

## Connectivity: Lifeline of Assam



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The second bridge over the Brahmaputra is part of the East-West corridor, which would connect the North East Region with the rest of the country. At the same time, a high speed highway from Silchar to Srirampur is being constructed in Assam at an investment of Rs 6000 crores. The mighty and sacred river, the Brahmaputra, is the lifeline of the people of Assam. A new bridge over Brahmaputra will serve the people of Assam as well as the States of Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. It will provide a new path towards progress and prosperity. The UPA Government is committed to the rapid development of the North East Region. This project is scheduled to be completed by December 2008. It will reduce the overall travel time and distance between the North East region and rest of India.

### Connectivity for Development

he Central Government is also committed to improving the road connectivity between the North Eastern states as well. The Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for the North East will construct new roads and help improve existing roads. It will connect state capitals, district headquarters and remote areas. In the first phase, it will be covering 1310 km of roads by investing Rs 4618 crore. India needs world class roads and bridges. Roads are the arteries of an economy.

Easy connectivity between different regions, between villages and towns, between farms and markets, will ensure spread of prosperity. The country has set a growth target of 9% to 10% over the next decade. It has achieved a growth rate of about 9% in the last two years and in the near future, the economy has the potential of achieving a growth rate in excess of 10%. The other task that needs to be addressed is to ensure that the fruits of this extremely rapid development is evenly spread among all regions and among all sections of society. For this, one needs to improve the condition of our agriculture, increase the employment in industry, and ensure that the youth get more jobs and farmers get higher incomes.

## **Need to Develop Industries**

his is especially true for the North-Eastern region. The agriculture in the state has to improve a great deal. It needs to have more irrigation. It needs to achieve greater productivity. The North East, and particularly Assam, also needs more industries. The people of Assam are hardworking and skilful. However, lack of industries has affected growth of employment opportunities. And poor connectivity has in itself been a cause of poor industrialization. Bridges and highways are the best way to bridge the connectivity gap and enable rapid industrialization of Assam.

What is true for Assam is true for the rest of India as well. The need is greater investment in roads, ports, telecommunication, airports, railways and power. India has one of the largest road networks in the world and the Government has given highest priority to the development of better quality National Highways and construction of rural roads. The UPA Government has launched Bharat Nirman under which investments are made in rural roads, telephones, safe drinking water and electricity in every village.

Improved road connectivity will help in taking agricultural produce to markets and create new possibilities of employment, and reduce poverty. With this objective in view, UPA Government is investing thousands of crores of Rupees in road construction.

### **Ambitious Programme**

The government is planning to implement an ambitious programme of Rs 2,20,000 crores till 2012 for improving the National Highway network. Several stretches will be improved to 4-lane or 6-lane width across the country. Most of these works will be taken up on a Public Private Partnership basis.

The National Highways Authority of India has awarded contracts for four laning of 600 kms of National Highways in Assam. This is the highest rate of road development in this region since the start of National Highways Development Programme.

Assam has now become a major beneficiary of the road programme. When these road projects are completed they will give a big boost to the industrial and agricultural sectors, to tourism and other service sectors in this region. Projects like this bridge across the mighty Brahmaputra will transform the lives and the economy of the region.

Adaptation from the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh's speech at the laying of the foundation stone for the 2nd Bridge over river Brahmaputra in Guwahati .

(PIB )

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editor

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