

## 14. INITIATIVES TO BOOST TRADE AND COMMERCE IN THE NORTH EASTERN REGION

### Initiatives to boost trade and commerce in the North Eastern Region

- The Government of India continues to accord high priority to the development of trade and exports in the North Eastern Region. An Empowered Committee under the Chairmanship of the Commerce Secretary functions in the Department of Commerce, to monitor and implement initiatives for the North East following the announcement in January, 2000 of a specific set of measures for the development of this region known as "PM's Action Plan for the North-East. The Committee has held six meetings so far and recommendations are being followed-up for implementation.
- Adequate infrastructure being an essential requirement for sustained growth of trade, the Department has been assisting various states for creation of infrastructure under the Assistance to States for Development of Export Infrastructure and other activities (ASIDE) scheme. During 2004-05 an amount of Rs. 36 crore constituting ten percent of the outlay under the scheme has been allocated for the Region.
- Following the announcement made by the Prime Minister in respect of measures for the development of exports from the North Eastern Region in Shillong on January 21-22, 2000, an Export Development Fund (EDF) has also been set up with the objective of using the resources for the development of exports from the region. An Empowered Committee has been set up under the Chairmanship of the Additional Secretary, Infrastructure, Department of Commerce for approving projects to be funded from the Export Development Fund. The funds are released to the Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), which has been nominated as the nodal agency for the Scheme. So far, Rs 20

crore have been released to APEDA including Rs 5 crore released during 2004-05.

Land Custom Stations are gateways for the transit of goods, services and human beings between neighbouring countries. India has 130 notified Land Custom Stations. The Department has been taking steps for the development and improvement of infrastructure at these Stations. The following 11 Stations have been prioritized for development of infrastructure.

S. No.	Land Customs	Station State	Neighbouring Country
1	Agartala	Tripura	Bangladesh
2	Borsorah	Meghalaya	Bangladesh
3	Dawki	Meghalaya	Bangladesh
4	Demagiri	Mizoram	Bangladesh
5	Ghasuapara	Meghalaya	Bangladesh
6	Karimganj Steamer Ghat	Assam	Bangladesh
7	Moreh	Manipur	Myanmar
8	Old Raghana Bazar	Tripura	Bangladesh
9	Srimantapur	Tripura	Bangladesh
10	Sutarkhandi	Assam	Bangladesh
11.	Zokhawthar	Mizoram	Myanmar

It has been decided that requirement of funds for the development of infrastructure at these Land Customs Stations would be met from the central component of ASIDE. M/s. RITES Ltd. has been asked to conduct a study on the development of infrastructure at Borsorah and Agartala Land Customs Stations in the North East.

An Inter-Ministerial Committee for the development of LCSs has been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Additional Secretary (Infrastructure), Department of Commerce with representatives from the Ministry of External Affairs,

Ministries of Home Affairs, Railways, Road Transport and Highways, Telecommunications, Department of Revenue, Reserve Bank of India, Central Warehousing Corporation, National Highways Authority of India, Border Roads Organization and the concerned State Governments. Coordination Committee at each of the LCSs have also been constituted under the Deputy Commissioner of Customs / Assistant Commissioner of Customs for deliberating on local issues connected with day to day functioning of the Station.

- Development of 4 border towns namely Moreh, Sutarkandi, Dawki and Zokhawthar have been given priority. The Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) has conducted a study of the infrastructure facilities required at Moreh (Manipur), Dawki (Meghalaya) and Sutarkandi (Assam) for improvement of their infrastructure. CWC is the appointed agency for the development of Moreh, Dawki and Sutarkandi. Zokhawthar is to be developed by the BRO in cooperation with the State Government of Mizoram.
- Availability and requirement of infrastructure like Roads, Railways, Banking, and Telecommunication facilities at prioritized Land Custom Stations have been assessed. Issues pertaining to particular Land Custom Stations have been taken up with respective departments / agencies like Banking, Telecommunication, and Border Roads Organization, etc. Visits to Land Customs Stations have also been undertaken to get

an on the spot assessment of infrastructure requirements. Matters have been taken up with the Department of Road Transport & Highways and the State Governments for upgrading the approach roads to the prioritized Land Custom Stations to National Highway standards.

- The Department of Commerce had introduced a scheme for providing transport assistance for export of horticulture products from North Eastern Region under the Export Development Fund The Scheme, operated by APEDA, provides for transport assistance to exporters for exporting notified horticulture products. Initially 10 products were identified for transport assistance. Subsequently it was decided to include Bamboo and Cane products from Tripura and Kiwi, Apple and Pineapple from Arunachal Pradesh under the existing scheme. An amount of Rs. 1 crore had been released from ASIDE Scheme to APEDA. However, the scheme did not invoke much response and hence under review. The amount released for this purpose earlier has also been returned by APEDA to the Department of Commerce.
- The following Agri Export Zones have been set up in the North Eastern Region: (a) Tripura- for Pineapples, (b) Sikkim- for Floriculture- Orchids and Cherry Pepper, (c) Sikkim – for ginger, (d) Assam – for fresh & processed ginger.