

BANGLADESH-BHUTAN-INDIA-NEPAL MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE SUB-REGION (M-CONNECT)



Joining Dots • Connecting People • Shared Prosperity

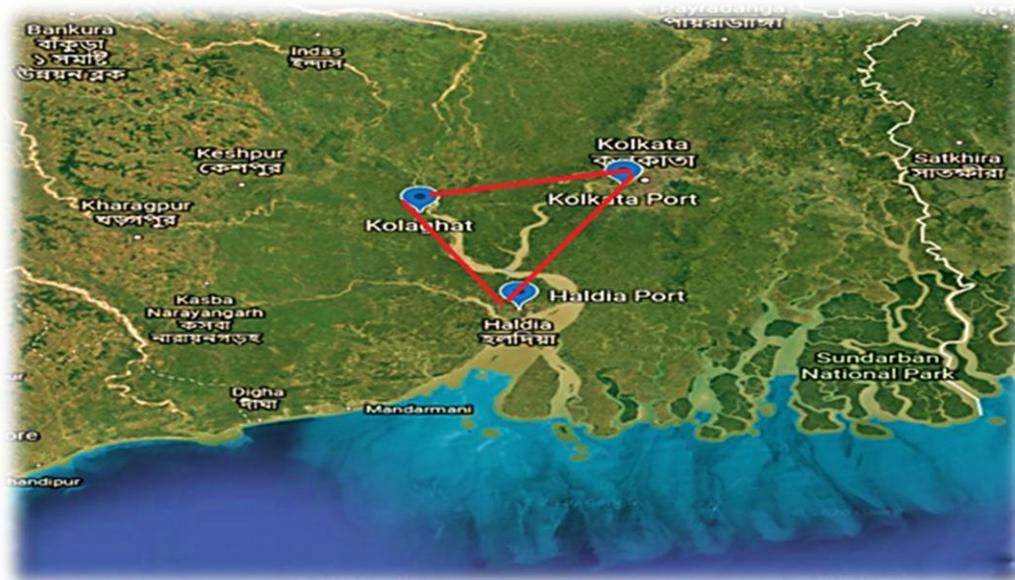
Field Diary Kolkata-Haldia-Kolaghat Triangle

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About the Field Visit

Under the project entitled '[Enabling a political economy discourse over multimodal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region \(M-Connect\)](#)', a team from [CUTS International](#), comprising Jithin Sabu, Srijata Deb and Bijaya Roy, visited Kolkata, Haldia and Kolaghat in West Bengal. The purpose of the visit was to assess and investigate the infrastructure, trade logistics and to do stakeholder consultations for exploring ways and means of encouraging and promoting multimodal connectivity among the BBIN countries. Major observations and experiences of the CUTS' team during the visit are summarised below.



Visited Locations

Kolkata Days



A view of Kolkata city

The CUTS team landed at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International airport, Kolkata, for a week-long field visit in the Southern region of West Bengal. It was night when the team reached Kolkata and the visual of the 'City of Joy' was very beautiful with all the lights and glow.

The accommodation was arranged in a hotel near Ballygunge. It was very close to the famous Victoria Memorial Museum, which is dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria. The erstwhile capital of British India, Kolkata, is now a large metropolitan city, where one can see the hand-drawn rickshaws and the underground metro hand-in-hand. Both extremities of life are visible in Kolkata, the slums and the multi-floored glass buildings. The wind in Kolkata was revealing its rich heritage of festivals, music, architecture, antiques, soccer matches and a culture that is long associated with the great Hooghly (Bhagirathi) river.



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata

On the first day, the team had discussions with a Professor of Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) and a retired General Manager of the Haldia Port. Both were possessing extensive knowledge and hands-on experience in the logistics and connectivity sector. The discussions were very insightful and helped the team to understand the bottlenecks existing in the sector.

They provided us with new ideas such as developing smaller integrated freight stations, where all types and sizes of cargoes are consolidated and segregated for various modes of transport. The importance of having a proper grievance redressal mechanism and uniform protocol for roads across all BBIN countries were discussed.

The team also got to know more about the potential of developing inland waterways and the practical difficulties of integrating them with other modes of transport. If the basic requirements such as desired width and depth in navigational channels, safe

navigational aids for day and night, terminals for berthing of vessels, facilities for loading/unloading of cargo and providing an interface with road and rail are made in all the potential inland water terminals, then it will bring in a revolution by integrating inland waterways in the logistics network of the sub-region which will help in decarbonisation and reduction of logistics cost.

The story of Kolkata Port



View from the entry to Kolkata Port Dock Complex

The team visited the riverine port of Kolkata on the banks of the Hooghly river. It reached the dock complex and had discussions with the Deputy Traffic Manager of the Port, Customs officials of India and Nepal and some truck drivers. It may be noted that this port faces competition from Vizag Port in Andhra Pradesh which is a deep seaport, that has a natural advantage over riverine ports.

It was a delighting news to hear from various stakeholders that the port is operating paperless for almost 90 percent of the activities. There is not much problem with the internet or electricity in the Kolkata port complex, though disruptions occur occasionally. Even though the representation of women staff is very low in this port, gender-friendly infrastructure, such as dedicated washrooms for women, etc., is available.

In this port, the team saw refrigerated containers, which are used to transport perishable cargo. The port is expected to be fully mechanised by 2024.



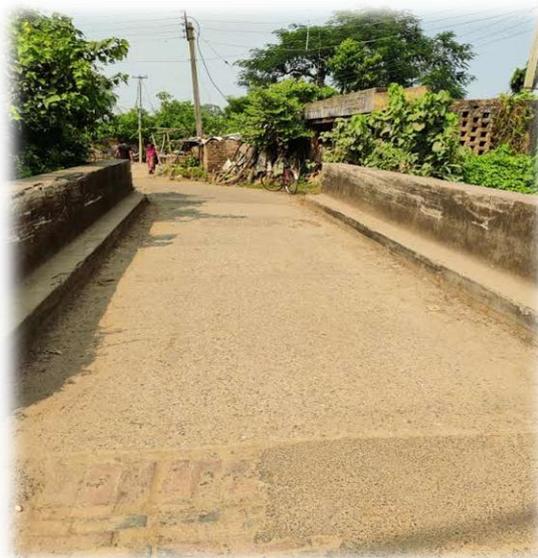
Refrigerated containers in Kolkata Port

The condition of the approach road to this port was very pathetic, with a lot of potholes and pits. Rapid growth in container handling at Kolkata port over the past few years has increased the road traffic in the area and results in traffic jams at times. The port has both road and rail connectivity. The team noticed that the lock-gates of Netaji Subhas Dock and Kidderpore Dock are very old and hence need upgradation.

Kolaghat and Haldia: Port of Call and Industrial City

After the Kolkata port visit, the team started the journey to Kolaghat and Haldia which are 72km and 120km approximately away from Kolkata. The team crossed the Howrah Bridge, which is a 2300-foot cantilever road bridge. Kolaghat is on the way to Haldia from Kolkata if one takes the NH 16 and NH 116 to reach Haldia. The road to Haldia from Kolkata was very good and without any congestions. On the way, the team saw many container trucks on the road, which reminded them of moving to an industrial port city, which is famous for many petrochemicals.

The first destination was Kolaghat on the banks of the Rupnarayan River, which is declared as a port of call¹ in the second addendum to India-Bangladesh Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT). The team travelled to the location which is proposed for the construction of the port infrastructure. The roads and bridges on the way to the location from NH were very narrow and the driver used all his skill to take the team to the location through the narrow roads and bridges.



A narrow bridge on the road to the location of Kolaghat port



Identified location for the port construction at Kolaghat

The Kolaghat port is not operational yet and the land for developing infrastructure is identified. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has given 14.45 crore to the Government of West Bengal to develop an approach road (3-3.5km) from Kolaghat terminal to National Highway, which is expected to start soon. Once the Kolaghat jetty becomes operational, fly ash generated in the Kolaghat thermal power station will be exported to Bangladesh through this port. Apart from fly ash, gypsum, cement and steel are also targeted.

¹<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/bangladesh-india-add-5-more-ports-of-call/1840902>

The residents of the area with whom the team interacted are eagerly waiting for the port to become operational so that they will get more employment opportunities. Even though they are not part of any meetings organised to discuss the development plan of Kolaghat, they are aware of the developments through the coverage in the local newspaper.

Haldia Port: Linkages through waterways, roadways and railways



Deposits of coal in Haldia

was the sight of coal dumped on open spaces, which was polluting the entire surrounding.

Haldia dock complex is linked with the rest of the country through multiple modes: national waterways, roadways and railways. Major commodities handled by the port are dry bulk cargo (limestone, coal, etc.) and liquid cargo (oil) which are also handled in containers. The port does not handle

perishable commodities. The team walked through the entire berths in the Haldia dock complex and also visited the lock-gate through which the barges/vessels enter the dock. This lock-gate makes the port of Haldia congested as it depends on the tide timings to get opened, which makes the vessels sometimes wait in the Sagar or Sandhead for 30 days to get the call from the port. Also, being a riverine port, the draft is low: 7.8-8 metres. Given this draft, a full load vessel cannot enter the Haldia dock and vessels with cargo load between 32000 to 39000 tonnes can only enter the dock.



A vessel moving to the lock gate when it got the call from port

Seeing fly ash jetties



A fly ash jetty in Haldia

After the Haldia dock visit, the team moved to see the IWAI jetties which are used to load fly ash from the road-borne vehicles. These jetties were connected to pipelines and compressors for the direct loading of fly ash. The team saw Bangladeshi vessels waiting in the jetties to be loaded. Once the Kolaghat port becomes operational, the fly ash will be directly loaded onto the vessels from there.

A third multi-modal terminal on the anvil

The team then moved to see the location where the construction work for a multi-modal terminal is currently undergoing. IWAI has acquired a 61-acre land in Haldia to construct a multimodal terminal, especially for inland vessels. The construction work is going on at the site at full pace and it is expected to be over by early 2021. It is near the



Bangladeshi vessels in the jetty

Haldia dock. This is the third multi-modal terminal in the National Waterway 1, after Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Sahibganj in Jharkhand. The Haldia multi-modal terminal

will play a crucial role in the growth of National Waterways 1 and 2 as it can connect the two major waterways and acts as the gateway for the protocol route of Bangladesh.



Construction work of Multi-modal terminal at Haldia

The terminal's cargo handling capacity will be 3.18 million tonnes per annum and it will be used to transport coal, fly ash, chemicals, petroleum and gas, construction

materials, fertilisers, edible oils, vegetable oils, gypsum, etc. The multi-modal terminal will have four berths, terminal capacity will be 3.07 million tonnes per annum and the berth length will be 465m. The terminal will have facilities including berthing space for four vessels, stockyard for storing, belt conveyor system with fixed hoppers, barge loader, shore protection works, roads, ramps, parking area and other buildings.

CUTS team is very thankful to the estate surveyor of Haldia port, who took the team to all the locations in the port complex and explained things comprehensively.

Post the site visits, the team met with the Deputy Manager, Railways, Haldia dock complex. After a very informative discussion with the manager, the team started its return journey from Haldia.



Sunset through the long fields, from a site in Haldia

The site of the sunset through the long fields in Haldia was a memorable adios for the team, until the next visit. The sites revealed that infrastructural development in India is going at a good pace, which will help it to take a top position in the world economy.

With the support of



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