



Globalization and Connectivity in Mizoram

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Abstract

The process of globalization has resulted in the improvement of infrastructure and transportation and communication, international trade, and business. Along with globalization in Mizoram, the Act East Policy will play a significant role in the development of the state and it will gain many benefits as it will be the corridor for Southeast Asia and central India. Many routes in terms of aviation, by-roads, and of course railways within Mizoram state will lie in a great strategic point for India. Also, the coming up of globalization in the state of Mizoram has brought much development for the state as well as for the people. But development cannot be seen immensely as the connectivity within the state is in very bad shape. For the accomplishment and flourish of the so-called 'Act East Policy' good connectivity within the state is a must.

Keywords: *Connectivity, Globalization, Flourish, Transport.*

Introduction

Globalization integrates and mobilizes the cultural values of the people. Many states and countries are amalgamated and mutated due to globalization. It has a gigantic effect on the social, economic, political, cultural, and way of life. Globalization is the progression over which societies and economies which is incorporated over cross border flow of ideas, technology, capital, communication, goods and services, and that of information. The process of globalization began in the 20th century; as a result, the improvement of infrastructure and transportation and communication, international trade, and business gradually grew rapidly. Due to this, the way of life, livelihood, and culture of the Mizo has immensely changed. Also, with the coming up of globalization in Mizoram, there comes along the 'Look East Policy' later 'Act East Policy'. This Act East Policy aims at looking forwards to have better connections with the South East Asian Countries. Due to this, the North-Eastern States of India will be an important strategic location for the flourish of the Act East Policy. Mizoram state will be one of the most important strategic locations as it will be the corridor for Central India and the Southeast Asian countries. So to accomplish and flourish the Act East, the Government of India laid certain plans especially on the connectivity issue i.e. road, railways,

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and aviation. Therefore, without proper connectivity in the state (Mizoram), the policy of the Act East Policy will not flourish.

Prior-to globalization in Mizoram, the condition of Mizoram state is archaic and demoded. But with the arrival of globalization, development has thrived and branched-out in various ways. The main reason behind the success of the development is due to connectivity, aviation, road, and railways. Without connectivity in the state, globalization in Mizoram will not be benefited by the state. The connectivity like aviation, road, and railways plays a very remarkable and noteworthy role in the attainment of development brought by globalization. With the absence of connectivity, globalization along with its various policies that are needed for the growth and development of the state will remain stagnant and thus will result in unattainable and insuperable. Furthermore, the success and development of the state along with globalization are extensively dependent on the state infrastructure and connectivity.

Connectivity in Mizoram (Roads, Railways, and Airways)

Transport affects the lives of everyone. Good transportation is needed for sustainable economic improvement. Good connectivity is frequently considered as a crucial means of enhancing the public effort to provide elementary healthiness and educational amenities as well as infrastructural sustenance for industry, trade, and commerce.[†] An impenetrable and harmonized system of transport acts as a significant role in the economic development of a country and transport routes are the elementary economic arteries of the country.[‡]

a) Road

Road transportation is of vital importance for the development and growth of a country. Road connectivity acts as a crucial role and contributes to the growth and development of the state economy and it also brings social benefits. Construction of more roads will make life easier and more convenient. Road infrastructure can be regarded as the most important of all public assets. In Mizoram, the availability of efficient and cheap means of transport and a good network of roads are essential for the economic development of Mizoram.[§] Road transportation is regarded as the lifeline of Mizoram as another mode of transport is frivolous and insignificant.

The total geographical area of Mizoram is 21081 Sq.km. and the overall distance of all classes' roads in Mizoram is 8948.179 Km and Road density is 42.45 km/100 Sq.km.^{**} It is important to note that for the development of the state it is necessary to have trade partners with other states, good and well-knit road transportation is inevitable. The state government takes up many steps towards its road transport

[†]Batta. N. Ravinder (2008). *Economics of the Road Transport*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications. P. 20

[‡]Saxena. M.H. (2005). *Transport Geography*. Jaipur: Prem Rawat for Rawat Publications. P. 185

[§]Lianzela. (1994). *Economic Development of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. P. 173

^{**}Interview with Lalrintluanga R. CE PWD (Road) by the Scholar at his Office, Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl on 1st July, 2019

connectivity.^{††} In Mizoram, the state has few National Highways like National Highway-44, National Highway 102b, National Highway 306, National Highway – 302. For the flourish of trade and the state economy, all the National Highways play important roles and they are the lifeline for the state. The reason being, there are no railways and waterways which connect Aizawl with other cities and states of India. At this moment, the state has not benefited much from railway and aviation as it used to be. In so doing this, the road connectivity plays a very vital role as it is the major helping hand for the State Government. But unfortunately, the conditions of the National highway within the state are in a very deplorable condition. The trucks and tankers which supply the basic needs for the state are facing problems every year due to bad conditions of the road and lots of minor accidents take place. The National Highway within the state needs to be repaired and upgraded every year as the revamp does not last long; they last usually for a month. Some of the studies of the National Highway within Mizoram state are discussed as under:

National Highway No-44

The National Highway No-44 connects Aizawl and Kanchanpur in the northern side of Tripura via Jampui Hills. This highway is the extension of the existing National Highway no. 44. On the Mizoram side, it will start from Sairang^{‡‡} via the junction to Airport road.^{§§} It is constructed under the supervision of the Public Work Department (PWD) of Mizoram. The work started in the year 2010 and it is estimated to be complete and to function from the year 2020. Almost all the works are about to be completed except the Langkaih bridges. It is believed that when the NH-44 is completed, it will be convenient for both the states in terms of trade and will save a lot of time. During the construction, there are some challenges and tensions created by the tribal people of Tripura.^{***} They do not want their land to be distorted and touched by the government. This slowed down the work and progress of the project.^{†††} Another problem faced during the construction of the Highway is that of landslide and acquisition. It also delayed the construction of the highways and the completion of the work.

National Highway 102b

This highway is locally known as the Guite Road. The National Highway 102b is the only highway that connects Mizoram and Manipur directly. The length of the NH 102b is 323 km (201 mi).^{‡‡‡} National Highway 102b starts from Jessami in Nagaland through Khurul District of Manipur via Churachandpur District up to Aizawl. On the side of Mizoram, it starts at Keifang-Saichal-Hliappui-Ngopa-Khawdungsei-

^{††}*Ibid*

^{‡‡}Sairang Village- It is a village on the national Highway which is 19km far away from the capital city Aizawl.

^{§§}*Ibid*

^{***}Lalrintluanga R., *Opcit*

^{†††}*Ibid*

^{‡‡‡} <https://www.getatoz.com/content/nh/number/102b>. Accessed on 5th October, 2020 by the Scholar.

Khawkawn-Tuivai river and connects to Manipur sides via Sinzawl-Singhat-Churachandpur. It is entrusted to the Border Road Organisation (BRO). This National Highway is regarded as one of the most important roads in the country as it is constructed along the Indo-Myanmar border. The highway covers both Guite Road (Churachandpur-Singhat-Sinzawl-Tuivai river) and some parts of Tedim Road (Imphal-Tedim in the Chin state of Myanmar). It has served as a defense and strategy road since the British period. During World War-II, the British India Army and the Japanese army had a long and fierce battle on this road.

The National Highway 102b currently is indeed in very poor shape as compared to another state National Highway. Not only Trucks, but four wheel vehicles, can hardly pass each other at the same time. If this highway is repaired with a fine fettle, the Mizo tribes from both sides of the state can come close to each other. Also, there are lots of Mizo tribes who reside in the state of Manipur. Therefore to bring more close relationships and to build up the liaison of Mizo from both the states, good connectivity's particularly road connectivity is a must. Not only is to bring the Mizo tribes from both sides of the state, proper road connectivity needed for the growth of trade between the two states.

National Highway 306

The National Highway 306 which was earlier known as National Highway 54 (NH-54) connecting Aizawl to Silchar is one of the most important routes, especially for Mizoram. Almost all essential commodities like rice, vegetables, fruits, raw materials, electronic items, etc. are coming through this route. For Mizoram, this National highway NH-306 is no doubt the lifeline of the state. The road conditions, however, are very bad and rough. The state government is trying to repair the NH-306 and it is under survey by a consultancy. It is to be reconstructed with two lanes.^{§§§} The road between Bilkhawthlir- Kolasib (Mizoram Side) is to be blacktop. The Central Government sanctioned 40.00 crores and the tender is still under process.^{****} The State Government has sent the Kolasib-Kawnpui Detail Project Report (DPR) to the Central Government to repair and blacktop the road.^{†††}

The Highway Department, Government of Mizoram, has sent an estimated sanction to the Central Government to reconstruct and blacktop the road between Kawnpui-Khamrang. The State Government has already advertised the tender and work order is awaited which is to be approved by the Ministry for the blacktopping of the road between Khamrang-Buichali.^{††††} National Highway 306 is one of the most important routes and most of the goods and materials are imported through it. If this highway is

§§§Interview with Hrangtawna (former Indian Traffic Police Service) at his residence Chawlhmun, Aizawl on 11th September, 2019

**** Ibid

††† Ibid

††††Lalmuankima Henry.,*Op Cit*

properly repaired by blacktopping as per the plan, it will be convenient for Mizoram and it will be beneficial to all the people of Mizoram.

National Highway - 302

This is a National Highway that will connect Lunglei^{§§§§} to Bangladesh. The route will be Lunglei-Tlabung-Kawrpuchhuah-Bangladesh. It is constructed under the fund of the World Bank.^{*****} The road to Lunglei is a single lane but Tlabung-Kawrpuchhuah will be a two lane highway. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) which is under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India tries to establish and construct new connectivity of good road transport where a village consisting of 250 population should be connected with roads.^{††††} The scheme was started in the year 2000-2001.

b) Railways

The Indian Railways is one of the lengthiest railway systems in the world with 63,000 route KM., roughly 7,000 locomotives, 30,000 passenger coaches, nearly 300,000 wagons, and provide work for approximately 1.6 million staff.^{‡‡‡‡} At present, the railway line is connected to Bairabi^{§§§§§} in Mizoram in the Assam-Mizoram border. As a result, the Mizo people hardly benefit from this. A Railway Out Agency is available in Aizawl for booking and carriage facilities of goods. At present, a train departs from Bairabi at 5:00 to Silchar and comes back at 4:15 PM. The rail carries goods and food grains to Bairabi and are stocked in the Bairabi Godown and Rengkan Godown. From these, they distribute the foodgrains to all parts of Mizoram state.

The North-East Frontier Railway is constructing a new railway line between Bairabi-Sairang near Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. It is a part and parcel of the Northeast Frontier Railway region of the Indian railways. The length of this railway line is to be 51 km and it is estimated to be opened in March 2022.^{*****} The state capital Aizawl will be on the railway map after the completion of the Bairabi-Sairang railway line. A railway line from Sairang to the Bangladesh border center via Kawrpuchhuah is under progress as well.

c) Air Transportation

Air transportation in India made an unassuming commencement in 1911 when the airmail operation started over a slight distance of 10 km between Allahabad and Naini and Indian National Airways was formed in 1933, but the tangible network of air

§§§§Lunglei- a District located in the Southern part of Mizoram.

*****Lalmuankima Henry., *Op Cit*

††††Lalrintluanga R., *Op cit*

‡‡‡‡Dewan K. K. & Mustafa. M. (2004). Management of Modern City Transportation System: A long-term strategy for energy and environment efficient transport administration. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd. P. 160

§§§§§Bairabi- a border town in Assam border

***** Ibid

transport activated only after independence.^{†††††}The construction of an airport at Lengpui which is known as Lengpui Airport was started by Congress Government led by Lalthanhawla and it was completed and inaugurated during MNG Government led by Zoramthanga in the year 1998 by Zoramthanga,. The airport in Mizoram is maintained and controlled by the Aviation Wing, Government of Mizoram which was established in the year 1983, to connect with the outside world and to maintain trade and business with other countries through airways. It plays a significant and important role in the development of the state.

One of the goals of the State Government is to upgrade the Lengpui Airport to international status and some steps have been taken up by the State Government to accomplish the goal. However, in April 2019, Jet Airways stopped its service to Mizoram. Subsequently, there is only one service that connects Mizoram i.e. Air India till October 2019. In October 2019, the Go Air started service between Aizawl-Kolkata and Aizawl-Guwahati. Also, the Government of Mizoram made a deal with the Ministry of Civil Aviation to provide helicopter service within the state of Mizoram. The provision now connects various districts and towns of Mizoram with the capital city, Aizawl.

The Aviation Wing under the Government of Mizoram took several steps to improve the airport facilities in Lengpui Airport. An Isolation Parking Bay was built in Lengpui Airport to park airplanes if an airplane is hijacked. For the security of the runway, a Runway Way End Safety Area (RESA) is an ongoing project. Sometimes undesirable things happen, like landing on the wrong side and sometimes an airplane running uncertainty. To prevent this RESA is undertaken and the work is being implemented under the Aviation Wing with the size of 90m x 120m.^{*****} To develop the airport, navigation and communication equipment are needed to upgrade and develop. Doppler Very High-Frequency Omni Range (DVOR) machine has been established in the village of the Hmunpui mountain peak. If this DVOR is completed the air service which connects Southeast Asian Countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, etc. will use this DVOR. And thus it will be one of the successful steps towards the Indian Act East Policy (AEP). This DVOR is estimated to be run and function by the end of 2019.

The State Government proposed to extend the Terminal building to handle up to 10,000 passengers in a day. This is the requirement for the next 50 years and is estimated to cost at least Rs. 50.00 crores.^{§§§§§} The terminal building design may be altered to give it a fresh and modernized look. Besides, the complete electrical fitting and wiring may be changed to avoid any incident/short circuits, the floor tiles may be replaced with marble/glossy tiles, etc. The State Government proposed to construct a new Fire station with an Air Traffic Control Tower (ATC) on top of it. The existing

^{†††††}H.M. Saxena, *Op.cit*, P.200

^{*****} Ibid

^{§§§§§} Ibid

Apron at Lengpui Airport has 4 parking Bays, suitable for parking of 2 Airbus 320 and 2 ATRs at a time. Given the growth in the Aviation sector, the Apron has to be extended to accommodate at least 10 Airbus 320 simultaneously which would facilitate the operation of more Airlines while catering for VVIP/VIP movements involving 3/4 MI-17 class of helicopters. Proper Airport Perimeter Security Fencing of Standard height 7ft with Y bar with barbed wire is required to be constructed. Perimeter road along the perimeter wall is also required for security patrolling and any emergencies.

Challenges

Connectivity is one of the most important means of globalization. It can be noted that without proper and efficient connectivity, the state is unable to take steps for enlargement and progress. The idea of proper connectivity within the Northeast region and also with her neighboring countries has come through the policy of Look East Policy (now known as the Act East Policy). The evolution of Act East Policy aims to provide better connectivity as it will be the corridor between India and its neighboring countries like Myanmar and beyond. This will help in the exchange of goods and services between (and among) the countries through border trade. But without the development of state connectivity, all the initiatives of Act East policy which are indeed beneficial for the growth of the state will remain stagnant and unpropitious. Unfortunately, the connectivity of the state is in very poor condition.

The state has taken many steps to develop and maintain proper connectivity however there are several challenges. The first and foremost challenge is transportation and connectivity in road transportation. The state has taken up many steps to improve the Highway, however, it has failed. The present National Highway within the state is very diminutive and tiny as compared to other states. One of the reasons is that Mizoram is a state with hilly terrain and landlocked areas, so it may be strenuous to construct a four or six-lane highway. In addition to this, it needs more time and huge money to construct a big highway. On the other hand, the State Government also lacks its highway in various ways. Taking, for instance, the National Highway 306 Buichali-Kawnpui is facing problems in every monsoon period. Sometimes, it is repaired with some blacktop but it will last only a few years. Still, the problems of this highway cannot be solved by any ruling party in Mizoram. Likewise, all the National Highways within the state like NH- 302, NH 102b, NH-44 are in very poor shape although they are very significant for the state.

Similarly, there is a huge challenge in the construction of railway lines. One of the hindrances is that there are difficulties in constructing the line due to the huge terrain as Mizoram is a State with hilly terrain. Another issue in the construction of the railway is the prolonged rainy season and heavy rainfall in the region. Moreover, the route of the railway line in Mizoram lies in the zone of the earthquake-prone areas. The major hindrance that lies here are that land disputes and demand for high compensation. The local people claim their land with high compensation as they desire to create pressure on the government. The construction for the railway line which passes through the local landowner's claims for compensation demanding in terms of lakhs and crore. The Government needs to fulfill its

demand and this led the work not to proceed according to the plan and implementation of the budget of the plan also suffered.

Another challenge of connectivity is air connectivity. The air connectivity in Aizawl does not meet the sufficient demand of people. One of the problems faced by air transportation is the maintenance of air transport because it is very costly to handle by the State Government without the help and aid of the central government. Among the transportations, Air transportation is the most expensive and it needs a huge amount of money in terms of airport repairing, renovation, security, etc. so it needs lots of money as compared to other transportations.

Prospects

A compact and condensed system of transport plays an imperative role in the economic growth of a country. Road transports are considered the basic economic arteries of the country. Therefore, the transport system is observed as the controller of the state economy and provides a very vital link between production and consumption.

India is one of the lengthiest road networks in the world accumulating to about 3.3 million km at present-day.^{*****} It has been recognized all over the world that the development of roads is the basic and important infrastructure for the development of the country and roads not only provide an important link between the rural and suburban areas of the country but also connect the country with other international centers of Trade and Commerce.^{††††††} It means road connectivity is very important to connect with the outside world and to have trade partnerships with foreign countries and other states of India. If the conditions of the road connectivity are weak the policy will just remain for name sake and the state will not benefit much from this Policy. Also, the coming of globalization along with its various policies will not be benefited by the State Government if the conditions of the connectivity are weak. To gain benefit from the coming up of globalization along with the Act East Policy, the State Government needs to upgrade and repair it's National Highway using good quality materials for long-lasting road transports. If the conditions of the National Highway repair and upgrade, there is a golden chance for the growth and development of the state especially in terms of the state economy. Also, traders and travelers can go easily. This will help people to contact and also do business between the neighboring countries. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the smooth running of trade and the development of the state economy is largely dependent on the quality of connectivity via road connectivity.

Regarding the railway connectivity in Mizoram, currently there is no railway line connecting Aizawl. The main objective of the railway line is to transport infrastructure to achieve the projected targets for the growing needs of the economy.^{††††††} The railway system which will connect Aizawl to Sairang is yet to be completed. It is estimated that a new

^{*****}*Ibid.*, P. 192.

^{††††††}Lianzela.(1994). *Economic Development of Mizoram*. Delhi: Spectrum Publications. P. 172.

^{††††††}Saxena H.M., *Op Cit*. P. 186

railway route that will connect Sairang to Hmawngbuchhuah^{§§§§§§§§} on the southern tip of the state in the border of Myanmar near Zochachhuah^{*****} i.e. Highway via Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) which will enter the neighboring country i.e. Sittwe, Myanmar. This railway route is expected to be completed and opened in March 2022⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺ but it seems to be doubtful. If this railway is fully constructed and functioning, both the neighboring countries will benefit in many ways. It will be one of the bulkiest trading centers for Mizoram; this will generate the economy in the future.

In Mizoram, there is only one Airport namely the Lengpui Airport at Lengpui which is about 32.2 kilometers from Aizawl. The Airport is renovating and extending the area by the Aviation Wing. The Lengpui Airport runway is to be extended for the landing of bigger Air Crafts. The night landing facilities in the Airport, the extension of the Terminal building is also under process and the construction of New Air Traffic control integrated with meteorological sectors and Fire stations is also undertaken.

The State Government is planning to transform and upgrade the Lengpui Airport to an international Airport. If the Airport is transformed and upgraded to International Airport, many tourists can come and visit the beautiful places of Mizoram. It will be more convenient for tourists to visit Mizoram. It will lead to the progress and growth of the state tourism department. The growth of the tourism department will generate a huge income and revenue for the state government. Many Mizo youths who are trained properly can be employed as a tourist guide, hotel chiefs, etc. It will also create jobs and opportunities, especially for the youth. Also for the development of the tourism department, having an International Airport is one of the basic needs of the state. If the Airport is also transformed into an international airport, the Act East policy will also flourish in many ways and thus result in gaining benefit through the coming of globalization in Mizoram.

Conclusion

The study found that the state needs to improve its connectivity in terms of aviation, road, and railways for the accomplishment of the so-called ‘Act East policy’. Without the improvement of its connectivity, the policy which is needed for the flourish of trade between India and Southeast Asia will not be in shape; it will be just the name shake. Not only for central India, through these Act East Policy, but Mizoram will also gain many benefits as it will be the corridor for Southeast Asia countries and India. Many routes in terms of aviation, by-roads, and of course railway within Mizoram state will lie in a strategic point for India. Also, the coming up of globalization in the state of Mizoram has brought much development for the state as well as for the people. But development cannot be seen immensely as the connectivity within the state is in very bad shape.

§§§§§§§§Hmawngbuchhuah- It is a village located in the Southern side of Mizoram and it lies under the Lawngtlai District Council

*****Zochachhuah- avillage of situated in the southern side of Mizoram and it is under the Lawngtlai District Council.

+++++, Op cit Hrangtawna

The connectivity particularly the roads are in a bad condition as most of the National Highway is diminutive and miniature as compared to other states National Highway. Most of the National Highways within the state are very diminutive that a big vehicle like Trucks can hardly pass each other at the same time. Not only is the size that matters, but the conditions of the road are also very poor that every year the national Highway needs minor repair. For instance, the National Highway 306 also called the lifeline of Mizoram is in a very bad shape particularly the road between Buichali-Kawnpui needs minor repair in every monsoon period. Many trucks and tankers which supplied the essential commodities for Mizoram stuck in this highway and resulted in scarcity of oil and price rise. The State Government needs to tackle and solve this problem as it is the main hindrance to the growth of the state. The very moment when National Highway 306 faced a problem, it directly affects the normal life of the people. Likewise, the State Government needs to take an expeditious move in terms of constructing the railway line. This development will contribute to the accomplishment and flourish of the so-called 'Act East Policy'. Over and above that, the State Government needs to take the necessary steps to upgrade the Lengpui Airport into an International airport to make it convenient for tourists to visit Mizoram. More tourists in the state will result in generating revenue for the State Government. In short, the study found out that the overall development of the state lies in the hand of the State Government. No doubt, every government is failing in improving its state connectivity and many state governments just developed state connectivity in words but not in practice. So, the State Government needs to tackle the hindrance and solve the solutions not just by words but to take action in reality.
