

CHAPTER - III

A NOTE ON TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN NORTH BENGAL

The economic development particularly the industrial development of a region depends on the transport facilities which is one of the major factor. The movement of both men and materials from one place to another is very needed with the help of transport facilities which is very much essential to bring about ordinary industrial growth in desired location. Road transport has an important part to play as a growth inducing factor besides its growth sustaining operation.

The above said roles of transportation are equally important for the industrial development of North Bengal.

Regional Importance of North Bengal :

Before dwelling upon the present transport and assessment of the need for further improvement thereof, it could be important to explain in short the importance of North Bengal from the broad economic context.

North Bengal has an important role for the economic development of West Bengal. Some big industries such as jute, paper and fruit processeing industries are established in Calcutta, but their raw materials are supplied by North Bengal. For example, paper industry in West Bengal largely depends upon the North Bengal, because bamboos and other raw materials for paper industry are send by North Bengal. Many fruits are produced in this region. About ninety percent pineapple and mango are grown in North Bengal. Therefore, North Bengal has an important part for the economic development of West Bengal.

The industries of South Bengal largely depends upon the important market outlet of Siliguri. It not only supplies finished product to entire North Bengal region but also supplies finished goods to Assam, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Tripura,

Nagaland, Mijoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. A whole sale market has been developed at Siliguri for a variety of consumer products. In fact, Siliguri is the most important business place in North-East India and second largest city in West Bengal. In North Bengal, there are number of tourist place such as Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Mirik, Jhaldapara and Hasimara. Development of tourism has good potential for establishment of service industries like hotels and transport.

Present State Of Transport Facilities:

The existing transport facilities in North Bengal comprise roadways, railways and airways. Although many years back, waterways had also been on the transport Map of the North Bengal, waterways lost its importance due to the division in 1947, as the water routes which interconnect various parts of North Bengal via Bangladesh. Now-a-days boats ply only in the rivers of Tista, Torsa, Jaldhakha and Mahananda when there is adequate flow of water in the rivers. The previous transport network had also disrupted due to partition. All rivers of North Bengal are flow North-South direction. As a result, all the rail and road routes were laid in British era in North-South direction and as such, the transport network between North Bengal and South Bengal was designed through areas falling in Bangladesh. After 1947, new transport network had to be set up to connect North Bengal with other parts of the country by roads, airways and railways.

Roadways :

The most important road network in North Bengal is two national highways. They are N. H. 34 and N. H. 31 which connect most areas of North Bengal and other parts of the country. The N. H. 34 passes through the districts of 24-parganas (north), Nadia and Murshidabad to enter North Bengal at Malda. It then goes towards north through English Bazar, Gajol, Itahar, Raiganj and finally meets the National Highway 31 at Dalkhola, which comes from Ranchi via Patna in Bihar. The National Highway 31 passes through Islampur in Uttar Dinajpur, Bagdogra and Siliguri in Darjeeling, Oodlabari, Mainaguri, Birpara and Falakata in Jalpaiguri, and Coochbehar town and Tufanganj in Coochbehar and finally enter the state of Assam. It has a branch 31 A, which runs from Sevoke to Gangtok, the capital of

Sikkim, the distance between Sevoke to Gangtok is 77 kilometres. The region is thus connected with Assam in east, Bihar in the west and South Bengal in the south by the network of National Highways (vide sheet No. 1). There are also a number of State Highways. Notable among those are Malda-Harishchandrapur Road, Malda-Samshi via Alal, Malda-Nalagola, Malda-Kaliaganj Road, Gajol-Hili Road, Haldibari-Darjeeling Road via Siliguri and Sitai-Mainaguri Road via Mathabhanga. Besides this, there are number of district and rural roads which are connected with the National Highways. Table 3.1 shows the length of differnt roads in North Bengal

Table - 3.1

Lengths of different types of Road in North Bengal (in kms.)

Year	N. H.	S. H.	D. R.	R. R.	Total
1951	222	80	617	0	919
1961	492	317	1,203	59	2,017
1969	611	632	1,648	187	3,078
1979	1,151	700	1,931	375	4,157
1985	1,151	700	2,560	510	4,921
1995	1,151	832	3,210	890	6,083
1998	1,151	940	3,450	970	6,511

Source : Public Works (Roads) Department, Government of West Bengal.

North Bengal had 6,511 kms. of surfaced roads in 1998 which shows approximately 7.08 fold extension since 1951. So it is clear that road lengths of North Bengal has been expanded significantly.

The passenger services in North Bengal are mainly provided by the NBSTC which head quarter is situated at Cooch Behar. It serves all the six districts in North Bengal by providing transport services in addition to providing its long routes services between Siliguri and Calcutta via Malda, Coach Behar and Calcutta via Jalpaiguri, Malda and Calcutta via Berhampore, Balurghat and Calcutta via Malda, Kaliaganj Calcutta via Malda, Raiganj and Calcutta via Malda, Islampur

and Calcutta via Malda. At present it has 20 depots which is situated throughout West Bengal.¹ The bus route of North Bengal State Transport Corporation is shown in the drawing (vide sheet No. II). Private buses ply side by side with the state buses in North Bengal. Six major routes was nationalised in Cooch Behar out of thirteen routes. In the other five districts of North Bengal NBSTC and private operators ply their buses side by side in all routes. It may be noted that some private operators were allowed to ply their buses in some nationalised routes due to shortage of fleet strength of NBSTC. At present most of the routes in North Bengal are open for private bus operators and ply their buses side by side with the state buses. Total route length of NBSTC services increased from 19,114 kms. in 1975-76 to around 1,65,498 kms. in 1991-92.²

NBSTC has many Mandi buses. There are a number of Mandis (weekly village market) dealing mainly in agricultural products in North Bengal. Mandi Service has become very popular in North Bengal. The NBSTC provides around 50 Mandi Services in North Bengal.

The fleet strength of NBSTC has steadily been increasing over the study period. Table 3.2 clearly shows that the number of serviceable buses of the corporation was 244 in 1973 which increased to 912 in 1998. The number of running buses had also increased from 235 in 1973 to 605 in 1998.³

Table - 3.2

Fleet Strength and its utilisation of NBSTC

Year	Serviceable fleet strength	Number of buses outshedded	% of fleet utilisation (per day)
1975	244	235	96
1976	234	197	84
1979	323	266	82
1982	242	273	80
1986	372	360	96

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Table 3.2 Contd.

1991	798	725	97
1995	971	765	79
1998	912	605	66

Source : Office Records, Annual Administrative Reports of NBSTC and Profile and performance of State Transport undertakings, published by CIRT, Pune.

During the year 1984-85, NBSTC ran around 280 buses out of which 250 buses operated within the State of West Bengal, while 29 buses operated in inter-state services. It was noticed that NBSTC authority had not increased inter-state services since 1975-76.

Over the years, NBSTC not only increased its fleet strength, but also increased its service kilometres and number of passengers. During the year 1975-76, its service kilometres was 16 million and increased to 58 million in the year 1997-98. It was carried 26 million passengers during the year 1975-76 and 99.5 million passengers during the year 1997-98.⁴

NBSTC also provided goods transport services during the beginning period of the corporation. It had 97 goods vehicle during the year 1975-76. But only 51 vehicles was running on the roads.⁵ During the same period it had carried two thirty thousand tonnes of goods. But it failed to increase its goods vehicles over the period of time, which will be clear from the following table 3.3

Table - 3.3

Goods Transport Services of NBSTC

Year	Fleet Strength (number)	Total Length run ('000 kms)	No of vehicle of operation	Total goods serve ('000 tonnes)
1975 - 76	97	508	51	230
1979 - 80	68	1,441	41	164
1980 - 81	66	1,248	33	142
1981 - 82	66	1,063	31	131

Table Contd. next page

Table 3.3 Contd.

1982 - 83	66	764	25	122
1996 - 97	51	N. A.	23	N. A.
1997 - 98	46	N. A.	19	N. A.

Source : Office Records and Annual Administrative Reports of NBSTC.

The authority of NBSTC has recently closed its goods transport service wing due to inadequate goods traffic. At present the demand for goods transportation in North Bengal are fulfilled by the private transport industry. The leading transport operators in North Bengal are, viv., Balurghat Transport Company, Sarada Transport Company, ABC India Ltd., Joy Durga Transport Company, Bengal Transport Company, East India Transport Agency Janata Transport Company and Duars Transport with a total fleet strength of around 350 trucks. There are also some 150 small operators having 3 – 4 trucks each. It has been estimated that around 10,000 private trucks ply daily in North Bengal. There are many items such as Mango, Silkworm, Tea, Jute, Timber-logs and Tobacco are transported by road in North Bengal. It is revealed by the local transport operators through discussion that North Bengal per year send by road on an average 1,00,000 tonnes of tea, 25,00,000 bales of jute, 50,000 tonnes of tobacco, 50,000 quintals of silkworm, 1,10,000 tonnes of mango and 1,20,000 tonnes of timber logs to many places of the country. The following table 3.4 shows the export destinations from North Bengal.

Table - 3.4

Destinations of Exports by Road from North Bengal

Items	Estimated amount	Major Destinations
Mango	1,10,000 tonnes.	Calcutta, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar
Silkworm	500 tonnes.	Calcutta, Banaras, Kanpur, Lucknow.
Timberlogs	1,20,000 tonnes.	Calcutta, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu
Tobacco	50,000 tonnes.	Calcutta, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh
Jute	25,00,000 bales.	Calcutta, Kanpur
Tea	1,00,000 tonnes.	Calcutta, Punjab, Gujrat, Maharastra, Haryana.

Source : Field Survey.

North Bengal imports all types of consumer goods except the agricultural products. The following goods are mainly imported by road in North Bengal. Among them, Medicine (mainly from Mumbai, Baroda, Chennai and Calcutta), Cloth (Mumbai, Calcutta and Ahmedabad), Milk Products (from Gujrat), Shoes (from Calcutta, Delhi and Kanpur), and Salt (from Ajmeer). At present, at the present price level (1997-98), it is estimated that around 200 crores value of goods brought into North Bengal per day.⁶

Railways :

The railway network in North Bengal region is having an aggregate length of 1000 kilometres. All the three types of gauges are available in North Bengal, viz., broad gauges (450 kms), metre gauges (450 kms.) and narrow gauges (88 kms.). Old Malda is a railway junction of two broad gauge lines, one line comes from Calcutta and other comes from Singabad in Malda itself. The broad gauge line proceeds through New Jalpaiguri, Raninagar, Changrabandha and New Cooch Behar. It enters Assam up to Laming. A broad gauge section has also been laid between Raninagar and Haldibari via Falakata in the districts of Jalpaiguri. The metre gauge line enters into North Bengal from Katihar in Bihar. It runs for about 260 kms. in North Bengal through Dalkhola, Naxalbari, Bagdogra, Siliguri, Sevoke, Oodlabari, New Mal, Hasimara, Rajbhatkhawa and Alipurduar. This stretch have introduced four metre gauge sections viz., (a) Siliguri –New Jalpaiguri (8 kms.), (b) New Mal– Changrabandha (62 kms.) via Lataguri with a further extension from Lataguri to Ramsai (32 kms.), (c) Rajbhatkhawa – Jayanti (16 kms.).

Narrow gauge line only exists between New Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling town via Siliguri in this region for a distance of 88 kilometres. It is one of the important rail link between hill stations and plain areas in North Bengal. Also the services of North Bengal are provided by the North East Frontier Railway. This N. F. Railway at present controls about 145 railway stations in North Bengal region out of which 47 stations are on broad gauge section, 71 stations on metre gauge section and 27 on narrow gauge section.⁷

There are number of passenger train services which gone through North Bengal to connect it with far- off places like Calcutta, Gauhati, Beneras, New Delhi and Triveandram, Chennai, Valore in south India. A number of important passenger trains are running on the broad gauge line in North Bengal, such as, Kamrup Express (Howrah – Gauhati), Tinsukia Mail (New Delhi – Gauhati), North East Express (Gauhati –New Delhi), Darjeeling Mail (Sealdah – Jalpaiguri), Trivandram Express (Trivandram – Gauhati via Howrah), Kanchanjangha Express (Howrah – New Jalpaiguri), Gour Express (Sealdah – Malda Town), Tista Bramhaputra Mail (Barauni – Tinsukia), Gorakhpur Express (Gorakhpur –Gauhati) and Varanashi Express (Varanashi – Gauhati), Bangalore Express (Gauhati – Bangalore), Ayodh Assam Express (Gauhati – New Delhi), Rajdhani Express (Gauhati – New Delhi), Farakka Express (Malda –Vhiwani via New Delhi), Hate Bazare Express (Katihar –Sealdah), North Bengal Express (Sealdah to New Cooch behar), Kanchankanya (Sealdah to New Jalpaiguri), Tista Torsha Express(Sealdah to New Coochbehar), Saraighat Express (Howrah – Gauhati).⁸

The frequency of train services within North Bengal is shown in the table 3.5

Table - 3.5

Frequency of Train Services per week within North Bengal.

Sl. No.	Origin Destination within the region	Frequency of Services in each way (in number)
1.	Malda Town – New Jalpaiguri (BG)*	12
2.	Malda Town – New Coach Behar (BG)	19
3.	New Jalpaiguri – New Coach Behar (BG)	3
4.	Singhabad – Malda Town (BG)	3
5.	New Jalpaiguri – Haldibari (BG)	3
6.	Siliguri – Dalkhola (MG)*	3
7.	Siliguri – Alipurduar (MG)	4
8.	New Jalpaiguri – Siliguri (MG)	5

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Table 3.5 Contd.

9.	Ramsai – Changrabandha (MG)	1
10.	Lataguri – Ramsai (MG)	1
11.	Alipurduar – Bamanhat (MG)	3
12.	New Jalpaiguri – Darjeeling Town (NG)*	2
13.	Kurseong – Darjeeling (NG)	1
(BG)* Broad Gauge, (MG)* Metre Gauge, (NG)* Narrow Gauge.		

Source : North East Frontier Railway.

Airways :

The only one airport of North Bengal is situated in Bagdogra. With the help of this airport the connection between Calcutta, New Delhi, Patna, Imphal and Gauhati with North Bengal is possible. Boeing 737 of Indian airlines flies three days in a week in this sector. But in the previous period it flies daily. To travel to Calcutta from Bagdogra airport it takes 55 minutes, 45 minutes to Gauhati, 125 minutes to Imphal, 45 minutes to Patna and 165 minutes to New Delhi.⁹

Few years ago, the vayodoot services had been operated from Calcutta to Malda Town, Balurghat to Dakhin Dinajpur and Coach Behar town, but later the above services had been left unserved. For this reason now the people of North Bengal depends on Road Transport and Railway services.

Shortfall In Existing Network and Services :

From the above discussion it is clear that the present condition of the transport services in North Bengal region was severely set back at the time of partition in 1947, in its transport network, and after that period the transport infrastructure of North Bengal is gradually developed. But the existing network and services contain with some loopholes which are as follows.

(I) Inadequate road infrastructure : The road infrastructure of North Bengal is quite inadequate for what is actually needed for minimum initiative and support for the alround industrial development in the six districts of North Bengal. This region required to serve 2266 persons for one kilometre of road whereas the country's average is 443 persons per kilometre, 720 persons per kilometre in

Uttarpradesh, 348 persons per kilometre in Maharashtra and 328 persons per kilometre in Karnataka.

(II) Lack of rural-urban integration :

After analysing the road infrastructure of North Bengal, it is clearly shown that there is very little scope for interaction between the urban and rural economics in North Bengal due to lack of rural roads. During the year 1985-86, there were only 400 kilometres of such roads in entire six districts of North Bengal which constituted less than ten percent of total road lengths. At present, there is only 113 kilometres of rural roads network in Darjeeling district, 99 kilometres in Jalpaiguri district, 132 kilometres in Coach Behar district, 325 Kilometres in Malda district, 276 kilometres in Uttar Dinajpur district and 310 kilometres in Dakshin Dinajpur district. Therefore, there are many village in North Bengal are still not accessible by road. For example, only in Coach Behar district there is 1,144 villages, but only 396 villages are provided with roads and other villages still has not rural roads. As a result the agriculture forest and other resources in the rural areas of North Bengal are not properly used due to lack of rural roads. And also the products of rural areas cannot reach to the consumers easily and economically. Rural artisans are not able to create demand for their products. For instance, the handloom industry of Coach Behar and both Dinajpur, the eri industry of Jalpaiguri and the handicrafts of Darjeeling could not improved significantly due to lack of transport infrastructure.

(III) Inoptimal Sub-regional integration : At present there is lack of integration between various sub-regions (district-units), especially we can mention here, Siliguri and Coach Behar, and Jalpaiguri and Coach Behar which is inoptimal in terms of travel time. N.H. 31 directly linked Siliguri and Coach Behar. But the vehicles run as noted above, through Oodalbari, Mainaguri and Birpara. As a result a vehicle covers 225 kilometres to reach Coach Behar from Siliguri. But there is an alternative route during the rainy season via Jalpaiguri to reach Coach Behar. But this short route is disrupted at several stretches and the vehicles have to ply through the former route. As a result a vehicle covers excess 100 kilometres for the above said route. This is also applicable in the case of Jalpaiguri and Coach

Behar. For this reason, an additional transportation cost has to bear by the industrial unit of Coach Behar.

(IV) Inadequate Forest roads : The most important forest belt of the State are situated in North Bengal mainly in the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. The above forest are rich with timber, salseeds, bamboo etc. which could be used for the purpose of industry. Due to the lack of proper forest roads it is impossible to utilise the forest resources properly. One thousand eight hundred kilometres of forest roads remain in Darjeeling district out of three thousand kilometres of North Bengal. The forest area of North Bengal is 312 hectares and the percent of the forest roads is less than 0.65.

After consultation with the Darjeeling forest officer, it is clear to us that 70% of the forest area in the upper altitudes are not easy to reach of. As a result it is impossible to use the post-matured trees of high altitudes. It will be remember that the removal of the old trees are necessary because the growth and existence of the new trees are prevented and therefore have to be removed to ensure planned forest development which is must for proper exploitation of forest resources as few materials for industries. But due to lack of forest roads in North Bengal preclude such planning.

(V) Poor Maintenance of National Highways : Within North Bengal, the maintenance of National Highways is very poor due to lack of funds. As a result it will take more travel time and increase operating cost by 20-25%. This is the opinion if the some leading private operators in North Bengal.

(VI) Poor Condition of Bridges : There are many rivers and riverlets in North Bengal region. The existing roads are bridged at frequent intervals. But few years ago, many of the bridges of North Bengal are of wooden structure and maintenance of such bridges are very poor. Such bridges cannot be expected to cope with the wrath of hilly rivers, especially in the rainy season. Practically, when hills receive more rains then the rivers flow speedily. As a result, many wooden bridges completely washed out. For this reason the transport system in certain part of North Bengal has been disrupted.

(VII) NBSTC is not able to provide stage carriage service in all routes and also is not able to ply adequate buses in some routes till now. As for example, it could be said that there are not available buses of NBSTC in the Siliguri- Calcutta route and some private bus operators ply their buses in this route unlawfully/ illegally till now.

Secondly often in this route buses are broken down and are not plied in road. Due to the lack of available buses in this route the services of buses are abandoned till the buses are not repaired. As a result the commuters/passengers have to face many problems. Although besides NBSTC, SBSTC and CSTC have started their bus services in these routes. For this reason some problems of travel of the people of this region is removed. Although the number of the buses of SBSTC & CSTC is inadequate which is actually required. At present NBSTC has provided many new buses in these routes to keep the running of their services which is still inadequate in terms of requirement.

(VIII) While the road transport service of North Bengal is grossly inadequate, Rail Transport too is not able to provide their services as for requirement. One of the important defect of rail services is that many rail routes are in Metre Gauge / Narrow Gauge among the Rail Network of this region. Although the Rail Board in principle have decided to convert the Metre Gauge and Narrow Gauge into Broad Gauge gradually. About half of the present track of the whole rail network of North Bengal is of Metre Gauge line. Especially the proper utilisation of the vast amount of mineral resources of Jayanti Hill in Jalpaiguri is not possible due to the absence of Broad Gauge line.

(IX) It will be recalled that besides the exportation to Bangladesh the dolomite of Jayanti Hill is supplied to various steel plant, glass factory etc. At first the dolomite is taken to Alipurduar from Jayanti Hill by Metre Gauge. Later on that dolomite is sent from there to various places. As a result all about 15% – 20% material is wasted. Labour cost is also increased and thereby using substantial additional financial burden to the miners – instead of removing the above hardles to facilitate healthy mining activities of this backward region like North Bengal.

The North East Frontier railway surprisingly has withdrawn the passenger cum goods train which was running from Jayanti Hill to Alipurduar with effect from 1st October, 1986.

(X) Three corporations are appointed for the mining of dolomite of the Jayanti Hill. These are North Bengal Dolomite Ltd., joint venture of SAIL and West Bengal Minerals Trading and Development Corporation (WBMTDC). The yearly production capacity of the mining of these places is 25,000 tonnes per annum. The Railway Authority has told those corporations to load their minerals from Rajabhatkhawa which is 15 kilometres away from Jayanti Hill. But the Field Survey has indicated that due to the transportation of dolomite the Railway Authority has to bear Rs. 30.00 per tonne and Rs. 15.00 per tonne for loading/unloading as additional cost. The prospect of dolomite mining of Jayanti Hill is jeopardised for the aforesaid decision of N. F. Railway and whereas all about 4000 people are employed directly or indirectly.

(XI) Slow Speed of Trains : A train takes long time to travel from one place to another place because the railway track of this region is narrow. As a result, besides this the speed also becomes slow. This is found that a Mail or Express train takes 6 hours whereas a passenger train takes all about 9 hours to cover 164 kilometres from Siliguri to Alipurduar and the average speed is only 23 kilometres and 17 kilometres per hour respectively.

(XII) Inappropriate time schedule for intra-regional journey:

This is another short-coming of the prevailing passenger service. Most of the Mail and Express trains which are running from New Jalpaiguri to Calcutta are night trains except Kanchanjangha. Most of these trains runs through Malda and for this reason the businessmen and residents of Malda feels very much inconvenience.

(XIII) Saturation of line capacity between Malda and New Jalpaiguri :

The busiest line of N. F. Railway is Malda to New Jalpaiguri. Though double line is setting, but that work is not totally completed till now and the setting of double line is still continuing. As a result the present railway track is saturated

till now. So more the moving of passenger trains in this routes is the cause of the more loss of the freight transportation. The superfast trains which are running in this routes take less than two hours. For this reason the freight transportation movement is increased.

(XIV) Inadequate railway service for Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur : N. F. Railway could not expand their network for Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur. At present Islampur subdivision is only linked up with the railway service. The railway network is not so much introduced in other areas of Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur. The creation of Eklakhi – Balurghat is started long ten years ago but that is not finished till now. There is no broad gauge line in Raiganj of Uttar Dinajpur till now.

(XV) Absence of intra-regional air service : The only one airport in North Bengal is Bagdogra. Some years ago also it had linked up itself with Calcutta, Patna, Gauhati, Imphal etc. by the regular boeing service of Indian Airlines, daily. But at present it has become irregular. Now-a-days instead of daily it flies thrice in a week. As a result the people of North Bengal who travel in the plane have to face some inconvenience. Besides this there is no intra regional air service between the districts of North Bengal. Although there is communication between Bagdogra and other important towns of the country. But there is not interlink between the other district of North Bengal with Bagdogra. As a result the people of the various parts of North Bengal could not take the convenience of this air service.

Besides the above loopholes in transport network and services the following are the more some deficiencies of the existing system and these deficiencies must be removed for the improvement of transport facilities in North Bengal.

(I) Inadequate Construction of Rural Roads :

The road in rural areas of North Bengal are grossly inadequate. So it is not possible to provide proper rural- urban integration and industrialisation. Therefore, the development of North Bengal region depends on the construction of the rural roads. During the year 1987, each kilometre of rural roads in West

Bengal was required to serve 6,500 rural people, while in North Bengal the figure was around 21,000 persons per kilometre of road. The rural population in North Bengal was estimated at 97.50 lacs during the same year.¹⁰ It would be necessary to construct more rural roads in North Bengal to bring it per with the State average.

(II) Inadequate construction of Forest Roads :

During the year 1987, only 0.65% of the forest area was covered by roads. But the above percentage is required to increase by 2.0 – 2.5 percent . It is felt that around 16,000 kilometres of forest roads shall have to be constructed in North Bengal at an estimated cost 300 crores.

(III) Siliguri – Cooch Behar Expressway :

There is no expressway between Siliguri – Cooch Behar via Mekhliganj and Mathabhanga which could provide short route highway services for the people of North Bengal. It should be designed to accomodate six lanes. The length of the above Expressway would be about 105 kilometres.

(IV) Inadequate Maintenance of Roads :

National Highways, State Highways, District Highways and bridges of North Bengal are very poorly maintained. As a result, when a passenger travel on the roads of North Bengal, it would take high travel time and extra expenditure due to wear and tear. So there is a need to take effective measure and create a seperate fund in this regard for a proper maintenance of roads in North Bengal.

(V) Lack of Improvement of NBSTC Services :

The services of NBSTC is not very satisfactory. But it has ample opportunity for improvement of NBSTC services. The corporation has not properly estimate the traffic demand at different routes in North Bengal. So there is a need to provide adequate fleet at different routes. The corporation should immediately resume goods transport for over all improvement of NBSTC services.

(VI) Incomplete double rail line between Malda and NJP. :

Intra-regional railway services in North Bengal is not being satisfactory. For this reason a second broad gauge line is needed for the development of North Bengal. As a result a double line work had started many years ago but still now work is not completed. So it is necessary, to complete the work as early as possible for economic development of North Bengal.

(VII) Inadequate fast moving train between Malda and NJP. :

There is no fast moving train during the day time except Kanchanjangha Express from NJP to Malda. Some new trains have been introduced such as Saraighat Express (thrice in a week), Uttarbanga Express and Kanchan Kanya Express (twice in a week) from Malda to NJP. But the above trains are not running during the day time from NJP to Malda. Fast moving train should be introduced during the day time in this route at 4 hourly intervals. Four trains during the day time and five trains during the night is needed at this stage.

(VIII) Completion of Balurghat – Eklakhi Project. :

The absence of railway service in Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur have been identified as the major factor for industrial development. For this reason, foundation stone was laid as early as in 1982 for Eklakhi – Balurghat project. But not much progress has yet been made in the implementation of the project till now.

(IX) Absence of New air routes. :

There is no new air routes in North Bengal for intra-regional air services. Bagdogra is the only airport in North Bengal. Though Indian Airlines operates boeing service thrice in a week from Delhi but it is not connected with the Mumbai, Chennai Bangalore and Hyderabad. But at present these are the business places in the country, the Indian air lines should introduce a service, at least thrice a week between Bagdogra and Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad so as to connect North Bengal directly with the stream of business activities in the country.

So it is clearly understood from the above discussion that there are many loopholes in the transport network and service of this region for which the

industrialisation of North Bengal is prevented. Transport is an important infrastructure for industrialisation.

The development of Transport system of North Bengal region is necessary and it is possible if the pace of industrial development of the region is to be accelerated.

Summary :

The economic development particularly the industrial development largely depends on the transport facilities. North Bengal has an important role for the economic development of West Bengal. Some big industries such as jute, paper and fruit processing industries are established in Calcutta but their raw material are supplied from North Bengal.

The existing transport facilities in North Bengal comprise roadways, railways and airways. The most important road network in North Bengal is two national highways. They are N. H. 31 and N. H. 34 which connect most areas of North Bengal and other parts of the country. The passenger service in North Bengal are mainly provided by the NBSTC whose headquarter is at Cooch Behar. NBSTC also provided goods transport service during the beginning period of corporation. But it has been closed at present due to inadequate goods traffic. The demand for goods transport service at present are fulfilled by the private operators.

The railway network in North Bengal region is having an aggregate length of 1000 kilometres. All the three types of gauges are available in North Bengal.

The only one airport in North Bengal is situated at Bagdogra. But this service is inadequate and as a result the people of North Bengal depends on Road Transport and railway services. After independence the transport infrastructure of North Bengal is gradually developed. But the existing network has some loopholes. They are (1) Inadequate road infrastructure; (2) Lack of rural-urban integration; (3) Inoptimal sub-regional integration; (4) Inadequate forest roads; (5) Poor maintenance of National highways; (6) Poor condition of bridges; (7) Inability of

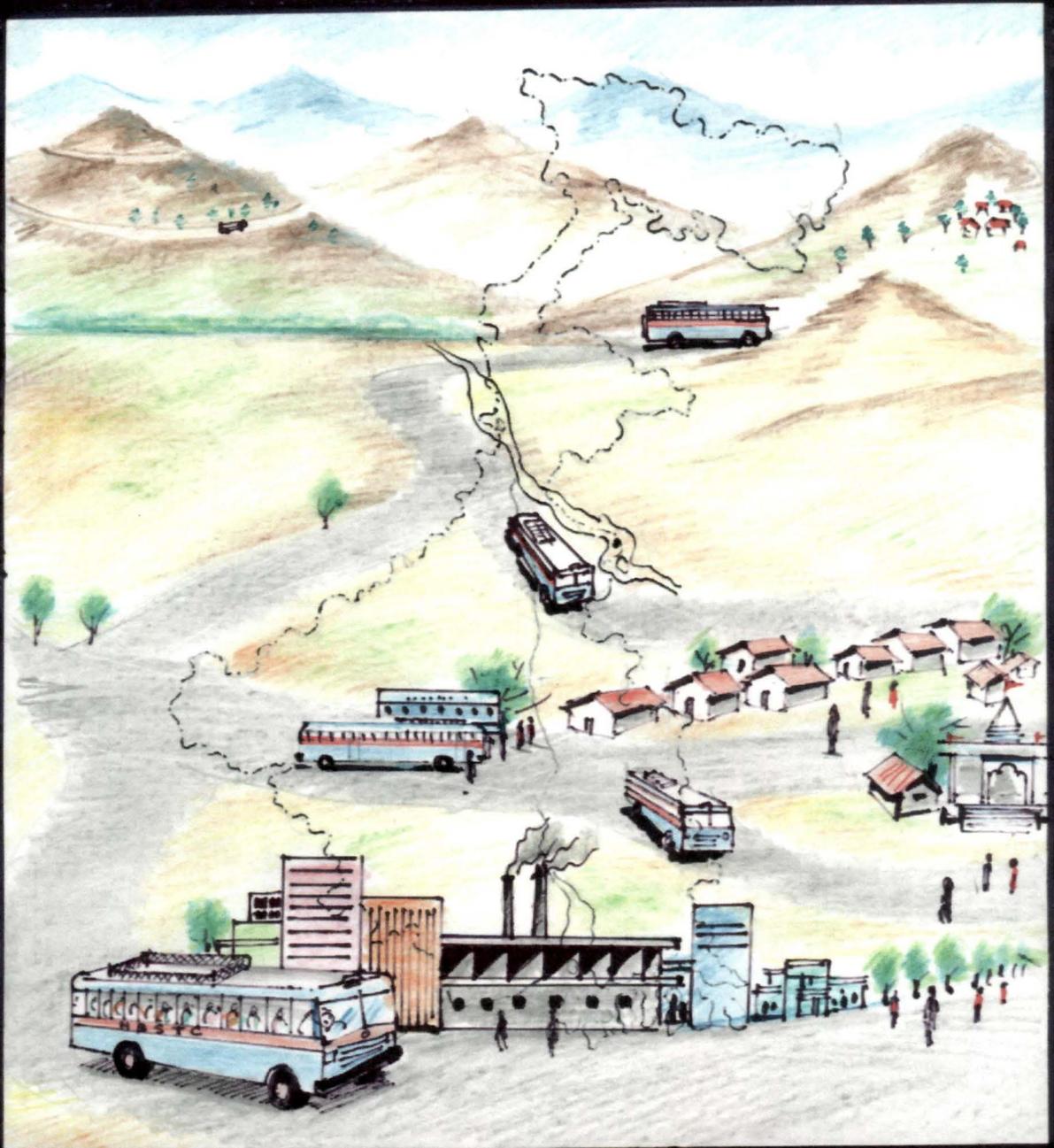
NBSTC to provide stage carriage service in all routes; (8) Inadequacy of train service; (9) Slow speed of trains; (10) Inappropriate time schedule for intra regional journey; (11) Saturation of time capacity between Malda and New Jalpaiguri; (12) Absence of intra-regional air service etc.

Notes and References.

1. Profile and Performance of State Transport Undertakings 1993-94 p. 140, published by CIRT, Pune, India.
2. Profile and Performance of State Transport Undertakings 1991-92, p.131, published by CIRT, Pune, India.
3. Profile and Performance of State Transport Undertakings , 1997-98, p.110, published by CIRT, Pune, India.
4. Profile and Performance of State Transport Undertakings, 1997-98, p.p. 110, 119. published by CIRT, Pune, India.
5. Office Records of NBSTC.
6. Field survey.
7. Office Records of North East Frontier Railway.
8. Office Records of North East Frontier Railway.
9. Indian Airlines Office Records.
10. Das Gupta, Manas, "Economic Development in North Bengal". p.175.

North Bengal State Transport Corporation

Cooch Bihar, West Bengal.



N. B. S. T. C.

SERVICE TO THE TRAVELLER

1997 - 98

EFFECTIVE KILOMETRES

(In lakhs)

583.06



NIGHT SERVICES

65



PERCENTAGE OF RURAL POPULATION SERVED

70%

CASUAL CONTRACTS (km. in lakhs)

181.29



FAIR TRAFFIC



PEAK SEASON TRAFFIC



PERCENTAGE OF VILLAGE SERVED

50%



LONG DISTANCE SERVICE

230

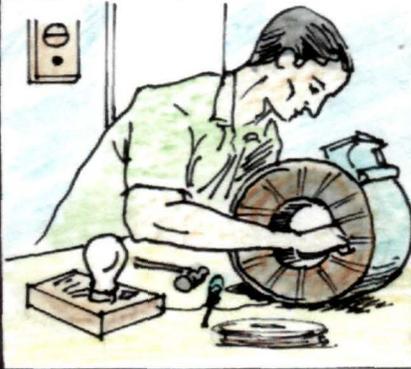


STAFF POSITION OF N.B.S.T.C.

As on 31st March 1998

6578

NO. OF ROUTES OPERATED 470	NO. OF CENTRAL WORKSHOPS 2	NO. OF DEPOTS 20
NO. OF DIVISIONAL WORKSHOPS 4		NO. OF DIVISIONS 4



SPHERES	TRFFIC	WORKSHOP & MAINTENANCE	ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
NO.	4403	1617	558	6578

Amenities to Passengers Given by N.B.S.T.C.

AS ON
31st MARCH, 1998

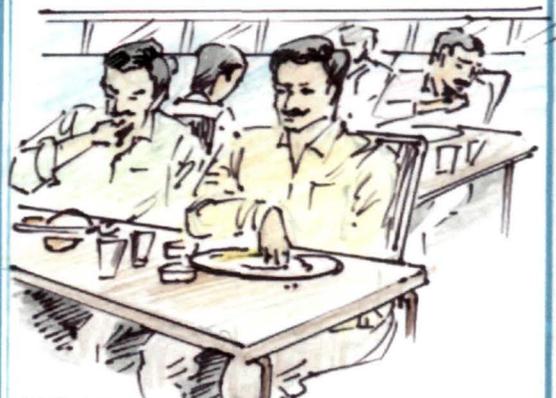


NO. OF BUS STATIONS - 23



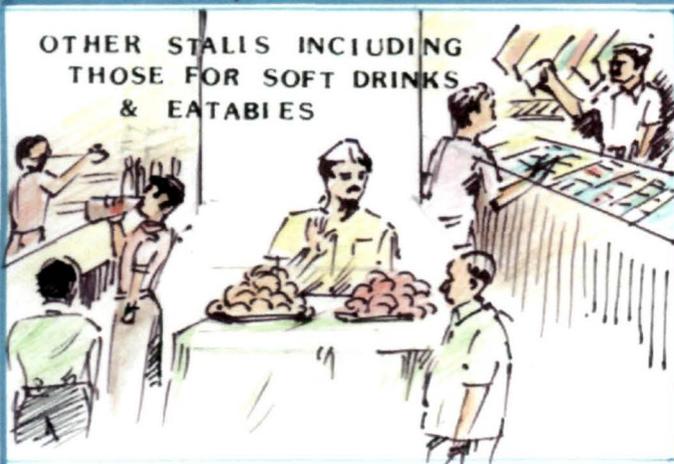
PICK-UP SHEDS

CONCESSION IN
NORMAL
FARES
TO
STUDENTS

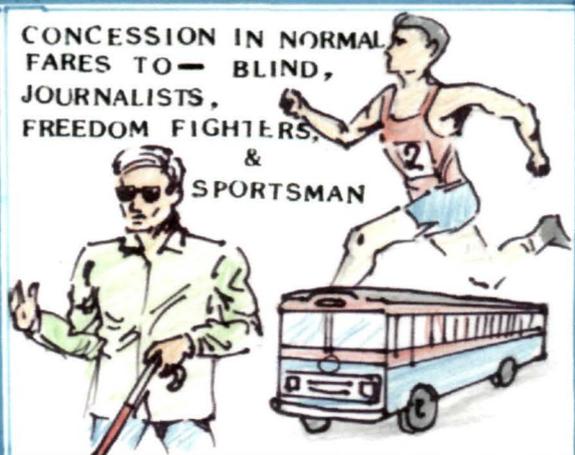


REFRESHMENT ROOM &
TEA STALL

OTHER STALLS INCLUDING
THOSE FOR SOFT DRINKS
& EATABLES

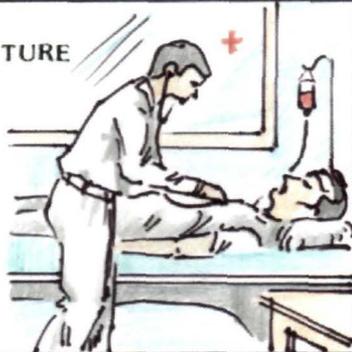


CONCESSION IN NORMAL
FARES TO - BLIND,
JOURNALISTS,
FREEDOM FIGHTERS,
&
SPORTSMAN



BENEFITS TO EMPLOYEES should be given by N.B.S.T.C.

MEDICAL EXPENDITURE



DRAMA
COMPETITION



FREE
FAMILY
PASS



SPORTS



RECREATION
CENTRES

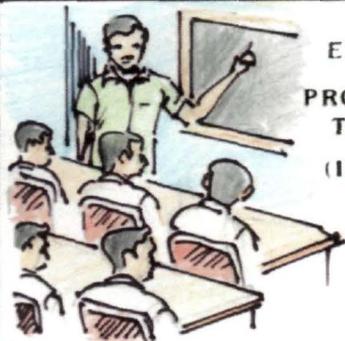
WELFARE
CENTRES



PRIZES
&
SCHOLARSHIPS
TO CHILDREN OF
ST EMPLOYEES



EMPLOYEES TRAINED
PROFESSIONAL
TRAINING
(INCLUDING DRIVERS)



STAFF
INSTITUTES

