

Geo-Strategic Importance of the North East Region in the Security of India



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Abstract

The region of Northeast is true frontier region located in corner of Indian Union with natural frontiers on the three sides. The strategic importance of the region emanates from its location in close proximity to the sensitive and highly porous frontiers it shares with other countries of the world. This part of India has immense geo-political and geo-strategic importance due to international frontier with china, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal. One of the characteristic features of this region is that it shares just two percent of border with the mainland of the country and more than 98 percent is linked with international border of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal.

Keywords:

Introduction

The region of Northeast is of great importance due to its geographical location. Though landlocked, the region of Northeast is strategically important owing to its location in close proximity to the region of Southeast Asia. It not only occupies a central position in Eastern South Asia, bordering with all other countries and states, but is also a bridge for connecting the subcontinent with East and Southeast Asia. It is strategically located at the centre of three giant markets of China, ASEAN and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region. Lying at the cross roads of South, East and Southeast Asia, the region is geographically and culturally remote from the mainland India.

The region is virtually cut off from the rest of the country. This geographical remoteness could have caused a sense of separateness from the mainland. The Northeast region share just two per cent of its border with the mainland India, while sharing ninety-eight per cent with the international border with countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal. The state of Arunachal Pradesh is surrounded on three sides by Bhutan to the west, China and Myanmar to the north and east respectively. While the state of Assam shares international border with Bangladesh and Bhutan. Manipur is surrounded by Myanmar in the east whereas Meghalaya shares international border with Bangladesh. The state of Mizoram is surrounded on the east and south by China and Myanmar respectively; and on the west by Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. While the state of Nagaland share border with Myanmar and Tripura is surrounded on all sides by Bangladesh, except a narrow neck in the north east. The state of Sikkim shares border with Nepal to the east. This is the region through which the Trans Asian highway will pass through. Given its geographic position, the richness of resources and the increasing focus on engaging with the east, the region could very well become the new growth engine for the country.

Aim of the Study

The topic entitled "Geo-Strategic Importance of the North East Region in the Security of India" to Elise the cruiser role of North-East region could play in the bridging and cementing the strategic partnership between in the Indian South east

NER Related To International Border with State Wise -Versa

Source: Ministry of Development of NER (MDoNER) NE States	Bangladesh	Bhutan	China	Myanmar	Nepal	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	0	217	1,080	520	0	1,817
Assam	263	267	0	0	0	530
Manipur	0	0	0	398	0	398
Meghalaya	443	0	0	0	0	443
Mizoram	318	0	0	510	0	828
Nagaland	0	0	0	215	0	215
Sikkim	0	32	220	0	97.80	350
Tripura	856	0	0	0	0	856
Total	1,880	516	1,300	1,643	98	5,437

The North East region located in the easternmost part of India in close proximity to Southeast Asia is one of the most geographically varied regions in our country. NER is critically located for it holds the key to India's economic integration efforts with its neighbours in South and South East Asia. Assam the largest among the eight northeast states occupies the blooming lowlands of the Brahmaputra Valley. Arunachal Pradesh occupies the densely forested but thinly populated foothills of the Himalayas; while Meghalaya, with its pine-clad hills and lakes, is known for being one of the wettest regions of the world. Manipur is known as the 'land of jewels' and is famous for the presence of 'Brow antlered Deer' and 'Siroy Lily'. Mizoram and Tripura are famous for its green valleys and lush hills with a variety of flora and fauna.

There are variations in the density of population which varies from 13 per sq. km. in Arunachal Pradesh to 340 per sq. km. in Assam. With the exception of Assam, all other States of the region have predominantly hilly terrain which is inhabited by an overwhelming proportion of tribal population ranging from 19.3 percent in Assam to 94.5 percent in Mizoram. The literacy rate of the North East region is 79.64 per cent, which is higher than the national average of 71.04 percent. According to 2016-17, 26.86 per cent of population in NER is living below the poverty line, making it the most backward region of India. The region is characterized by high dependence on agriculture, low levels of modern input use, traditional farming techniques, lack of farm mechanization, subsistence farming, low level of productivity, poor infrastructure, etc. While the region accounts for 3.4 per cent of the agricultural land of the country, it contributes only 2.8 per cent to total agricultural production, underscoring the low productivity of the region's agricultural sector.

When we see and identify the world's Bio-diversity then we see that in the era of NER the species-rich tropical rain forests, the region supports diverse flora and fauna and several crop species. The NER's forest cover constitutes 52 percent of its total geographical area. Accordingly, the availability of arable land in the region is limited. The region has a very high potential to generate hydropower, i.e., about 80 percent of the total hydropower potential in the country. The richness of region in terms of biodiversity, hydroelectric potential, oil, gas, coal and limestone's are the major high spots of the NER.

Most of the states in the NER, while having unique characteristics in some respects, possess identical economic and geographical attributes. Undoubtedly, the region is endowed with vast natural resources in terms of forests, biological diversity, hydro-electricity potential; nevertheless, it has remained largely underdeveloped. Poor infrastructure and limited connectivity, both within the region as well as with the rest of the India are regarded as greatest economic impediment in the region.

The NER is services driven economy in which 59 per cent of annual average income is derived from services sector. But, agriculture is the mainstay of the economies of the NER as it accounts to 27 per cent (2015-16), and is a major source of employment and livelihood for around 80 per cent of the population. The region continues to be a net importer of food grains. In spite of covering 8.8 per cent of the country's total geographical area, the NER produces just 1.5 per cent of the country's total food grain production. Overall, the region of Northeast is characterized by remote, backward, underdeveloped and conflict prone hinterlands. The protracted violence in the region has a close linkage with the economic underdevelopment, insurgency problem and rising unemployment in the region. Ensure lasting development in the region which is the need of the hour remains the key challenge ahead for the Indian government. This challenge can be addressed by integrating the Northeast with the Southeast Asian region, thereby ushering stable development in the entire region.

Conclusion

Overall, the key areas of strength for the Northeast region include relatively high literacy rates and human development levels as compared to the rest of the country; high skill levels in certain areas; an abundant natural resource endowment; potential for the development of the tourism industry; and potential for exports and scope for regional cooperation.

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