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AN OVERVIEW ON THE EXPORTS-IMPORTS TREND IN CROSS-BORDER TRADE THROUGH NATHULA PASS, SIKKIM

SANJAYA KUMAR SUBBA
ASST. PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NAMCHI GOVERNMENT COLLEGE
SOUTH SIKKIM

PRAVEEN RIZAL
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY
ANNAMALAI NAGAR

ABSTRACT

The prime objective of present paper is to analyse the Cross-border trade through Nathula Pass in Sikkim State. Nathula pass route in Sikkim is one of the three open trading border posts of India in the Himalayan Mountain. It is the oldest Pass from Sikkim to Tibet. The reopening of Nathula Pass for trade between India and China on 6th July, 2006 gave the way to more benefits to India through trade. The Agreement between two Governments has declared 36 items for exports and 20 items for imports. The data obtained through secondary sources represents that the exports of Indian goods to China is more than imports. It has increased from 8.87 Lakhs in 2006 to 4.02 Crores in 2010. The import has decreased from 10.83 lakhs in 2006 to 2.96 lakhs in 2009 and Nil in the year 2010 against 4.02 crores of export. With the increasing trend in the volume of export of goods from India to China, we can state that the cross-border trade through Nathula Pass is in the favour of India. Further, for more growth in trade through Nathula and thereby more benefit, facilities like better transportation system, warehouses, inspection posts, proper weights and measures, surfaced roadway, accommodation facilities to the people i.e., both trades and tourists, and good opportunities for traders should be provided.

KEYWORDS

Cross-border trade, exports-imports, Nathula Pass, Sikkim.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Trade is the exchange of goods between two individuals or Nations. Trade is the basic component of economic activities and is undertaken for mutual advantage" (Dictionary of Economics, Oxford University Press). As per the definition given by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry regarding Border Trade, "Border trade is overland trade and exchange of commodities by the residents along the border". Trade through Nathula pass is one of the three open trading border posts of India. The other two are Shipkila in Himachal Pradesh and Lipulekh in Uttarakhand. There is a total of 54 kms of road to Nathula from Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim and 430 km from Lhasa. Nathula, a 14,140-foot-high Himalayan border was sealed since the war between two countries from 1962 to 2006. Only in 2006, the pass reopened for trading purpose following numerous bilateral trade agreements. Sikkim, after all, is having very long history of trading with its neighboring state Tibet, Nathula being part of the old Silk Route. It is the oldest Pass from Sikkim to Tibet, now Tibet Autonomous Region- China (Praveen and Asokan, 2013). The word 'Nathula' means the whistling pass, is one of the highest motor able roads of the world, at a height of 14200 ft. (4330 m). It is about 56 kilometers by road from Gangtok (Dorji, 2008).

The border trade via the Old Silk Route at Nathula reopened on the 6th of July, 2006 amidst huge expectations of improving the relation between the two upcoming superpowers of the world, India and China. It was also expected to help in achieving economic prosperity in the areas surrounding the Nathula Pass in both the countries. The Border Trade remains officially open for about six months every year (Government of Sikkim, 2010). The trade between the two countries is of serious gain to livelihood for the people of Sikkim and other adjoining states. The Government of India has declared 29 items for export and 15 items for import within a specific trading period per year which has further increased to 20 import and 36 export items in 2012. The rising trend of exports shows the positive impact of Nathula trade to India. The opening of the pass is expected to strengthen the economy of both the countries and the growth of cross-border trade. Also the cross-border trade is strengthening and shortening the travelling distance to the pilgrimage sites of the both land.

In spite of enthusiastic trade agreement between two countries, there is a wide gap in export and import. Further, what is the present position and status after the reopening of the Nathula pass? What is the trend in export and import within these six years of cross-border trade? It is in this light, the paper examines the present scenario in Sino-India trade through Nathula pass.

METHODOLOGY

DATA AND SOURCES

The present paper is based on the secondary data. Secondary data and information on the exports and imports of goods between India and China have been collected from the Department of Statistics, evaluation and monitoring of Government of Sikkim.

PERIOD OF THE STUDY

The period for the study covers Seven years from 2006-07 to 2012-13. The rationale behind selecting year from 2006-07 to 2011-12 is that the Nathula Cross border trade between India and China restarted in the year 2006 only.

STATISTICAL METHOD USED

Statistics like mean, S.D, Variance, Range, Maximum, Minimum have been used to study the trade scenario after the reopening of Nathula Pass. Further, the differences in exports and import, trade trend and benefits from the trade have been estimated with the help of simple equation of Cross-Border Trade Surplus (CBTS).

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The paper is confined to the study of cross-border trade between India and China through Nathula Pass in Sikkim.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Cross-border trade between two countries is taking place in a Mart at Sherathang, which is four kms before reaching Nathula. The trade at present is open to the local people of Sikkim State and is proved as a means to livelihood to the people of this region. Trading period was different in the first year of border trading and later on changed to some possible extent. The trade mart at Sherathang was opened from 1st of June to 30th of September in the early year (2006)

and after 2007, it was revised from 1st May to 30th November. This mart opens from Monday to Thursday every week. Four days in a week and from morning 7.30 am to afternoon 3.30 pm Indian Standard Time (IST) and 10 am to 6pm as per the Chinese time (Praveen and Asokan, 2013).

TABLE 1: TRADING PERIOD (2006-07 TO 2011-12)

Sl. No.	Year	From	To
1	2006-2007	6 th July 2006	3 rd September 2006
2	2007-2008	1 st May 2007	30 th November 2007
3	2008-2009	19 th May 2008	27 th November 2008
4	2009-2010	1 st May 2009	30 th November 2009
5	2010-2011	1 st May 2010	30 th November 2010
6	2011-2012	2 nd May 2011	30 th November 2011

Sources: Government of Sikkim

For the trade through Nathula pass Imported –Exported Code is not required because persons importing or exporting to TAR-China (Tibet Autonomous Region-China) are authorized to trade in Indian Currency value of Rs.25000/- per day per trader (2006-2007) only. Later, it has increased from Rs.25000/- to Rs. 100000/- per day per trader after 2007-08. Further, a permit fee of Rs. 50 for each vehicle is levied while entering the Sikkim state. Similarly, a sum of 5 Yuan (Rs.5 equal to one Yuan) is levied for every vehicle crossing over to the Chinese to the trade mart point.

TABLE 2: LIST OF EXPORTS-IMPORTS ITEMS THROUGH NATHULA TRADE

EXPORT		IMPORT
1. Agriculture Implements	16. Snuff	1. Goat Skin
2. Blankets	17. Spices	2. Sheep Skin
3. Copper products	18. Shoes	3. Wool
4. Clothes	19. Kerosene oil	4. Raw Silk
5. Cycles	20. Stationary	5. Yak tail
6. Coffee	21. Utensils	6. Yak hair
7. Tea	22. Wheat	7. China clay
8. Barley	23. Liquor	8. Borax
9. Rice	24. Milk Processed Product	9. Seabelyipe
10. Flour	25. Canned Food	10. Butter
11. Dry Fruits	26. Cigarettes	11. Goat Kashmiri
12. Dry and Fresh Vegetables	27. Local Herb	12. Common salt
13. Vegetable oil	28. Palm oil	13. Horse
14. Gur and Misri	29. Hardware	14. Goat
15. Tobacco		15. Sheep

Sources: Government of Sikkim

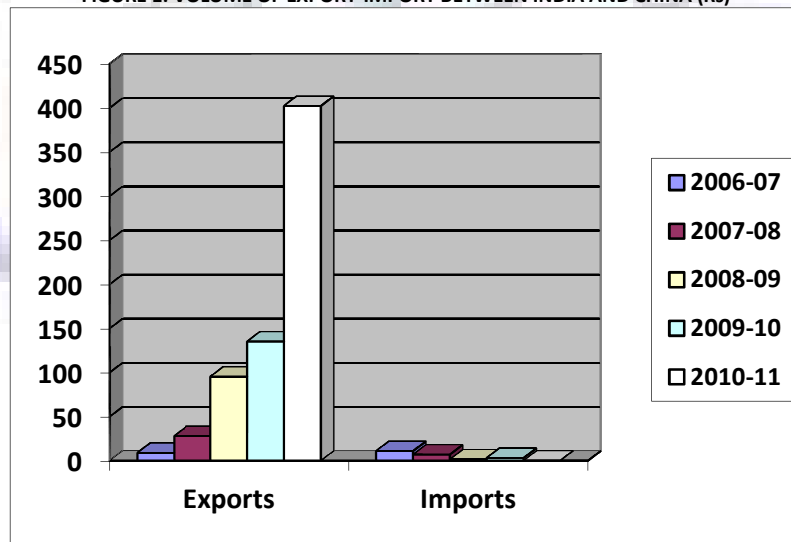
The table 2 shows the total number of export and import items for the trade between India and China through Nathula Pass. The list of exportable and importable items shows that the total number of export items is more than that of items to be imported from China. Initially till 2011-12, Governments of both the Countries had declared 29 items for export and 15 items for import. Later, in the year 2012 the items have been revised and the total number has been increased to 36 items for export and 20 items for import.

TABLE 3: DETAIL OF TRADE FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEARS

Sl. No	Year	Exports	Imports
1	2006-07	8.87	10.83
2	2007-08	27.87	6.88
3	2008-09	95.00	1.35
4	2009-10	135.00	2.96
5	2010-11	402.00	00
6	2011-12	334.4	00
7	2012-13	598.81	101.46

Sources: Government of Sikkim

FIGURE 1. VOLUME OF EXPORT-IMPORT BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA (Rs)



The recommencement of Indo-China cross-border trade through the Nathula trade route has proved highly beneficial to India, especially to the Himalayan region of Sikkim and its local people. The table 3 shows the rising trend of exports of Indian commodities to China. This rising trend of exports shows the positive impact of Nathula trade for India. The data, obtained through secondary sources depict that the exports of Indian goods to China is more than imports. The export of Indian goods to China has increased from 8.87 lakhs in 2006-07 to 598.8 lakhs in 2012-13. It was 8.87 lakhs in 2006-07, 27.87 lakhs in 2007-08, 95.00 lakhs in 2008-09. During the year 2009-10, export from India to Tibet Autonomous Region was recorded at Rs. 135.00 lakhs whereas import from Tibet Autonomous Region to India was recorded at Rs. 2.96 lakhs (Government of Sikkim). In the year 2010-11 it was 402 lakhs and 334.4 lakhs in 2011. As per the government official record, canned foods, utensils, textiles, copper items, vegetable oil, tea, cigarette, coffee, mire, and blankets have been the most popular export items for the year 2010-11. In the year 2012-13 it has further increased to 598.81 lakhs.

The import has decreased from 10.83 lakhs in 2006-07 to 00 in 2011-12. The table 3 shows the negative trend of imports. It is 10.83 lakhs in 2006-07, 6.88 lakhs in 2007-08, 1.35 lakhs in 2008-09 and 2.96 lakhs in 2009-10 respectively. The import for the year 2010-11 and 2011-12 was nil against 402 and 334 lakhs of exports in 2010-11 and in 2011-12. In the year 2012-13, the import of the goods from China to India has been increased to 101.46 lakhs. It is because of the additional five items in the import side.

TABLE 4: STATISTIC OF EXPORTS-IMPORTS FROM 2006-07 TO 2010-11 (in Lakhs)

Statistics	Exportable	Importable
Mean	132.4567	3.6700
Std. Deviation	141.64519	4.34497
Variance	20063.361	18.879
Range	393.13	10.83
Minimum	8.87	.00
Maximum	402.00	10.83

Sources: Computed using SPSS

Statistics of the exports and imports in the table 4 shows a wide gap between the export and import of the commodities in the trade. The mean for the exports is 132.45 against 3.67 of mean for the imports. If we see all the statistics, there is a significant gap in exports and imports of goods. Through this, we can conclude that there is a wide gap in trade between two countries.

With the rising trend in the volume of export, it is clear that the cross-border trade through Nathula Pass is favorable to India. The positive and favorable impact of cross-border trade through Nathula pass can be observed and explained in terms of Cross-Border Trade Surplus. The following table shows the positive impact of Indo-China cross-border trade through Nathula with the help of Trade Surplus.

TABLE 5: CROSS-BORDER TRADE SURPLUS (CBTS) THROUGH NATHULA PASS TRADE (in Lakhs)

Sl. No	Year	Exports	Imports	Cross-Border Trade Surplus (E-I)
1	2006-07	8.87	10.83	- 1.96
2	2007-08	27.87	6.88	20.99
3	2008-09	95.00	1.35	93.65
4	2009-10	135.00	2.96	132.04
5	2010-11	402.00	00	402.00
6	2011-12	334.4	00	334.4
7	2012-13	598.81	101.46	497.35

Sources: Computed

The Cross-Border Trade Surplus, on the other hand, is an estimation of Balance of Trade of a particular point, like Nathula trade. Balance of Trade is the excess of the visible exports over the visible imports (Dictionary of Economics, Oxford). The table 5 states that there is a positive and increasing Cross-Border Trade Surplus through Nathula cross-border trade. In the first year of cross-border trade (2006-07), the Trade Surplus is deficit i.e., -1.96 (in Lakhs). The Trade Surplus has increased tremendously every year after 2007-08. It has increased from 20.99 the year 200-08 to 497.35 in the year 2012-13. As compared, the same of 2010 is 19.15 times more than that of 2007. This increasing Trade Surplus is the result of rising trend in exports from India to China and at the same time, it is the result of decreasing of imports from China.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The cross-border trade is proved to be very highly profitable to India. It is found that there is a rising trend of export of Indian commodities as compared to Imports from China. Further, the increasing trend in Trade Surplus through Nathula trade shows the cross-border trade between India and China is favorable to India and it is expected to increase further in the future. It is serving as a means of livelihood to the citizen of Sikkim, those who have employed themselves as traders. In spite of its positive side, cross-border trade from the Nathula is yet to improve for the further growth in trade and benefit thereby. The items for the trade should be increased so that it will strengthen the trading relation. The State Government also requested for change/ revision in the list of export/ import items for Nathula Border Trade as most of the items in the list are not tradable. But no changes were made during the year. This is one of the reasons for the Nathula Border Trade not doing well as expected of it (Government of Sikkim, 2010).

Further, for more growth in trade through Nathula and thereby more benefit, facilities like better transportation system, warehouses, inspection posts, proper weights and measures, surfaced roadway, accommodation facilities to the people i.e., both trades and tourists, and good opportunities for traders should be provided. Also the Border Roads Organization and the Department of Roads, Transport and Highways, Government of India, have taken up road widening works for improvement of National Highway 31A from Sevoke to Nathula Border (Government of Sikkim, 2010) but it is still under construction process. Need for quick and better steps for the improvement of trade in Nathula Pass is felt extensively. Further, the increasing crowd because of growth of trade and tourism in and around the Nathula Pass also has equal impact on the environment and the sustainability. It is a major research gap of the study and which needs to be filled in future studies.

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