Chapter 9

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Plan Outlay/Expenditure on Transport and Communication

9.3 System of Transport

9.4 Break up of Expenditure for the Constituents of Transport and Communication

9.5 National Highway

9.1 Introduction

Development of transport and communication contributes to a great extent towards building up of the necessary economic infrastructure of the economy. And it has been recognised all over the world that development of road is the basic and important infrastructure for the development of the country. Roads not only provide important link between the rural and sub-urban areas of the country, but also connect the country with other international centres of trade and commerce. The requirement of Mizoram in this respect is still greater as the region has mostly to depend on the roads network for the movement of goods and passengers within and outside the region. The lack of adequate transport infrastructure both within the region and its link with rest of the country has been the main reason for the backwardness and the feeling of isolation of the people of Mizoram.

The terrain of Mizoram is difficult. In many parts of Mizoram, there are deep gorges and steep hills with abundant forests. High velocity
wind formations, occasionally of a significant intensity as well as land slides disrupt surface communications in the region. Therefore, surface communications or transportation system, do not become very reliable and also are disproportionately capital intensive in costs. Maintenance of roads becomes forbiddingly costly and adequate labour is always not available for timely clearance of works. Besides, in Mizoram, there is acute shortage of good quality stone required for road construction projects.

A dependable and low cost transport system is vital to the economy of Mizoram, as she imports practically all her requirements of consumer goods, machineries, equipments and many of the raw materials for her industries. On the other hand, Mizoram exports few items of goods produced internally like ginger, squash, chillies, bamboo etc. Without a provision of good and cheap transport system, Mizoram would remain a high cost structure economy which would act as a deterrent to the rapid industrialization of the state.
9.2 Plan Outlay/Expenditure on Transport and Communication

Whether Transport and Communication sector is given due importance in the successive Five Year Plans in Mizoram may be seen from the following table.

Table 9.1 Plan Outlay/Expenditure on Transport and Communication in Mizoram.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Five Year Plan</th>
<th>Outlay (as in lakhs)</th>
<th>Expenditure (as in lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First Plan</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second Plan</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Third Plan</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fourth Plan(1969-74)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>263.25(30.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fifth Plan(1974-79)</td>
<td>1247.00(26.75)</td>
<td>1587.23(28.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1979 - 1980</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>483.05(29.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sixth Plan(1980-85)</td>
<td>3220.00(24.76)</td>
<td>3719.49(24.34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages to total.

Source: Planning Department, Government of Mizoram.
Table 9.1 reveals that Transport and Communication sector has always been a favoured sector since the Fourth Plan in Mizoram. Against the 30.25 and 28.63 per cent of the Plan expenditure in the Fourth and Fifth Plan in Mizoram, the share of Transport and Communication sector in Assam was 13.1 and 10.4 per cent of the total outlay. But taking the three Plans (Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Plan) in Mizoram, though in absolute terms, there is increase in the amount spent for the sector, but percentage-wise the share declines from 30.25 in the Fourth Plan to 28.63 in Fifth and to 24.34 in the Sixth Plan.

9.3 System of Transport

9.3.1 Road Transport

The availability of efficient and cheap means of transport and good network of roads are essential for the economic development of Mizoram. Road transport is said to be the life line of Mizoram economy because other mode of transport like railway and ropeway are either absent or too insignificant.
Road development got the attention of the British since the starting of the military expeditions inside the Lushai Hills. But the difficult terrain stood in the way of making wide and permanent roads.

As mentioned earlier the first jeepable road was constructed during the Second World War, connecting Silchar with Aizawl, a distance of nearly 160 kms. In 1953, Aijal (now Aizawl) – Lungleh (now Lunglei) Jeep road upto Zemabawk was opened by the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru on the 3rd April 1953. The road was constructed by the people on a voluntary and self-help basis. The BRWF (Border Road Task Force) was inducted in the Mizoram District in 1963. The regular Public Works Department (P.W.D) also started functioning in the District, earlier there was only a small P.W.D establishment under the Deputy Commissioner.

There has been a considerable progress in road construction in Mizoram. The following table gives the total length of roads in All India, Assam and Mizoram in 1974-75 and 1982-83.
Table 9.2 Total length of roads, 1974-75 and 1982-83.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total road length 1974-75</th>
<th>Total road length 1982-83</th>
<th>Of which surfaced (%) 1974-75</th>
<th>Of which surfaced (%) 1982-83</th>
<th>Per '000 Sq Km of area 1974-75</th>
<th>Per '000 Sq Km of area 1982-83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All India</td>
<td>12,15,357</td>
<td>15,54,204</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>24,206</td>
<td>32,466</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>1,988</td>
<td>2,662</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic Intelligence Service, Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy Vol 2: States 1959, Table 6.4.
From the above table we can see that in Mizoram the percentage of surfaced road in 1974-75 was 0.9 only. But in 1932-33 it was 43.9 per cent. The progress in this respect was quite significant. And in respect of road length per unit area, the progress in Mizoram is noticeable. In 1974-75, it was 95 (per 1000 Sq. Km of area) and in 1932-33 it was 127.

In analysing road development in a particular region, what is important is availability of a good all-weather road connecting every village. This should be regarded as an absolutely necessary prerequisite for improving the quality of life and economic conditions in rural areas of the country. In the case of rural areas, the emphasis should be to improve the existing road facility to villages throughout the year by construction of cross-drainage, culverts and improvement of low grade sections of kutcha roads rather than by laying pucca roads.

The following table gives the statistics of villages connected with all-weather roads in 1987-88 in All India, Assam and Mizoram.
Table 9.5 Villages connected with all-weather roads in 1987-88.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total villages</th>
<th>Villages connected with all-weather roads</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of total village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All India</td>
<td>5,91,677</td>
<td>2,40,717</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>22,005</td>
<td>14,219</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Analysing the above table, we can see that the position of Mizoram, in respect of all-weather roads connecting villages, is very much unsatisfactory, much below the national standard. Taking all the 25 states in India, the rank of Mizoram in respect of villages connected with all-weather roads (taking the percentage) is 23rd only. The two states below the rank of Mizoram are Orissa and Arunachal Pradesh.
The actual expenditure on road transport in Mizoram was Rs 34.50 lakhs during the Fourth Plan, Rs 61.30 lakhs in the Fifth and Rs 55.11 lakhs during 1979-80 and Rs 275.09 lakhs in the Sixth Plan. In view of the importance of road transport in Mizoram, the expenditure incurred for the said sector can be justified. In fact, more should have been spent for this as it is the life line of the whole economy.

9.3.2 **Inland water Transport**

Apart from the communication by road, there is a scope for development of Inland water transport in Mizoram. Before independence the South Lushai Hills had quite a good waterways connection by the Khawthlangtuipui (Karnaphuli) river from Demagiri to Rangamiti and Chittagong. When Pakistan built the Kaptai Dam near Rangamiti, huge areas on the Indian side near Demagiri were submerged in water. But this catchment of water and consequent rising of water level has made it possible to develop riverine transport in the Demagiri area.

The Chhimtuipui (Kolodyne) river which passes through the southern part of the territory
can also be made navigable with some planning and improvement. In the north Dhaleswari (Tlawn) river and Sonai and some few others were navigable.

Prior to the Second World War, before Silchar was connected with Aizawl by a jeep road, much of the commodities sold in Aizawl bazaar were imported through the river Tlawn (Dhaleswari). All these water courses were made use of by the Deputy Commissioner in 1970 and 1971 when large scale relief operations were organised and a few thousand tonnes of rice and other commodities were moved by river from Silchar to the interior centres of the Mizo Hills. The total waterways in the territory have, however remained more or less static, increasing by only 30 Kms in three years from 170 Kms in 1969 to 200 Kms in 1972.

The actual expenditure incurred for Inland Water Transport in Mizoram was Rs 4.00 lakhs in 1969-74, Rs 25.47 lakhs in 1974-79, Rs 5.73 lakhs in 1979-80 and Rs 15.81 in 1980-85.
9.3.3 **Air Service**

The Mizo Hills saw the first air service when in 1966 helicopters hopped from village to village mainly as a part of anti-insurgency measure, transporting personnel of military and security forces, and also moving civil officers, doctors, medicines, food etc and also evacuating civilian patients from the interiors to the hospitals in the town. Helipads were constructed in some grouping centres and essential communications were maintained through the helicopter services during insurgency period.

As mentioned earlier, the Mizo Hills got an airstrip in 1967 built by the army engineers near Aizawl. For sometime helicopter services operated within and outside the state but services have stopped due mainly to financial constraints. The Vayudoot service has, at present linked Aizawl with Silchar and Calcutta. The facility rendered by the said air service is too insignificant considering the very poor surface facilities of transportation in the region.

Till the end of the Sixth Plan, the whole of the north eastern region has ten civil airports,
out of which six are in Assam, one each in Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland. Arunachal and Mizoram have no air facilities worth mentioning so far. Considering the need of the region, one of the programmes for the Seventh Plan in the north east region was construction of new airstrip at Aizawl, Itanagar, Howgond, Kailashar and Khowni.

The Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, took a decision in 1980 on the basis of the report of the National Transport Policy Committee on short haul air services, to introduce feeder air services to as many as eleven locations in the north eastern region viz Hups in Assam, Shillong in Meghalaya, Kamalpur and Kailashar in Tripura, Aizawl in Mizoram etc. (This decision is contained in the Home Ministry's letter No. 13029/7/79-AF dated 7.10.80). As against this, till March 1985, Vayudoot services have so far been extended only to Shillong, Tezu and Aizawl.

Considering the poor facility in respect of air service in Mizoram, one suggestion is that
Vayudoot should fulfill its role by extending its services to a large number of districts, commercial and administrative headquarters of remote and inaccessible areas in Mizoram. The state government may also consider introduction of helicopter services for transportation of government, medical and other personnel and also for passenger service as a temporary solution of transport bottle neck in the region.

9.3.4 Railway

Mizoram was never included in the Railway map of India. The nearest rail head for Mizoram is Silchar, which is nearly 130 kms from Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. Though there was no rail head connecting Mizoram with the rest of India, at the consent of the railway authority, the Railway Out Agency in Aizawl provided booking and carriage facilities of goods from outside agencies to Mizoram. This Railway Out Agency is a carrying agent and is government undertaking under Supply and Transport Department. This Agency handled 5264 quintals of goods during 1984-85 and the revenue collection
till the end of January, 1935 was Rs 1,53,040.30 and the expenditure up to December 1934 was Rs 2,53,760.96.

The state of Mizoram is not satisfied with her existing status i.e., having the railway out agency only, what she needs is the actual rail link. In this respect, the work is still going on to bring Mizoram on the railway map of India by constructing a railway line up to Bairabi. In fact, this railway line has, at one time been already inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Mizoram, and the rail head has actually reached Bairabi. But the service has not yet fully been utilised for carrying goods etc. as the service, because of various reasons, is not very regular till recently. Still, evidences are there that the service was utilised for carrying essential commodities like rice to Mizoram up to Bairabi (recently a number of wagons that carry tonnes of rice reached Bairabi). In the next phase, the line is proposed to come up to Sairang near Aizawl.
9.4  Break-up of expenditure for the constituents of Transport and Communication

In the Plan of Mizoram, usually for Transport and Communication sector, there are three heads of expenditure viz (1) Roads and Bridges (2) Road Transport and (3) Inland Water Transport. The following table indicates the percentage share of expenditures of the constituents of Transport and Communication in Mizoram.

Table 9.4  Percentages of Expenditure for the Constituents of Transport and Communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>Fourth Plan</th>
<th>Fifth Plan</th>
<th>1979-80</th>
<th>Sixth Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transport and Communication</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Roads and Bridges</td>
<td>36.40</td>
<td>95.74</td>
<td>57.39</td>
<td>92.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Road Transport</td>
<td>12.13</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td>7.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inland Water Transport</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Planning Department, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl.
The above table shows that since the Fourth Plan, among the constituents of Transport and Communication, the percentage share of expenditure in roads and bridges is the highest throughout followed by expenditure on road transport. The share of inland water transport is least in all the Plans in Mizoram.

9.5 National Highway

Till now Mizoram has one national highway i.e. NH No. 54 which starts from Silchar and ends at Lunglei. The total length from the starting to the terminal station is 290 Kms. The position of national highway of All India, North East region, Assam and Mizoram can be depicted in the following table.

Table 9.5 Position of National Highway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>State/Region</th>
<th>Length of NH in Km</th>
<th>Area in 1000 Sq Km</th>
<th>Length of NH in Km per 100 Sq Km</th>
<th>Population in lakh per 1981 census</th>
<th>Length of NH in Km per lakh population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>All India</td>
<td>31350</td>
<td>3237.6</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>6838.10</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Total for N.E Region</td>
<td>4062</td>
<td>255.1</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>266.14</td>
<td>15.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>2278</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>29.02</td>
<td>199.03</td>
<td>11.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>11.37</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>49.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: Report of the working Group on Development of North Eastern Region During the Seventh Five year Plan 1985, p.249

As seen from the above table the length of National Highway in Mizoram, considering the whole North Eastern Region or even Assam also, is insignificant. Efforts should be given to increase the number and length of national highway in Mizoram.

9.6 Road Development Plan 1961-61 and Mizoram

Soon after independence, the pace of road development in the country was enhanced with the result that the targets of road mileage laid down in the Nagpur Plan were within sight by 1958. It was expected that by the end of Second Five Year Plan i.e. by 1961, the length of the main roads would be 14,40,000 miles and that of the other roads 2,35,000 miles thus exceeding the targets of the Nagpur Plan. The Nagpur Plan envisaged planned development of all types of road in such a manner as to increase the road mileage of main roads from 38,000 miles to 1,23,000 miles and of other roads from 1,52,000 miles to 2,06,000 miles (post partition India). This gave a target of 26 miles of roads per 100 Sq miles of area (i.e. 16 Km per 100 Sq km).
The second attempt for preparing the road development plan on an all India basis was started in 1958 and the 1961-81 Road Development Plan popularly known as Bombay Plan was formulated taking into consideration the position of road development then, including the deficiencies in the road system. Considering the limited financial resource of the country, the overall objective of the 1961-81 Road Development Plan was to raise the density of the road mileage from 26 to 52 miles per 100 Sq miles of the area (i.e. 32.01 Km per 100 Sq Km). This target was set taking into account the level of expected development, and the need of the rural as well as the urban. The requirement of connecting administrative headquarters, industrial and commercial centres was also given due consideration apart from the strategic needs of the country. The modified grid and star formulae were proposed for different classes of roads. The general distribution of area then prevailing was 60.5 Sq miles of agricultural area, 20.5 Sq miles of under developed area per 100 Sq miles.

Whether Mizoram has satisfied the over all objective of the 1961-81 Road Development Plan (Bombay Plan) can be viewed from the following table.
Table 9.6 Anticipated Road length by March 1985.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total length in Km</th>
<th>Length of surfaced roads in Km</th>
<th>Ave. Length per 100 sq km</th>
<th>Percentage of surfaced roads</th>
<th>Length of total road in Km</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All India</td>
<td>1684110</td>
<td>45.79</td>
<td>623402</td>
<td>13.96</td>
<td>58.86</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>267507</td>
<td>54.09</td>
<td>6579</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>30.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>39.19</td>
<td>133.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: Report of the Working Group on Development of North Eastern Region During the Seventh Five Year Plan, 1985, p. 239.

From table 9.6 it is clearly seen that Mizoram has still a long way to go to satisfy the objective of the 1961-81 Road Development Plan. As against the suggested over all road mileage of 52 miles per 100 Sq miles (or 32.01 Km per 100 Sq Km approx.) the average length of roads per 100 Sq Km in Mizoram is 6.45. The average length of road in Assam as revealed by the above table is 34.09 and All India is 48.79.

In the light of the preceding discussion we can conclude that progress of development in transport and communication in Mizoram under the Plans is not up to the mark. The average length of roads per 100 Sq Km in Mizoram as mentioned earlier is 6.45 km in 1985 against the target set of 32.01 Km per 100 Sq Km by the Bombay Plan. In view of its importance for the economy of Mizoram, transport and communication, road development in particular, more attention must be given to this sector.
References


5. Ibid.

6. Planning Department, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl

7. Hmuaka P A, Economics of Transport in Mizoram, A Survey Work on Public Transportation in Aizawl Town: A dissertation submitted for fulfilment of Master Degree of Arts in Economics, MeHU, Mizoram Campus,
Aizawl) 1990, p.6.


13. Ibid.