

PREPARING NORTH EAST FOR THE LOOK EAST POLICY

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Theoretical economics has long pleaded for removal of all restrictions on trade. The belief is that “in every country it always is and must be the interest of the great body of the people to buy whatever they want off those who sell it cheapest”. Stating this in his ‘Wealth of Nations’ Adam Smith also clarified that “the proposition is so very manifest that it seems ridiculous to take any pains to prove it; nor could it ever have been called in question, had not the interested sophistry of merchants and manufacturers confounded the commonsense of mankind”.

In the practical field international trade has fostered the wealth of nations all along. In the tremendous economic development which has taken place in the six decades since the end of the Second World War trade probably has played the most important role. When I visited Taiwan in 2003 I went into the genesis of its transformation from a poor fishing island into one of the most prosperous countries in the world. It was in 1950 that Generalissimo Chiang Kei Shek and his wife Sung Li fled to Taiwan (then called Formosa) after Mao Zedong’s Red Army swept into power in mainland China. They started the process of Taiwan’s economic development through trade. First they harvested and exported fish. Then agricultural and agro-industrial goods. Then the products of village and small industries which included very large consignments of cheap ready-made clothes. This continued for some time when they started manufacturing and exporting computer hardware. Meanwhile the entire young generation went through a sort of knowledge revolution which created a huge human resource base in a small country. Taiwan does not have much natural resources. But it imported raw materials from different countries and transformed these into high quality manufactured goods and exported the same. This value addition became possible through its technically skilled and rich human resources.

A number of countries including South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and others followed more or less similar growth paths and became prosperous. Even Indonesia and the Philippines are going through the same process. To quote the Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz “the most successful developing countries in the world have achieved their success through trade-through

exports”. But he has warned that “opening up markets in the developing countries to goods from the advanced industrial countries without full reciprocation” might not work. He quoted the case of Europe when in 2001 it “unilaterally opened up its markets to the poorest countries of the world” and “almost no trade followed”. Stiglitz referred to the various trade agreements and opined that “even if trade agreements have been truly free and fair, not all countries would have benefited-or at least benefited much-and not all people, even in the countries that did benefit, would share in the gains. Even if trade barriers are brought down systematically, not everyone is equally in a position to take advantage of the new opportunities”.¹

These are prophetic words with great potency. What I propose to do in this paper is to examine whether the North Eastern Region (NE) of India is ready to participate fully in the ‘Look East policy’ (LEP) of the Government of India (GOI) and whether NE will actually gain from such a policy. Let me first lay down the expectations of the LEP in its historical perspective.

Ever since liberalization of the Indian economy in 1990 a new orientation is sought to be given to India’s foreign policy and trade by a thrust on south Asian and south east Asian countries. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described India’s LEP as “a strategic shift in our perspective” and further clarified that “the age-old India-Asean linkages have been given a renewed thrust with the impressive growth of connectivity and the ever increasing flows of tourism between India and Asean”. In fact, Asean (Association of South East Asian Nations) has reached 40 years of its existence in 2007. Recalling the recent events Singh further said that “in the present phase of our Look East policy, we in India seek to deepen our economic integration by entering into free trade or comprehensive economic partnership agreements, both with Asean as a whole and with individual countries of the region”.² Considerable progress has been recorded in trade between India and the Asean countries in the past few years. The volume has risen from US \$40 billion in 2007-08 to US \$44 billion in 2009-10. A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed between India and the Asean countries in Bangkok on August 13, 2009. It is proposed to increase the trade volume to US \$60 in seven years and to reduce the tariff rates drastically. In fact, the growth rate of trade between India and the Asean member countries has been 15.69 percent between 2007-08 and 2009-10. This is remarkable. Growth has been registered with all the Asean

member countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The very first agreement in this field was the Indo Myanmar Trade Agreement signed on January 31, 1994. The agreement provided for “establishment of trade on the basis of equality and mutual benefit”. The idea was to put in place a “signaling device to monitor the movement of commodities and people”. Probably another objective was to provide “an insurance against the perceived threat of Chinese dominance of the region”.³ A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was also signed between GOI and Myanmar on the same day. These two agreements were followed up by a delegation level talk on June 10, 1994.

Media comments on these events at that time were favourable to GOI. For example, Sapra said that “improvement in relations with ASEAN as well as other key East Asian countries like China and Japan would only heighten regional economic bonds. India’s increasing integration with this region will only help ensure that these bonds do not snap at any time in the foreseeable future”.⁴ The MOU is concerned with co-operation between civilian border authorities of the two countries. The minutes of the talk related to banking and trading arrangements, immigration and customs inspection and timing of border trade. Indo-Myanmar trade was formally launched on April 12, 1995 by the Union Commerce Minister P. Chidambaram and his Myanmar counterpart Lt. Gen. Tun Kyi.

It is appropriate that the LEP first touched Myanmar. Myanmar has a common border of 1643 kms with four of India’s states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. For trade with China and the south east Asian countries by the land route all movement has to be through Myanmar. It is true that Myanmar itself is poor. It does not have as much manufactured goods to offer as the other south east Asian countries. But it has vast natural resources which are yet to be tapped. In recent years the volume of trade between India and Myanmar has gone upto US \$1.2 billions. At present India’s imports include pulses, wood and wood products, fruits and nuts, natural rubber and paper and paper pulp. India exports drugs and pharmaceutical products, machinery and instruments, steel and transport equipments.

Moreover, Myanmar’s geo-strategic location cannot be ignored. That is why India is building the trans-Asian railway network through Myanmar to Singapore. The

Asian road highway is also under construction through Myanmar. The ultimate idea is to link up the Indian ocean with south China sea. Besides, India has taken up several infrastructure projects in Myanmar. Tatas are setting up a truck manufacturing plant at Magway, the ESSAR group is joining in the attempt to build the multi-modal Kaladan transport project, the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation will build the Tamanthi power project and GOI will help Myanmar to build a new port at Sittwe.

All this effort to achieve closer Indo-Myanmarese relations reflected India's present pragmatism in matters relating to foreign policy. It may be recalled that writing about India's foreign policy in the Asian context the former Indian Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit had suggested that our trade relations with Myanmar should be normalized irrespective of the government that may be in power there because that country is geo-strategically important to India. Such close cooperation with Myanmar is also necessary in order that India may curb smuggling, border crimes, drug movement and insurgency. Dixit, however, never envisaged LEP although he had devoted three chapters of his book to India's relations with the countries of Asia.⁵ In recent years India has changed its policy towards the autocratic Junta which controls Myanmar. India is continuing to support the world community's effort towards assisting the Nobel Laureate Aung San Su Ki's fight for democracy in her country. But at the same time it is doing business with the Junta government of Myanmar. This is Realpolitik. It is in pursuance of this Realpolitik that India and Myanmar have exchanged high level visits in recent times. The most important visit perhaps is that of the Myanmarese senior General Than Shwe, who as the "Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar" heads the autocratic government of that country. During his discussion with the Indian Prime Minister on July 27, 2010 India and Myanmar agreed on "close co-operation between the security forces of the two countries in tackling the pernicious problem of terrorism". Arrangements were also finalized for Indian participation in critical areas like medical science, education, telecom services and in major projects and manufacturing industries. Than Shwe was accompanied by a large delegation which included U Soe Tha, Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, U Tin Naing Thein, Minister for Commerce and U Thaung, Minister for Science and Technology. This shows the seriousness with which Myanmar has taken the trade and security relationships with India.

An important and parallel development has been in the spiritual and the cultural fields. The ancient university of Nalanda near Pataliputra (modern Patna) is being revived. The relevant Act has been passed by Parliament in 2010. It was former President APJ Abdul Kalam who made the suggestion in an address to the joint session of the Bihar Assembly and council in March, 2006. Thereafter, the “Nalanda Proposal” of the Singapore Government was received which spelled out the details of a great university of the twenty first century. The basic idea of this proposal was to establish a link between south and east Asia through world-class education and tourism. Then the Nalanda Mentor Group, headed by the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, made detailed recommendations regarding governance, finance, academic disciplines and other aspects. The leaders who attended the East Asia Summit at Hua Hin in Thailand in October, 2009 endorsed these recommendations and decided to extend their support to the revival of the University. Meanwhile, the celebration of 1000 years of the Vietnamese capital of Ha Noi during 2010 coincided with a similar celebration of the millennia of establishing the Brihadeswara temple at Thanjavur by the Chola dynasty which played the most important role in connecting India with south east Asia through trade, commerce and maritime activities. These are occasions which will facilitate integration of India and southeast Asia through the spiritual and cultural exchanges under LEP. In this context it is significant that the Myanmar strongman Than Shwe visited Bodh Gaya and other pilgrimage sites around it during his official visit to India. Whether the new world-class university to be established at Guwahati can also be assigned a role in this field needs urgent consideration.

The strategic importance of NE in the Asian context was recognized six decades ago by Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the then Supreme Commander of the Allied Armed Forces. He was no development planner nor was he bent on increasing trade. His sole interest in this area was the transport and communication network for supporting China in the war against Japan. It was his South East Asia Command which built the famous Ledo Road to Kunming in China for supervising the two oil pipe lines, respectively, from Kolkata and Chittagong to Kunming via Tinsukia. This road was also used for movement of troops and military supplies. Its construction was overseen by Mountbatten’s quarrelsome Deputy Gen. J.W. Stilwell. But a magnanimous Mountbatten named the road after Stilwell.⁶ According to media

report the Stilwell Road has now been rebuilt by China in the Guangzhou Region upto their border with Myanmar. On the Indian side the road is quite good upto a reasonable distance of the India-Myanmar border. The damaged stretch can be repaired within a short time. It is the portion within Myanmar which will need very extensive rebuilding. Myanmar does not seem to have the resources to do this. Whether India and China will carry out the repair is a question which has no answer as yet.

In the second Indo-Asean summit held in 2003 India signed the treaty of Amity and Co-operation in South-East Asia. A separate declaration provided for combating international terrorism as also for comprehensive economic cooperation with a view to step up the current volume of trade. Again, in order to achieve closer trade relations it is expected that India's peak tariff rates would be reviewed to make these at par with the rates in the Asean countries. For this a Free Trade Agreement has been already signed.

During the later half of 2010s there have been many exchanges between India and the south east Asian countries. As a part of LEP's diplomatic initiative the Indian External Affairs Minister visited Indonesia and Singapore. After that the Prime Ministers of Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia visited India. A Thai business delegation visited NE. This has not yet borne any positive results in terms of trade and investment. However, the Conference in Bangkok in October, 2007, has promised some investment in NE by Thailand. Earlier India and Thailand had signed two agreements: one on enhanced cooperation on renewable energy and the other on cultural exchanges.

Regional co-operation has been given a boost ever since the first BIMSTEC summit in July, 2004. The countries included in this summit were Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar. Again, the Thailand Mekong Ganga Co-operation Project aims at revitalizing and developing overland trade, tourism, communications and transport. The countries involved are India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. These are developments which will advance LEP and enhance India's economic and diplomatic relations with these countries.

India's most immediate neighbour, Bangladesh, need special attention. It is believed that close collaboration between these two countries will help achieve growth

and prosperity for both. Therefore, the five agreements signed during Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in January 10-13, 2010 have become significant. These five agreements are on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, on transfer of sentenced persons, on combating international terrorism, organized crimes and illegal drug trafficking, on co-operation in the power sector and a cultural exchange programme. In pursuance of these agreements certain concrete steps were taken including India's promise to export 240 MW of power to Bangladesh and to assist that country to build power plants of 1320 MW each in Khulna and Chittagong. In respect of import trade India will remove 47 (plus the earlier agreed to 56 items) from the negative list. India will give a credit amounting to US \$1 billion to Bangladesh for certain infrastructure projects. Bangladesh will facilitate transit of Indian goods and commodities through its territory and will allow the use of Chittagong and Mangla ports to India. India will give access to Bangladesh for trade and travel to Nepal and Bhutan. As far as insurgents are concerned Bangladesh had pushed out some ULFA leaders from its territory and these leaders were taken into custody by Assam police. In September, 2010 a batch of 28 ULFA leaders who had deserted the outfit came back to India from Bangladesh. This method was followed by a large number of others. According to media reports ULFA Commander-in-Chief Paresh Barua is now completely isolated. He is somewhere in the Yunan province of China. His Chinese visa is reported to have been extended upto January 31, 2011.

There are critics in India who do not like that so much concessions have been given to Bangladesh. Some of them feel that the credit of US \$1 billion (about Rs.5000 crores) is too much. There is a perpetual adverse balance of trade of about US \$1 billion annually which Bangladesh has not been able to wipe out. They do not produce the goods which India can import. The quality also is low. They have plenty of natural gas. But they want to preserve it underground rather than drill out and export to India. Meanwhile, the value of the smuggled goods, on both sides, has been estimated to have increased to US \$3 billion per annum. The Bangladeshi smugglers are reported to be making up the adverse balance of illegal trade by illegal export of arms, gold and narcotics according to a National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) study. After the January, 2010 agreements this type of clandestine trade should end. However, whether that will actually happen is still a moot question.

Bangladesh is expecting to gain considerable improvement of its economy by better connectivity with India. According to the former Bangladesh Foreign Secretary, Farooq Sobhan, the Prime Minister level talks have “opened up a whole new vista, not only simply in terms of Bangladesh’s bilateral relations with India, but in terms of Bangladesh becoming a middle income country by 2021”. He further stated that “if Bangladesh is to move from an annual growth rate of 6 per cent to 8 or 9 per cent, it must make rapid progress in the integration of its economy with its immediate neighbours, India, Nepal and Bhutan”.

According to Sanjib Baruah, foremost scholar on LEP, “Northeast India’s isolation from its neighbourhood has much older roots: that which came about as a result of the advent of western dominance over sea routes and over global trade and more particularly the British conquest of the region and the decisions to draw lines between the hills and plains, to put barriers of trade between Bhutan and Assam and to treat Myanmar as a strategic frontier – British India’s buffer against French Indochina and China. While the British colonial rulers built a major new transportation infrastructure, aimed primarily at taking tea and other resources out of Assam, the disruption of old trade routes remained colonialism’s most enduring negative legacy”.⁷

According to Baruah “Northeast India was on the southern trails of the Silk Road”. If that was so, this region had connectivity in the ancient times with the world outside. This got snapped during British times. In this connection Baruah alludes to Bhutan. That country realized the importance of connectivity with south-east Asia. The Bhutan King emphasized this when he made the following statement: “No other region in the world needs harmonious and cooperative relations among its states more than South Asia”.⁸

The legal and formal arrangements for trade through NE to southeast Asia is now more or less complete. But is NE ready for it ? This region is not yet economically as developed as the rest of India. Moreover, it is land locked. After partition of India in 1947 NE lost its natural trade routes through what is now Bangladesh. Its land connectivity with the rest of India remained limited to the 26 kms “Chicken’s neck” in northern West Bengal.

As far as trade itself is concerned many countries and regions in the world have become prosperous through trade as noted earlier. In fact, countries like Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia have achieved their present status and level of development through trade. But what has NE to offer to, say, China in exchange for the plethora of goods which that country is already exporting to this region ? Industrial products are very limited. Agricultural products will need proper processing and packaging before the same can be exported. The service sector in NE is not doing badly. But the quality is low. Tourism has not been so attractive because facilities are not upto the mark and also because of media's projection of our security environment in very bad light.⁹ An extremely concentrated endeavour will be required to achieve economic development of NE and its principal state of Assam before NE can be ready for participation in LEP. When the Thai trade delegation visited Assam in June, 2007 the Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) said that Rs.15,000 crores would be spent on infrastructure development in NE in the Eleventh Five Year Plan.¹⁰ The Planning Commission Deputy Chairman also announced that substantial funds will be allocated for all round development of NE in a seminar held on October 7-9, 2007. Unfortunately, however, nothing much has happened during the past three years. It will be necessary that the funds are utilized properly for the development of the region.

Let us examine the situation in some detail. Will opening a new trade route or reviving the previous land trade route through NE lead to economic development of this area ? There is nothing automatic about it. Before meaningful trade activities can be undertaken our agriculture has to improve both in terms of production and in terms of productivity. Processing industries have to be set up to manufacture quality goods which can be offered in international markets at acceptable prices. The entire infrastructure of roads, railways, communication and air transport will have to be completely revamped. Similarly hotels, restaurants and resorts will have to be built for sophisticated tourists. If that cannot be achieved LEP will not benefit NE. In that case, LEP will only provide a bridge between the rest of India and south east Asia of which NE will forever remain an "underbelly". This type of result probably was not envisaged when the policy was devised. In order that LEP is inclusive it must therefore provide for economic development of NE as a direct objective. In India the

indirect effect or “trickling down effect” has not worked so far. Even Stiglitz has opined that “trickle down economics does not work. The fact is that if the economy grows, it is not inclusive and some time the poor can be worse off”.¹¹

It is not proposed to go into details of the steps needed to achieve this objective. But an attempt is made to identify, to the extent possible, the exports which are within the range of possibility. Agriculture is the mainstay of majority of people in all the states of NE. However, no scientific study of the varieties of plants available in this area has been made. Such a study is already overdue. According to experts there are more than 200,000 “domesticable” plants available in nature.¹² Again, except for Tripura and Manipur agriculture is not doing well in the other states. In Assam there is a process of deceleration during the past few years when production, productivity and land use have all declined. During 2009-10 there is a slight improvement in the situation according to latest reports. However, the potentialities are great in agriculture because of good climate, plenty of water except in certain patches, reasonable cost of land and availability of cheap labour. It is the state government which must stir itself and make concentrated effort for agricultural development taking advantage of GOI’s present initiative for a second green revolution. In the allied sector poultry development can be taken up on a large scale. There is a huge market for chickens, ducks, pork and meat on hoof in the Indo-Chinese countries as well as in China. I may mention that I have visited most of these countries during the past one decade. Except for China, Thailand, Malaysia and the city states of Hong Kong and Singapore all the other countries are under-developed. However, the big markets in these countries gave me the impression that they can import many commodities from India.

Export possibilities are quite high in plantation crops. Tea, for example, has been exported ever since the first batch of Assam tea was auctioned at London in 1834. Even now Assam produces more than half of India’s and 15 percent of world’s tea. Its export has declined somewhat due to increasing cost and lack of demand for high quality tea which Assam produces. Kenya and Sri Lanka produce tea all around the year against Assam’s nine month season. Hence the high cost and limited per hectare production. But proper branding and educating the Asian middle class about the value of high liquoring, properly blended and carefully produced Assam tea should be able to increase tea export to these presently non-traditional markets.¹³

There was an Assam tea logo launched in March, 1990. It has been reported that the Indian Tea Board is launching another in the near future. This will promote export. Again, the green tea market is quite extensive in Asia. Assam can put some of its area under green tea.

Fresh fruits and vegetables of NE are very tasty. Assam alone produces 1.56 million tones of fruits, 3.88 m.t. of vegetables and 0.219 m.t. of spices. Spices of Assam include turmeric, black pepper and black-cummins. Once cold storage and cold chain are provided these can be exported in plenty. Cold chain involves pre-cooling at farm yard, deep freezing in heavy vehicles during transportation and retail sale from refrigerators. Preservation and packaging also are important. NE's major fruit products include pineapples, pears, bananas, plantains, oranges and now even apples. Vegetables include chillies, ginger, pumpkins, gourds, lemons, jack fruits, orange, cucumber, tomatoes, egg plants and onions.¹⁴ The surplus of bananas from Assam has been estimated at 3.06 m.t.

According to the Export Import Bank of India's assessment "Asia region accounted for nearly 15 percent of share in the global fruits and vegetable imports. Major importers include Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Saudi Arabia and China. In terms of exports, major Asian players include China, Turkey, India and Thailand".¹⁵

NE is till now outside the traditional rubber-growing area. However, its climate is very favourable for rubber. A good beginning has been made in Assam with 10,500 hectares under 400 varieties of rubber and in Tripura with 23,500 hectares under high yielding varieties. In fact, Tripura has been declared as the "second rubber capital of India" (next to Kerala) by the Indian Rubber Board. Again, Assam produces 40 percent of India's rubber honey. It appears that 500 tonnes of honey can be produced from an average rubber plantation. Its export possibilities need to be explored.¹⁶ India is the third highest rubber producing country in the world and has the highest rate of rubber productivity.¹⁷

NE is believed to be very rich in medicinal plants. Arunachal, NE's largest state in area, is reported to have more than 500 species of medicinal plants. In Manipur the investment requirement on medicinal plants has been estimated at Rs.100 to Rs.132 crores. In Nagaland ginseng is available among medicinal plants. Here the

investment requirement is estimated at Rs.80 to 104 crores. The plants include agar, tejpatta, dalchini, mint etc. Similarly in Mizoram the investment requirement on medicinal plants will be Rs.100 to 132 crores. In Tripura it will be Rs.55 to 71 crores. Assam's depleting expanse of dense forest reserves even now have "medicinal herbs with an investment potential of Rs.173 crores to Rs.195 crores which include cultivation, drying and storage, herbal formulation, homeopathy, plants and spices processing etc".¹⁸ Identifications and preliminary estimations have been already done. There are 3000 species of medicinal and aromatics plants. What is needed is to bring up the units in coordination and collaboration with India's export oriented pharmaceutical industry which has registered high growth during the past few decades.

Assam has plenty of tuber crops, the annual production being 0.219 m.t. Similarly coconuts and arecanuts are produced in plenty. The annual production of arecanut in Assam is estimated at 72 million tonnes of nuts and that of coconut at 165 m.t. of nuts. Some of these are exported outside NE.

The Asian market has already shown its liking for some of the industrial products of NE. Products manufactured from plantation crops such as jute, mesta and ramie have proved their popularity in the Asian market. Assam is one of the leading producers of good quality jute in the world and it "enjoys a competitive advantage in the availability of superior fibre and inexpensive, semi skilled labour. There is tremendous scope for production and export of jute commodities and value added items and the industry has been identified as a thrust area".¹⁹ Assam produces 4 to 6 lakh bales of jute annually. The items which can be produced from jute include bags, sofa covers, curtains, wall hangings, flooring material, shoes and even clothes.

In the case of cane and bamboo products also NE has vast potential. Considerable work has been done on this industry and the demand has been seen in various national and international exhibitions and expositions. Another area with great possibilities is handloom and handicraft. Assam's silk, and particularly muga, can earn megabucks abroad.²⁰

To sum up NE has to be an integral part of LEP. In order to achieve that the states of the region must develop their agriculture and industry to such a status that their agricultural and industrial products can compete in the international market. The

funds are available under various schemes of GOI and in the banks and financial institutions. The natural resources are all there. Some of these have been already identified. NE does not have the required number of entrepreneurs and technical manpower. It cannot transform its natural resources into finished products without the human resources. It must have skilled technical manpower as in Taiwan. For that NE has to become a “knowledge society” or a “knowledge economy” as the management guru Peter Drucker has defined.²¹ In this age of information technology, biotechnology and nanotechnology knowledge has become the most important input into economic development.²²

The planners and builders of NE have to realize this cardinal fact. What is necessary is the vision and concentrated efforts in various thrust areas after micro studies and appropriate project formulation which can bring NE to a standard in which it will be able to stand the challenge of LEP and will also be able to fully participate in the new milieu. The macro studies have been already done. Considerable work of identification of agricultural, horticultural, floricultural and industrial products have also been carried out. But the real work has to start in the field. Only then NE can hope to be a part of the bridge connecting India and south and southeast Asia. (The writer was Chief Secretary, Assam, during 1990-95)

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 14. Ginger is grown in plenty in Mizoram and Assam. In Assam an agricultural export zone has been set up consisting of the districts of Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta, Nagaon, Morigaon, Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hills. In this zone ginger is raised in 13,908 hectares and production is 61,259 metric tonnes. The total area under ginger in the state is 18,748 hectares and production is 1,35,000 metric tonnes. Special attention is now being paid to its marketing by government. Assam's chillies have received high accolades in the international market. See (i) National Geographic. May, 2007. "Bih/Bhut Jalokia". (ii) Time. Special Summer Issue. June 25-July 2, 2007. "Global warming. How the chili spread from its South American home and spiced up world cuisine".

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