, 24.17 and 29.94 per cent, respectively (Joshi, Srinivas and Bajaj 2003: 97). In a status paper on illegal immigration filed in January 1999 in the Supreme Court in response to a petition, the Government of West Bengal admitted that 1,240,000 Bangladeshi who entered the

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state with travel documents had simply melted away into the local population, while another 570,000 had been pushed back into Bangladesh between 1972 to 1998. The document stated that, till 1997, the intercepted infiltrators were summarily pushed back, but after 1997 this practice was discontinued. Thus, according to Partha Ghosh, in some districts, the Bangladeshis in their desperate bid to seek refuge in India have been hijacked the legal procedure of immigration (Ghosh 2001: 9).

Assam is the second state brutally hunted by the problem of migration. It was the first rocked by the foreigner issue way back in early 1985 that the center was able to come to an agreement with all India Assam Students Union (AASU), the party in the forefront of the agitation. While this issue continues to plague the states, several studies have been done to estimate the numbers of illegal Bangladeshis residing in Assam (Weiner 1983; Baruah 1986: 279-292, 1184-1206). One of the accepted and much quoted figures has been contained in 1998 report of the Governor of Assam on illegal migration in Assam submitted to the President of India. In November 1998, the then Governor of Assam, Lt. Gen. (Retd.), SK Sihna, submitted a report to the President of India, which estimated the total volume of this infiltration at six million. Most of this increase was concentrated in a few areas with a dramatic impact on the local demography and, hence, politics. According to the report, four districts of Assam—Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta and Hailakhandi—had been transformed into Muslim majority districts by 1991 as a result of this mass infiltration. Another two districts—Nagaon and Karimganj—would have had a Muslim majority since 1998 and yet another district, Morigaon, was first approaching this position (Sinha 1998).

According to the 1991 census Muslim population has grown by 77.42 per cent as against 41.89 per cent of Hindus. He also points out that four districts—Dhubri, Barpeta, Goalpara and Hailakhandi have become Muslim majority districts. Some demographers estimated the influx of Bangladeshi migrants during 1981-91 in to Assam to be at 158,639. As a result of these demographic changes, immigrants hold the balance in 40 out of 126 Assembly seats in Assam Legislative Assembly (Hajarika 2000: 189-191).

The situation is becoming alarming in other states of the North-East as well, particularly in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunanchal Pradesh and Tripura. In Tripura, the influx of Bengalis from the plains of Bangladesh has reduced the state’s tribal population
to minority. According to 1991 Census of India, the indigenous tribes of Tripura constituted only 28 per cent of the state’s population of 2.76 million while three decades earlier, they comprised two third of the population. In Meghalaya and Nagaland the situation is also more alarming. Thuingaleng Muivah, General Secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland—Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), the insurgent group has observed, “now there are two lakhs Bangladeshis in Dimapur area... these immigrants are Employed by the puppet leaders, who end up amassing a lot of wealth (Phanjoubam 2007).

Similarly in Meghalaya, illegal migration from Bangladesh has become a serious problem in Boldamgre, Kalaichar, Mehendragunj, Purakhasia, Ampati, Garobandh, Rajabala, Selsella, Phulbari and Tikrikilla, all in the West Garo Hills district; the presence of illegal migrants is increasingly noticeable. According to one report, an ally between two Dargahs (Muslim Shrine) of the same name on either side of the Indo-Bangladesh border in West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya is arguably the busiest infiltration rout in to India. This border area, called Mehendragunj, has reportedly become the hub of anti-India propaganda fueled by some of the infiltrators who are backed by Islamic fundamentalists and militants. The area has also been witnessed to two major communal riots since 1992 (Rammohan 2006; Bhaumik 2007).

**Migration caused Conflicts: With Host, Inter- and Intra-Group**

Competition for resources typically lies at the heart of ethnic conflict. Property rights, jobs, scholarships, educational admissions, language rights, government contracts, and development allocations all confer benefits on individuals and groups. All such resources are scarce and, thus, objects of competition and occasionally struggle between individuals and, when organized, groups. In societies where ethnicity is an important basis for identity, group competition often forms along ethnic lines (Lake and Rothchild 1996: 41-75).² Not so long ago, the proposition was advanced that increased political consciousness could be expected to consolidate the unit of states with homogeneous

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² This is, of course, not true as a universal rule. Although ethnic identities are often strong, groups can also form along class, religious, or other lines. The more politically salient ethnicity is, however, the more likely it is that groups will organize on this basis. This is an important way in which the between-group and within-group variables examined here interact.
population and "strain or destroy" the cohesion of states with diverse populations (Deutsch 1961: 493-514). At the time, the observation seemed even handed enough, but in the interval it has become clear that few states are homogenous and many are deeply divided. The North-East of India is one of the worst places affected by violent ethnic conflicts (Horowitz 2000: 1-55).

Ethnic conflict or conflict between ethnic groups in North-East India has become worsen now. Migration from Bangladesh along with migration from neighbouring Indian states has made the northeastern region into a diversion region. Since long time North-East is known for the tribal people of the region. The outsiders have out-numbered the indigenous people in their own homeland. The result is now; there are conflicts among ethnic groups everywhere and in every segment of livelihood. The diversion in socio-cultural life where one ethnic group hates another and scared of lose of his own culture. Migrants are definitely clever and intelligent in comparison with the native people and captured all the major sectors like political and economic. Especially the economic sector where all the industries—small and big—are belongs to the outsider which creating fear in the native ethny and the conflict among them.

**Trafficking on Indo-Bangladesh Border—Human, Animals and Drugs**

**Trafficking in Human: Men, Women and Children**

The Indian security and intelligence agencies along with some NGOs, believe that Bangladesh is a source and transit country for men and women trafficked for the purposes of commercial, sexual exploitation and involuntary servitude. This is also a source country for children—both girls and boys—trafficked for commercial and sexual exploitation, bonded labourer, and other forms of involuntary servitude. Bangladeshi women also migrate legally to the Gulf and other countries for work as domestic servants, but often find themselves in situations of involuntary servitude when faced with restrictions on movement, non-payment of wages, and physical or sexual abuse. In addition, Bangladeshi men and women migrate to Malaysia, the Gulf, and Jordan to work in the construction or garment industry, but sometimes face conditions of involuntary servitude, including fraudulent recruitment offers; debt bondage may be facilitated by
large pre-departure fees imposed by Bangladeshi recruitment agents. Internally, Bangladeshis are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and bonded labourer. Some Burmese women who are trafficked to India transit through Bangladesh (HTMS 2007).

The Government of Bangladesh does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; until recent days after coming under tremendous pressure of NGOs and international community. Bangladesh continued to raise awareness of trafficking and criminally prosecute and punish sex traffickers over the reporting period. The government also taking some bold steps to shut down labour recruitment agencies believed to be using deceptive recruiting practices and opened cases for forced child labour. Bangladesh did not, however, report any criminal convictions or prison sentences for acts of involuntary servitude. It is demanded that Bangladesh should prosecute labour trafficking offenses and seek the imposition of criminal penalties for deceptive recruitment practices that facilitate trafficking, and should increase efforts to combat internal trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Bangladesh should also provide more protection services for adult male trafficking victims and victims of labour forms of trafficking (RHTP 2004; TR 2006).

Nowadays India is also facing the same problem in Northeastern region as the increasing incidents of human trafficking. Human traffickers are increasingly turning to India’s poverty-ridden and insurgency-wracked northeastern states in their search for young girls to work in the brothels of the big cities. Over the past five years there has been a rise in reports of girls gone missing from the remote region of these eight states, an increase which authorities believe is due to trafficking. Police say that at least 700 girls from the region have been reported missing over the last five years, 300 of whom disappeared in 2005 alone. But NGOs estimate that thousands of northeastern girls disappear every year. Most of them are not reported by families due to the stigma associated with being a part of the sex trade. The rise in the number of girls disappearing from states like Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh is partly due to tighter surveillance on India’s northeastern border with Nepal, from where most of the trafficking took place earlier. Mr. Pachuau, IPS, Director of North East Police Academy (NEPA) says increased security along the border to curb Maoist insurgencies in both
countries has deterred many traffickers, and the number of Nepali girls being brought into India annually has halved from around 10,000 three or four years ago (Moses 2007: 161-174).

The research also revealed that the trafficking problem is more widespread in the region than previously thought. Interviews by Nedan's field teams with 60 teenage sex workers at Dimapur, Nagaland, revealed that many of the girls had been trafficked from the Naga countryside with false promises of sales jobs in big cities. Most of the girls were from broken families, having lost one or both parents in the region's protracted ethnic conflicts. Almost all had dropped out of school and faced a bleak future (Moses 2007: 161-174).

Several reports over the years reveal that traffickers use 20 main points in 16 south/south-western districts of Bangladesh near the Indian border to run their trade. The main trafficking route is the Dhaka-Mumbai-Karachi-Dubai route. There are people on both sides of the Bangladesh-India border involved in this trafficking chain. Just like in other parts of Asia, Bangladeshi girls (under 18 years of age) from the villages are trafficked for about 1,000 US dollars and sold to the sex industry. However, human trafficking is not confined to the sex industry only (VWB 2002).

**Trafficking in Drugs and other Narco Items**

Growing drug trafficking on the West Bengal-Bangladesh border has become another big worry for border management. Murshidabad and Bongaon in South Bengal had become convenient routes for drug trafficking. While much of the drug grown in Uttar Pradesh was going to Bangladesh, some drug processed in the Golden Triangle area of Myanmar, according to the central sources, is entering India via Bangladesh. It was learnt that the Border Security Force (BSF) had seized nearly 10 kgs of heroin and brown sugar in the current year, passing from India to Bangladesh. About six kgs of opium was also seized in 2004 (DTWBB 2004).

Drug trafficking has also become a major problem in North-East India. What is worse, not only drugs from the Golden Triangle are coming into India; some of these routes are now being used to smuggle narcotics out of India. Thus, it has now become a two-way route for illegal trade in drugs. The processes of drugs are done mostly in Uttar Pradesh.
along with the Golden Triangle area of Myanmar (ICB 2004). In July this year Jorhat police in Assam seized 550 gms of Thai-manufactured heroin. On August 24, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Assam police seized about 945 gm of heroin hidden in a plastic packet with a Thai label (Pathak 2008; Nepram-Mentschel 2007; Richards 1981: 59-82). The Assam Police believes that narcotics, particularly heroin and brown sugar, manufactured by the drug lords in the Golden Triangle, where high-grade poppy seeds are produced in abundance, find their way out through Tamu (Myanmar)-Moreh (Manipur)-Nagaland-Assam, Myanmar-Mizoram-Assam, Mizoram-Barak Valley (Assam)-Bangladesh routes. In the process, Guwahati, the gateway to the north-east, has become the primary transit point for drug trafficking.

There is another worst thing happening now is the spreading of deadly diseases due to drugs (ICB 2004). According to a research report of 2005 by Nedan Foundation, “Poverty and conflict” are fuelling trafficking in the northeastern states. This opens up huge possibilities for the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. The fear is that many such girls are extremely susceptible to HIV/AIDS and that many have already been infected. Young girls and women from poor, desperate families are dually vulnerable: to being trafficked into the sex trade and to catching HIV. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) said that up to 200,000 people were displaced in 2003 in Assam state alone and a further 15,000 in neighbouring Tripura state (IHT 2006).

**Trafficking in Animals, Birds and Plants**

It's a lucrative trade that spans countries and continents, where animals and birds are trafficked across the Indo-Bangladesh border through cargo carriers, trucks and Lories using the same channels as legal trade. But unlike those traders, who use legal channels with proper paper work, those trafficking wildlife, falsify certificates, and use multiple means of transport via multiple routes. They even hide their live merchandise by hiding animals and birds inside boxes with hidden compartments, hence mixing them with legal shipments. It is estimated that 350 million animals and plants are traded every year in a market, which is worth more than US $20 billion both in India and Bangladesh. More than a quarter of this trade, well over $5 billion is illegal, making it second only to the narcotics trade (TIAT 2008).
Those involved in the trade are mostly highly organized cross-border syndicates and include large supply chains, which ranges from tribals and poachers, who trap or kill an animal, to the transporter who moves it to the market. Taking them from West Bengal across the porous border to Bangladesh and then on to the Far East, from the mountains of Sikkim, Nagaland and Meghalaya to China. These trade routes are also used to smuggle other illegal goods like guns, ammunition and narcotics especially in the North-East where insurgency has kept the trade in wildlife and wildlife products alive and funded the buying of weapons and ammunition (Choudhury 2001; Gupta 2007: 92-101).

Thousands of cattle heads are smuggled everyday from India to Bangladesh. The quantum of this smuggling is so important that the price of beef in Bangladesh market depends upon the government policy regarding this smuggling. Significance of this trade though illegal is not lost on the government in Bangladesh. They have opened many customs check points through which this trade could be carried on, thus cashing in on this influx. Not surprisingly, the smugglers are eternally on the lookout for new channels. However, India does not seem to recognize this issue at all. There are no parallel custom points or check points on Indian side. Local police and security staff are enticed by the prospects of additional earnings and thus it seems to somewhat compromise them (Pramanik 2004) (Press Trust of India 2007).

With the background of all above factors, all Bangladeshi rulers have encouraged the cattle smuggling from India. But after 1980, the number of smuggled cattle has alarmingly increased. In 1980-81, total beef production jumped to 187.45 thousand metric tons from 119.38 thousand metric tons in 1979-80. Stiff rise of growth curve of the beef production was unabated till 1986-87. It is significant that from 1987-88 the beef production came down to half from the previous year because of anti-cattle smuggling drive. This production trend has been seen till 1992-93.2 After an assessment of country’s meat production in 1993, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Government, under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia, decided to encourage cattle smuggling and established 12 customs corridors for legalizing the smuggled cattle in the north and south-western border districts of the country with Indian state of West Bengal. These customs corridors have started functioning from January 1994 and drove up the cattle smuggling on Indian side of the border. During the tenure of Zia (1991-96), leather
(including tanned and other than tanned) and leather products export had steadily increased, particularly from 1994 a significant jump of leather export was witnessed when government decided to encourage cattle smuggling by establishing special customs corridor for cattle only in the bordering region of Bangladesh and West Bengal. But during the tenure of Sheikh Hasina (1996-2001) trend of leather export came down significantly (Karlekar 2005).


The worst thing is these animals are now being used for buying weapons and run operations by subversive groups. In the India of the jungles, local animal trappers have a new breed of client: militants using the trade in rare wildlife to raise funds for their cause (Cathy 2007). It is so early in the morning that the cooks in the roadside Dhabas along India’s National Highway 37 are asleep in their kitchens, their tandoors unlit. A senior Indian security sources, based in the North-East, who has tracked the incursion into the trade by Bangladeshi militants, warns that the poaching has global consequences (Dyke 2007; Datta 2007: 145-170).

**Environment and Ecosystem of Indo-Bangladesh Border Areas India**

It has already been discussed how the conflict between migrants and native people destroying local socio-cultural and economic life. These poor migrants along with other anti-national elements like terrorists, insurgents, smugglers, and gang mafias making their routes with cutting plants, big trees and killing many wild animals on their way to the destination. Sometime they also burn the forests to bias security personnel, sometimes to create a new route and sometime to catch wild animals. There are reports that Illegal migrants, on the other hand, are facing shortage of shelter in the host country for which they cutting trees and burning forests and small jungles. They are also cutting trees along with many valuable trees and selling those in markets to get money. They also clean the
forests for cultivation. It is very difficult to get a suitable piece of land for cultivation in the hilly areas. So, they cut the trees and clean many areas for cultivation also (Banerjee 2005).

In the Indo-Bangladesh border areas security personnel have to fight with these kinds of activities. Some time they also do the same kind of job and use the same kind of tactics to tackle the anti-national elements. It has been seen many time the security personnel especially BSF and BDR unnecessary fire upon each other with small and big weapons and also sometime with rocket launchers and big artilleries. Sometime giving covering to terrorists, insurgents, and mafias and also to migrants they use heavy firing with machine guns and artilleries. Secondly, to find out terrorists and insurgent groups, to destroy their hide-outs and training camps, security personnel have to deadly fight with them. In such kind of fighting they use heavy arms and ammunitions from both the side. It happens generally in the forest and jungle areas. In the fighting, several trees, plans and animals being destroyed along with the climate, environment, and the water gone contaminated and the whole ecosystem has gone damaged (Bhattacharyya 2005).

The result is unnecessary and irregular rain fails and river flood in the border areas. The rainfall and flood destroys management tasks, makes operation tasks very difficult one. The irregular rain and flood creates the changing of river course every year and destroys border fences. Taking the advantage of these problems, antinational like terrorists and insurgent group moves and cross the border unchecked along with their equipments; arms and ammunitions in the search of some new hide-outs and training camps. For all these activities forest areas in North-East India is decreasing day-by-day along with many wild life and valuable animals which harming the environment and the whole ecosystem of the region (Meher-Homji 1990).

**Indo-Bangladesh Border Trade: Legal and Illegal**

Border trade, in general, refers to the flow of goods and services across the international borders between countries. In this sense, it is a part of normal trade that flows through standard EXIM frameworks of nations. However, the economic, social and political implications of border trade are far deeper than normal trade that flows through the sea and airports. Border trade is the increased trade in areas near a national border
caused by a price difference, either generally or only for particular products (especially alcohol and tobacco products), in the two countries (Engel, Rogers 1996; Anderson, Wincoop 2001; Krumm, Kharas 2004: 1112-25). The Indo-Bangladesh border trade can only be understood analyzing legal and illegal both the parts of trade.

**Formal or Legal Border Trade**

The economic or trade relations between India and Bangladesh constitute a very significant aspect of the overall relations between the two countries. They are of extensive nature, including trade relations, credit arrangements, joint ventures and transport. They benefit both the countries and have an overall stabilizing effect on the political relations between them. Bangladesh is one of the important markets for India’s exports which in 1992-93 reached a figure of Rs. 1,030 crore and reached at 200 million in 2007. In 1992-93 Bangladesh was ranked 15th among the major markets for Indian goods; it would rank much higher among the importers of India’s manufactured products (Dubey 1994: 97-115) (the Table, No. 8).

**Indo-Bangladesh Special Trade—Formal: North-East Region and Bangladesh**

The importance of Bangladesh in NER’s development agenda is evident from the wide length of border, historically developed pattern of production, transport and trade linkages between them. The region has age-old socio-economic ties with Bangladesh from time immemorial. Although the partition has disrupted the structure of age-old flow of goods and services between these two areas, even then the communication channels are not completely abandoned. The old road links and water-ways are being used in many places for export-import trade between Bangladesh and NER. In fact, the land border between Bangladesh and NER are more accessible and cost effective than the borders with other neighbouring countries. Moreover, as far as existing infrastructural linkage is concerned, the region is having better transportation linkages in terms of both surface transport as well as water ways with Bangladesh than the other neighbouring countries (Das and Purkayastha 2000).
The development interest of NER in Bangladesh also lies in latter’s geo-strategic location. Transit through Bangladesh can greatly enhance the accessibility of NER, particularly of Tripura, South Assam, Mizoram and Manipur, to mainland India, and to the global markets through Chittagong Port. Thus Bangladesh can offer markets, transportation linkages and transit facilities—all of which are critical infrastructure for the development of NER.

Likewise, Bangladesh also has its own development interest in NER. Scarcity of mineral resources, except natural gas, has been a major problem for the development of Bangladesh. NER with its mineral resource base can fill this vacuum. Moreover, the complementary nature of the hill economies of NER, their agro-forest resources and hydro-power potentials all can be of much help for the development of Bangladesh. In fact the resources structure of NER and the demand structure of Bangladesh are such that a free trade between them is likely to reinforce the development efforts in both sides of the border. Therefore, a study of NER-Bangladesh Trade is essential in order to assess its nature and implications for development of both NER and Bangladesh.

NER-Bangladesh trade flows through two channels: official or formal and unofficial or informal. While the volume of official trade is recorded at different levels, it is almost impossible to quantify the volume of unofficial trade. Again, the official trade flows both directly and indirectly. Direct trade flows through the Land Custom Stations (LCS)/custom check posts along the international borders between NER and Bangladesh. Hence the items of trade, quantity and value—all are recorded at LCS. However, in case of indirect trade, it is very difficult to estimate the contribution of the NER as the goods produced in the region are exported from places outside the region, after value addition in the process of production of exportable. As a result, any objective analysis of trade between NER and Bangladesh, based on empirical data, has to bank on only custom data on direct official trade which is only a part of the total volume of trade.

The export from NER mainly consists of mineral and horticultural products. Mineral products contribute 89.41 per cent of the total export value. They consist of only two minerals viz., coal and limestone. Both are mined in the Southern belt of Meghalaya and directly exported to Bangladesh through the custom check posts along Meghalaya-Bangladesh border as well as Karimganj (Assam)-Bangladesh border without any value
addition. Horticultural products like ginger, oranges, citrus fruits, garlic, pears, etc., contribute 5.83 per cent of total NER’s export. These are produced mainly in Meghalaya, Mizoram and NC Hills of Assam. Although the commodity basket of agricultural products of the plains of NER and of eastern region of Bangladesh has much similarity, the same between the hills of NER and the plains of Bangladesh are dissimilar.

The complementarities between the resource base of the hills of NER and the plains of Bangladesh provide a firm basis for trade between them. Meghalaya, with an estimated reserve of 563 million tons of coal, 4147 million tones of limestone, 4.44 million tones of kaolin, 80.97 million tones of clay and huge deposit of glass sand coupled with congenial climatic condition for large scale horticultural production, and traditional linkage with the production and consumption centres across the border, is a treasure house for Bangladesh. The Chhatak Cement Company, at Chhatak in Bangladesh, the only major public sector cement manufacturer, largely depends upon Meghalaya for limestone. Besides this cement company, the tea gardens, jute mills and brick manufacturing units in Bangladesh largely depend on the Meghalaya coal. In fact, the demand for mineral products in Bangladesh is far more than the supply from Meghalaya (Das and Purkayastha 2000).

In spite of the impressive performance on the trade front, the full potentialities of economic cooperation between India and Bangladesh remain to be realised. Over the years, there has been a lamentable lack of effort on the part of the two governments to take conscious and well-planned measures to nurture these relations and impart dynamism to them. These relations have by and large, grown dictated by the logic of the geographical situation of and other objective factors prevailing in the two countries (IBBT 2006).

Minimum necessary institutional infrastructure for under planning economic cooperation has long been in place. There is a Trade Agreement between the two countries and also an agreement to hold regular periodic trade review talks. There is a Joint Economic Commission at the Ministerial level, with four committees dealing respectively with economic matters, trade and transport, science and technology, and agriculture. There is an Agreement on Land Water Transport and memoranda of understanding covering cooperation in specific areas. However, these institutions have
frequently been afflicted by the neglect of the two governments. To take an example, a high-level Joint Economic Commission (JEC) between the two countries was set up soon after the liberation of Bangladesh. After remaining active for a couple of years, the Commission went into a long period of hibernation until it became dead. As a result, a JEC had to be set up in 1982. But this Commission may meet the same fate as its predecessor. The periodicity of the meeting of the Trade Review Talks has also been subjected to the vicissitudes of the domestic political conditions in either country and of their bilateral political relations (De 2004).

There have also been instances when Government of India has unduly delayed its offers of export credit package to Bangladesh. Of late, for a variety of reasons, Bangladesh has been very slow in utilising the credit extended to it by India. Some of the very important physical and legal infrastructures required for facilitating a growing economic relationship remain to be created. These include agreement on vehicular transport, transshipment of goods, availability of port and train facilities, etc., responding to requests from Bangladesh to supply essential commodities required for its development and for consumption (Mohanty 2003).

In spite of Bangladesh being a fairly large market for India’s exports, Indian businessmen and entrepreneurs do not bestow upon in the care and attention it deserves. They are not as eager to come to Bangladesh for selling their wares and rendering services as they are in rushing to the markets of developed countries. Thus what is in reality a principal market is psychologically treated as a residual market. One hears frequent complaints from Bangladeshi businessmen and industrialists that their Indian partners do not respond to their calls in time and regard the Bangladesh market as dumping ground for their inferior products, keeping the superior varieties for the more prosperous markets. Economic relations between two countries are influenced by the climate and the state of their political relations (Sobhan 1995: 385-389).

The economic reforms introduced recently by both India and Bangladesh have inevitably introduced changes in the nature and forms of economic transactions and interaction between the two countries. For one thing, the State is now playing a much diminished role and initiatives for economic cooperation rest more and more with private enterprises. Less inward-looking economic policies, reduction in the important barriers
and provision of enhanced incentives to invest, should lead to an increasing interaction and collaboration between the private sectors of the two countries. The geographical proximity as natural advantage that the two countries have in trading should be provided an additional incentive for expanded economic cooperation. But if the private enterprises, on account of the burden of their past attitude and the lure of the markets of developed countries, do not respond to the opportunities opened up by the process of liberalization, economic cooperation would suffer a set-back, particularly in the absence of the compensating role of the State. Moreover, since the liberalization, the stronger economic partner i.e. India is likely to gain more than the weaker one, that is, Bangladesh (TSA 2004).

The trading relationship between India and Bangladesh is currently of special interest in both countries for a number of reasons. Firstly, there are urgent and longstanding concerns in Bangladesh arising from the perennial, large bilateral trade deficit with India, and from the large volumes of informal imports from India across the land border which avoid Bangladesh import duties (Kumar 2001). These concerns have been particularly acute on the Bangladesh side in the context of discussions between the two governments of the possibility of a bilateral free trade agreement along the lines of the India-Sri Lanka FTA. Secondly, even though (because of the disparity in the size of the two economies) India’s trading relationship with Bangladesh is much less significant for it than it is for Bangladesh, closer economic integration with Bangladesh is nevertheless seen as a very important way of reducing the economic and political isolation of the seven Indian eastern and north eastern states from the rest of the country. Finally, both countries have long shared common objectives for closer economic integration within the South Asia region, and these have recently been reemphasised by signing on to SAFTA4, which takes effect from January 2006. Under SAFTA, the preferential tariffs agreed in the various rounds of SAPTA5-so far largely ineffective in generating much intra-regional trade- will continue, but a number of ambitious new objectives have been enunciated. These include the eventual elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers on trade between the members, the harmonisation of Customs procedures and documentation, the facilitation of banking relationships, and cooperation and improvements in the infrastructure for regional trade (Mukherji 2004; Jamil 2004).
Informal or Illegal Border Trade

Illegal border trade is another big problem being occurring directly out of improper management of Indo-Bangladesh border. Due to unique nature of this border, political antagonism and misunderstandings from both the countries the bilateral trade especially the benefits of border trade has been always out of the agenda and sometimes even undermined. Indo-Bangladesh border has a potentiality of much beneficial trade than any other borders of India. Its strategic location is mainly argued for it. But, unfortunately, neither government has ever tried to exploit this border in this way. The problem now has become acute and very dangerous. Almost all the types and varieties of commodities and goods are being smuggled and sold in each others’ markets through this border illegally.

The amount of illegal trade is more than US $ 200 ml comparing with the legal trade nearly US $ 200 ml would be more than legal trade. It has been seen that in many cases informal trade is more appreciated than the formal trade (Mukharjee 2003; Mukherjee 2001: 41-56). Reasons are very interesting also. The hectic procedures, time consumption, monetary loss and threats to life, goods and vehicles are demoralizing legal trade through this border. Informal trade on the other hand, requires no procedures at all, even easy border crossing low risk and high profit. Some goods are well accepted and legalized by the concerned governments after entering into their side of the border. According to some experts the denial of FTA with India by Bangladesh is the clear indication of how Bangladesh benefits more from illegal trade than the legal trade (Mukherji 2004).

Geographically, India has between the world’s two major opium producing regions—the Gold Crescent and the Golden Triangle. This has made it extremely vulnerable for illegal trade. The main informal trading centres on the Indo-Bangladesh border are Assam (Fakiragram, Mankachar and Karimganj), Meghalaya (Lichubari and Dawki), Mizoram (Tlangbung), and Tripura (Kailashahar, Agartala, Sonamora, Bilonia, Mejdia, Lalgola, Mohedpur, Radhikapur, kaliagunj and Hilli). Availability of a large market and railways near the border make it easier and attractive for the smugglers to indulge informal trade. The illegal trade is carried out mostly on headloads, bicycles, rickshaw,
vans and boats. An estimate of illegal trade as carried out by various agencies i.e., MARC, Rahman, BIDS, NCAER, etc (the Tables, No. 9 and 10).

Size of Informal Trade

According to the 2002 surveys and some very approximate extrapolations from them, Bangladesh’s smuggled/imports approximately $500 million from India during 2002/03 about 40% of approximately 30% of total imports from India. The total value of goods imported by “technical” smuggling—underinvoicing, misdeclarations and other illegal practices at Customs—is estimated to exceed total “bootleg” smuggling by a substantial margin, and most of the “technical” smuggling occurs at the land border. Between them, ‘bootleg” and “technical” smuggling at the land borders add about 70% to total land border imports but appear to be much less prevalent in the sea and air trade (Taneja 2004: 5367-5371). Based on surveys at Chittagong which asked about under-invoicing and mis­declaration practices, total technical smuggling of imports from India by sea and air was about 17% of the total recorded value of this trade, compared to 32% of the total recorded value of imports by the land border. These shares would be somewhat lower if it were possible to allocate “back-to-back L/C” imports (i.e. duty free imports of inputs used by Bangladesh exporters) between the land border and the sea trade, but these imports are not recorded by NBR and the available estimates are from Bangladesh Bank statistics on letters of credit which do not distinguish these two routes.

For many reasons that are emphasized in the 2002 survey reports, the estimates of “bootleg” smuggling and even more so the estimates of “technical” smuggling are very rough approximations at best and subject to wide margins of error. Indications of the possible size of these errors are apparent from the project study on trade financing and the case study of the sugar industry. The biggest item on the agenda of smugglers is cattle, which are transported undetected from Punjab, Rajasthan, UP, MP, Bihar and Orissa. These cattle are brought up to the border districts in the cattles mandis and from there unloaded about 15 kms from the border on the Indian side and then gradually moved towards the international boundary in small groups as part of the local cattle heads. Since the local cattle are allowed to graze up to the boundary, these cattle also form a part of the group and eventually are made to cross over to Bangladesh through the
unfenced border. There has been several studies been done both in India and Bangladesh regarding this (Pramanik 2004).

These estimates in the Goyal study were based on the opinions of relatively few people and may not be reliable, since the focus of the study was on financing and they were not systematically checked against the estimates of other informed people. However, Goyal’s estimate for sugar smuggling is roughly consistent with the sugar case study, which estimates sugar smuggling at between $170 million and $215 million in 2001/02 and from $100 million to $127 million in 2002/03. A partial explanation for these discrepancies may be that Goyal’s and the sugar study estimates were including “technical” as well as “bootleg” smuggling, whereas the Bangladesh surveys which distinguish individual products are in principle for “bootleg” smuggling only. Even so, the resulting discrepancy in the estimate of total land border smuggling is very large: for example, the total discrepancy of just these five commodities as reported in Goyal’s study, would about double the survey-based total (bootleg+technical) estimate for 2002/03 from $422 million to $831 million, and assuming a smaller discrepancy for sugar of $100 million, still increases the total survey-based estimate by about 40%, from $422 million to $708 million (Pursell 2007; Goyal 2004).

These very large differences underline the importance of coordinated contemporaneous surveys on both sides of the border with iteration between the survey teams involved to explore and narrow down discrepancies. Unfortunately, all the studies which have aimed to quantify cross border smuggling—including the 2002 Bangladesh survey, the 1998 Bangladesh surveys reported by Rahman and Razzaque, and the 1994 NCAER survey—have all faced time and resource constraints which would have been needed for this kind of coordination, and therefore are based solely on the analysis of survey results dealing with imports in the case of the Bangladesh surveys, and on exports in the case of the 1994 NCAER survey in India (Rahman and Razzaque 1998).

Composition According to the 2002 surveys, the value of “bootleg” smuggling is discussed in a World Banka Document (SIBT 2006). These shares were roughly the same as in the 1998 survey, except for an increase in the share of processed foods (nearly all sugar) and a smaller share of textiles. The products being smuggled correspond fairly closely to the products mentioned in NCAER’s survey of exporters in Kolkata.
survey, for products which were the same or similar to those they were exporting, the exporters were asked whether the “source of entry” into Bangladesh was (1) legal only (2) illegal only or (3) both legal and illegal (Das and Pohit 2004). However, underinvoicing and similar practices could have been going on when the products were exported by the legal route.

There is very limited information on the commodity composition of “technical” smuggling. Some indication is provided by the diverse set of agricultural and industrial products included in 52 shipments that were inspected by Bangladesh Customs Intelligence at Benapole during January–November 2002 and found to have under-declared the weight or the number of items in the shipment. Most of these shipments were of industrial products-only 8 of the 42 (4 of rice, 2 of spices, one each of coconuts and lentils) were agricultural products. Judged by the number of separate shipments, false declarations were most common for paper board and paper products, followed by sanitary ware. Under-declarations of weight or quantity varied from 10% to 67% and averaged about 30%, but values were not provided in the data set, so it is not possible to infer anything about the ranking of different commodities in terms of the value of technical smuggling (Pursell 2007; Goyal 2004).

Indo-Bangladesh Special Trade— Informal: North-East Region and Bangladesh

Although it is difficult to arrive at any precise estimation of the volume of unofficial trade, the direction and composition of such trade can be delineated to some reliable extent. A study on “Cross border trade between India and Bangladesh” by NCAER (Chaudhari 1995) has revealed many aspects of the unofficial trade between NER and Bangladesh. It has covered most smuggling prone bordering districts of West Bengal (9 districts), Assam (3 districts) and Tripura (3 districts). Of the three border districts in Assam, four centres of unofficial trade, viz., Sutarkandi and Steamerghat (Karimganj Ferryghat) in Karimganj having trade links with Sutarkandi and Latu of Sylhet district of Bangladesh respectively; Katigorah in Silchar having link with Jakiganj in Sylhet, and Golakganj in Dhubri connected with Bhurungahari in Rongpur—have been surveyed.
Similarly, in Tripura one trade centre each for three border districts, viz., Billonia in South Tripura having link with Sabrum in Nowakhali district of Bangladesh, Agartala in West Tripura having link with Akhaura in Brahmanberia, and Kailashar in North Tripura connected with Hicklia in Moulavibazar—have been surveyed. Based on the sample survey of selected trading centres and information collected from other non-surveysed centres and districts, the study has made state level generalization of volume, direction and composition of unofficial trade along Assam, Tripura and West Bengal borders with Bangladesh (the Tables, No. 12, 13, 14, and 15).

Principal commodities smuggled into Bangladesh through Assam and Tripura include food/edible items, live animals, wood/timber, cotton printed saris, bicycle parts, cosmetics, babyfood, cement, coal and kerosene. The total volume of unofficial exports to Bangladesh through these three border states is estimated at Rs. 1165 crores annually of which West Bengal accounts for as much as 96 per cent (Rs. 1121 crores), Assam 3 per cent (35.5 crores) and Tripura 1 per cent (8.1 crores). Although much of the unofficial trade runs through the border districts of West Bengal, unofficial export through Tripura is as much 50 times higher than official exports and in Assam it is double the volume of official exports.

Unofficial exports of sugar, the study identified, ranks first among the smuggled-out commodities through Karimganj followed by cotton printed saris. In all the districts of Tripura and Dhubri in Assam wood and timber constitute the single most important smuggled out item which accounts for 49 to 64 per cent of the smuggled volume in each district.

The study did not cover border district and trade centres of Meghalaya and Mizoram. While unofficial trade through Mizoram borders is believed to be negligible, it is substantial along Meghalaya-Bangladesh borders. Although no systematic study has been made to gauge the extent of smuggling either through Mizoram or through Meghalaya borders, Srinath Baruah has reported a small amount of unofficial exports of horticultural products from Mizoram and imports of third country origin manufactured goods from Bangladesh. He has also reported unofficial exports of agro-products and some other items of necessities to Bangladesh through Meghalaya borders and imports of dry fish and third country origin manufactured goods from Bangladesh. What is more important
which Baruah has also taken into cognizance is that besides formal exports of coal and limestone there is also a large scale unofficial exports of these mineral products from Meghalaya to Bangladesh (Rao, Baruah and Das 1997). It is gathered from informal discussions with the exporters and officials of enforcement agencies that the volume of unofficial exports of coal, limestone and agro-forest based products will be 4 to 5 times higher than the volume of official exports from Meghalaya to Bangladesh. The observations made by Shekhar Dutta also corroborate this fact (Dutta 2000).

There are several factors which encourage informal trade range from evasion of tariff and non-tariff barriers; differences in the rates and high demand; nature of the border terrain; porosity of the border; habitation of the population; and connivance of officials. Informal trade also takes place due to domestic policy distortions. A large number of commodities that fall under administered prizing are siphoned off from the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India into Bangladesh. An inadequate transit and transport system often results in high transport costs, which in turn creates a strong incentive for trade to take place through informal channel would (Upadhaya 2002).

Under Development of Infrastructure for Border Trade

The Indo-Bangladesh border region has a potentiality of fair trade. But unfortunately the areas are not much developed to creating the congenial climate for trade. A potential border trade depends on a well strategy with developed infrastructures in the region.

Border Infrastructure for Economy and Trade

India’s North-Eastern Region (NER) is surrounded by foreign countries in the four sides, China, Bhutan in the north, Burma in the east and Bangladesh in the south and west. The NER is connected to the mainland of India with a narrow strip of land in the west through Bengal. Physiographically, the area grouped into two natural divisions—Hills and Mountains—cover about one fourth of the area and rest is plains and alluvium deposits. The area is extensively dissected by two main river systems, the Brahmaputra and the Surma. The entire regions experience heavy seasonal rainfall, rich in forest and forest based resources and favourable for cultivation of varieties of crops, throughout the year (Bhuyan 2000: 109-117) (the Table, No, 11, 15, 16 and 17).
Different types of crops—paddy, jute, mustard, sugarcane, tea, rubber, fruits like apple, banana, orange etc. are cultivated based on local conditions. Because of the undulating topography, and heavy rainfall and ice capped mountain in the north, the NER has a high potential for Hyde Power development. As per assessment of the Central Water and Power Commission, the NER has a high potential for Hyde Power development potential of 14 million Kwt; of which about 1.00 per cent is exploited so far. Some of the mineral resources found in the NER-are coal in Meghalaya, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Nagaland; Limestone in Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur; Chilimunarite in Meghalaya. Other potential biotic/abiotic resources are fish and fisheries in the rivers and marshy land, livestock, and sericulture.

Primary sector still dominates the economy, about, 3/4th of the work force are engaged in the agriculture. In 1983-84, at current prices, sectoral distribution of Net State Domestic Product in the NER were primary sector—60.9 per cent (against Indian average 38.4 per cent); secondary sector 26.8 per cent (39.0%). Over the years tertiary sector has been playing important role to the regional economy (Baruah 2000).

Mainly, trading items produced in surplus in the North Eastern Region (NER) are tea, coal, forest products, and betel nuts. The region has a long heritage on sericulture and horticulture that has not been developed with modern input, to the full potential. The NER is still far below the all India Index on Basic Infrastructure mainly, road, transport and communication and power. Since the process of economic diversification had been set into, along with the British occupation; mainly due to tea cultivation, jute cultivation, exploitation of forest and mineral resources—coal and oil and construction of road, railways, and improvement of steamer services. By the close of the 19th Century, trading of commodities has been integral part in the production, imposed on the self sufficient ideal village economy. Principal items of imports to Assam (greater) included: coal, cotton twist and yarn, piece goods (European), gram and pulse, rice (husked) liquor, brass, copper and other metals, iron, salt, sugar, opium, tobacco, woolen-goods. Major articles of exports were—tea, oilseeds, cotton (raw), jute (raw), silk (manufactured), timber, bamboos, coal and coke, lime, betal-nut, orange. By and large these items were remained same till the time of independence.
Merchants from Dhaka collected the local produced in exchange of foreign articles, food staff, and business. In the Brahmaputra valley, people from Rajasthan collected the trade while in Khasi Hills, by the Khasis, in Naga Hills by the Angamis; changsil, was the trading place between the Mizos of Mizoram and Silchar.

Assam-Manipur, trade was carried by two routes through Cachar and Kohima, Cattlers were imported from Burma via Manipur. Trade out lets from Assam was also through Surma valley—items expected were tea, jute, mustard; from the Chittagong hill Kerosene was imported to the Surma valley. Almost the entire trade of Assam was with Bengal—from Calcutta; export markets were at Dacca, Narayanganj, Mymensing. In early days of British occupation trade is mainly carried by steamers and boats and later by the Railways. After opening of Assam Bengal Railways and hill section, Chittagong port has been major exporting centre. Increase in trade and commerce in Bengal led to emergence of the wealthy middle class, of the tests and basaks, the people in the valleys of Assam lived and died as an agricultural community. The process of drainage of vast resource of the province thus began, continued, without and break, till our own time.

The NER has vast potential for border trades with Bangladeshi special facilities are created. The NER has the following scope:

1. The NER may act as transit zone between trades with Indian mainland and with neighbouring countries,

2. The NER may produce items those have demand in the neighbouring countries. This may be in two sectors—manufacturing sector and farming sector. Export oriented Industrial Zone may be developed in the selected urban centres. Action in this line is already initiated at Guwahati, may be taken up in Agartala, Imphal, Aizawl, Tinsukia, Dimapur, Silchar.

The major border routes and centres may be developed (Subramanian and Arnold 2001):

1. Trade with Bangladesh through Mizoram—(a) Lungle-Demagiri-Rangmatti-Chittagong.

2. Trade with Bangladesh through Tripura—(a) Agartala-Comilla-Laksham-Naokhali, (b) Udaipur-Sabrum-Ramgarh-Chittagong, (c) Kamalpur-Kammalganj.
3. Trade with Bangladesh through Meghalaya on—(a) Shillong-Dawki-sylhet-Commilla-Dhalua (b) Tura-Buregapara-Bghamara-Durgapur-Nasirabad-Dhaka.

4. Trade with Bangladesh through Assam and Meghalaya—(a) Guwahati-Mankachar-Bengunbari-Dhaka (b) Karimganj-Sylhet (c) Karimganj-Silua-Kamalganj-Commilla-Chittagong-Cox’s Bazar.


Infrastructure to be created in the trading points: trade information system, exhibition hall for trade items, customs clearance centre, transport and communication, warehouse. Hotels, insurance provision, currency exchange centre in selected towns etc.

**Cross-Border Nexus, Networks and Border Management: BSF and BDR**

The security forces and their involvement has become the biggest facilitator in the movement of people and goods across the border. It has now been come public that several security personnel of BSF and BDR both are keenly involved in the whole matter. A number of surveys and studies have been indicating that there is a large nexus starting from security personnel to local police to mafias, local politicians and the contractors arranging and running the movement across the border.

The most unfortunate thing happening in the border management process is, according to the local people, the security forces especially the border guarding forces are being deeply involved in all kinds of unsocial, unmoral and security incidents happening on the border areas. Although it wouldn’t be fair to blame border guarding forces for corruption.
but the story in a long way is true. As SK Ghosh's argued as every the border check post
or out-post is involved in several kinds of corruption. The issue also became evident
through several studies conducted by research institutions, governmental agencies and
from couple of recent incidents where BSF jawans openly blaming against their
colleagues being involved in corruption. Recently a BSF jawan in Delhi complain of
harassment by his senior authorities because of his opposition to corruption on Indo-
Bangladesh border area (Ghosh 1993).

There are frequent news coming in Indian, Bangladeshi and several foreign dailies
regarding BDR and BSF pushing poor people into each other’s side in the dark nights.
Several times BSF argued of stopping such kind of activities done by BDR people. But,
on the other side, BDR denies every time arguing it is BSF pushing Bengali Muslims into
Bangladesh side. Every time the story is half-true and half-falls from both the sides.
Several studies have been done both in Indian and Bangladesh regarding migration and
migration caused other issues. Some studies are conducted by institutes in Bangladesh
like The Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RAMMRU), Dristhi
Research Centre and some other independent institutions. From Indian side some studies
has been conducted by India Migration Network, Centre for Research on Indo-
Bangladesh Relations, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations
(ICRIER), Mahanirban Calcutta Research Groups (CRG) and some other independent
research institutions. Some studies have also been conducted both by Bangladeshi and
Indian research institutions jointly.

According to the field surveys conducted by Bangladeshi scholars, people are brought
and given permission to cross the border by Tk. 100 previously and Rs. 400 to Rs. 500 in
Bangladesh side and Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000 in Indian side per head respectively. These
trades have been going on through several formal and informal transit points. Economic
and poor labour migrants are getting easy permission through their contractors and then
cross the border in groups. The women migrants especially girls for marriage or sex
business are getting permission through their agents in both the side of the border. It was
found out more female migrants are getting permission than male migrants. A study was
conducted by RAMMRU, where it was found the sex workers particularly are most and
frequent cross-border than any other types of migrants. According to those sex workers
they have to sell their sex and sometimes at free of cost to the security forces to get the permission to cross the border and they found that is the most easy and cheaper way to get cross the border. It happens every time from both the side to cross the border.

From both the side everything is pre-planned and set by the contractors and mediators who will send and who will receive them. The BSF people in Indian side also take money and share among themselves and let them in for which there is no complain against each other except very few exceptions. And if it’s an election time in any border state of India then there will be huge migration from Bangladesh. Truck load people come cast their votes and goes back without any kind of check or interruption in any place on their way to India or Bangladesh. Although, they all go back, by their own calculation, still a sizeable number stays back in India every time. Nowadays the processes are become very sophisticated and easier and official. There is a very good cooperation and understanding between BSF and BDR in such kind of activities. With a perfect understanding both BSF and BDR receives handsome money from the contractors and mediators from both the side.

Secondly, in trafficking matter both the security forces in the both sides have a very good understanding among them. There is a huge amount of trafficking and smuggling from both the sides through several transit points. Mostly trafficking happens in human (young girls), animal (cattle), small stationery and garments, small arms and narcotic items. Thirdly, the issue of border trade is another interesting subject where border security forces are involved the most. This has become the most profitable business for both the BSF and BDR people. Both BSF and BDR play a very interesting role in the whole process. The illegal trade through trucks and small vehicles cross the border very easily with prior permission of security forces. The business goes easier than the official trade as there is no document need from either side for custom checking or any other kinds of permission.

Another interesting thing is there are several items have declared legal after coming into their side of the border, through unofficial channels. However, it is being argued by officials that it happens due to the huge demand in their respective sides. Fourthly, due to the security personnel and their counter operations, environment and ecology of border
areas states are severely affected and damaged. The soil and water is also gone contaminated which is being affecting the cultivation and livelihood of people.

Finally, human rights violation has become common and daily news in all the border states of Indo-Bangladesh border. Media reports, in northeastern states of India people have been tortured by security forces particularly by BSF jawans and regular Indian Army. They blame, in the name of terrorists, insurgents, illegal migrants, gang mafias and sex racket runners BSF torturing people, killing them, raping their women and looting their property and livestock. There have been strong protests throughout northeastern states against the Indian army and BSF recently. The normal life of North-East India has disrupted due to these unsocial and unmoral activities by our prestigious security forces. Nobody in the region is ready to trust and rely on security forces. Therefore the common people sympathy is growing for insurgent groups which have become very difficult for India to tackle terrorists and insurgents in the region. Interestingly, there is a very well understanding and dangerous nexus has been grown up among antinational, security forces and politicians across the border making the management task an impossible task.