

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



Joining Dots • Connecting People • Shared Prosperity

## Field Diary Glimpses of National and Cross-border Connectivity Linkages from New Delhi

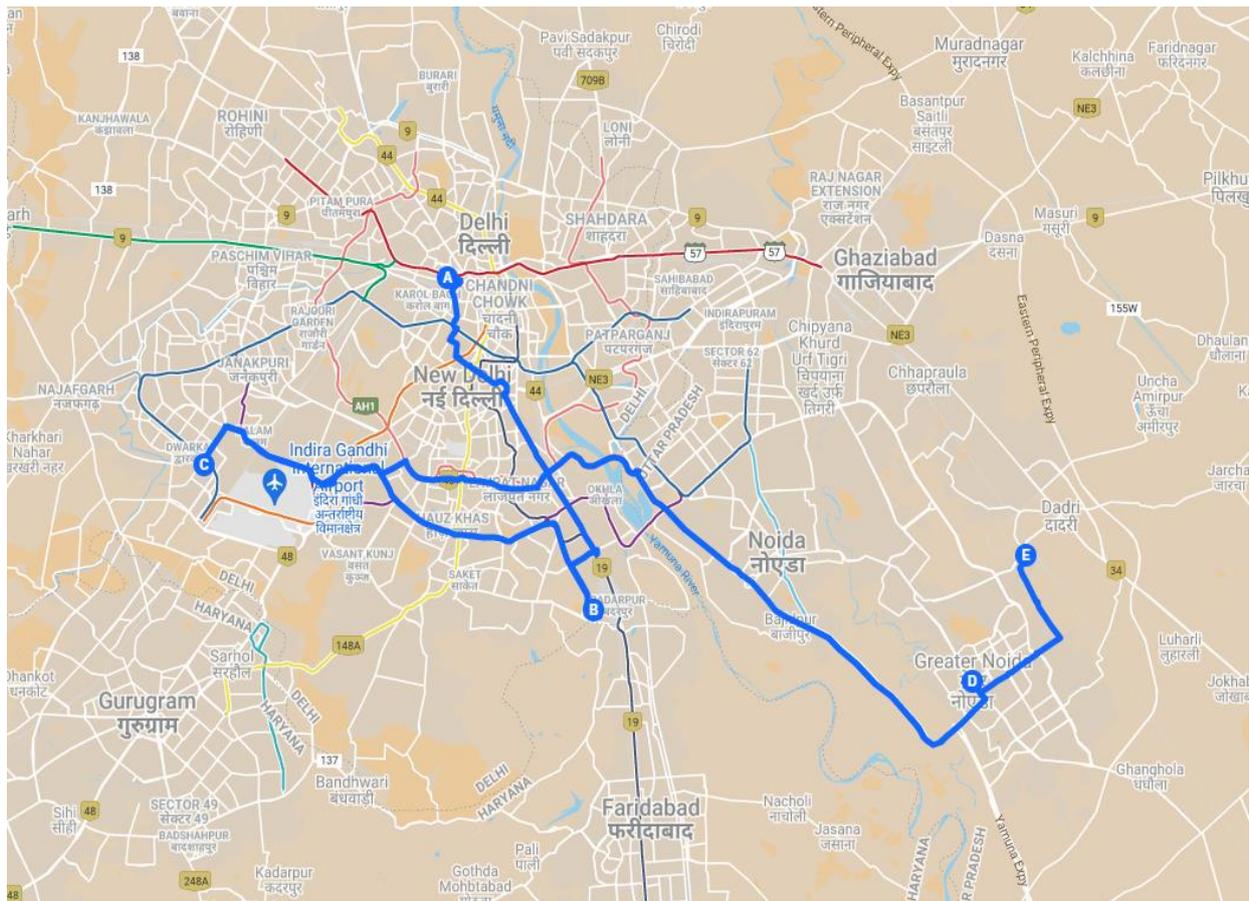
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### About the Field Visit

Under the project entitled '[Enabling a political economy discourse for multimodal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region \(M-Connect\)](#),' a team from [CUTS International](#) comprising Deepmala Ghosh and Srijata Deb visited Delhi-NCR from March 26-April 02, 2021. The purpose of the visit was to examine the trade and transit prospects of the capital state of India in providing seamless and inter-modal connectivity in the country with linkages to the BBIN sub-region. In particular, trade logistics, trade infrastructure, related policy frameworks, and stakeholders' participation for improving livelihood and private sector engagement opportunities to promote multimodal connectivity in the sub-region were assessed.

The locations visited were Noida Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Dadri and Tuglakabad Inland Container Depot, Container Corporation (CONCOR) corporate office and Asian Institute of Transport Development. In addition to visiting the locations as mentioned above to capture the granular field aspects, the team also interacted with several academic experts and policy commentators from leading think tanks and development organisations.



*Map of the places visited*

## Delhi-National Capital Region:<sup>1</sup> India's Connectivity Hub

India's role and significance in driving trade and transit to facilitate the movement of goods and people for the BBIN sub-region are unparalleled. New Delhi, in particular, offers insight into initiatives that can potentially catalyse the development of the transportation and logistics landscape in the sub-region. Furthermore, being home to the country's leading development organisations, civil societies and non-profits, the state has a stellar potential in guiding multimodal connectivity initiatives in the sub-region.

## Findings from the Field

The state is gradually emerging as a transportation hub, with the availability of multiple modes of connectivity. The Central and state governments have taken several steps to hone the national capital's connectivity prospects further. This is mainly exhibited through the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor<sup>2</sup> (DMIC) and the significant role that Delhi plays in the western dedicated freight corridor.

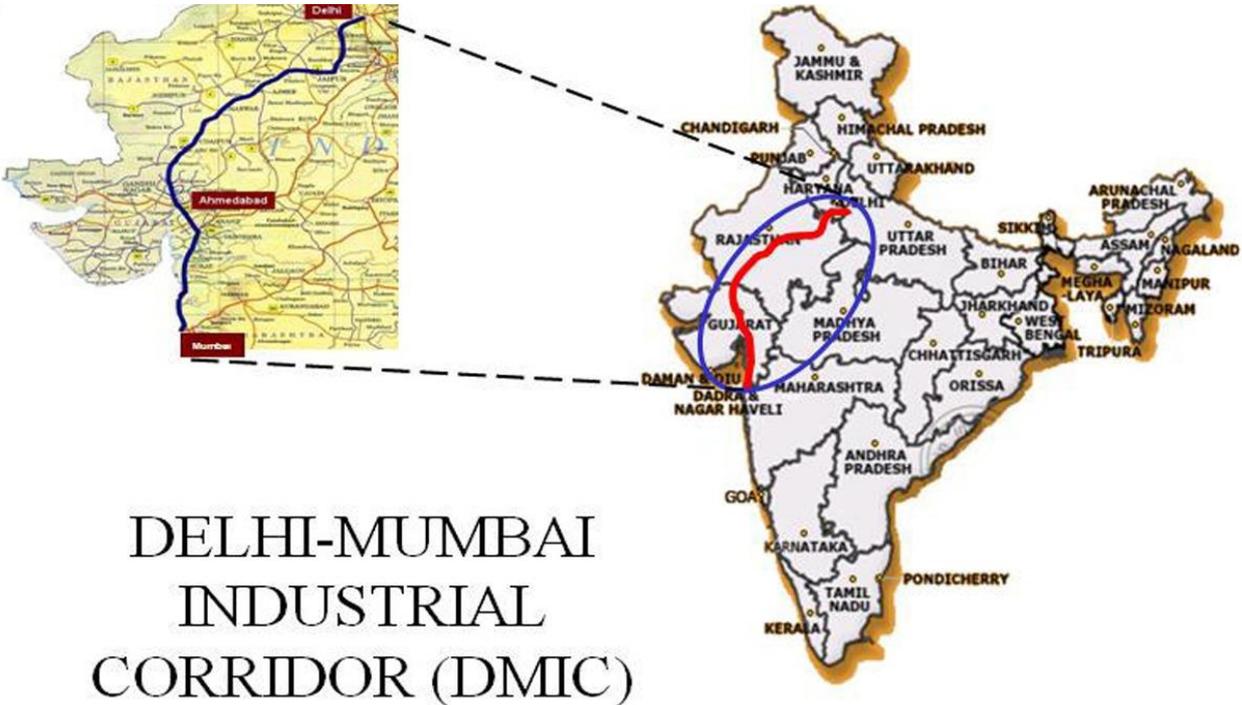
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/delhi/delhi-ncr-map.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gidb.org/newprojectdmic>

Greater Noida is shaping up as one of India's most innovative city in addition to the National Capital Region's (NCR's) modern urban development centre. Additionally, the town is emerging as a modern model of far-sighted urban planning with a focus on connectivity as a driver of economic activity. Thus, Greater Noida is getting national-level attention.

The team visited Dadri and Noida SEZs.

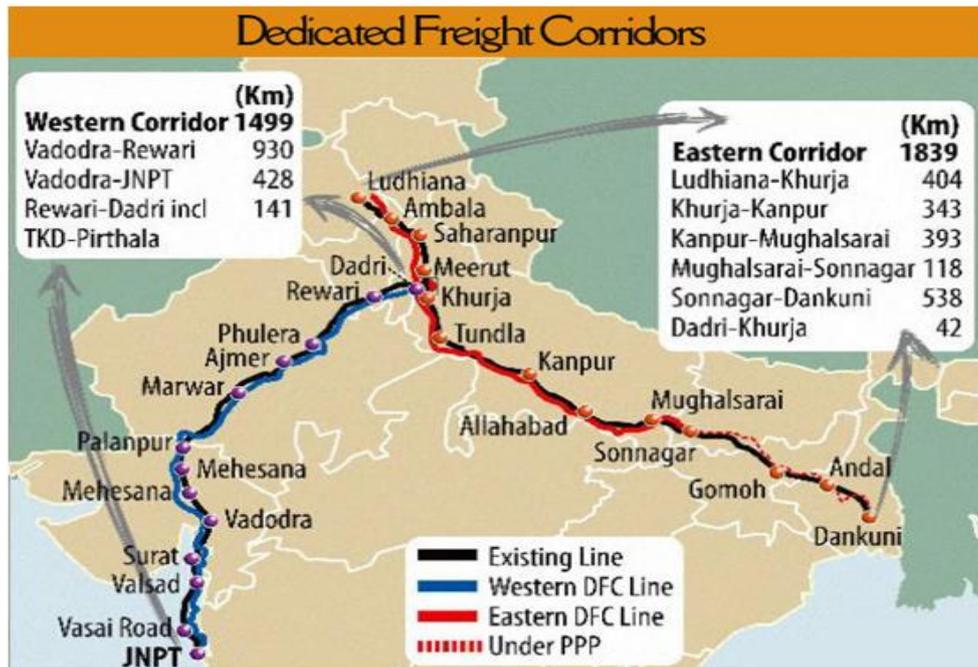
Dadri, in particular, is a city located in the Gautam Budh Nagar sub-urban district. The city acts as an intersection point of the Western- and Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridors. Additionally, it is also the gateway to the DMIC.



Source Image : <http://dholarasir.com>

*The Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor*

Interactions with various stakeholders during the field visits in Noida, drew close attention to the Dadri-Noida and Ghaziabad belt.



**Map of the Dedicated Freight Corridors**

It was highlighted that the belt mentioned above, presently, comprises some of the largest companies in India. These companies are extensively involved in manufacturing auto parts, engineering products, consumers, manufacturing of food processing & beverages (sugar & alcohol), textile, chemicals, steel, fabricated metal products, sports goods, and electronics. In addition to this, the belt will serve as a central IT hub of India with a significant number of software exports. Thus, when completed, the belt will result in reduction of commuting challenges for the workforce and the potential emergence of industrial zones and affordable workers housing located near the industrial zones, in addition to the enhanced access to mass transit corridors.

## Operations in Tuglakabad ICD and Back-end Corporate Office

Inland Container Depot (ICD), Tuglakabad, is situated on the southeast of Delhi. It is an important terminal of the CONCOR and is pivotal in freight containerisation in the country. Tuglakabad ICD is the country's most extensive Electronic Data Exchange (EDI)<sup>3</sup> enabled dry port.

The ICD runs daily train services to several gateway ports.<sup>4</sup> It is also conveniently located, having an approach to major roads in Delhi connecting all National Highways, including NH-2 and NH-48, leading out of the state.

The establishment has adequate equipment and facilities for almost all tiers of its workforce.

<sup>3</sup> For more details on EDI mechanisms: <https://www.shippingandfreightresource.com/what-is-edi-and-what-is-the-importance-of-edi-in-current-day-shipping/>

<sup>4</sup> These include: Mudra port, Gujarat port, Vizag port and Navasheva port.

The administrative building is 8000 sqm of the established area, which includes housing offices of Container Corporation (CONCOR), Customs, Bank, ATMs, and Canteen.

The premise is well equipped with 24/7 electricity, CCTV cameras and an uninterrupted internet facility for fully automatic document clearances. In addition to this, Customs House Agents (CHAs) have a fully air-conditioned lounge and touch screen kiosks for container inquiries.

Infrastructure-wise, the ICD is optimal due to its availability of all required infrastructure and its efficient operations. These include separate import and export warehouses, dedicated open area for Less than Container Load (LCL)<sup>5</sup> export cargo, loaded Twenty-unit Equivalent Unit(s)<sup>6</sup> and empty TEUs, computerised weighbridges, trailers for internal shifting and sling crane and forklifts for cargo handling.



**CONCOR Container at Tughlakabad**



**CONCOR Bhawan**

<sup>5</sup> Less than Container Load (LCL) is handy when the exporter doesn't have to book an entire container because the size of the cargo doesn't demand that much space. Smaller shipments that need to be sent economically and are less time-sensitive are sent on an LCL container.

<sup>6</sup> A TEU or Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit is an exact unit used to measure cargo capacity for container ships and container terminals.

The team was told that several innovative approaches had been adopted in the establishment at Tuglakabad ICD for automated, seamless and harmonised operations. For instance, the facility of e-filing of documents has been recently instated. In addition to this, the Electronic Clearing System (ECS) for payment of dues or refund and SMS facility for tracking of the container has also been started.

### **A Truck Driver in Noida: A Case Profile**

The team’s visit to Noida SEZ and Customs office also led to interactions with drivers.

Drivers, the team interacted with, said that they do not transcend national borders but highlighted that they have to wait at the loading/unloading shed till they are assigned a particular cargo to be dropped off at destination. This process usually takes more than a day.

In view of that, lack of accommodation and food facilities or even washrooms for these individuals create inconvenience. For example, drivers have no choice but to reside in their vehicles till the assigned cargo is loaded onto their vehicles. For longer delays, they put makeshift accommodation near their vehicles and cook for themselves inside or alongside their vehicles.



***In Conversation with Truck Driver in Noida***

It was highlighted that a driver’s monthly income includes food and accommodation allowances and is insufficient to support a family.



***Noida Special Economic Zone***

## Excerpts from Academician's Comments

In conversations with various academicians, policy commentators and subject experts, the team came across various insights. First and foremost, it was highlighted that current policies have focussed on improving transshipment<sup>7</sup> at the border. The opinions of the respondents underlined that such interventions only undermine the purpose of improved regional connectivity. It was explained that loading/unloading of cargo is an archaic practice and should be scrapped off.

However, on the contrary, it was also expressed that a large chunk of the locally residing communities depends on their livelihood practices. They stressed that communities' dependence on transshipment practices should be reduced for long-term trade and welfare gains.

In view of that and to ensure livelihood generation and community development at border points, the adoption of twin town models, as being followed in Maesot (at Myanmar-Thailand border) and the Myanmar-China border (Muse-Ruili) can be pondered over. These establishments can be defined as two urban centres located across the international border and are connected through a comprehensive transport system.

These twin cities foster cross-border value chains and promote sustainable development across shared borders by addressing common cross-border challenges through active socio-economic cooperation and integration. If developed with proper mechanisms, these cities will serve as an important node for border trade and emerge as an independent township.

Such implementation of twin SEZs at both sides of the border will promote synergic growth through fluid employment and further enhance regional connectivity, particularly for the BBIN countries.

In addition to this, the discussions pointed out that to make multimodal connectivity efficient, understanding the usefulness and effectiveness of different modes of transport is vital, and therefore should be studied. This study should include what type of traffic and commodities can be transported through which mode of transport. We need to consider traffic flows, cost, infrastructure requirements, among other such indicators.

Knowing that BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) is a significant component that can further catalyse multimodal connectivity in the sub-region, the academic experts suggested the need to build confidence measures through civil societies' and people-to-people contact. Such linkages can be established through meetings, dialogues and training sessions that address the apprehensions of the concerned stakeholders.

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<sup>7</sup> A transshipment is when cargo or a container is moved from one vessel to another while in transit to its final destination. Transshipped containers count twice in the port performance because waterside cranes handle them for unloading from arriving vessel and then loading onto departing vessel.

Talking about women's participation in trade procedures and practices, the discussion pointed out that improving trade infrastructure to encourage more women to be involved should be contemplated over. However, to make trade gender inclusive, there is a need to attack the problem from all sides. Gender inclusivity is a multifaceted problem and cannot be solved by just focussing on improving trade infrastructure.

## Way Forward

The team left the capital to further the discourse of streamlining the developments and focussing on capacity-building aspects. Also, it will further the project's goal of resilient interdependency and synergies for connectivity between India and other member countries of the sub-region.

