

Media Conference

On

“Sub-Regional Trans-Boundary Cooperation towards Food Security”

Under the project:

Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio in South Asia

Organised by CUTS International & Funded by DFAT, Australia

With the support from Agartala Press Club

Date: 20 Dec., 2015 / Venue: Agartala PRESS CLUB, Tripura, India

Press Link 1:



AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE DEFICIT ON RISE – CUTS INTERNATIONAL

In Dainik Sambad (the largest circulated Bengali daily in Tripura) (Translated gist of the media article)

<http://www.dainiksambad.net/epapermain.aspx?queryed=133&eddate=12/21/2015>

Agartala, 20 December, 2015: A considerable amount of agri-product demand of Tripura is being met from procurement outside the state leading to higher prices for end consumers. Due to lack of proper transport infrastructure and connectivity, the cost of such procurement is quite high, resulting in high prices for vegetables in the local markets. The issue can be tackled by promoting higher trans-boundary cooperation, wherein agricultural produce can flow in from Bangladesh, lowering the prices for the common person.

The matter was being discussed at a conference organized at the Agartala Press Club on Sunday, 20 December 2015. Prithviraj Nath, Policy Analyst and Head, of CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre, the organisers of the event, said that according to the statistics of Department of Agriculture, Government of Tripura the state procures 1 Lakh metric tonnes of cereal (paddy) every year from outside the state. The total deficit of vegetables in Tripura for the year 2012-2013 was 0.13 lakh metric tonnes and that of potato alone was 1.3 lakh metric tonnes in 2013-14. The organisers expressed concerns that with increasing population this deficit will also be increasing in future, adversely affecting food security.

The workshop stressed that to ensure food security in the state and region, strengthening of transboundary value chains and relationships is required. This will help the common consumers of the state. CUTS shared that their research findings shows that Tripura is already importing a lot from Bangladesh with the import figure standing at INR 357 crores for the past year. This mostly includes stone chips, cement, plastics products and fish. In contrast, trade of agricultural products is rather low. If trans-boundary trade in agricultural produce is

promoted through proper infrastructure development, it will help to lower price and enhance better accessibility to everyday food for the common person. Export to Bangladesh includes seasonal fruits, cardboard, leather, etc. The state has potential to enhance its exports in rubber, betel leaf, bay leaf, etc. The enhancement of trans-boundary trade will positively affect the consumers on both sides of the border. The success story of the recently opened Border Haats at Srinagar and Kamalagar was cited as proof of how higher trans-boundary cooperation and exchange can lead to socio-economic gains on both sides of the border. It was shared that as per Departments of Industries and Commerce, Government of Tripura the haats have done a collective business of around INR 2 crores for the ongoing year. In the backdrop of this recent success of the haats, the organisers invited all relevant stakeholders to strengthen trans-boundary economic and social cooperation. The event was co-organised by Agartala Press Club with support from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia. Satyabrata Chakraborty, President Agartala Press Club, Kalyanjit Singh, Secretary Agartala Press Club and other veteran journalists also exchanged their thoughts regarding this issue. At the conclusion, Sumanta Biswas, Program Co-ordinator, CUTS, thanked everyone for their active participation.

Press Link 2:

MEDIA WORKSHOP

In Tripura Darpan (Translated gist of the media article)

Agartala, 20 December 2015: Tripura has got every possibility of becoming a hub for international trade and

আগরতলা প্রেস ক্লাবে
মিডিয়া ওয়ার্কশপ
নিজস্ব প্রতিনিধি, আগরতলা, ২০
ডিসেম্বর।। ত্রিপুরায় আন্তর্জাতিক
বাণিজ্যের সম্ভাবনা খুবই উজ্জ্বল।
শুধুমাত্র প্রয়োজন সম্ভাবনাময়
দিকগুলি বেশি করে জন সমুখে তুলে
ধরা। দক্ষিণ পূর্ব এশিয়ার বাংলাদেশ
ভূটান ভারত নেপাল এঁ চার দেশ
পরস্পরের সহিত হাতেহাতে রেখে
বাণিজ্য প্রসার লাভের জন্য উদ্যোগ
হয়েছে। যা খুবই শুভ সংকেত।
রবিবার আগরতলা প্রেস ক্লাবে
কাইসের কলকাতা রিসোর্চ
সেন্টারের উদ্যোগে এ প্রেস ক্লাবে
সহায়তায় আয়োজিত এক মিডিয়া
কর্মশালায় একথা জানা পুথভিরাঙ্গ
নাথ। শ্রীনাথ বলেন, আগরতলাকে
যেভাবে উত্তর পূর্বের বাণিজ্যের
ক্ষেত্রে করিডোর করা হয়েছে, তা
আগামীদিন আরো প্রসার হবে।
পাশ্চবর্তী রাষ্ট্র বাংলাদেশের সঙ্গে
ক্রমশই ব্যবসা বাণিজ্যে প্রসার
ঘটছে। বিশেষ করে সীমান্ত হাট এর
একটি অন্যতম স্থান। তবে ইন্দো
বাংলা মোটর আইনে উভয় দেশ
সহমত পোষণ করায় সবচেয়ে বেশি
লাভ হবে ত্রিপুরার মানুষ। তাই
আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যের সম্ভাবনায়
দিকগুলি সাধারণ মানুষের কাছে
পৌঁছে দেওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে সবচেয়ে
বেশি অগ্রণী ভূমিকা নিতে পারে
সংবাদ মাধ্যম।

business. However, it is important to highlight and disseminate the possibility and potential to create a robust public consciousness. Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) sub-region are working together to enhance the trade relations between and amongst them. This was shared by Prithviraj Nath, Policy Analyst, CUTS CRC in a recent press conference last Sunday and he further opined that such developments are very positive for the subregion.

The event was jointly organized by CUTS CRC and Agartala Press Club. Prithviraj supposes that Agartala's role as a corridor for trade with North-East India will grow further in the near future. India and Bangladesh has, in the recent past, taken many pro-active steps to enhance trade. A good example is the presently running Border Hats. The recent progresses of Indo-Bangladesh Motor Vehicle Agreement will bring Tripura much closer to the other Indian states via direct land routes through Bangladesh. Thus, the common people of the state are likely to gain in terms of greater access through both Indian and Bangladeshi markets. However, the media is expected to play a progressive role in creating a much needed public consensus to push for pro-cooperation changes in the sub region.

Press Link 3:

STRENGTHENING TRANS-BOUNDARY INTEGRATION IS AN IMPERATIVE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION, OPINED EXPERTS

In VNewsBD.com (Translated Media Release)

<http://bangla.vnewsbd.com/2015/12/21/%E0%A6%89%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%9F%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%87-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%9F%E0%A7%8B/>

Agartala, 20 December, 2015: The South Asian countries including India and Bangladesh should be aiming to enhance and strengthen their trade relations which in turn can help the common people of this region. The recent signing of the Motor Vehicle Agreement between the sub-region of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) one of the positive developments in the region. The positive political will of India and Bangladesh is very apparent from the fact that as many as 22 agreements, MoUs and similar documents were signed between the two nations during the last visit of Mr. Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister in his last Dhaka visit. These issues were being shared by Prithviraj Nath, Policy analyst and Head, CUTS Calcutta Resource Center. The conference was jointly organized by CUTS CRC and Agartala Press Club on Sunday, 20 December 2015. Look East to Act East. The clear intension is to build up a more integrated relationship in terms of socio-economic development through the channel of international trade and business. CUTS experts think it is the right time to promote Indo-Bangladesh relationship and integration. Prithviraj further cited the successes of the recently started border hats at Srinagar (operative from January 2015) and Kamalasagar (operative from June 2015) along the India- Bangladesh borders and also added the recent cross-border agreements like the one between Bureau of Indian standard (BIS) and Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI) for standard related cooperation. The MoU allowing the usage of Chittagong and Mongla Ports and the recent positive developments in terms of transit will expectedly fetch the North Eastern region of India with greater benefits amongst other things. CUTS also shared that Tripura is already importing a lot from Bangladesh, which was to the tune of INR 357 crores for the past year and there remains ample opportunity for further trade. Amongst other agricultural produce, potato is one of the important crops imported from Bangladesh, leading to consumer gains. The organizers also pointed out the role of media in creating a much needed public consensus to push for pro-cooperation changes in the sub region. Satyabrata Charkaborty, President Agartala Press Club, Kalyanjit Singh, Secretary Agartala Press Club and Sumanta Biswas, Project coordinator, CUTS CRC were amongst the participants present in the occasion. The house stressed the importance of a strong and better relationship between India and Bangladesh.

Press Link 4:

In Tripura InfoWay

<http://www.tripurainfoway.com/news-details/TN/43708/cuts-to-discuss-on-the-issues-of-india-ndash-bangladesh-trade-with-focus-on-tripura.html>
<http://tripurainfoway.com/news-details/NIS/43947/cuts-organises-media-conference-at-press-club-tiwn-pic-dec-20.html>

12/22/2015

TRIPURAINFOWAY : Tripura's Latest News, Views &

10: 03: 05 A.M. Tuesday, 22-12-2015



Home | News | Business | Travel | Tripura | Students | Lifestyle | Nature | Archive

Tripura News

Home > Tripura News

CUTS to discuss on the issues of Indo-Bangla trade with focus on Tripura

TIWN



PHOTO : TIWN

AGARTALA, Dec 17 (TIWN): With aim to discuss about the various prospects and issues of India – Bangladesh trade with focus on Tripura, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) to hold a media conference on December 20 at Agartala Press Club.

On the half day Media Conference scheduled to be organizing on December 20, the organization is going to discuss various prospects and issues of India – Bangladesh trade with focus on Tripura. Besides, they will also discuss on media to facilitate trade led development.

CUTS began its journey in the year 1983 with the initiatives of the rural development communication namely Gram Gadar. It is published regularly and reaches every nook and corner of Rajasthan including the remote villages. CUTS has expanded its scope for the consumer protection work in India and interventions to subjects, such as good governance and Social accountability, trade and development, economic and business regulation and many others. The organization's vision is 'consumers sovereignty'. CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC) was established in New Delhi in 2008 with the aim of offering research, educational and training programmes on competition policy and law and sector regularity laws.

12/22/2015

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10: 01: 23 A.M. Tuesday, 22-12-2015



Home | News | Business | Travel | Tripura | Students | Lifestyle | Nature | Archive

Home >

CUTS organises media conference at press club. TIWN Pic Dec 20

TIWN



PHOTO : TIWN

CUTS organises media conference at press club. TIWN Pic Dec 20

Press Link 5:

In Tripura Observer:

MONDAY, 21ST DECEMBER 2015 TRIPURA OBSERVER

Higher trans-boundary cooperation in Eastern South Asia region

Agartala, 20 December, 2015: Prithviraj Nath, Policy Analyst and Head, CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre, said that the time to push for better trans-boundary cooperation is just right for Eastern South Asia given the positive political will in the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) sub-region at present. Nath was speaking at a Media Workshop organised by CUTS International in partnership with Agartala Press Club, at Agartala, Tripura on 20 December 2015. Satyabrata Chakraborty, President, Agartala Press Club, welcomed the initiative and said the event is timely and important.

The event aimed to create media awareness on the recent developments in trans-boundary cooperation in the BBIN Sub-region and the opportunities for North East India in general and Tripura in particular. This workshop was organised as part of CUTS's advocacy efforts to promote trans-boundary cooperation on food, water and energy under a work programme titled the South Asia Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP) that is supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT),

Imperative for development in state

Government of Australia. The event highlighted the positive developments in the BBIN sub-region citing India's shift from "Look East" to "Act East" as one of the most important policy shifts in the recent times that contributed towards this positive impetus to sub-regional integration agenda. Prithviraj Nath shared that within the sub-region, India-Bangladesh cooperation has been progressing particularly well and has gone from strength to strength. As many as 22 agreements, MoUs and protocols were agreed and signed during Indian Prime Minister's visit to Dhaka in June 2015.

These include Protocol for Exchange of Instrument of Ratification for Land Boundary Agreement, Agreement on Coastal Shipping, Agreement on Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala Bus Service and its Protocol, Protocol on Inland Waterways Transit and Trade, MoU on Use of Chittagong and Mongla Ports for Movement of Goods to and from India, Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) and Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI), to name a few. In addition there have been positive talks between India-Bangladesh towards furthering the already existing energy cooperation. The BBIN sub-region also inked a Motor Vehicle Agreement amongst the four nations recently and there has been a lot of thrust on its implementation from all member countries.

CUTS's ongoing and long term research indicates that one of the most important take-away from this sub-regional trans-boundary cooperation discourse from India's perspective is the possible impact on its North Eastern states. For a very long time, the North Eastern States of India lived a life of a land-locked territory with plummeting incomes, livelihood options and development index.

The North East Indian states, including Tripura, are expected to gain majorly from higher trans-boundary cooperation in the sub-region via gaining access to alternate and much shorter land routes to the rest of India through Bangladesh, access to the sea ports of Mongla and Chittagong, access to bigger and better markets from across the sub-region, and also by becoming a hub for the enhanced economic activities that such a move is likely to generate. More specifically, Tripura, which shares roughly 84 percent of its border with Bangladesh, is particularly poised to gain through better access to Bangladeshi markets and vice versa.

Tripura's relationship with Bangladesh is aptly reflected by its high import trade with the country that stands at INR 357 crores, which mostly includes stone chips, cement, plastics products and fish. The state can gain further from import of other agricultural and allied products. Export to Bangladesh includes seasonal fruits, cardboard, leather, etc.

The state has potential to enhance its exports in rubber, betel leaf, bay leaf, etc. Given the similarities that Tripura shares with Bangladesh in terms of climate, culture, language and most importantly food habits, better agricultural (both inputs and outputs) value chains across the sub-region and specifically with Bangladesh will not only en-

sure enhanced food security but also lead to better market access by producers and consumers on both sides of the borders. As a proof of this, one can cite the wonderful initiative by the state in the form of two Border Haats with Bangladesh, operating at Srinagar and Kamalagar respectively. As per data available with Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Tripura, collective business at the border haats have crossed INR 2 crores so far for the current year. CUTS's study also revealed the positive gains and higher availability of everyday products for the border communities from the haats.

The haats stand as live examples of how trans-boundary cooperation can lead to immediate economic gains, higher access and better people-to-people connect.

To conclude, the role of Media in creating consensus on these issues was highlighted. The house agreed that state, national and regional media needs to take proactive steps to this end and engage in the much needed public and political discourses on these issues so as to push for pro-people and pro-cooperation changes in the region.