Port infrastructure attracts a lot of attention today. But port literature is not well-developed and this is particularly true of Calcutta port. The present work is an attempt to fill the lacuna. An M. Phil dissertation — Haldia Port Complex: A Quantitative Study on its Problems and Potentialities — was prepared in 1979 by the author as a preliminary study of this exercise. A Ph.D. thesis entitled Economics of Haldia Port Complex is now presented here as an extension of the maiden work. It is argued that the poor performance of Haldia Port during the first three years of its operation (i.e., during 1977-78 to 1979-80) as well as the emergence of large excess capacity in the dock complex could mainly be attributed to the demand factors (namely, economic factors and policy variables).

It has to be admitted, however, that the present study remains also inadequate for a number of reasons. First, Haldia dock system was commissioned only in February 1977 and we have the monthwise data on cargo handled only for the years 1977-78 to 1979-80. But all the relevant data on explanatory variables, particularly on economic factors for these recent years are not available monthwise to help us analyse the relative importance of these factors. Secondly, the aggregate as well as the commodity-wise export-import figures according to source or destination of cargo for Major ports other than

1/ Haldia oil jetty was, of course, commissioned in 1968 and for oil traffic yearly data for a number of years are available.
Visakhapatnam for years following 1974-75 are not available to help us observe the trend and quantum of diversion of traffic from Haldia's hinterland to those ports.

Given that the scope of the present study is limited in these and other respects, one can suggest a few possible extensions of the study. First, given the origin and destination of cargo, total costs of cargo passing through different ports can be observed in greater detail. This would help establish the relative economy or diseconomy of Haldia port in respect of cargo handling. Secondly, the pattern and quantum of diversion of traffic, if any, from Haldia port's hinterland to other ports can be studied in coming years by undertaking export/import surveys of Major ports, as was done in the past by Directorate of Transport Research, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Government of India, and is now being done by Visakhapatnam Port Trust. Thirdly, the relative importance of different factors that have stood in the way of effective functioning and development of Haldia Port can be more rigorously assessed with the availability of data for the construction of suitable and sufficient time series involving the relevant variables.

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