



## **Emissary Tripura in India – Bangladesh Relations: A close discussion from the perspective of Constructivism**

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### **Abstract**

*The foreign policy of a country has multifarious dimensions and exhibits different foreign policies for different nations. The foreign policies of the nations are framed on the basis of socio-political and cultural relationships between them. Being an emerging power in South Asia, Indian foreign policy towards its neighbourhood demands vitality and prominence. Bangladesh is the facilitator of India's Act East Policy. The location of Bangladesh in the region is important for Indian foreign policymaking. This study is based on the theory of Social Constructivism. The strategic role of Tripura is also highlighted. Tripura, being a tiny state, is increasingly coming into this discussion because it has a shared history and cultural commonalities with Bangladesh. The foreign policy making of a country is often influenced by its shared culture and socio-political relations. The strategic location of Tripura is also beneficial for the economic development of nascent northeast in particular and of the country in general. The Northeastern region of India is isolated from the mainland due to some historical reasons. Hence the development of this region is severely thwarted. Tripura will work as an alternative path to infrastructural development of the region due to its geo-strategic connectivity with Bangladesh. The strategic role of Tripura in India's foreign policy-making towards Bangladesh will throw light on the socio-political aspect of international relations. So this paper will highlight the role of socio-political and cultural factors in influencing the foreign policy making of a country.*

**Keywords:** Geostrategic importance, Social constructivism, Tripura, Internet gateway, Border haat

### **1. Introduction**

In the traditional understanding of international relations, the states are to be a formidable player. But in the recent times, the essentialism of the states is questioned in international relations. The mediation of social issues provided a new paradigm in the study of IR and contested the conventional perspective of IR. The present paradigm of International relations is not centred only on the activities of the state. The dominant materialist approaches stressed the role of structure in influencing the behaviour of the state due to the anarchic nature of International relations. But events from the recent past showed that it is not only the structure which influences the

activities of the state. The states are still exhibiting the similar foreign policy for achieving their distinctive and diversified national interest<sup>1</sup>. The concept of 'national interest' itself is diversified<sup>22</sup>. In the post-cold war era, the researchers are not only confined to the structure of International relations i.e., 'why' are they behaving in the same way? The 'how' aspect is also answered and processes of such similar behaviour are also discussed. The institutions, other than the state - including traditions, cultural commonalities, and people to people contacts also came to influence the state-to-state relations and interactions and thus the foreign policy of a state considerably influenced by social factors.

The central aim of this paper is to set Tripura as an emissary in Indian Foreign Policymaking which is presented through the logical interpretation of constructivism. This research work is essentially analytical in nature. Analytical and historical methods are adopted in this study. It will discuss how the theory of Social Constructivism can be applied in Indian foreign policy analysis, where Tripura is a formidable player. It will also present a convincing argument in favour of the application of constructivism in India and Bangladesh with a focus on Tripura.

### **1. Societal Construction of International Political Realities**

The emergence of social perspective in IR in the 1980s not only contested the 'grand theories' of IR but also reinterpreted the discipline from social, rather than from a strictly political perspective. It is one of the dominant theories of International relations today which is being increasingly used in foreign policy analysis for the last few decades. The concept of Constructivism was introduced by Nicholas Onuf but it got popularity in the writings of Alexander Wendt. This theory, unlike other dominant theories of IR, gives emphasis on ideas instead of material concepts. Constructivists emphasised the social dimension of international relations and demonstrate the norms, rules and languages at this level. It gives emphasis to the social and cultural process in influencing the state action. This theory contests the centrality of the state and interprets the international reality in the light of the social aspect of the state's activity. Hence it answers the 'how' aspect of the same process of interaction of the states. After the end of the Cold War, the neo-liberal approaches of IR failed to predict the nature of International political system and events and were uncertain about the Post Cold War international order. Soon after the dissolution of USSR, the analysis was centred on the status of USA as the hegemon. It was a period of vacuum when no new approach emerged with a concrete prediction. Social constructivism emerged at this hour as an alternative approach to the already existing dominant approaches. This theory identifies the role of social elements in the state's decision-making process. Initially, the approach did not get much response. It could not hype the discipline of international relations and foreign policy analysis. But that uncertain situation after the cold war when no one could have predicted properly led constructivism took its throne as one of the prominent approaches to IR. In this nuclear era where each nation state survives for attaining their national interest,

constructivism emerges as an alternative approach which not only stresses the peaceful settlement of conflicts and but also provides a leeway for mutual economic development.

### **1.1. Constructivism in India – Bangladesh Relations**

Almost every theory of International relations focuses on attaining the highest possible national interest of a country, social constructivism is not different. It identifies the role of social ideas in the decision-making process of a country. Constructivism can be rightly applied in India Bangladesh relations. The relation between India and Bangladesh is mostly driven by their cultural commonalities, history and common languages and other societal sentiments.

The foreign policy of a country demands a strong theoretical background. Indian foreign policy has been driven by this new discourse of constructivism though it is not the single approach which guides Indian foreign policymaking. Ravi Ranjan stated, "Indian foreign policy has always regarded the concept of neighbourhood as one of the widening concentric circles, around a central axis of historical and cultural commonalities". His statement reveals the gesture of India towards its neighbours (Ranjan, 2013). India's relation with Srilanka is often determined by Tamil sentiments, Nepal, being a Hindu nation is linked with India, where the majority is Hindu. Bangladesh is closely connected with India due to its shared history, cultural commonalities, traditions and people to people contact.

South Asia is a strategically important region. It is the homeland of two emerging powers - China and India. China, India and Pakistan are the three nuclear weapon power of the region. In this era of mutual deterrence, the culture is the reliable and most viable option which the nation states can use for fulfilling their desired goal and attainment of their targeted grail. The foreign policy of India strives for setting up such a cordial relationship with its neighbourhood. The peripheral North-Eastern region of India is the gateway to South East Asia. Each northeast Indian state holds a vital strategic importance for Indian foreign policymakers as most of these states have socio-cultural linkages with the neighbouring countries of South and Southeast Asia. Culture influences the foreign policymaking. Sometimes the national culture of a country differs from its external policies. But for meeting the mutual interest, the nation states can easily grip the cultural connectivity between them. India and Bangladesh are two neighbouring nations in South Asia. Historically these two nations were closely connected to their historical, cultural and linguistic tie up. Bangladesh is surrounded by India from three sides and Bay of Bengal from the west. Hence Bangladesh Government gives emphasis on a friendly relationship with India. Some Indian states share an international border with Bangladesh. Bangladesh is important in attaining India's great power status and also to stabilize regional balance in South Asia.

### **2.2. Bangladesh Factor in India's Foreign Policy**

Bangladesh is important for India. The geographical location of Bangladesh is advantageous for India.

Bangladesh's geographical location keeps it very close to the Regional powers of South Asia viz, India and China which makes it strategically important. Northeast India is connected with mainland only by narrow 22 km Siliguri corridor which is considered to be inadequate by Indian Defence experts. This narrow strip of land is threatened. If Bangladesh permits, a strategic corridor can be set up, which will secure North East from any external aggression and can also ensure cost-effective transit facilities. A strong military base can be set up there to fight with insurgent groups from North East. From the external side, India needs a supportive Bangladesh to check China's ascendancy in South Asia. Bangladesh's well-developed port can be accessed by India to open trade-gate for its North East. Both China and India are hoping to access the seaport of Bangladesh. China is planning to access Bangladesh's Sonadia Island and to make it a deep sea port and also want an access to Chittagong port. Though the last visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Dhaka ensured India's access to Chittagong port and Mongla port of Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>In this context, it is necessary for India to mould its relations with Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is an important factor for the proper implementation of India's 'Look East' policy. In fact, it is the facilitator of India's 'Act East policy'. PM Modi avowed "India's Act East Policy starts with Bangladesh. India is ready to work on mutually beneficial projects," (NDTV, 2014). The Ex-senior diplomat of India Rajiv Sikri (2013) said, "Without Bangladesh's help and support, we cannot access our north-eastern region. Bangladesh is central to the success of our Look-East policy," But the relationship got strained due to many factors like water dispute, boundary dispute, maritime borders, transit, illegal migration and many more. Especially after the strong stand of West Bengal government towards Bangladesh, regarding the Teesta water sharing, the relations got strained. At this juncture, India needs a reliable anchor that can make smooth the complex situation.

## **2. Strategic Role of Tripura in India – Bangladesh Relations**

Every nation-state needs a stable platform, from where it can grasp its interest and for that, a peaceful neighbourhood is vitally important. India's relationship with Bangladesh is mostly driven by its socio-cultural connectivity. The Make in India Programme of Central Government stressed the need for giving more importance to the states which are sharing the international border. Five Indian states Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, West Bengal and Tripura share border with Bangladesh. Among these, Tripura can be the important player due to its historical role in Bangladesh liberation. During the liberation war of Bangladesh Tripura played a remarkable role. The cordial relationship between the Ex-Chief Minister of Tripura, Sachindralal Singh and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman made the tiny state shelter people even more than its capacity. The ideal location of this state also made it one of the determining factors in India-Bangladesh relations. The strategic importance of Tripura is enormous as it lies on the eastern border of India and shares border with Bangladesh. The strategic location of Tripura can give a positive direction to India -Bangladesh

relations. The status of Tripura is very tiny in case of India - Bangladesh relations. It presents a new vista on how the societal elements are influencing the foreign policy making of India. Culture and other societal elements not only affect the decision making from outside, it also helps in bringing the amicable solution to the grave problems. Tripura is strategically important for India's foreign policy towards Bangladesh.

### **2.1. Historical Connectivity between Bangladesh and Tripura**

History of Tripura showed that it has a close connectivity with Bangladesh. After partition, the erstwhile princely Tripura joined India. From 1280 AD the Tripura kings invited Bengali people to modernise the administrative structure of the state. Bengali culture was also encouraged hence Bengali people started entering into the state from time to time. Language is also a determining element which influences the foreign policy making of a state. A major part of Tripura's population is Bengali. The full-hearted support of the people of Tripura at that point in time is sincerely appreciated. The liberation was started as an agitation for the protection of the own language of Bengali people in erstwhile East Pakistan. Here East Pakistan got support from Tripura. Tripura played a major role in convincing Indian Government to interfere in East Pakistan's internal issue. During her visit to Tripura University in 2012, honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina addressed Tripura as the "pilgrimage of Bangladesh Liberation War" (Hindu, 2012).

Tripura and Bangladesh have cultural commonalities. They share culture and long tradition. Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, Noakhali districts of Bangladesh have a great influence on the life of people of Tripura especially in the case of language and customs. Chottakhola is one of the places in Tripura where the combatants of Bangladesh liberation war were given shelter. This site is a meeting ground for the people of both the countries. In December 2017 the Chief Minister of Tripura Sri Manik Sarkar has inaugurated India – Bangladesh Friendship Park at Chottakhola. It is a memorial site where the supportive role of Tripura in Bangladesh liberation war is remembered. The park is the real platform of cultural exchange.

### **2.2. Geostrategic Importance of Tripura**

Geostrategy considers geography and politics together. It stresses on the interaction of these two terms. It also emphasises how geographical location of a state or region influence policymaking. Hence the geostrategic importance of Tripura is enormous, especially in India-Bangladesh relations. India and Bangladesh share 4,096 kilometres of international border. Assam has 262 km border with Bangladesh, Mizoram shares 180 km, Meghalaya shares 443 km with Bangladesh. Tripura shares 856 km which is the second largest length of the international border with Bangladesh after West Bengal which has 2,217 km long border with Bangladesh. 3/4th of Tripura's border is with Bangladesh. 3 sides of this tiny state Tripura is surrounded by Bangladesh. It has very poor connectivity with mainland India. The location of Tripura is insecure and

defenceless as it is more exposed to Bangladesh than to India. It is a security concern for India. Like any other international border, Tripura's border with Bangladesh is also insecure and it is a security threat to the entire region and the whole country as well. Trans-border crime, illegal trade, insurgency are the major issues between Tripura Bangladesh Border which instigate major border disputes. Drugs smuggling, cattle smugglings, robbing are very common issues in Tripura- Bangladesh border. BSF personnel killed three civilians as they were accused of cow smuggling. Nevertheless, Government of Tripura asked for a strong enquiry. There was an incident of robbery in an Indian village – Siddhi Nagar, southern Tripura. 12 of those trespassers came from Bangladesh side but they were further attacked by the Indian people. These issues are the matter of great concern and need serious considerations. Influx from Bangladesh is an important factor for the politics of Tripura. The demographic structure of the state had been changed due to the large influx from Bangladesh. The process of migration is still continuing and has become the most prominent hurdle for peace in the state. This issue had instigated the riot of 1980 between Tribal and non-tribal people<sup>4</sup>. In recent days, people from Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) are claiming for separate statehood. This demand has been deteriorating the peace and tranquillity of the state. This is mostly for this migration factor; as the indigenous of this princely state have become almost minority due to large influx from Bangladesh from decade to decade. Bangladesh is increasingly coming to the political scenario of Tripura. According to the data 5774 people came from Bangladesh only in 1970-71 (Rahman, 2016).

The dynamism of international relations is sometimes defined by social relations. Social life influences international relations. At Sonamora (Bisramganj District, Tripura), Durgapur village presents a very unusual and interesting scene. A sense of cultural connectivity was found there which shows socio-cultural relations between the folk of two countries. People from both the side have contributed to the construction of a Mosque. The water of the pond is equally shared by all. The first sight of the village could not let others know that the village is situated on the borderline of India and Bangladesh. It is symbolic to the cultural affinity between the inhabitants of India and Bangladesh. The village could have defined international relations from the traditional perspective as it is situated in a place where a sharp line of demarcation is drawn between India and Bangladesh. But it showed how cultural connectivity binds people together. It is highlighting the cultural landscape between the two countries. The social interactions between these people almost veiled the fact that people who are living here are from different countries. This tiny village has challenged the traditional understanding of international relations which was only featured by the use of conflict, war, skirmish, security dilemma, hard military power, domination etc.

In spite of the virtual demarcation of land, people of India and Bangladesh are living side by side. This social aspect of international relations can be grasped only through

social constructivism. The people to people contact is taken to be important here in making a country's foreign policy as the Government of both the states will have to consider the demands of these people while making policies.

### **2.3. Tripura, the economic boon in India – Bangladesh relations**

The global economy is connecting to the local economies. Various conferences and International monetary agencies are stressing the need for a global access to the regional markets. The market of South East Asia can be accessed if Bangladesh and India cooperate with each other. For instance, Tripura has a plenty of pineapples which have a great demand outside like, in Thailand. Bangladesh's leading food producing company PRAN which is already having a subsidiary in Tripura can easily access these pineapples. If these are properly processed and marketized, it can augment the pace of GDP of both India and Bangladesh. Tripura, a tiny state in India, can offer an alternative scope for mutual interaction between India and Bangladesh. India's nascent region North East will be benefited if Bangladesh offers transit facilities and integrates its market with North East India. Presently Tripura has two border haats (integrated market) – one at Srinagar under Sabroom sub-division and another one at Kamala Sagar under Sipahijala sub-division. These border haats have levelled the expectations high in business. Trade between Bangladesh and India suffered attenuation in the last few years especially the trade with Tripura. But these border haats raised hope higher. Bangladesh exports leather, edible fruits, vegetables, nuts, textile fibres, worn clothing etc. At the same time, India imports rubber, iron and steel, residues and waste from the food industries, tea, coffee, electrical machinery, power etc. In these border markets, minor forest produces –Bamboo, Bamboo grass, broomstick (Except Timber) Products of cottage industry like Gamcha, Lungi etc. Small agricultural household implements like Dao(Cutter), Plough Axe, Spade Chisel etc. Garments, melamine products, processed food items, fruit juice, toiletries, cosmetics, plastic products, aluminium products, cookeries. According to the Report of SDM office, Sipahijala, these two border haats have been making a smooth deal in<sup>5</sup>. These two border markets not only contributed to the economy of both Bangladesh and Tripura, though the percentage of profit is negligible, have ensured people to people contact. Very recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2017) while inaugurating the Rail Passenger Terminus says the connectivity means 'people to people contact'. He added that 'development' and 'connectivity' – are related to each other<sup>6</sup>. From an analytical perspective, these two agendas can be connected together and can be used for the growth of infrastructure in North East India mainly. People to people contact and well-structured connectivity will enhance the growth of mutual development for both Bangladesh and North Eastern region of India.

Indian North East, being a remote part, lacks proper infrastructure. In spite of having a plethora of natural resources, due to the poor connectivity, it suffered a setback, especially from the economic aspect. The connectivity between India and Bangladesh through Tripura is profitable for both the countries. Chittagong port of Bangladesh is

only 70 km away from Sabroom (Tripura). If proper transit facilities are provided, Tripura will become a 'Gateway to North East'. This is the first time a port can be accessed from North Eastern Region of India. It will boost up the economy of this entire region. Bangladesh also gets a chance to access and utilize the North Eastern Region.

The railway project between Delhi, Kolkata, and Agartala is a new vista in the development discourse of North East. Suresh Prabhu, the Railway Minister has laid the foundation of this rail connection in 2016. This railway will connect Agartala with Ashuganj and Chittagong sea port. It will also reduce the distance between Kolkata and Agartala by rail. Presently the distance between Agartala and Kolkata approximately 1650 km will be reduced to 550 km only through Bangladesh. This 15 km rail line between Agartala and Akhaura is a part of Trans-Asian Railway network. This major initiative has brought Tripura in Asian map as a sparkling star. This Trans Asian Railway network has connected two important countries of South Asia. This railway project will be a boon, for the North East and the entire country as well, if properly executed. Through this rail connectivity, Tripura has become a life-line of nascent North Eastern Region and also an alternative path of development for India.

#### **2.4. Agartala the Internet Gateway**

Agartala has become the Third Internet Gateway in India<sup>7</sup>. The statesmen of India and Bangladesh Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina inaugurated this project in 2016. Here the role of Tripura is commendable as India imported 10GB bandwidth from the internet port of Cox Bazaar, Bangladesh through Akhaura Check Post. Indian Prime Minister Modi considered this project as a milestone in Act East Policy. Sheikh Hasina also approved this initiative as it will boost up regional cooperation. The tiny Tripura played the vital role in the regional integration of South Asia. It is also effective for the infrastructure of the entire North East as lack of connectivity is a major hurdle in the progress of this region. It is a part of BBIN, Bangladesh and India - both are the members of this agreement<sup>8</sup>. Both this country took one step forward to strengthen the connectivity.

#### **2.5. Congenial Local Politics of Tripura**

The local politics of Tripura has always welcomed any stand taken by Indian Government towards Bangladesh. From Sachindra Lal Singh to present Chief Minister Manik Sarkar has kind-heartedly supported any stand of Indian Government towards its Bangladesh policy. Tripura government has always encouraged any kind of socio-cultural connectivity with Bangladesh. Many cultural groups of the state are visiting Bangladesh vis-a-vis various cultural groups from Bangladesh are visiting the state. India shares 100 MW power through Palatana Power Plant, Tripura<sup>9</sup>. It will meet the power shortage of Bangladesh. Tripura Government full-heartedly agreed to this proposal. Assam –Agartala highway which is the lifeline of this tiny state is quite narrow and was blocked due to the landslide. Disruption of this route led to a price hike and even the shortage of fuel in the state. Tripura took assistance from Bangladesh and through Bangladesh, the loaded trucks entered in the state. The State

Government asked the Central government for an alternative route through Bangladesh which may reduce the dependence of the state on this highway. Tripura is the feasible option for India to hook up its relationship with Bangladesh. Tripura is one of the states in Northeast India through which the ports of Bangladesh can be accessed by the entire Northeastern region. Hence the state Tripura is bait through which economic options can be lured.

### **2.6. Disputed riverine border of Muhari**

Muharichor (enclave) is another disputed issue which makes Tripura prime in India-Bangladesh relations. This issue comes under international river dispute. Muhari River is originated from Mizo Hills (Lushai Hills) and enters into Bangladesh (Feni District). It has demarcated India and Bangladesh. Tripura had two parts - Hilly Tripura and Plain Part (Chakla Roshnabad). 1947 onwards, this river Muhori has been considered as a line of demarcation between India and Bangladesh as Chakla Roshnabad merged with East Pakistan. This riverine border is an unsettled issue as the river has changed its course over time. Due to the gradual erosion and sedimentation process, char (river islands) came out. This char area is fertile and can be well cultivated. Disputes arose when the cultivators from both sides started using those char and claiming it to be respective sides. According to Shiv Shankar Chatterjee, a major portion (44.87) of this char land is occupied by Indian cultivators and out of 62.27 acres, 17.40 is cultivated by the Bangladeshi nationals (Chatterjee, 2012). Now the problem is the Indian cultivators often face difficulties in using the remaining 12.4 acres of land as they are confronted by Border Guards of Bangladesh (BGB). This often led to the skirmish between the Border personnel. Sometimes the locals get involved in such conflicts. This unresolved international water conflict between India and Bangladesh again involves Tripura in India's foreign policy-making towards Bangladesh.

### **3. Conclusion**

The above points focused on the strategic importance of Tripura in India - Bangladesh relations. Now the question is what made Tripura play this role? Social Constructivism will throw light on this issue. Based on this approach of Constructivism, the relationship between these two nations can be reinterpreted. The present world order is dynamic and having multifarious issues. Unlike the periods of cold war, the present wave of international politics cannot be wholly dictated by a single theory. The issues, events, institutions, the main actors and their roles have been changed. Realism is being hyped in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a dominant ideology. The anticipation of this theory regarding the contemporary situation was almost correct. The two most devastating events viz, WWI and WWII vanquished any contemporary ideologies and led realism hype the world for decades. The cold war also followed the same vein.

But the present situation is different. The logical interpretation of social constructivism is much more viable to interpret the international politics. The role played by India in 1971 liberation war is often criticised as in spite of having a chance to conquer the land, India provided assistance only. This role of India still debated being a humanitarian intervention. The materialistic approach cannot define this stand of India. This can be understood through the prism of social constructivism. India and Bangladesh - these two nations are mostly connected by their cultural commonalities. Though the historical tie up, cultural connectivity and language could not lead the relationship last forever. After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the relationship got strained. The successive periods were not so good and favourable for India. It is not possible for any single approach to cover the whole episode of a country's foreign policy. Constructivism cannot be applied to these successive periods. It is only when Sheikh Hasina came in power; relationship started changing in favour of India. The successive Governments of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the military government had a pro-Pakistan approach which worsened India -Bangladesh relations. Due to the secular nature of India, Bangladesh preferred to keep a distance from India. In South Asian society India and Bangladesh are two prominent members. A cordial neighbourhood is essential for the development of the South Asian Region. Various scholars tried to measure the political phenomena of South Asia from a realist perspective. China is the biggest trade partner of Bangladesh. Still, the visit of Indian Prime Minister in Bangladesh in 2015 ensured Indian access to the ports of Bangladesh. Every nation-state wants to achieve their highest possible interest. The pro-Indian approach of Bangladesh can help India to help the status quo as a regional superpower. This power centric concept comes from realism. Here constructive approach can be taken by India as an alternative to avail the desired end. At this juncture of India Bangladesh relations, if realism indicates the goal of India, constructivism can be used as a means to achieve that desired end. Constructivists argue for the social dimension of state interaction.

For achieving the desired goal India needs to stress on the friendly relationship with Bangladesh. It should stress and extend its connections. Here Tripura can play the role of a catalyst in giving a congenial and cordial relationship between India and Bangladesh. The Ex-Chief Minister of Tripura late Sachindra Lal Singh dreamt of making Tripura a catalyst of peaceful India – Bangladesh relations which is continued till today. The theory of social constructivism identifies this crucial role of Tripura in India-Bangladesh relations.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Structural realist Kenneth Waltz (*Theory of International Politics*) answered why the states behave in a similar way despite their innate differences within them. Waltz stressed the structure of international relations which compels the states to act in a similar way.

<sup>2</sup>The national interest of a state is diversified. For example, the states which are sharing an international border with neighbouring countries in India sometimes appear as an important factor. Based on the security and interest of that state the country negotiates with the neighbouring country. That very approach may not be necessary for other states.

<sup>3</sup> *Joint task force to discuss India's access to Chittagong port*, retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/joint-task-force-to-discuss-indias-access-to-chittagong-port/article8184920.ece>, accessed on 10/04/2016.

<sup>4</sup> In 1980 Tripura faced a riot known as Mandwi massacre between tribal and non- tribal. Many Bengali people were killed by the insurgent groups – TUJS and TNV. It was the most gruesome incident for the Bengali people. For details <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/indiascope/story/19800715-communal-riots-rock-tripura-state-govt-try-to-find-scapegoat-to-blame-mob-frenzy-on-821251-2014-01-22>

<sup>5</sup> According to the report of Sepahijala District Magistrate office, the Kamala Sagar border Haat gets profit as compared with its Bangladesh counterpart. The report says average sales of each vendor from the Indian side are more than 70% whereas the vendors from Bangladesh side accounts 40% on average.

<sup>6</sup> In his recent speech, PM Modi has highlighted the historical landscape between India and Bangladesh, in the presence of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina and the Chief Minister of Bengal Smt. Mamata Banerjee. He added the strong connectivity between two states can ensure mutual growth, though he stressed on the cultural connectivity between Bangladesh and West Bengal. See [www.livemint.com/Politics/Weiq7914AO9IwK2MptWjUJ/India-Bangladesh-launch-connectivity-projects-including-ne.html](http://www.livemint.com/Politics/Weiq7914AO9IwK2MptWjUJ/India-Bangladesh-launch-connectivity-projects-including-ne.html)

<sup>7</sup> See <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agartala/Agartala-becomes-Indias-third-intl-internet-gateway/articleshow/51544682.cms>

<sup>8</sup> Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) is a sub-regional initiative in South Asia. It mainly focuses on four areas- resources, power, transport and infrastructure. Under this sub-regional agreement, Northeast India is focused.

<sup>9</sup> See [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agartala/bsf-under-fire-for-smuggler-deaths/articleshow/57713840.cms?TOI\\_browsertification=true](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agartala/bsf-under-fire-for-smuggler-deaths/articleshow/57713840.cms?TOI_browsertification=true)