

Significance of Bogibeel Bridge in Assam

Why in news?

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Bogibeel, the longest rail-road bridge of India, was recently inaugurated by the Prime Minister.

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What is it?

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- The Bogibeel Bridge, inside Assam, is 20 km from the border with Arunachal Pradesh.

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- It spans nearly five-km across the Brahmaputra river.

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- It connects Dibrugarh on the Brahmaputra's south bank to Dhemaji on the north bank.

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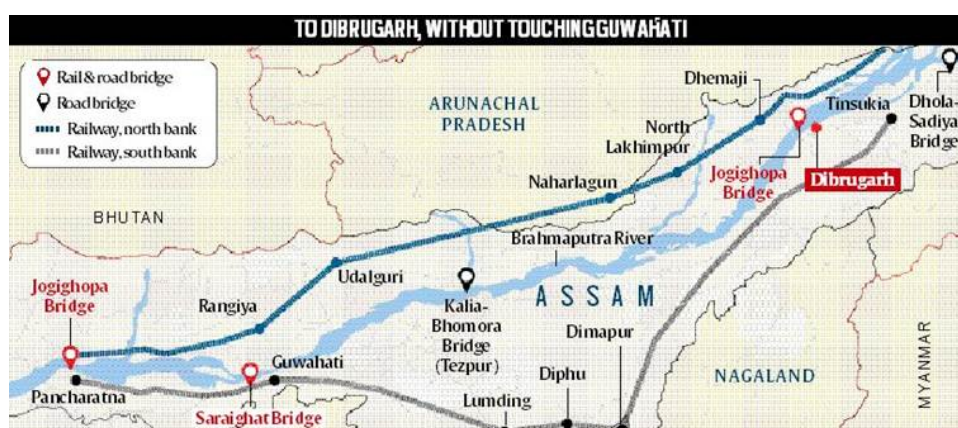
- It will link Dibrugarh with North Lakhimpur district of Assam and parts of eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

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- It is the country's longest road-cum-rail bridge, and its fourth longest of any kind above water.

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Why is it so significant?

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- **Dibrugarh** - Dibrugarh is seen to be reclaiming its lost glory 68 years after being ravaged by a devastating earthquake and the ensuing floods.

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- It used to be a thriving centre of the plantation industry during the colonial times.

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- It remains a hub of higher education and medical treatment in the region.

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- However, for decades, the only recourse for people to cross the Brahmaputra is a diesel propelled ferry.

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- So commissioning the bridge has reduced the journey time across the river to less than five minutes.

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- **North-East** - The single biggest factor which has hampered the development of the Northeast region is the absence of robust connectivity.

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- A maze of river systems across Arunachal Pradesh, with their confluence in Brahmaputra, has posed an enormous challenge.

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- The bridge has the potential to infuse economic dynamism in the region.

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- It could provide opportunities for the expansion of tourism, industrial development and trade.

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- **Infrastructure** - Bogibeel must be viewed alongside other infrastructure developments in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh.

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- The iconic Bhupen Hazarika bridge (Dhola-Sadiya Bridge) over the Lohit river was commissioned recently by the Prime Minister.

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- A 7.5 km long bridge over the Dibang river was also dedicated to the nation recently.

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- The Trans Arunachal Highway has seen considerable progress, especially in the eastern part of the state.

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- An airport has been commissioned at Pasighat, barely two hours away from Dibrugarh.
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- **Tourism** - The region has now become more accessible to the rest of the world.
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- This could give a fillip to tourism, given the region's abundant wildlife and ideal condition for river rafting and angling.
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- But a roadmap of tourism development, promotion and branding needs to be crafted, which is centred on the region's tribal ethos.
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- **Industries** - Dibrugarh lies at the heart of a crucial oil and gas axis in Assam, given its proximity to Digboi and Duliajan oilfields.
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- Further east lie the Kharsang gas fields and Kumchai oilfields of Arunachal Pradesh.
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- The district also has significant coal deposits. There are more than 200 tea factories as well in Dibrugarh.
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- So the bridge has raised the prospects of industrial development and employment opportunities, especially in the mining and plantation sectors.
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- **China** - Bogibeel is the gateway to the historic Stilwell Road.
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- The road connects Ledo in Assam to Kunming in China, passing through Myanmar's Kachin state, via Arunachal Pradesh.
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- The 1,800 km long route was used for transporting arms to the Chinese by the Americans during World War II.
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- From a strategic standpoint, movement of troops has become a much quicker, efficient and reliable proposition.
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- The road beyond Dibrugarh leads to the frontier parts of Arunachal Pradesh, with a fully functional advanced landing ground of Air Force at Walong, barely 100 km from the Chinese border.
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- **Trade** - The route could now well become the centrepiece of the ambitious Act East Policy. It could boost trade across the region.
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- Infrastructure in Myanmar would need to be strengthened and the land customs station at Nampong in Arunachal Pradesh revived.

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- Importantly, the advantage of connectivity must be accompanied by an imaginative blueprint of economic development.

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Source: Indian Express

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