APPRAISAL:

A developed transport system is a pre-requisite for the economic development. An efficient and competent transport system makes it possible for the mobilization of men and materials amongst different regions and makes large scale production possible. It enlarges the potential market and hence generates income and employment. It helps in bringing about economic, social and national integration.  

The transport system in Assam comprises of a number of distinct services. They mainly include water transport, railways, road transport, airlines and pipelines. The history of transport development in Assam has passed through the following stages of evolution. Firstly, it was the era of human, animal and country boat transport, with the existence of a subsistence economy. Dug-outs were operated in the lesser streams and the roughest of roads, briddle paths or tracts were used for animal and human transportation. For many years in the past country boats were the only means of transportation.

1 Govt. of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Transport in India, December, 1967, p. 5
Secondly, the era of mechanised water transport commenced from 1846 onwards. The development of tea gardens, discovery of coal mines and the Company's reign brought steamers to the main rivers. Thirdly, the era of rail transport began from 1882. From that day the railways began to serve the British colonial interest. The development of the tea industry was the main reason for the opening of the railways. Fourthly, it was the beginning of the motor transport after the thirties. Until the thirties mechanised road transport was practically unknown in Assam.  

Since the beginning of the recorded history water transport has occupied an important place in the transport history of Assam. Mechanised water transport played a vital role till 1965. The R.S.I. and the I.G.S.N. Company operated steamer services on the waterways of Assam with great success. There were as many as 35 number of inland water transport operators in Assam before 1965. Even after the construction and development of railways, water transport continued to carry most of the traffic to and from Assam. The river transport were the life line of Assam, because the single metre gauge railway line failed to serve the needs of the State of Assam.

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Assam and its adjoining states adequately. The road transport was not developed and the river transport most efficiently operated and carried the bulky commodities. It had played the most important role in the economic development of Assam. In fact water transport had a prestigious position with monopoly power till 1965.

After partition of the country in 1947, crises began to appear in the water transport of Assam. The problem was accentuated by the earthquake of 1950. The hostilities of 1965, between Pakistan and India dealt a serious blow to the Inland Water Transport in the State. The traffic in water transport diminished abruptly. It had adversely affected the economic development of Assam and its neighbouring states. At the same time the rail and road transport traffic developed to a considerable extent. After the reopening of the waterways between Assam and Calcutta, via, Bangladesh in 1972 the water transport traffic has continued to improve during the last 15 years, but it is far less than that of the pre 1965 period.

Though water transport has no inherent weakness of its own, it is suffering from a number of problems in Assam. Consequently, it failed to retain its old prestigious position, that was before 1965. In Assam this cheapest mode of transport remains neglected and efforts were made only for the development of rail and road transport. In competition with the well
equipped rail and road transport the infant inland water transport have been thrown over.\(^3\)

The fact of the matter is that road transport nowadays with its speed and efficiency has made deep inroads not only to river transport but also rail transport. Because one can get his goods transported quicker and without risk of breakage or pilferage. As a result of development of road transport, quite a number of carrier services have been functioning all over the country. Another advantage of road transport is that they can pick up goods from the point of loading right up to the destination in a single operation. Hence many traders, businessmen and others went for road transport in a big way notwithstanding the higher rates of charges.\(^4\)

The history of decline of I.W.T., is not peculiar to Assam or India alone. In the U.S.A. and European countries the inland water transport had also deteriorated over a considerable period of time. But such countries had appreciated the inherent values of inland water transport very much earlier, resulting in its revival and development. They were able to

\(^3\) Govt. of India, Ministry of Transport and Communication, New Delhi, Report of the Inland Water Transport Committee, June 1959, (Gokhale Committee), p.5

\(^4\) The Assam Tribune, June 27, 1986, Friday.
overcome the difficulties of inland water transport and made tremendous development in its various branches. After the First World War, the U.S.A. and European countries made a bold policy of active participation of the Government for the upliftment of I.W.T., as a dimension of economic development. In the Continent of Europe the eight member countries of the conference of European Ministers of Transport, experienced a growth in the total tonnes carried by inland water transport in Federal Republic of Germany (F.R.G.), East Germany and also in Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, the Govt. of India failed to appreciate the true role of water transport. Notwithstanding the fact that the rail and road transport have made rapid strides in Assam, Assam and its adjoining states have always been handicapped by their inconvenient location at an extreme corner. There was no Govt. organization in Assam till 1959, for dealing with the water transport. It is because of the misconception in the minds of the Government and the people, about water transport. They consider that water can only be

5 Govt. of India, Ministry of Transport and Communication, New Delhi, Report of the Inland Water Transport Committee, June 1959, (GoKhaile Committee), p.8
6 ESCAP Seminar on Planning and Development of Inland Waterways, Calcutta, 1979, Some excerpts from the note by the ESCAP Secretariat and other papers and articles.
7 Govt. of Assam, Assam District Gazetteers, Goalpara, 1979, p. 262
used for irrigation and according to them navigation is possible only if deep water is available throughout the year. In fact they consider water of the rivers as a dangerous element, causing great devastation by flood. The Govt. has not come forward for the development of water transport, in spite of the recommendations made by several Inland Water Transport Committees, under the auspices of the Govt. of India.

There is a good prospects for the development of water transport in Assam. For the interest of the overall economic development of Assam and its adjoining states, it is utmost necessary that the available waterways should put to the most productive use. "Rail and road traffic has virtually reached saturation point. Therefore, it is essential that the nation develops inland waterways to economise resources and to foster a more balanced growth. In addition, economic features like agricultural productivity, industrial output, increased consumption level, diversification of economy etc. and also socio-economic cohesion, reinforcement of national security, boosting socially desirable settlement patterns, retention of cultural values and civilization etc. demand an acceptable mode of transport through inland waterways.

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8 ESCAP Seminar on Planning and Development of Inland Waterways, Calcutta 1979, some excerpts from the note by the ESCAP Secretariat and other papers and articles.
In other words inland waterways have a decisive role to play in our future growth. It is high time to make measures to overcome the obstacles which derelict the water transport in Assam. It has been emphasised time and again that only when the future of I.W.T. can be assured, we can reap the benefits of the economies of I.W.T., as has been done by countries of Europe, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. Sir Arthur Cotton the Madras Chief Engineer, who was the architect of Caveri and Godavari works and a great supporter of water transport, emphasised before a Parliamentary Committee in 1872 the importance of water transport and stated the inevitability of water transport in India.

Revival of water transport will remove a long felt need of Assam. It will remove the transport bottleneck in the North-East Region. In the last few decades some industries, such as Bongaigaon Petro-Chemical Complex, paper mills at Jogighopa, Jagiroad and Silchar, Thermal and Hydel Power Projects, Namrup Fertilizer Plant, Oil and Natural Gas Industries, Silghat Jute mill, Tea industry etc., have come up in Assam. Consequently, the demand for transport has been growing to a great extent.

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9 Inland Waterways Authority of India, Arakal Xavier, Chairman, National Integration Through Waterways.


It has been stated that the water transport has very little disadvantages compared to rail and road transport. The various weaknesses from which the I.W.T. is suffering in Assam can be mitigated by adopting suitable measures. In the following pages attention has been given to point out some suggestions for the upliftment of I.W.T. with particular reference to Assam.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

8 : 1 COLLECTION OF DATA:

In fact data are the fundamentals of every economic policies. They are the foundation of development policies. It has already been noted that there is acute shortage of water transport statistics in Assam. Collection of data on water transport in Assam is essential for its development in future.

Comprehensive traffic survey should be made in Assam and its adjoining states. In view of the increasing economic and industrial activities, the North-East Region would have considerable traffic burden in future. For this purpose it is essential in the first instance to find out the nature, quantum and direction of growing traffic, that can be handled by I.W.T. at a comparatively lesser cost.
This will ascertain the demand for water transport and arrangement can be made for providing the services.

Detailed Hydrographic survey is inevitable for the development of the waterways, and hence it should be undertaken regularly. Waterways in the state should be classified on the basis of their suitabilities for navigation, with different drought. The Sub-Committee of the Inland Transport Committee of the ECAFE had classified the water route, as under for navigation.¹²

a) Drought of less than 02 feet,
b) between 02 feet and 04 feet,
c) between 04 feet and 06 feet 6 inches, and
d) more than 06 feet.

Techno-economic feasibility survey should be conducted regularly. Data regarding the cargoes and passengers carried by water transport and their income and expenditure should be recorded. Engineering studies about the design, speed etc. of the vessels should be undertaken. Docking, ship building, ship repairing and the infrastructural facilities that are available should be examined. Research should be conducted on craft design, river conservancy, loading and terminal facilities, navigational aids and survey technique.

¹² Refer, Govt. Of India, Road and Inland Water Transport Advisory Committee, 1960.
For the purpose of planning and development of water transport in Assam, a Research Cell under the Directorate of Inland Water Transport, Govt. of Assam, should be opened immediately. The cell should be headed by a Research-Cum-Planning Officer. This branch should be responsible for the collection and maintenance of water transport statistics. This Research Cell should preserve the scanty data which were scattered at different offices, libraries and files. Shri Ramesh Nanda Prasad who was the member of the Central Inland Water Transport Board, also suggested for the setting up of a Research Institute for the development of the Inland Water Transport Industry. Establishment of such an organization will help to study the immediate and long term requirements of water transport.

8 : 2 IMPROVEMENT OF CONSERVANCY:

The basic problem that threatened the navigability of waterways in Assam is the lack of maintenance. To ensure the future of this cheapest mode of transport it is utmost necessary that extensive conservancy measures should be adopted. Both the permanent and temporary measures should be considered to ensure the adequate depth and width of waterways throughout the year. Along with the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, route from Karimganj to Silchar (65 kms.) in the Barak river, which serves as the gate-way to Manipur and Mizoram,
required to be properly improved and maintained on priority basis.

Conservancy works are very costly. On the part of the State Govt., it is very difficult to finance the required expenditure for conservancy. Govt. of Assam had also expressed its inability to incur expenditure on conservancy on the great rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Barak. It is in the interest of the Nation, and for the development of this cheapest mode of transport with their suitabilities in the North-East Region the Central Govt. should bear the entire expenditure on conservancy. In all the countries where waterways have attained a pre-eminent position in the transport system, conservancy has been accepted as the responsibility of the Central Govt.\(^{13}\)

The responsibility for maintaining the waterways is also necessary to vest in the hands of the State Govt. In the 12th meeting, August 1959, on the conservancy of the Brahmaputra and the Barak and other rivers in Assam, the Chairman Shri R.L. Gupta, I.C.S., supported the views of the G.B.W.T.B., that the conservancy of the navigable channels should be assumed by the State Govts. It is only the State Govts., who can understand the feasibilities of such a waterways of this economically backward North-East Region, and can manage them effectively.

\(^{13}\) Govt. of India, Road and Inland Water Transport Advisory Committee 1960.
For proper organization of the work relating to the maintenance of waterways it is necessary to divide the waterways into some suitable sections, as that of the roads under the P.W.D. The length of such sections should depend on the conditions and importance of waterways. The responsibility of each sections of the waterways should be vested to the river surveyor, headed by a chief river surveyor, and his office. Each section of the conservancy unit should be fully equipped with technical experts, hydrographic surveyors and equipments.

It has been stated that the conservancy works can serve as a flood control measure in Assam. So it is necessary that there should be full co-operation amongst Flood Control Department, Govt. of Assam, Brahmaputra Board and I.W.T. Department, for planning and executing the projects relating to navigable rivers.

A long run measure for restoring the depth and prevention of silting and bank erosion of the rivers and hence navigation are the extension of social forestry and prevention of Jhum Cultivation. Extensive afforestation measures in the catchment areas of the rivers should be taken to prevent excessive run of and reduce of silt charges. Jhum Cultivation should be totally stopped. Such measures
along with the objective of navigation will serve the purpose of flood control and environmental objectives. 13.a

8 : 3 IMPROVEMENT OF TRAINING FACILITIES:

Development and maintenance of water transport requires adequate trained manpower. Many studies had stressed the needs for the establishment of training institute to train and educate persons with sufficient knowledge and expertise of water transport. Training facilities about hydrographic survey, conservancy, pilotage, navigational aids and marks, terminal facilities, repairs etc. are inevitable for the development of water transport. There are plenty of scope to specialise its employees and the local youth in the various branches of this mode of transport in Assam. A suitable training establishment should be set up for training of the people on the inland water transport matters. 14 Fortunately, the Inland Waterways Authority of India, has decided to give priority to the establishment of a National Institute, to train the required personal on water transport. The Govt. of Bihar has promised to give the


necessary buildings for the staff and office of the institute in addition to the five acres of land for the establishment of the institute building. It is suggested to the Authority to consider for the establishment of a sub-centre of the said institute in Assam, with the help of the Govt. of Assam. The Govt. of Assam should take active interest in this respect. Improvement must be made in the crew training centre located at Guwahati, under the I.W.T. Directorate, Govt. of Assam. Steps should be taken to give training to the country boatmen.

At the centre a special team should be set up, which should include naval architects and marine engineers. This team should be confined solely to find out ways and means to modify the old model vessels. They should be associated with the studies which is undertaken by foreign experts for preparation of designs of the vessels.

It can be noted that the various agencies of the western countries have drawn up programmes for providing I.W.T., training to the persons of the developing countries. Such training are imparted by the U.K., France, Germany, Canada, the U.S.A., and Japan etc. It is recommended that the opportunities provided by the developed countries for training of persons should be fully availed. Attempt should

15 Inland Waterways Authority of India, National Integration Through Waterways.
be made to include courses on the history, problems, scope and utility of the development of water transport etc., at the college and university courses. If the Govt. takes active interest in these subjects, surely the local youth will be inclined to this line, and shall be able to revitalize this mode of transport in the future.

8 : 4 IMPROVEMENT OF WORKSHOP:

Considering the growing activity of the I.W.T. and its increasing vessels, the necessity of setting-up of a ship repairing facility has been long felt by the I.W.T., operators in Assam. Well equipped ship repairing facilities are unavoidable for the smooth functioning of the I.W.T. So the I.W.T. Directorate Govt. of Assam and the C.I.W.T.C. Limited, should extend its ship repairing facilities.

Several factors should be considered for the selection of places for the workshop. For selecting such places, generally, terrain condition, foreshore condition, floods, proximity to town, infrastructural facilities etc. should be considered.16 It is advantageous to locate such a workshop in close proximity to a town or city. Such a place has

16 Govt. of India, The National Industrial Development Corporation Limited, New Delhi, Govt. of Assam, Department of Industry, Guwahati, Pre-Investment study Boat Building and Repairing, 1977, p. 19
the advantage as the burden of providing a township can be eliminated and in such places skill labours are easily available. Considering all these factors the central workshop of the I.W.T., in Assam should be located at Gauhati. At present the Central Workshop of the I.W.T. Directorate, Govt. of Assam, is situated at Gauhati. So it is suggested that the working capacity and repairing facilities of this workshop should be increased.

It is suggested that for efficient and quicker services, another three ship repairing workshop should be set up at Dibrugarh and Jogighopa on the Brahmaputra and another at Silchar on the Barak river. Such branch workshop would have the advantage of reducing the workload of the central workshop and regular repair of vessels will be possible very easily.

For the convenience of repairing the vessels, particularly in the dry water season, a slipway or a dry dock is necessary. With this background in view the I.W.T. Directorate, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Govt. of India, engaged, Consulting Engineering Service (India) Private Limited, (consultant) to study the problems and to prepare a feasibility report. They made detailed studies about size and number of vessels, soil and river data, hydrographic and hydrological information about river regimes etc. They also
studied the advantages and disadvantages of various alternative schemes, such as slipway, dry-dock and floating dock for the convenience of the ship repair. After considering all these factors they came to the conclusion that Pandu is the most suitable site for the workshop and slipway will be the convenient process for ship repairing. 17

8 : 5 INSTALLATION OF MODERN SPEEDY SHIP, ADDITIONAL FLEET REQUIREMENT:

In a modern society with the increasing scientific and technological development in all the fields, there is also the necessity to review the design, speed and energy consumption etc., of the vessels operating in Assam. In the U.S.A. and in European Countries water transport has made tremendous development concerning the design, speed, energy consumption etc., of the vessels. It has transformed from the old paddle-steamer of S.S. Lord William Dentinct to the latest technology of pusher tug-barges and flotillas at present. 18 Hence it is suggested that steps should be taken to design, manufacture and to install modern mechanised


18 Govt. of India, Road and Inland Water Transport Advisory Committee, 1960
vessels suited to the waterways of Assam. The vessels should have the great carrying capacity of bulk commodities over long distance with speed and efficiency to enhance the utility of the present and perspective waterways. For the interest of the economic operation of the inland water transport, it is essential to find out ways and means for the replacement of the old and outdated vessels immediately as far as possible, (Report of the Inland Water Transport Committee, 1959). Attention should be given for the introduction of shallow draught navigation in the feeder rivers in Assam. Installation of such shallow draught navigation will help navigation in the dry weather. Under the auspices of the I.W.T., Inland Water Transport expert Mr. J.J. Surie of Holland inspected the waterways of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra in October to December 1952. He recommended a project for the development of shallow draught navigation on the feeder rivers of Assam.

8 : 6 PROVISION FOR INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES:

For the revival of the I.W.T., activities it is inevitable to provide adequate infrastructural facilities at the ports and steamer ghats. It is recommended that

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attention must be given for providing the infrastructural facilities at an early date. Firstly, it is essential that the approach roads to the ports and steamer ghats should be constructed, developed, gravelled and pitched as far as practicable with immediate attention. Improvement of the adjoining roads is inescapable for attracting the traffic to the inland water transport. Secondly, the landing stages to the vessels should develop. Proper attention should be given to improve the landing stages to the steamers. However, it is a very difficult task, with the changing water level and river regime and bank erosions landing stages are also required to change. Thirdly, at the ports and steamer stations drinking water and electricity should be supplied regularly. Fourthly, arrangement should be made for the construction of rest houses and other buildings for performing the workings of the inland water transport. Fifthly, foreshore of the steamer stations should be raised and pitched and parking places for the cars and lorries should be developed. Sixthly, storage facilities, i.e., warehousing facilities should be provided at each of the important steamer stations and ports. Covered area with adequate security at the ports can attract the traders to inland water transport. Seventhly, there should be regular booking counter and arrangement for cargo transportation by the inland water transport operators in Assam.
IMPROVEMENT OF CARGO AND FERRY SERVICES:

The objective of the development of transport system is to increase its cargo as well as passenger services. The risk of investment will be economically wasteful by sheer disuse if attention is not laid for attracting people to the water transport. Such instances are noticed in the case of D.Y.C. canal. So serious efforts should be given to attract more traffic to water transport. Some of the measures for attracting cargo to the inland water transport are listed below.

Amongst the short term measures for increasing traffic the reliability of the water transport must be increased. Timing and frequency of the vessels should be properly maintained. It has been stated that the speed of the water transport is slow compared to the rail and motor transport. So the I.W.T., operators should try to procure commodities whose transportation do not require more speed.

Attention should be laid to identify cargo with low value and hence high transportation cost. Inland Water Transport can carry such commodities at a comparatively low transportation cost. It is noticed that some of the traders flock

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21 Govt. of India, Road and Inland Water Transport Advisory Committee, 1960.

to water transport, only during the crisis of rail and road transport. Efforts should be given for the tactful handling of such users to water transport. I.W.T. should try to procure cargo at the lean period by offering attractive terms. It is suggested that arrangement should be made with road transport organizations for rendering door to door services. Water transport is convenient for the carriage of heavy machinery and equipments. In Assam some new projects are under implementation and there is possibility of developing such projects in the future. Such projects are required to import heavy machineries. Inland water transport should try to procure such heavy machineries for transportation. Along with the other short term measures for traffic promotion, efforts should be made through publicity, personal contact, mailing list, intensive advertisement, appointment of cargo brokers, establishment of commercial intelligence cell etc. Appointment of out agency is another important device for procuring traffic to the I.W.T.

Among the long-run measures it is necessary that both the Govt. of Assam and the Central Govt., should come forward to help the activities of the I.W.T. operators, to

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regulate their traffic. It is of utmost importance to consult with various Govt. Departments to ensure regular traffic to I.W.T. The National Productivity Council, recommended for approaching the Govt. of Assam and Calcutta Port Trust for seeking exemption from payment of Assam Carriage Tax, and from Calcutta Port Charges. Another long-run measure for improving the cargo intensity of water transport is the establishment of industries on the river side. One of the main benefits of developing the navigable waterways would be the stimulative effect which the inland water transport would have on regional planning, urbanization and industrialization in the underdeveloped regions. The experience of the developed countries reveals that the navigable waterways has attracted the industries and commercial places. In Assam there is good prospects for the development of many agro-based industries, which depend on bulk commodities to support their production needs or produce bulk load commodities for which they require low-cost transport service. The Assam Industrial Development Corporation, Directorate of Industries, central or state industrial licensing authorities and the financial institutions may be requested to explore the possibilities of locating the new industries near water
front. Efforts should be made to locate the industries like fertilizer, paper, cement, jute, steel etc. Important places having prospects for the development of industries near water front should be declared as backward areas in the state. The Central and the State Governments should subsidise the establishment of industrial units in the backward region.

For the improvement of the cargo services it is also recommended that the services of the I.W.T. should be extended up to Dibrugarh immediately. Such a step will fill-up the great vacuum of the water transport in Assam. At the same the carrying capacity of the water transport, on the Calcutta-Assam-Calcutta, route should be increased. They should introduce direct river services between Bihar and Assam. It is suggested that feeder commercial river services on the Subansiri, Katakhal and Daleswari rivers should be opened at an early date. Introduction of Tramp Cargo services at different reaches of the Brahmaputra will bring a new stimulus to the inland water transport in Assam. It is also recommended to open an express passenger service on the Gauhati-Dibrugarh-Gauhati and Gauhati-Dhubri-Gauhati route. At first the service should ply once in a week and

later their frequency may be increased considering the intensity of the passengers. Efforts should be made to use the inter-state cargo by water transport in Assam.  

It is essential that the I.W.T. Directorate, Govt. of Assam, should take over the responsibility for operation of efficient, safe and river worthy ferry services across the river Brahmaputra and the Barak. Auctioning system of ferries should be dispensed with and they should be run departmentally. Ferry services should expand to other important ghats. At the time of festivals or peak demand the frequency of the ferry services must be increased.

The recreation facilities in our waterways are scarce. The I.W.T. operators should make efforts to increase water recreation. Provision for facilities like accommodation, boating, yatching, fishing, joy side etc. should be provided to the tourist. Floating guest houses, hotels should be provided to the tourist at Dispur, Narpur, Guwahati and Dhubri etc. It is suggested to run excursion ferry services at different places. Powered safety vessels should be used for this purpose. Boat race and other water

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26 Govt. of Assam, Directorate of Inland Water Transport, Project Report of River Vessel Building Unit (Dock Yard), Prepared with the Assistance of Mr. G.G. Murthy, Engineer & Cost Consultant, Guwahati, p.3
sports should be arranged to make people water minded and to contribute towards cultural integration and mutual understandings.

3 : 8 CONSTRUCTION OF DRY PORT:

For the efficient operation of water transport the necessity of dry port is unavoidable. The inland water transport operators in Assam since its very beginning perceived the importance of a dry port. Absence of dry port in the whole river route in Assam, actually diverts the users of the water transport to the rail and road. If and when dry port is established in the waterways of Assam, the expansion of I.W.T. is expected to easily increase ten times to its present carrying capacity. 27

The commercial importance of the Guwahati city has increased the traffic intensity of all the transports after independence. So the importance of a dry port with modern cargo handling equipments and covered area is very high at Guwahati. All the transport advisory committees and inland water transport committees appointed by the Govt. had argued for the construction of a dry port at Pandu (Guwahati). Plan

27 Govt. of Assam, Directorate of Inland Water Transport, Project Report of River Vessel Building Unit (Dock-Yard), Prepared with the Assistance of Pr.G.S. Murthy, Engineer & Cost Consultant, Guwahati, p.3
allocation was also made for the same. But, till now, construction is not completed. For the development of the I.W.T. in Assam it is suggested that the construction of the Pandu port should complete immediately with permanent jetty, floating and fixed crane and with adequate terminal facilities for heavy lifts. 28

Jogighopa should be the second important inland port in Assam. Jogighopa is situated near the Jogighopa Hill in the Soelpara District. Port facilities with all modern equipments should be made available at an early date at Jogighopa. Improvement should be made at each of the major steamer stations, viz., Dibrugarh, Nemati, Tezpur, Silghat and Dhubri etc., on the Brahmaputra river and Silchar and Karimganj on the Barak river.

8:9 CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER MODES OF TRANSPORT:

The aim of the over-all development of the transport system of a country is to meet the total transport demand. The rivalry development of each mode of transport may be economically wasteful by several ways. Here the objective should be to develop various modes of transport

28 Govt. of India, Ministry of Transport & Communication, New Delhi, Report of the Inland Water Transport Committee, June, 1959, p. 26
in such optimal proportions and combinations as would meet the total demands for transport, at all the stages and conditions at the minimum cost to the economy.  

In spite of some problems faced by the I.W.T., the case for co-ordinated development of water transport along with the rail and road transport rest upon the prime consideration related to the real resources cost. Considering the topography, climatic conditions, geographical location, resources endowment etc., in Assam the water transport should be developed in co-ordination with rail and road transport. The 6th plan documents also explained the necessity of developing the I.W.T. as a major supplementary mode in the North-East India.

From various studies it is clear that there is unanimity about the co-ordinated development of water transport with rail and road transport in the North-East Region.

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29 Govt. of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Publication Division, Transport in India, 1967, p. 48


31 Govt. of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi, Committee on Transport Policy and Co-ordination, Final Report, January, 1966, p. 144

of the Indian Union. The approach paper to the 7th plan has stressed the need for integrated development of all transport. At a conference held on August 1949, the then Transport and Railway Minister, M. Gopal Swami Ayyangar stated that the Govt. were interested in co-ordinating all forms of transport. If the river services were found to be better suited to a particular area, Govt. would be prepared to consider their development, even in preference to the railway.\textsuperscript{33} The Committee on Transport Policy and Co-ordination (1966) also stressed the needs for co-ordination of different transport.

Though there is the slogan for co-ordination of different transport, no clear policy about it is available from these recommendations. There is no institutional organization for achieving this objective. However, it is not an easy task. The C.T.F.C. had realised that considering the constitutional responsibilities for the regulation and development of transport and the nature of the transport industry, it is not easy to evolve a co-ordinated transport policy.\textsuperscript{34} For such co-ordination several factors are required to be taken into consideration.

\textsuperscript{33} Govt. of India, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Report of the Inland Water Transport Committee, October-1970, p.19

\textsuperscript{34} Govt. of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi, Report of the National Transport Policy Committee, May, 1960, p.121
The existing waterways and railways in the North-East Region reveals that for inter-state transportation they are not suitable. For inter-state distribution and mobilization of traffic in the North-East Region, road transport is inevitable. For motor transport zonal permit system may be introduced. Such zonal system has the advantages of reducing the illegal convey of traffic and can check the monopoly of road transport. The Mitchell Kirkness Committee and the Transport Advisory Committee had also suggested the zoning system of road transport for co-ordination. For achieving the co-ordination among different modes of transport, it is utmost necessary to have co-ordination between the Central Govt. and the State Govts. of the North-East Region. For performing this objective the C.T.F.C. (1966) had suggested for setting-up of a Council for Transport Co-ordination. The Planning Commission is the most important body which can take active interest in achieving the co-ordination by way of investment and other decisions taken in the context of Five Year Plans and Annual Plans. Co-ordination should be achieved at the operational level and by regulating fares and taxes. Administrative regulation

36 Govt. of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi, Report of the National Transport Policy Committee, May-1980, p. 121
will be a great help for achieving the co-ordination.

To evolve the policy of co-ordination among different modes of transport the National Transport Policy Committee had suggested for setting-up of a National Transport Commission at the centre and Transportation Board at the state level. We are also of the opinion that such Commission and Board should be formed as early as possible.

6 : 10  LINK BETWEEN THE GANGA AND THE BRAHMAPUTRA:

It has been noted in a previous chapter (Chapter No. VII), that there is always uncertainty in the water transport in Assam. Any conflict, with our neighbouring country Bangladesh, may create uncertainty in the waterways between Assam and Calcutta, via Bangladesh. In the absence of the Assam-Calcutta route, the inter-state movement of traffic by water transport in Assam will not be effective, as the comparative cost of water transport is low only in the long distant movement. To overcome the possibilities of uncertainty in water transport and to ensure its future prospects for development it is suggested to take a project for linking the Brahmaputra with the Ganga through Indian Territory.

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37 Govt. of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi, Report of the National Transport Policy Committee, May-1980, p. 124
Such a project will shorten the river route to Calcutta, avoiding the entrance of the Alien country of Bangladesh. In 1952, the Govt. of India under the auspices of the C.I.W.T.B. had announced such a project. A multipurpose project by linking the Brahmaputra with the Ganges shall have immense benefit to the economy of India. Such a project, along with the objective of navigation will serve the purpose of irrigation and flood control. Huge scheme for connecting rivers in Eastern Europe and in the United States of America had developed a large network of waterways.

For linking the Brahmaputra with the Ganges through Indian territory we suggest that a committee should be set up. The committee should consist of the members from the Govt. of Assam, Govt. of Bengal, Central Govt., engineers, surveyors, representatives from Flood Control Department, Irrigation Department and from the Brahmaputra Board. The committee should find out the possibility, economic viability, expected cost, cost benefit analysis, required time period etc., for such a project. The entire cost of the project should be borne by the Central Govt., and the fruits of the project will be reaped by the whole nation.

38 A short note on subjects proposed by Shri K.D. Roy for discussion of the meeting of the Sub-Committee (Inland Road & Water Transport Advisory Committee) held at New Delhi on 4th July, 1964.

39 ESCAP Seminar on Planning and Development of Inland Waterways, Calcutta, 1979, some excerpts from the note by the ESCAP Secretariat and other papers and articles.
8.11 REGISTRATION OF COUNTRY BOAT:

Country boats are playing an important role in the transport economy of Assam. Their importance increases with the onset of the rains. But the Govt., is indifferent to the development of the country boat services. We are of the opinion that as a preliminary measure for adopting interest on country boats, the registration of country boats and the issue of driving licence for country boat operators are inevitable. As most of the country boat operators are illiterate or with primary education, registration and licencing process must be easy and convenient. This process will help to assess the actual number of country boats, operators, their carrying capacities, nature of commodities carried, operating waterways etc., and hence policy proper. The issue of driving licence to the country boat operators will reduce the incidence of accidents of the country boats.

8.12 INSURANCE OF CARGO AND PASSENGERS:

It is essential that insurance of cargo and passengers' risk should be made statutorily obligatory for the I.W.T. operators by steam vessels. Safety of life of the passengers on board inland crafts should made a legal liability of the carrier and suitable measures should be taken for making insurance of passengers and cargo transported
by I.W.T. operators. It is recommended that the Insurance Company may be directed to insure passengers, crews and freight cargo in transit on vessels at a reasonable premium, which may be prescribed by Govt. provision should also be made for reducing offences of over loading to ensure safety of inland vessels; passengers, cargo and crew on board. 

8 : 13 ORGANIZATIONAL VIEWS : 

The needs for setting up of a suitable organizational machinery both at the Centre and State was highlighted by a number of expert committees. As a result the Inland Water Transport Directorate, Govt. of Assam, was setup in the year 1959. In our views changes in the state level organization, i.e., the Inland Water Transport Directorate, under the Department of Transport, Govt. of Assam, is not necessary. It is only essential to equip it with competent manpower, having inland water transport background, expertise and dynamism.

At the centre the formation of the Inland Waterways Authority of India is a new impetus for the development, maintenance and management of the National Waterways. It is

40 Govt. of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi, Report of the National Transport Policy Committee, May-1980, p.299
suggested that the Central Govt., should establish a Regional Office of the I.A.I. at Guwahati for better maintenance and proper supervision of the work.\textsuperscript{41}

The Saraiya Committee had suggested to form co-operative society for the betterment of the country boatmen.\textsuperscript{42} The recommendations of the Gokhale Committee (1959) were endorsed by Road and Inland Water Transport Advisory Committee and suggested further to form co-operatives of the boatmen. It is perceived that the mere formation of the co-operatives of the country boatmen will not serve the purpose and it is very difficult to organize the illiterate boatmen co-operatively. Again the registered co-operatives of Bihar and Bengal reveal that such co-operatives failed to serve the objectives.

According to our views one effective measure shall be to declare the country boats and its operation as a small-scale industry. Under the industrial development schemes it is essential to supply them better boats, in some cases diesel engine and provide necessary training. It is suggested that they should provide longterm credit and credit facilities. These will enable the boatmen to

\textsuperscript{41} The Assam Tribune, 24th June, 1986.

\textsuperscript{42} Govt. of India, Ministry of Transport, Report of the Study Group on Transport Co-operatives, September, 1962.
win the confidence with increasing income and the prospects of future expansion may stimulate public interest on them.

Like the developed countries of the world, it is essential that the Govt. should consider the water resources as national assets and should exploit them not only for power generation, fishery, water storage, flood control and irrigation but also for navigation. For an underdeveloped country like India, with acute shortage of resources it is difficult to implement the various suggestions listed in this chapter at an early date. For the development of the water transport in Assam it is suggested to work out a perspective plan covering a period of 15 to 20 years. Proper policy with priority attention should be drawn-up. There are number of items which require certain policy pronouncement, and this will usher in smooth, co-ordinated and efficient functioning of the I.W.T. This should also demarcate the central and the state responsibilities for the development of water transport. The development plan for water transport should form a part of the over all development of the transport plan in the country, to ensure its development in Assam. The Committee on Transport Policy and Co-ordination (1959) under the chairmanship of Shri K.C. Neogy, which was reconstituted in 1964 under the chairmanship of Shri Tarlok Singh, member Planning Commission, studied the question of I.W.T. in
the country. The Committee recommended that, development of I.W.T. should be viewed in each region in the context of integrated regional transport plan, within the framework of the transport plan of the country as a whole. It is also suggested that the North-East Council, (N.E.C.) should take active interest for the implementations of the water transport plan in Assam.

43 Govt. of India, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Report of the Inland Water Transport Committee, October, 1970, pp. 9-10