December 2008 Vol 52

YOJANA

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Let noble thoughts come to us from every side
Rig Veda

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YOJANA seeks to carry the message of the Plan to all sections of the people and promote a more earnest discussion on problems of social and economic development. Although **published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**, Yojana is not restricted to expressing the official point of view. Yojana is published in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

EDITORIAL OFFICE : Yojana Bhavan, Sansad Marg, New Delhi Tel.: 23096738, 23717910, (23096666, 23096690, 23096696- Extn. 2509, 2510, 2565, 2566, 2511). Tlgm.: Yojana. **Business Manager (Hqs.) :** Ph :24367260, 24365609, 24365610

For new subscriptions, renewals, enquiries please contact : Business Manager (Circulation & Advt.), Publications Division, Min. of I&B, East Block-IV, Level-VII, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110066, Tel.: 26100207, Telegram : Soochprakasan and Sales Emporia : Publications Division: *Soochna Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi -110003 (Ph 24365610) *Hall No.196, Old Secretariat, Delhi 110054(Ph 23890205) * 701, B Wing, 7th Floor, Kendriya Sadan, Belapur, Navi Mumbai 400614 (Ph 27570686)*8, Esplanade East, Kolkata-700069 (Ph 22488030) *'A' Wing, Rajaji Bhawan, Basant Nagar, Chennai-600090 (Ph 24917673) *Press road, Near Govt. Press, Thiruvananthapuram-695001 (Ph 2330650) *Block No.4, 1st Floor, Gruhakalpa Complex, M G Road, Nampally, Hyderabad-500001 (Ph 24605383) *1st Floor, 'F' Wing, Kendriya Sadan, Koramangala, Bangalore-560034 (Ph 25537244) *Bihar State Co-operative Bank Building, Ashoka Rajpath, Patna-800004 (Ph 2683407) *Hall No 1, 2nd floor, Kendriya Bhawan, Sector-H, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024(Ph 2225455) *Ambica Complex, 1st Floor, above UCO Bank, Paldi, Ahmedabad-380007 (Ph 26588669) *KKB Road, New Colony, House No.7, Chenikuthi, Guwahati 781003 (Ph 2665090)

SUBSCRIPTION : 1 year Rs. 100, 2 years Rs. 180, 3 years Rs. 250. For neighbouring countries by Air Mail Rs. 530 yearly; for European and other countries Rs. 730 yearly.
No. of Pages : 88

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ECONOMIC INDICATORS

ANNUAL INDICATORS	Units	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09 (Proj.)
Population (as on 1 Oct)	in crores	101.9	103.8	105.5	107.3	109	111	112.2	113.8	115.2
GDP at current market prices (new series)	Rs.crore	2102314	2278952	2454561	2754621	3149412	3580344	4145810	4713148	-
GDP:Per Capita (current prices)	Rupees	20,631	21,955	23,266	25,696	28,920	32,372	36,950	41416	-
Gross domestic savings (current prices)	% of GDPmp	23.7	23.5	26.4	29.8	31.8	34.3	34.8	-	-
Gross domestic capital formation (cur. pr)	”	24.2	24.2	25.2	26.8	31.6	34.5	36.0	37.5	-
Central Govt. Gross Fiscal Deficit	”	5.7	6.2	5.9	4.5	4.0	4.1	3.4	3.0	2.5
Sectoral shares (of GDPfc at current prices)										
Agriculture & allied	% of GDPfc	23.4	23.2	20.9	21.0	19.2	18.8	18.3	17.8	-
Industry	”	26.2	25.3	26.5	26.2	28.2	28.8	29.3	29.4	-
Services	”	50.5	51.5	52.7	52.8	52.6	52.4	52.4	52.8	-
Prices (Annual Average)										
WPI of All commodities (wt 100.00)	Apr 1993=100	155.7	161.3	166.8	175.9	187.2	195.5	206.1	215.9	-
CPI-IW General index: India	Jul 2001=100	95.93	100.07	104.05	108.07	112.2	117.2	125.0	132.75	-
Agriculture: Production										
Foodgrains	mln. tns.	196.8	212.9	174.8	213.2	198.4	208.6	217.3	230.7	230.7
Cereals	”	185.7	199.5	163.7	198.3	185.2	195.2	203.1	215.6	215.6
Rice	”	85.0	93.3	71.8	88.5	83.1	91.8	93.4	96.4	96.4
Wheat	”	69.7	72.8	65.8	72.2	68.6	69.4	75.8	78.4	78.4
Pulses	”	11.1	13.4	11.1	14.9	13.1	13.4	14.2	15.1	15.1
Oilseeds	”	18.4	20.7	14.8	25.2	24.4	28.0	24.3	28.8	28.8
Sugar cane	”	296.0	297.2	287.4	233.9	237.1	281.2	355.5	340.6	340.6
Industry & Energy										
“Index of industrial production (wt 100) (Annual Average)”	Apr 1993=100	162.69	166.99	176.64	188.97	204.8	221.52	247.05	268.02	-
	% change	5.06	2.64	5.78	6.98	8.37	8.16	11.53	8.49	-
Commercial energy production	MTOE #	230.9	237.9	246.9	259.2	272.0	283.83	298.55	73.45	-
Electricity generation by public utilities	bln. kwh	501.2	517.4	532.7	565.1	594.5	617.5	662.5	704.5	-
External Transactions										
Exports	US $ mln.	44,147	43,958	52,823	63,886	83,502	103,075	126,276	155,435	179,000
Imports	”	50,056	51,567	61,533	78,203	111,472	149,144	185,624	235,868	309,000
Forex reserves ^	”	39554	51049	71890	107448	135571	145108	191924	299147	-
Foreign direct investments in India (net)	”	4031	6125	5036	4322	5987	8901.0	21991	32327	-
Portfolio investments in India (net)	”	2760	2021	979	11356	9311	12494	7004	29096	-
Rupee exchange rate (Annual Average)	Rs / USD	45.61	47.55	48.30	45.92	44.95	44.28	45.29	40.24	-

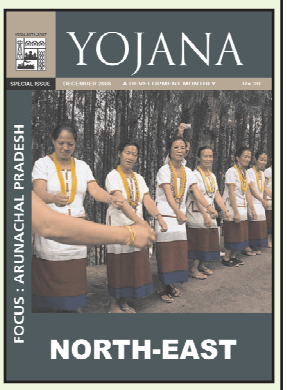
Indicators: Monthly	Units	Jul-07	Aug-07	Sep-07	Oct-07	Nov-07	Dec-07	Jan-08	Feb-08	Mar-08	Apr-08	May-08	Jun-08	Jul-08	Aug-08	Sep-08	Oct-08
Prices																	
“Wholesale price index (All Commodities)”	1993-94= 100	213.6	213.8	215.1	215.2	215.9	216.4	218.2	219.9	225.5	228.5	231.1	237.4	240	240.8	241	-
	% change	4.7	4.1	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.8	4.5	5.3	7.5	8.0	8.9	11.8	12.4	12.6	12.1	-
Agriculture																	
Actual rainfall (All-India)	Millimetres	259	299	194	75	14	16	19	19	32	37	38	159	276	249	175	62
Dev. from normal rainfall	Per cent	0	-2	14	-22	-49	1	-19	-14	21	-15	-31	22	-15	2	0	-40
Stock of Rice (Central pool)	mln. tns.	-	6670	-	10650	10050	11150	-	-	13840	12860	12130	-	9793	8472	-	-
Stock of Wheat (-do-)	mln. tns.	-	10862	-	9020	8360	7352	-	-	5800	17690	24120	-	24380	23259	-	-

Investments (CMIE CapEx database)		Mar ‘01	Mar ‘02	Mar ‘03	Mar ‘04	Mar ‘05	Mar ‘06	Mar ‘07	Mar ‘08
“Project investments outstanding* (as on)”	Rs.crore	1,403,025	1,486,938	1,382,122	1,503,040	1,931,500	2,761,339	4,293,108	6,118,218
	project count	4,328	5,805	6,942	8,835	9,434	9,688	12,281	14,501

Note: (a) % change is year on year (y-o-y) basis; (b) # MTOE: Million Tonnes of Oil Equivalent; (c) ^ Total value of foreign currencies held by Govt. of India (excl. gold & SDRs); (d) * It is the sum total of the project costs of all the outstanding (Live) capital expenditure projects happening in the country. These projects may be under announced or under-implementation stage.

Source: i3 (i-cube) at Planning Commission, New Delhi, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)

About the Issue



Most accounts and discussions about the Northeast point out its diversity in people, flora-fauna, vibrant culture, rich natural resources, especially water and forests. Given this richness and vibrancy there is a feeling that the region could potentially be one of the wealthiest regions of India. Over the past decades, economic development, population growth, growing educational opportunities, commercialization of livelihoods, and increasing interactions between the northeastern people, peninsular India, and the south-eastern neighbors have started to change the region's social and economic fabric and the outlook on development challenges.

Yet several indicators reveal not so rosy a picture: in spite of some progress in a few of the northeastern states overall growth rates over the past years have remained low, poverty incidence is high, there are still a number of areas subject to continued violence. Several reports document natural resource degradation, depleting the very assets that are usually highlighted as offering the greatest potential for growth and development in the Region. Thus, in recent years, the region has missed out on the economic growth acceleration witnessed in much of India.

Yojana magazine has been documenting the complex unravelling of development trajectories in the North east region for the past three years. In this special annual issue, we focus on Arunachal Pradesh as part of our ongoing series.

Arunachal, also called 'The land of dawnlit mountains', is literally a bit of paradise on earth covering an area of 83,743 sq. km. Evergreen forest covers more than sixty percent of the state which also boasts of numerous turbulent streams, roaring rivers, deep gorges, lofty mountains, snow-clad shining peaks, hundreds and thousands of species of flora and fauna. Its endless variations of scenic beauty are the first to greet sunrise in the country. Once described as the "Hidden Land" it has now opened its doors to outsiders. Prime Minister's maiden visit to the State in January 2008 also brought Arunachal Pradesh into limelight.

At the time of independence, Arunachal Pradesh lagged behind the other parts of the country in terms of development indices. Since then, economic development along with government sponsored urbanization has brought about significant changes in the structure of the economy. The recent vision document for progress of the north-eastern region, presented in May 2008, details people-centric strategy based on harnessing natural resources of the region and suggests creation and activation of governance institutions right from the village level upward. We bring to you in this issue, write-ups from Union Minister, H.E. The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, and Chief Minister articles on the inclusive growth in North east, Vision statement, Planning for the North-East, tourism sector, agriculture, Border Area development programme as also the success story of micro-hydel power projects among other features.

We wish our readers a Happy and prosperous New year ahead. ❑

GEOGRAPHY

Neetu Singh

|| Prelims Classes , 2nd January ||

Programme Highlights, 09 Prelims

- Our Basic aim to treat Geography at elementary level to understand Core portion i.e. Geomorphology , climatology, Thought & Cartography Geography Syllabus is very vast each and every topic correlates our preparation strategy is to complete 100% of syllabus with enhancement of that corelation
- Elaborate study of Thought & Cartography to solve merit determining questions ,Examination orientation self practice test paper, Topic Wise, coverage of all section With full explanation of each question
- Course Director Neetu Singh **Delhi School Of Economics** (Geographer & Cartographer) handle full syllabus this helps you in the cohesive understanding of the concept.
- For last few years nature of questions have been statement based, time consuming making objective paper to be prepared subjectively

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YE-12-08/8

Inclusive Growth through Inclusive Governance

Mani Shankar Aiyar
Nupur Tiwari



For Inclusive Growth, we need to hitch the horse of accelerated growth to the wagon of participative development

INCLUSIVE GROWTH is both the title and the overarching goal of the Eleventh Five Year Plan. Economic reforms have led, especially over the last five years or so, to not only accelerated growth but sustained accelerated growth. Yet, notwithstanding the considerable space given to Panchayati Raj in the Eleventh Plan –as also the long section on "Decentralization" in Chapter X on "Governance" - there still seems to be some reluctance to accept inclusive governance as the quintessential and unique path to inclusive growth.

There can be no two views that the acceleration of growth on a sustained basis, combined with major tax reforms, has resulted in a miraculous augmentation of Government revenues, particularly over the last four years. Buoyant revenues have resulted in buoyant spending on the social sector. In his address to the National Convention, the Prime Minister estimated the increased spending on poverty alleviation and rural development, including the flagship Bharat Nirman programmes, at "four times" the spending in the last year of the previous government. In absolute numbers, this works out to an exponential increase in nominal terms from around Rs 34,000 crore in fiscal 2003-04 to about Rs. 1,20,000 crore in the current financial year.This four-fold increase in expenditure on poverty alleviation and rural development comes on top of an increase in such spending between 1993-94 and 2003-04, in nominal terms, from about Rs.7600 crore to about Rs.34,000 crore, about a four-fold increase over the decade.

Why then is there such a mismatch between growth in the booming sectors of our economy and the income of the entrepreneurial classes in contrast to the halting, uncertain, sporadic

The authors are : Union Minister of Panchayati Raj & DoNER, Government of India; and Senior Consultant to Union Minister of Panchayati Raj & DoNER respectively.

and un-sustained amelioration in the condition of the vast majority of Indians? Why is India prospering when most Indians are not?

In August 2007, the Arjun Sengupta Committee reported the deeply disturbing, if widely accepted figure of 836 million Indians – that is over 75% of our people, "the poor and the vulnerable" – surviving on a daily average expenditure of under Rs. 20 a day. Rs. 20 a day is the equivalent of what a family of four earns per capita as the daily wage in Tamil Nadu under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme. (Incidentally, the NREGP wage rate in Tamil Nadu is just about the highest in the country).

The hard fact is that while India is prospering, most Indians are not. Although over the last four years India has witnessed a sustained GDP growth rate of 8-8 per cent per annum, which is set to rise even higher, poverty levels remain unacceptably high. The Gini co-efficient tilts against the 800 million or so Indians who are still to access the higher trajectory of growth. In this sense, the rich-poor divide has increased and poverty reduction figures of India are now lower than those of Bangladesh. More than 300 million people in India still live in deep poverty at less than a dollar a day while another 350 million live on less than two dollars a day. There are also disparities among regions, states, sectors, and communities. Among the States, the North-Eastern Region as a whole and the Central regions, which have large tribal populations, are lagging behind. Among sectors, agriculture has fallen behind industry and the service sector.

The key component of our "strategy of inclusive growth" must be inclusive governance as the means of empowering the disadvantaged with the aim of enabling them to overcome their poverty. It is the effective empowerment of the disadvantaged through the effective devolution of Functions, Finances and Functionaries to representative institutions of local self-government such as Panchayats (where part IX of the Constitution applies) and Village Councils, Village Development Boards and similar such institutions elsewhere, on the principle of subsidiarity, which states that anything which can be done at a lower level should be done at that level and no higher level, that will pave the way to the effective implementation of other measures of inclusive growth such as: .

- Stepping up investment in rural areas, in rural infrastructure and agriculture;
- Increased credit availability, particularly to farmers and others, and offering them remunerative prices for their crops;
- Increased rural employment, including the provision of an unique social safety net in the shape of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme;
- Increased public spending on education and healthcare, including strengthening the mid-day meal programme and offering scholarships to the needy;
- Investment in urban renewal, improving the quality of life for the urban poor;
- Empowering the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, minorities, women and children socially, economically and educationally; and ensuring that, through public investment, the growth process spreads to backward regions and districts of our country

Local self-government, as elaborated in our Constitution, provides the essential means of reconciling 'accelerated growth' with 'inclusive growth'. We cannot secure inclusive growth without inclusive governance. The virtually three-fold increase in annual allocations to rural development and welfare, and the launching of new schemes like NREGA, BRGF and RTI, are inadequately impacting on inclusive growth because governance at the grassroots is still far from inclusive. Too large a proportion of the Centre's Rs.81, 000 crore per annum on rural development and welfare reaches the people - if it reaches them at all – through government-run or officially managed *silos*; too small a proportion of it is actually planned and implemented with the participation, involvement and supervision of village communities and their elected representatives. If Gram Sabhas are largely non-functional and most elected representatives (other than Panchayat Presidents) left uninvolved and, therefore, frustrated, this is because even as they see more and more money being poured into rural areas, they also see that much of it is beyond their control or responsibility. The overarching components of governance include (a) policy

formulation (b) implementation (c) monitoring and evaluation. If these three components are tightly packed there is little room for manipulation and corruption

That this should be so is an anomaly considering that the Constitution amendments have so firmly rooted Panchayati Raj in our system of governance that 3.2 million elected representatives, including 1.2 million women and well over 22% SC/ST (their estimated share in the rural population), are serving in the local bodies of our vibrantly democratic society at the grassroots. This anomaly is caused by:

(i) Inadequate effective devolution of functions, finances and functions by State legislatures/ governments to the Panchayati Raj Institutions; and

(ii) Inadequate provisions for planning and implementation by PRIs in the guidelines issued by Central Ministries for Centrally Sponsored and Central Sector schemes that directly impinge on inclusive growth.

It is important that Panchayat Raj be brought centre-stage as the principal governance reform to reinforce economic reform in such a manner as to secure inclusive growth. (Parallel measures of empowering the grassroots are required in those areas, many in the North-East, which the Constitution exempts from Panchayati Raj, such as the Sixth Schedule areas).

Activating and strengthening institutions of local self government calls for conformity to certain broad and generally well-accepted principles of institutional design. Holding of regular elections to local bodies; clarity in the functional assignments to different levels of local bodies in rural and urban areas; matching the devolution of functions with the concomitant devolution of funds and functionaries so that the devolved functions might be effectively performed; ensuring that elected representatives of local bodies effectively wield their powers; building capacity in local bodies to undertake planning; ensuring a healthy, constructive and mutually fruitful relationship between officials appointed by the State government and elected local bodies; and providing for collective decision-making through Gram and Ward Sabhas and holding the local body to account for their performance are some of the features of a good design for local self-government. In addition, it is important to create systems and institutions for planning and delivery of public services, including the creation of information systems, and for monitoring evaluation and ensuring accountability.

Inclusive Governance

Systems of decentralised governance in the NER show a wide diversity, unparalleled in any other region of the country. While the Panchayati Raj system fully covers two of the eight States of the Region - Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh - three other States - Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland - are entirely exempted and have their own local systems. The remaining three States - Assam, Tripura and Manipur - have both Panchayati Raj and non-Panchayati Raj areas existing side by side. Such diversity is as it should be, even though it makes local governance exceedingly complex, since it is based on the immense ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity seen in the region. However, a common feature of these diverse systems of self-governance is that all need strengthening. This is as true of NER as it is of most parts of the country.

Although Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and parts of Assam, Tripura and Manipur are covered under the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution, the extent of powers devolved upon Panchayats in these States is uneven. Sikkim has been adjudged the third best State in the country in the implementation of Panchayati Raj; Assam the best for Activity Mapping; Tripura and Manipur among the better States for their pattern of devolution; and Arunachal Pradesh has been commended for recent steps taken to move towards effective devolution. Yet, in all five States, there is considerable scope for advancing the cause of devolution. Happily, all five States are party to the 150 conclusions of the seven Round Table Conferences held in 2004 covering all 18 identified dimensions of Panchayati Raj, reinforced by Memoranda of Understanding or joint Statements of Conclusions signed by the Chief Minister and the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj in all five States, to reinforce the consensual action points of the Round Tables with State-specific Action Points. The accelerated implementation by the State and Central Governments of these agreed points of action will contribute greatly to securing inclusive growth through inclusive

governance in the North-East Region.

Strengthening Inclusive Governance for Inclusive Growth

The Arunachal Pradesh Activity Mapping order 2007 was released by the Chief Minister, Arunachal Pradesh on 25th October, 2007 and the executive order for devolution of 29 subjects of Activity Mapping was issued on 21st February, 2008. The executive order was issued for devolution of 29 subjects covering 20 departments. There is overlap of some of the functions devolved to different tiers of Panchayats and more clarity is required in terms of specifying the functions in terms of policy, planning, implementation, coordination/ control devolved to different tiers. It is observed that principle of subsidiarity has not been adhered to while preparing the Activity Mapping. The functionaries of the line departments have not been transferred to Panchayats as yet although the Directorate of Panchayati Raj has initiated the process in consultation with the concerned line Departments.

Assam has 21 districts covered under Part IX of the Constitution and some areas fall under the 6th Schedule. Government of Assam issued a notification dated 25th June, 2007 through which functions, functionaries and funds in respect of 23 subjects were devolved to the three tiers of the Panchayats i.e. Zilla Parishad, Aanchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayat. The responsibilities for each tier are clearly demarcated and these have been distributed according to the capacity of each level of Panchayat. The Activity Mapping also indicates in detail the staff transferred to the Panchayats and heads of accounts from which funds will be drawn for the activities assigned to the Panchayats. However, elections to the Panchayats in Assam were held with some gap in December 2007 and it is still to be seen whether the notification regarding Activity Mapping is effectively implemented.

Manipur Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 details the devolution of functions to the PRIs, all the subjects listed in Schedule 11 of the Constitution have been devolved to the PRIs. The Activity Mapping approved by the State Cabinet in September 2005 lists only 16 of these subjects. The activities transferred to the ZPs as well as the GPs relate only to identification of beneficiaries, supervision and monitoring, etc. Even though additional tasks have been devolved, no funds and functionaries have been devolved. The State Government has undertaken to transfer all functionaries along with functions and finances to the Panchayats and to frame rules for Panchayat based cadres of technical and other support services recruited at the Panchayat level. However, there is no visible progress in this regard.

In Tripura Activity Mapping was completed in 2005. This covers 29 subjects mentioned in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution and applies to 21 departments. The Government of Tripura has taken a decision to implement the Activity mapping in phases. Till now, Irrigation Schemes, Primary Schools, Institutions relating to WCD have been transferred to the Panchayats through executive orders. The devolution of functionaries is to be patterned on the lines of Activity Mapping. The functionaries of five subjects, for which functions have devolved, have been transferred to Panchayats. Panchayats have the power to recommend payment of salary, transfer, grant of leave and disciplinary action over these functionaries. Their work is reviewed by Panchayats. However, overall controlling authority is still with the line departments and the State has not discontinued further recruitment of staff after devolving functionaries to Panchayats.

Sikkim has completed their activity mapping. Sikkim's Activity Mapping includes detailed assignment of funds to Panchayats as also precise details of the officials who will be attached to each Panchayat for the performance of devolved activities.

Equally, all five States will need to clearly identify those budgetary line items that ought to go to the Panchayats and separately earmark them through a Panchayat sector window in the budgets of the relevant State line departments to ensure the flow of funds for undertaking devolved activities to the Panchayats. Functionaries will need to be devolved to that level of the Panchayati Raj system to which any given activity has been assigned in the Activity Map, in conformity with the pattern of devolution of functions and finances. All these are works in progress and the progress recorded in the last few years has been encouraging. The stage is, therefore, well and truly set for inclusive growth through inclusive governance provided this is prioritized and followed through assiduously and conscientiously.

Institutionalizing participative planning from the grassroots level upwards to culminate in the preparation of a district plan is another key step in the strengthening

of Panchayats. As mandated in the Constitution, District Planning Committees (DPCs) are required to be elected to the extent of 80 per cent of the membership by and from amongst the elected members of the district level Panchayat (Zilla Parishad) and the Municipalities within a district. Although most states falling under Part IX of the Constitution have now constituted DPCs, the states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya are yet to get into this exercise. However, in Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, some issues relating to the composition of the DPCs, owing to the special circumstances of these States, still remain to be clarified. The district plan must emerge from plans prepared by each village Panchayat, intermediate Panchayat, district Panchayat, and municipality for their respective geographical areas and functional competencies. To this end, State governments need to clearly inform Panchayats at each level (and the Municipalities) of the resources likely to be available and the activities entrusted to them. DPCs are entrusted the responsibility to "consolidate" these panchayat/ nagarpalika plans into a draft district development plan and forward it to the State Government.

The NER States concerned have commenced the process of district planning through the Panchayats in BRGF districts. However, steps will need to be taken to ensure that these guidelines are fully followed and district planning becomes established as a practice in all districts in the NER.

Governance Reforms in NER areas exempted from Panchayati Raj

All of Meghalaya and Mizoram, and large tracts of Tripura, come under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. Nagaland and the hill areas of Manipur are governed by similar arrangements through State legislation. Such special arrangements are aimed at the protection of tribal areas and interests, by mandating district or regional local self-government institutions for them through Constitutional arrangements or State legislation. These institutions have been entrusted with the twin tasks of i) protecting tribal culture and customs and ii) undertaking development tasks. However, the Autonomous Developmental Councils which are supposed to establish responsive administrations and undertake development-planning functions with the maximum participation of the people are yet, like their Panchayati Raj counterparts, to fulfill their role effectively.

In order to maximize people's participation in governance and to chart out a clear roadmap to involve these institutions in grass-roots planning, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj appointed an Expert Group on Planning for the Sixth Schedule Areas and those areas not covered by Parts IX and IX-A of the Constitution, again under the Chairmanship of Shri V. Ramachandran.

The Expert Group on Grassroots Planning has suggested a series of sequential steps for building the district plan from the village level upwards. First, a district vision setting out the goals and outcomes for the next 10-15 years will need to be fashioned through participative processes starting from the grassroots level upwards. Each planning unit starting from Gram Panchayat and municipalities in areas covered by Parts IX and IX-A of the Constitution (and Village Development Committees in areas covered by Schedule VI of the Constitution and similar other areas discussed above) should articulate the vision and set out the goals and outcomes in terms of human development indicators, infrastructure development and development in the productive sectors of the economy based on the physical and human resources.

While the Constitution leaves it, of course, to the States to determine the nature, direction and pace of devolution, the Centre could greatly accelerate and rationalise this process by adapting the guidelines of Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the principal source of funding for PRIs, to ensure the centrality of PRIs in the planning and implementation of these schemes in conformity with the letter and spirit of Parts IX and IXA of the Constitution.

A crying need is to incentivise the States to further empower their PRIs, as also to incentivise PRIs to be transparent and accountable in their transactions, besides steadily contributing an increased share of their expenditure from resources that they themselves mobilise. Hence the key significance of the following passage from the Eleventh Plan:"The Eleventh Plan recognises that there is a need to build in incentives that will encourage the States to devolve functions, funds and functionaries to the PRIs. In order to capture the extent to which this process and empowerment of PRIs has actually progressed in a State, a suitable devolution Index will be developed and will be called the

PRI-Empowerment Index." (para 1.148).

There is the imperative need to make available untied block grants to the PRIs so that they have an adequate reservoir of financial resources which they themselves, without let or hindrance from outside, can plan and implement for neighbourhood economic development and social justice, as envisaged in Parts IX and IXA, in particular Article 243 G read with Article 243 ZD. The 13th Finance Commission has a golden opportunity to build on the tentative beginnings of its predecessor Commissions by raising, block untied non-Plan grants, particularly for the maintenance of community assets and improved service delivery, by increasing the 12th Finance Commission grant to the local bodies of Rs.20,000 crore for the entire cycle of its recommendations to at least Rs.20,000 crore a year.

We continue to rely heavily on a creaking bureaucratic delivery system, fashioned into administrative silos insulated one from the other, that has proved over six decades to be quite unequal to the task of delivering development. The Eleventh Five Year Plan says (para 4.70):"The DRDAs (District Rural Development Agencies, the bureaucratic arm of the Ministry of Rural Development) in their current form and content do not appear to have the requisite wherewithal to handle a complex issue such as poverty. The current administrative set up at the national level is unequal to a large task such as poverty elimination across geographical and social complexity…"

Not bureaucratic development but participative development – that is, grassroots development through grassroots democracy - is our imperative need. The path to such development was charted through the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution, which resulted in the present Part IX ('The Panchayats') and Part IXA ('The Municipalities'). In these two Parts of the Constitution we have the key to Inclusive Growth through Inclusive Governance. For Inclusive Growth, we need to hitch the horse of accelerated growth to the wagon of participative development. ❑

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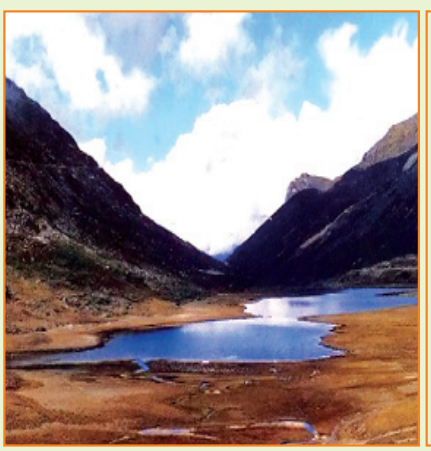
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ARUNACHAL PRADESH



















The Future of Modern India

J J Singh



Arunachal Pradesh will rise from the East as a new star and become one of the best regions of our country

IT is indeed a matter of pride for the people of Arunachal Pradesh that one of the most prestigious magazines like 'Yojana' is going to have a special issue on Arunachal Pradesh. My heartiest thanks to the Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and hope that this will prove to be a great opportunity to showcase the rich Arunachal Panorama.

I represent the easternmost and frontier state of our country, Arunachal Pradesh, which is rightly called as land of rising sun. We have common borders with Bhutan, China and Myanmar. The outside world has inadequate knowledge of this land of enchanting beauty and peace loving, patriotic and sincere tribal people.

From where the mountains rise from the plains of Assam stretching northwards and eastwards to the boundaries with China Bhutan and Myanmar, lies Arunachal Pradesh. Once referred as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), Arunachal Pradesh is the largest among all the North-eastern states. Amongst our States, Arunachal has the longest international borders of 1863 kms. (Indo-China 1126 kms, Indo-Myanmar 520 kms and Indo-Bhutan 217 kms) Most of the border areas are still in the vicious circle of poverty, under-development, separation and isolation because of their remoteness and the rugged terrain, which has made connectivity a major challenge. It is twice as big as Switzerland or Denmark. The state is home to 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub tribes living in 3857 villages spread across 83743 sq kms. The population density at 13 per sq kms is the least in the country and for some of the districts like Dibang Valley it is as low as one person per sq kms. Arunachal Pradesh has a complex hill system with varying elevations from the Assam plains to 7000m, traversed by numerous river valleys and is a part of the great Himalayan Eco-System. It

The author is Governor of Arunachal Pradesh.

is recognized as one of the 18 Biodiversity " Hot Spots" in the world. The State possesses myriad types of life forms co-existing in diverse ecological situations in their pristine glory. As per State of Forest Report 2005 published by FSI (Forest Survey of India), the Arunachal Pradesh occupies 2.54% of total geographical area of the country but contributes 10.01% of country's forest cover. Arunachal Pradesh is maintaining 81.46% of forest cover against stipulated 66% forest cover for hill states.

From the flora point of view, there are more than 5000 species of flowering plants, 600 species of orchids, 89 species of bamboos, 18 species of canes, 400 species of ferns, 24 species of gymnosperms and equally high number of unexplored algae, fungi, lichen, bryophytes and microorganisms. Thus, this eastern Himalayan state harbors more than 33% of Indian total flora with unique Taxa and large number of genetic resources making it a "cradle of speciation" and center of origin of number of cultivated plants.

Faunistically, the state is also rich in having more than 213 mammals, 800 birds, 113 reptiles, 130 fishes and 7 non-human primates and innumerable species of insects, microorganisms and other life forms. Thus, the rich biodiversity in both flora and fauna has contributed to its recognition as one of the 18 Biodiversity Hot spots in the world.

The forest of Arunachal Pradesh is the rich source of various timbers and non-timber forest products including bamboo, cane, medicinal plants, orchids, thatch, broom grass resin etc. These resources are found throughout Arunachal Pradesh in various forest types.



Children at Tawang on 15th August in Arunachal Pradesh

My association with this mountain state goes back to the year 1981-83 when as a young Colonel I commanded a battalion in the Lohit sector of Arunachal Pradesh. Those years I must have trekked more than one thousand kilometres to reach to areas bordering China as well as Myanmar. Me and my family still cherish the fond memories of crossing rivers on elephant back, and love and affection of the local tribal people. I consider it a great honour that I am the constitutional head of this state and I am able to contribute towards the development of this state, which in true sense going through a very rapid and historical phase of development.

It is interesting to note that when the process of development in other states of our country started in the 19th century, Arunachal Pradesh, the then NEFT (North East Frontier Tract), was treated as Excluded or Un-administered area by the British Rulers. After independence the NEFT was converted into NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency), and till 1965 the Agency functioned under Ministry of External Affairs. Development is a phenomenon which started only after our independence, and subsequently gained some momentum after 1962.

Our State cannot be compared with any other part of the country. Prior to independence this area was seeped in poverty and illiteracy. At the dawn of independence we had only two schools with fifty students and almost zero literacy, rudimentary health infrastructure, no electricity or banks, and mere 100 kms of dirt roads!

Blessed with immense natural resources in the form of Hydro-power, horticulture, forest, mines and minerals we remained poor amidst plenty! Though, every day we receive the first sun rays in our country, we are the last to see the rays of development!

Planned economic development started with the First Five Year Plan outlay of Rs 3.00 crore only. During the last 45 years, we have achieved a fair amount of progress. Today we have 18000 kms of road, around three thousand schools with more than 3 lakhs students, around 500 health institutions and so on! Of course, when compared with the developed states, we lag far behind. Our road density at 21.9 km per 100 sq kms is the least in the country, our index of social and economic infrastructure at 69.71 (As per EFC, 2000) is also the least in the country. In one of the studies CMIE has also ranked Arunachal as the lowest with the Infrastructure Index of only 0.44. Even today, 34 of our administrative centres and 2741 habitations (around 76%) of villages, are not connected by all weather roads, more than 50% of villages do not have electricity and safe drinking water supply. This will soon change for better.

Today I am reminded of Hon'ble Prime Minister's statement during the Combined Commander's Conference in October 2006. Quote 'A critical aspect of our policy must be the rapid development of infrastructure in our border areas. This is now recognized to have major implications not only for our internal security but also as a force multiplier when it comes to our external security.' During independence Day speech on 15th August 2005 Hon'ble Prime Minister said that 'we will ensure that these (border) regions are provided basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity and telephone connectivity in the next 3-4 years',

This philosophy was then converted into a mega economic package for the State of Arunachal Pradesh which he has announced on his maiden visit to Itanagar on 31st January 2008. It is worth mentioning that it was only after 12 long years, the Prime Minister of India had visited this frontier state. In his speech at Itanagar, Hon'ble Prime Minister chalked out the strategy for the development for my state when he said that

Quote 'Today we have a definite strategy for the development of Arunachal Pradesh. There are four main areas where we need to work if we have to ensure rapid development of the state

- The state needs good connectivity with the rest of the country through roads, railways and air-ports.
- There is a need for good infrastructure within the state- roads, power and drinking water.
- The people of Arunachal Pradesh need much better educational and health facilities.
- And most importantly, the state needs all round economic development- in tourism, in food processing, in large scale power projects.' Unquote

The Hon'ble Prime Minister's visit was an event of historical significance. Various important developmental programmes of over Rs, 20000 crore have been announced by the Prime Minister. The Hon'ble Prime Minister's initiatives such as Trans-Arunachal Highway, 2 lane connectivity to all the district headquarters, four lane connectivity to Itanagar, border village illumination programme, connection of 513 habitations by roads under PMGSY, green-field airport at Itanagar, rail connectivity for Capital region, operationalising 09 old air-strips etc are revolutionary as far as the betterment of socio-economic profile of this state is concerned. The recently announced bridges over river Brahmaputra in Assam will also be of immense value to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

This is not the first time that the region got such an economic package. But this time institutional arrangement set up by the Prime Minister's Office speaks about the commitment of the Central Government about speedy implementation. At the State level, I am deeply involved in the monitoring of the progress on various projects. Many times the State Government has requested me to use my good office to pursue the cases with the Central Ministries. I am happy to mention that in last seven months, I have toured entire Arunachal covering all three borders that is Bhutan, China and Myanmar and also had more than 40 meetings with the union ministers and secretaries. We have instituted a mechanism of six-monthly conference of all ministers and senior officers, yearly conference of deputy commissioners, where the Chief Minister and I undertake a joint review of performance and progress. Further, we have constituted a state level monitoring committee to monitor the progress on various schemes under the package. All



Adi Dance of Arunachal Pradesh

the relevant information has also been hosted on the official web-site. The State Government is also happy with the fact that at Centre, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister is conducting regular review meetings.

However, I strongly feel that the major projects will take few years to come. But immediate need of this hour is to provide the sustainable income generating activities to the common people, especially the youth. I am a very strong advocate of tourism and horticulture as areas of economic empowerment for the younger generation. I have also initiated a 'Honey Mission' for the state of Arunachal with a dream to make my state as the largest producer of honey in few years time. Some of the activities like tourism, fruit production, floriculture including orchid flowers, organic farming, handloom and handicrafts, bamboo based industries; etc can generate lot of wealth for the indigenous people. If I am to ask to list areas where Arunachal has advantage, I will name three, tourism, hydropower and horticulture!

Of late the State has begun the process of harnessing the 55000 MW hydropower potential by inviting the Central Public Sector Undertakings and the private sector. This itself will give us a revenue to the tune of three to four thousand crore per year after 2015 thereby reducing our dependency on the center for funding our developmental projects. I am also happy that the State Government has also carried out many reforms in the planning and financing process, results of which will be visible very shortly.

At this juncture I would like to stress upon the importance of border area development. The PM's package has addressed many of our long pending requirements. With the growing aspirations of the younger generations, there is a significant movement and migration of people from the remote border areas

to foot-hills leaving the borders depopulated. Having a depopulated border will be a great disadvantage from the strategic point of view. Hence, we have to develop the border areas so that the local people continue to stay there. The Planning Commission's task force on the Border area development has rightly pointed out the same. Let me tell the planners of this country that the money spent in this frontier state is not expenditure, but is an investment, and hence please do not apply the theoretical outdated 'cost-benefit' formula here. A pro-active, resource based and time bound strategy for the development of border areas of Arunachal Pradesh should be the foremost priority of our Government's at the State and the Centre. And we do now realize the growing importance given by the Central Government to our state. Of course with the growing attention , the state has initiated many reforms in the administrative mechanism.

We have to invest a lot in constructing roads in the border areas. The task force on border area development has recommended a two lane highway along the border (not exactly parallel to the border) and we endorse the same. The State PWD has prepared a concept paper for 2042 kms of new roads and 1750 kms of upgardation .Around 500 kms of road will also be required in addition to all above to connect important hydro-power basins. I strongly believe that the roads are like arteries through which the blood of development flows. Due to lack of roads, our schools are without teachers, our hospitals are without doctors and our ration shops without food-grains. We should also have a programme for connecting remote villages by good quality foot suspension bridges.

One of the most important areas where the border areas lag behind is the tele-communications. Few months back I had met Hon'ble Minister for Communication and briefed him about the fragile tele-communication system in Arunachal Pradesh. I appealed him for the immediate need of having good mobile connectivity in border blocks and providing reliable internet access at the circle headquarters. Purely, the commercial angle should not be the criteria for such remote area of our country. A lot can be done using the funds under Universal Social Obligations (USO).

The Look East Policy(LEP) forms an important aspect of border management for Arunachal Pradesh. Opening of trade-routes with China appears to be some what difficult at this juncture, but we must vehemently push the proposal for opening trade route to Myanmar through Pangsau Pass and to Bhutan through Bleeting. Though at this moment the trade may not be of that volume, but I am sure that within few years it will pick up. I have strongly advocated that the road leading to the border areas such as Pangsau Pass, Bumla should be of world class. Lot has been written and spoken about the cultural linkage of the NER with the South East Asia. Now the time has come to cash in on this advantage. This cultural continuum can serve as the base for the developing the foreign policy in general and border trade in particular. In fact, to be brief, in order to make LEP successful, what we need today is a very strong and innovative foreign policy backed by the massive dose in infrastructure building coupled with strong defence policy, internal security policy and international trade policy.

In one of the articles in Telegraph on January 10th of this year, I have specifically said that 'look at the map with Guwahati or Shillong as the hub. If one were to draw an arc with 1000 kms of radius, the circle will encompass eight countries and also include cities like Kolkota, Dhaka, Varanasi, Kathmandu, Gangtok, Thinpu, Lhasa, Kunming, Mandalay, Chittagong and the border areas of Vietnam, Laos and Thiland. Therefore this area assumes geo-strategic importance as the land link between India and far east.'

I strongly believe that development is the lifeblood of any growing civilisation. I am happy that destiny has given me an opportunity to once more serve in this part of the country to achieve what I myself have thought and written before becoming Governor of Arunachal Pradesh.

We are confident that with synergised efforts we will be able to realise the Prime Minister's dream about Arunachal Pradesh when he said "Arunachal Pradesh will rise from the East as a new star and become one of the best regions of our country" ❑

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A Remarkable Journey

Dorjee Khandu



Peace is a prerequisite for development. Therefore, maintenance of proper law and order is a must for development

ARUNACHAL PRADESH is a mountainous Frontier State sharing its international borders with Myanmar, Bhutan and China and inhabited by 26 major tribes and over 110 sub-tribes. Each one of them has its distinct identity and cultural milieu. However, all of them identify themselves as Arunachalees and greet visitors with "Jai Hind" and with pride. In Arunachal Pradesh, both Hindi and Assamese are lingua francas.

Till 1947, when India became Independent, tribal habitations, people and their economic and cultural space were secluded from rest of the world. The prevailing principle of their development was to segregate them in some kind of reservation and leave them on their own. The Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873 enacted by the British, restricted the entry of people from rest of India in Arunachal Pradesh (the then NEFA) without the permission of the Government.

With the passage of time, some Arunachalee tribes inhabiting villages near Assam border came in contact with soldiers, a few explorers and British land survey parties and some traders. An occasional Political Officer or two visited villages to settle land disputes. All tribes lived in villages. The social unit was the patriarchal family.

It was a time when Arunachalees sought security in life by raising harvests with community labour through shifting cultivation and hunting in forests and fishing in rivers. Their mobility was restricted due to complete absence of communication facility. Inter-village rivalry also restricted their movement. Infant mortality rate was very high, people often died

The author is Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh.

young for want of preventive and curative medical services, weaker tribes had to pay tribute to the strong, slavery and other social evils like child marriage were prevalent in some tribes. At material level life was not easy. But they endured physical sufferings with courage and zest for life with a smile.

After Independence, contacts of Arunachalees with outside people and agencies increased. And Indian Government took an enlightened and humane view of its tribal people. In respect of tribes of North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), now Arunachal Pradesh, the Government of India policy was not to isolate them but to help preserve their skills, customs, institutions and traditional values in which they tended to surpass the urbanized, modern segment of the population.

We, Arunachalees owe much to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Smt. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi for our cultural and political evolution. It was Nehru, who enunciated the guiding principles of development process in Arunachal Pradesh immediately after Independence, which helped us protect our cultural identity. Politically, North East Frontier Agency gained the status of Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. Arunachal Pradesh attained statehood in 1987, when Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister.

Arunachalees like most of the tribal communities world over are ingenious. They constructed cane bridges to cross rivers, used their traditional knowledge of medicinal plants to treat diseases, constructed beautiful homes by using local expertise, which suited their worldview. They protected the environment and produced beautiful artifacts using natural materials and women provided hand-woven clothes in exquisite designs.

In just over five decades the interaction of our people with outside world and introduction to innovations of the new world and particularly the developmental efforts of the Central Government and the State Government have taken the tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh from the status of hunter gatherer stage to the user of microchips. At the time of Independence, there was only one primary school and that too was located near Arunachal-Assam border. There were no roads, no radio and hardly any Arunachalee ventured outside the state. But people were happy. They were ecosystem-people. Every village was a self-sustaining unit. Now we have a university, many colleges, hundreds of schools, road networks of thousands of kms, a number of public health centres, hospitals, radio station, cable TV, helicopter service and other amenities of modern world and a considerable section of people has since urbanized.

There are still some villages which have no surface connectivity. It takes between 4 to 5 days of foot march to reach to the nearest motorable point. Children of those villages have seen helicopters but not the motor cars. In Arunachal Pradesh old and new co-exists.

With the initiation of the development process, the traditional economies of Arunachal Pradesh in pre-independence era has transited to cash economy at a fast pace in post-independence period. However, in absence of development of its vast natural resources, the financial resource base has remained poor. And therefore, Arunachal Pradesh is largely depended on Central Government funding for meeting its development demands.

The main stumbling blocks in the path of development of Arunachal Pradesh are poor communication infrastructure and lack of finances to develop state's vast natural resources. My Government has successfully drawn the attention of Government of India to the necessity of filling the infrastructure gaps in strategically located Arunachal Pradesh. And to our much happiness Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India during his recent visit to our State announced a development package which among many other schemes included construction of 1846 kms two-lane Trans Arunachal Highway from Tawang to Tirap, construction of four-lane Highway to connect Itanagar, Harmuty-Itanagar railway line (32 km) to provide rail

connectivity to the State capital. Greenfield Airport at Itanagar, operationalisation of airports at Pasighat, Aalo, Daporijo, Ziro and Tezu, daily helicopter service between Guwahati and Tawang. The Prime Minister's package is being implemented with all sincerity of purpose and we hope to complete all the projects within the stipulated time period.

As I mentioned, Arunachal Pradesh is endowed with vast natural resources. It has huge hydropower potential of over 57,000 MW, substantial deposits of oil, natural gas, coal, Dolomites, Limestone etc., forest wealth is magnificent with its phenomenal biodiversity, beautiful landscapes, verdant hills, gurgling rivers and salubrious climate provide tremendous potential for the development of tourism sector, wide altitudinal variations with conducive edaphic factors present ideal condition for raising a variety of horticultural produce. However, the vast natural resources the State is blessed with are yet to be converted into goods and services for economic development of the State.

It is worth mentioning that Arunachal Pradesh has over 81% of its area under forest cover. Till 1996, forests used to be the major source of revenue to the State. Following the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and the National Forest Policy, we have reduced forest harvesting drastically and giving preference to conservation of forest over its harvesting, though it hurts us most the State's financial resource and economy. Though Arunachal Pradesh occupies 2.54% of total geographical area of the country, it contributes 10.01% of India's forest cover. Over 12.5% of forest cover constitutes Protected Area Network (PAN) in Arunachal Pradesh as against country's PAN of 4.5%.

In the above context, the burden of setting apart over 81% area of the State for serving ecological and environmental interests, which restricts severely the land use for development and economic activities in the State, needs to be appreciated. Arunachal Pradesh deserves to be compensated or I may say, rewarded with "Green Bonus" for its vast natural forests act as Carbon Sink reducing the build up of Green House Gases in the atmosphere and restricting global warming to some extent.

Government policies lay the foundation for development in any society. My Government has reviewed the existing Hydro Power Policy and Industrial Policy paving the way for development of huge Hydro Power potential and Industrial development in the State. In order to cause minimum distress to displaced and project affected families in the wake of development of hydro power projects on a large scale, the State Government has formulated "Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2008". The Policy not only guarantees adequate compensation to the project affected families, but also takes care of their livelihoods.

Peace is a prerequisite for development. Therefore, maintenance of proper law and order is a must for development. On the other hand, if development does not take place, law and order situation is bound to deteriorate.

The perception of outside people including investors about law and order situation in the North Eastern Region is generally that the Region is affected by terrorism and violence, which is not true in case of Arunachal Pradesh. Investors shy away from the Region including Arunachal Pradesh.

The perception of investors is not totally unfounded. The recent serial blasts in Assam are a case in point. If there is bandh in Assam, which is very frequent, Arunachal has to suffer as Assam is the gateway to Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, there is an urgent need to have a regional strategy to curb the menace of insurgency. We must realize that the problem of any state in the region particularly Assam is going to affect all the states of the Region.

Arunachalees are a patriotic lot. There have never been any unpatriotic or separatist sentiments amongst them. Though Northeast has been associated with insurgency, Arunachal Pradesh, by and large, is considered peaceful. But over the last seventeen years various insurgent groups have been

trying to establish their supremacy in the districts adjoining Nagaland and Assam. There is no home grown insurgency in Arunachal Pradesh. Though the insurgents do not have any permanent camps in the State, they use forests in Arunachal Pradesh as corridors for going to Myanmar. They continue to use jungle routes and porous borders for their movements. In order to check free movement of insurgents, it is necessary to seal the border routes being used by them particularly in two districts of Arunachal Pradesh bordering Myanmar and Nagaland. We need to strengthen and increase deployment of Army to contain activities of insurgents/militants in border districts of Arunachal Pradesh adjoining Assam and Nagaland.

My Government supports the view that inclusive development can take place only through Panchayati Raj Institutions. Therefore, we are taking suitable measures to strengthen all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj viz. Zilla Parishads, Anchal Samities and Gram Sabha for their effective functioning under the able guidance of Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, Hon'ble Union Minister, Panchayati Raj and DoNER.

From geo-economic point of view, Northeast Region is considered gateway to South-East Asian countries. Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh himself had announced that North East, particularly Arunachal Pradesh could serve as the gateway to South East Asia, where 50 per cent of world's rich live. India's Look East Policy aimed at integration of the Region with the thriving market across the borders. It is admitted that the future of the Northeast lies in political integration with India and economic integration with Southeast Asia. In order to realize this vision we need to pursue the Look East Policy vigorously.

As of now we are depended on Central Government for funding of our development projects, but by the year 2020, when Hydro Power Projects under various stages of construction are commissioned and its vast oil & natural gas reserves are exploited, Arunachal Pradesh will be a self-sustaining State. ❑

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YE-12-08/10

Planning for the North East

B K Chaturvedi



The economy of the region, which otherwise feels constricted, can expand and grow at a fast pace, if border trade is undertaken

THE REGION of the Northeast is opening up with massive investment in infrastructure development – roads, power, rail and airports. Plan expenditure is expected to grow to 2.00 lac crore, nearly 2.5 times of the Tenth Plan. Public Sector companies - NHAI, NHPC, ONGC, Oil India - are investing resources in the area. Effective and easy communication will generate interest in the industry. Investment in power projects will provide surplus power in the region. Efforts are on to develop the service sector in the region. A parallel exercise of 'Look East Policy' is providing integration with the rest of South-Asia. An effective project implementation capability and capacity building in the region is critical to the success of these efforts. The next two decades will see major economic transformation in the region.

As India moves its determined march towards an inclusive and rapid growth, the strategy for growth in the northeast region has also undergone major shift. An area slightly less than one-tenth of the country and people which are only 4%, the region offers special challenges for growth. There are major constraints. Nearly two-thirds of the region is covered with forest, whose direct exploitation is feasible only consistent with ecological and environmental requirements. Its connectivity with the rest of the country is only through a 20 km stretch. The altitude varies substantially. The terrain is tough and development of infrastructure has costs. Over a period of years, insurgent activities in certain parts of the region have led to poor security environment. Both public and private investors do not find it an attractive destination, in view of these issues.

The author is, Member, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Region offers enormous potential for growth. It has huge potential for development of floriculture and horticulture. Assam has potential for tea and Tripura has shown good possibilities of rubber. Ginger, pineapple, passion fruits, orange, turmeric, cashew, banana, all have excellent potential. The productivity of paddy in Assam and Manipur is low and can be stepped-up. The region consumes huge amount of eggs, which it can produce if the poultry industry can be developed. The same is true of fishes, for which it has potential. Several areas of the region are producing crude oil and gas. In fact, Assam was one of the earliest areas in the world to indicate possibilities of crude oil development. Nagaland and Arunachal have also shown a good potential in petroleum production. There are deposits of coal and limestone in Meghalaya, which can be exploited. Though in small quantities, there is possibility of uranium – mining too - in parts of Meghalaya. Development of all these natural resources can generate huge economic activities.

One of the most important resource of the region is hydel power. Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim can generate more than 60 thousand MW hydel power. In addition, large areas in the hills can also generate micro-hydel power for use in the region itself. As many of these projects develop, it will be important to plan for evacuation of power. This will require major investments and, since the transmission network has to be built up only once, a strategy will have to be worked out to evacuate power through an economically viable model. A result of this emphasis is that during the next five years, nearly 6000 mw of capacity is expected to be established, which is 15-20 times more than what was attained in 10th Plan. Development of hydel power will require careful planning from another perspective. An appropriate mix between run of the river and storage reservoirs will have to be developed. This will need to be coordinated with the flood protection measures. Given the sensitivity of the region for earthquakes, it will require appropriate supportive safeguards. There are inter-state issues which will have to be discussed and resolved. The stake-holders must realize the major benefits from such storage reservoirs. Environmentally and ecologically, these will have to be sustainable. As projects develop, it will be possible to have measures for meeting the objectives of larger power generation and flood protection consistent with ecological and environmental concerns.

There are excellent possibilities for development of tourism in the region. The States offer huge variety in terms of culture, scenic beauty, terrain and climate. There are a number of lakes, huge river bodies and the tribal culture offers enormous potential. Each region has its own history. The famous Tawang Monastery, number of old manuscripts, trekking, river rafting are all available options. The art and dance of Manipur has travelled throughout the country and on international fora. What is required, however, is better connectivity, highly improved infrastructure and facilities for tourists to avail these. One of the important limitations in the region is the Inner Line Permit; the issue has to be reviewed.

Bamboo offers huge possibilities in the region. Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland and number of other States have excellent bamboo plantation which can be used for small-scale household projects and production of paper. It is extensively used in the region as construction material. Its exploitation will require opening up of the region with a road network. A number of roads under PMGSY have been built. Unfortunately, the capacity to undertake these works in the region is limited. Larger attention is now being paid to this.

One of the growth areas during the Eleventh Plan is Service Sector. A strength of the region is its population, lot of whom are English speaking and can easily work in different service sectors. The field of nursing, paramedics, BPO, hospitality industry, tourism, IT are some areas where excellent possibilities exist. The levels of literacy are, at the moment, only slightly above the national average. However, cultural practices provide good opportunities for women

to undertake work. Development of training institutions in the above areas can lead to creation of employment and a general integration with other parts of the country.

The Oil and Gas Sector offers excellent opportunities for developing the region and set up industries. So far, after the initial finds, Oil India and ONGC have had little degree of success in finding oil and some gas. Explorations are going on in new blocks. These new discoveries in blocks will provide additional resources, employment opportunity during exploration and drilling of oilfields and possibilities for developing gas-based industries. Gas Authority of India is developing a plant in the region. Its completion will help develop petrochemical industry. Some of these products will be marketed in the region, while most of it will be sent to other States.

One of the biggest constraints for industrializing the region has been providing easy access for trade and movement of personnel. Since Tripura and Meghalaya have long border with Bangladesh and the Chittagong Port is hardly 60 kms. from the Indian boarder, there have been efforts in the past to access international market through Bangladesh. These arrangements have not succeeded. A new trade route is now being planned for providing connectivity. It is proposed to use the Kaladan River in Myanmar for providing transportation facilities of goods. The plan is to develop Sittwe Port in Myanmar. Goods from Haldia Port can move over to Sittwe. From there, the Kaladan River will provide access for some distance till Kaletwa. Thereafter, road to Mizoram and subsequent movement to other north-eastern States will provide an alternate access for movement to the region. The work on this initiative has already started. It is important that it is completed expeditiously.

While planning for growth, the critical issue is financial investment. The Eleventh Plan strategy is centered around increase in public sector investments and creating more favourable conditions and encouraging institutions for development of private Investments. The States have, so far, limited economic activity. Their own financial resource base is, therefore, quite narrow. This has necessitated larger devolution of Central funds. These, however, have to be supplemented with resources from public sector organizations and private sector industrial investments. The overall investment in the region has to be stepped-up several folds. During the Tenth Plan, the Central Ministries and the State Government's planned resources were nearly Rs.80,000 crore. During the Eleventh Plan, it is proposed to step these up to Rs.2 lakh crore. In addition, investments from other sources, including public sector organizations in oil, power and gas would further supplement this. Private investments in power and other resources would also add up. Construction of roads, development of airports and construction of rail would also entail financial resources for expansion of infrastructure. All these would increase the investments in the region. It is estimated by CMIE that share of the region has gone up to 1.2% of the all India investment (March, 2008) as against 0.8% in March, 2002. This trend needs further strengthening. The new Industrial Policy 2007 which offers alternative investment - subsidies and tax exemption - is likely to further strengthen this process.

One of the critical areas is development of connectivity through rail, road, air and waterways. It is planned to undertake a huge road development programme through the National Highway Authority. This will be supplemented by Border Road Organization and additional resources with the State Government. It is planned to connect Assam through a Rs.6,000 crore project, where a four-lane highway across the State is planned to be made. Work on this is already underway. It is also planned to develop all State Capitals with these highway and provide inter-state connectivity. A Special Accelerated Road Development Programme (SARDP) for North-East has been launched with this objective. As Phase-B of this Programme, it is also planned to connect all district roads with two-lane highway. Development of DPRs for this is already underway. Total investments in these programmes is estimated at Rs.43,000 crore.

A major initiative announced by the Prime Minister is a special package for Arunachal. As part of this package a highway across Arunachal from Tawang – going right up to the end of Arunachal Pradesh and crossing it – is being planned. A number of connecting roads are also part of this project. The objective is to provide infrastructure in Assam for easy movement of vehicles to enable faster growth. The total investment under these are estimated to be around Rs.32,000 crore. In addition, Assam highway and several other road projects are also being developed. The massive investment, now, has to be executed in the coming years. A part of it may be completed in the 11th Plan. However, nearly Rs.18,000 crore worth of projects are, at this moment, planned for the Twelfth Plan. The next ten years, thus, will see major change in the landscape of the region.

The rail connectivity is vital for opening up and faster movement. It is planned to connect all State Capitals with rail in the coming ten years. Also, all meter-gauge lines are being converted to broad-gauge and work on these has already been undertaken. The region has nearly 4% of the country's total railway lines. It is proposed to expand this to 5-6 per cent, initially. This offers enormous challenges for project execution. Scarcity of personnel, financial resources, non-viable nature of the operations and tough terrain all contribute to the difficulties. In the normal course, resources required for it may not be adequate, given the high cost of these projects. These areas also require development of several bridges across the large number of rivers. Bogibeel Bridge, which was being constructed for some time, may now get completed with financial resources having been tied up. There are other such bridges in the region too. A number of projects are being funded as national projects. Additional financial resources for others too are being planned. This process will need strengthening.

One of the most important initiatives taken in the plan has been development of air infrastructure. The region has 23 airports, of which 11 are non-operational. It is, now, planned to develop these airports, and it is hoped that by 2012 only 4 such airports will remain, which would need further development. In addition, Greenfield airports at Kokrajhar, Tawang, Chithu (Nagaland), Pakyong (Sikkim) and Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh) are also planned. Sikkim has remained unconnected with air services for a long time, in spite of provisions in the 12th Finance Commission to develop its air infrastructure. It is, now, proposed to develop this airport, for which a plan has already been finalized by Airport Authority. The demand for air services has resulted in its rapid expansion. The number of air services per week which was 87 in 2002 has expanded more than three-fold to 287 in 2007. As a result of expansion of facilities at Guwahati Airport, night-landing and usage till late in the night is being done. This has enabled an increase in passengers to the northeast. The passenger traffic has nearly doubled during 2004-05/2007-08. The helicopter services to Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura is already in operation through Pawanhans. During the 11th Plan, it is proposed to further strengthen the air services by expansion of airports. Air services also would have to be further expanded to new areas.

Waterways offer excellent potential for transport. It is comparatively less costly. The inland waterways have, therefore, been planned between Dhubri and Pandu in the river Brahmaputra. There is, however, a constant need for dredging to enable effective use of this mode in this, as well as Barak River. There are excellent possibilities for river transport with Bangladesh. It can offer highly competitive mode. Bilateral negotiations have to be firmed up to put the system in place to exploit this potential.

One of the biggest challenges in the region is project execution. The terrain, as mentioned above, is difficult and costs are high. There are security concerns Project implementation in these situations is difficult. Border Road Organisation, State PWDs, NHAI, Ministry of Railways, NHPC and other companies are undertaking major developmental activities. All these organizations will need

to develop effective management capabilities. Many of these are old organization and very experienced in their disciplines. Quite often security concerns have delayed implementation of the projects. A number of rail projects have also had problems due to lack of funds. Time-bound completion of Infrastructure development requires project execution capabilities and capacity building.

Arunachal Pradesh has special requirement. The State has a huge area - almost 32% of the northeastern region - and a small population, which is very spread out. The habitations are quite often at great distances. Delivery of education or health services to children poses serious difficulties. To provide public services in a cost effective manner is a management challenge. Providing electricity in many of these habitations is important. Micro hydel projects are doing this in several areas.

International trade with Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar and countries of South-East Asia is important for the region. There are a number of border land custom stations. Recently, a special arrangement of border trade has been made with China via Nathu La Pass in Sikkim. Traditionally, people in these areas have had contacts over ages. They have exchanged goods and small amount of border trade was beneficial for people in the region. It generated economic activity. There is need, now, to develop this process. The arrangements made with Government of China at Nathu La needs to be further strengthened. The list of commodities which can be traded under the agreement needs to be widened further. The infrastructure for selling the goods needs to be further strengthened on both sides. There are already efforts afoot to develop the Gangtok-Nathu La Road. This should help the process. These custom stations need huge investments and massive upgradation. The economy of the region, which otherwise feels constricted, can expand and grow at a fast pace, if border trade is undertaken. Such an upgradation will also require high quality connecting road network. ❑

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ADB to help Arunachal combat floods, erosion

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is providing additional technical assistance to help Arunachal Pradesh combat the devastating impact of floods and river erosion.

Arunachal Pradesh is in the Brahmaputra River Basin, one of the most flood-prone parts of the world, and the incidence of poverty in the State is higher than the national level.

Recurring flooding and river erosion affect large segments of the population, degrade the limited productive land and environment, and act as a disincentive for long-term investment in the State. As a result, economic growth is slowing and the incidence of poverty is increasing.

ADB will provide a $150,000 grant from its technical assistance funding program to help prepare the Integrated Flood and River Erosion Management Project - Arunachal Pradesh.

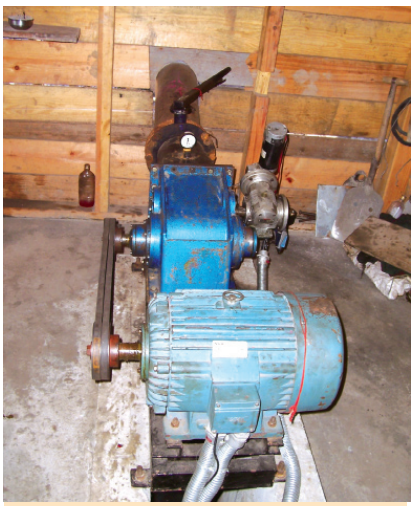
An additional $75,000 in co-financing will be supplied by the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, under the Water Financing Partnership Facility administered by ADB. The Fund's contributors include the governments of Australia, Austria, and Norway. The State Government will also provide financial help.

The fresh finance follows earlier technical assistance given by ADB to prepare the groundwork for the project, which is designed to help Arunachal Pradesh shore up its defenses against floods and erosion. It will help create programs as well as a policy and regulatory environment that enable State agencies to take integrated action in tackling these problems. ❑

(Courtesy : Newspapers)

Empowering the 'Power' Less

Prashant Lokhande



One feels proud to see such developments in extremely remote areas close to international border and gets great satisfaction to see smile on the faces of the villagers

ARUNACHAL PRADESH, with more than 55000 MW hydropower potential, will be known as the Power House of the country in few years time. In fact the experts say that the identified potential of 55000 MW is a conservative estimate and the actual potential may run into 70000 MW. Since past few years the State has taken up concerted efforts to harness this potential by inviting the central public sector undertakings as well as private players to participate in the process. The 2000 MW Lower Subansiri project and the 600 MW Kameng project will be commissioned by the end of eleventh five year plan. The State has its own Hydro Power Policy which guides the Government in the process of harnessing the power potential.

It is worth mentioning that though the State is late starter as far as harnessing the mega-potential, but for micro-hydel the process started way back in 1972. Over the years many micro-hydel stations came up illuminating important administrative headquarters. However, the entire process remained slow and tardy, for obvious reasons of geographical isolation and lack of infrastructure. From 1972 to 2007, the State has added only 35 MW through micro-hydels which is just 1MW per year. However, some 42 projects with capacity of 49 MW were languishing for years together for the various reasons. In the year 2007-08, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Shri Dorjee Kahndu approached the Planning Commission of India to provide a one time gap funding to complete these languishing ongoing projects. After a detailed study and field inspection by the team headed by Ms Jayati Chandra, Pr Advisor, Planning Commission of India, the project was approved and the state got gap funding of Rs. 169.11 crore under the Prime Minister's Package

The Author is Secretary Planning and Secretary to the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh.



One feels proud to see such developments in extremely remote areas

to complete these projects. It is also very encouraging to see the results on the ground. As on date the State has completed 14 projects and added 17 MW in just one single year, which is 17 times higher than the last 35 years average. By September 2009, we propose to add another 30 MW by completing the remaining projects.

When the State was busy in making modalities to harness the mega-potential, the North East Council's Pasighat Summit on Power Sector, under the chairmanship of Shri Mani Shanker Aiyar, Hon'ble Minister DoNER, spearheaded the attention towards harnessing the 1500 MW micro-hydel potential especially in the border areas. Taking the clue from the discussions, the state's Hydropower department under its secretary Shri T. Norbu with the approval of Hon'ble Chief Minister, developed a proposal under the name of 'Border Village Illumination Programme' for establishing series of micro-hydel in the border areas. The proposal envisages more than 100 micro-hydels to illuminate the border areas of Arunachal Pradesh. At the backdrop of this proposal, lies a strong foundation of a great success story carved by the District Administration and Department of Hydropower Development under the leadership of Shri P S Lokhande, IAS and Er R K Joshi, on the Indo-China border at Kaho in Anjaw district (erstwhile Lohit district), which is highlighted in the following paragraphs.

It was the shortest day of year, 21st December, and Arunachal Pradesh being the eastern most tip of the country the day was much shorter when sun light goes at 4.15 in evening. Jinu Meyor, 25 years, a resident of KAHO, the remotest village exactly on Indo-China border was attempting to convince the villagers in a dwarfed wooden house about the possibility of getting electricity through the small stream nearby under a dying Sun. Some twinkling lights on the other side of the boarder were adding the salt. He being a bonafied of the village and the government staff simultaneously was a little skeptical but yet confident too about the plan conceived by our Executive Engineer Shri R K Joshi and Deputy Commissioner P S Lokhande, IAS. Actually the villagers were sick of such proposals since years and habituated to live with the light of Sun and sleep with it. They were even not ready to part with the water of the stream as an apprehension to interfere with their village life as small farmers. They were not ready to extend help and we were committed to get a nod, which ended with a hard bargain that their irrigation and drinking water system shall not be disturbed. During the day some of them heard saying that let us not waste time on things, which are not possible. But nobody realized that it was a beginning of a success story……a success when a political will, developmental administration and engineering skills are coupled together can only deliver the best!

Some way they were correct also since constructing a Hydro Project in such a remote area is truly a challenging task. Earlier times also efforts are made but conceded due the remoteness of site. But the same remoteness was the catalytic factor for the Governmental Agencies.

On achieving the basic foundation ready in terms of villager's big Yes and covering sanction, the field work was to be planned meticulously because even a mismatch of few Centimeter of measurement in pre fabricated

items and difference of millimeter in foundation may make the whole process un-ending. Er R K Joshi did an excellent job! The morale of the team needed in the highest, to make things possible in such remote place where a nail or screw is as difficult as aero-plane or satellite. The concept got recognition on 18th Jan'05 as sanction order for execution and startup contribution money of Rs1.00 lakhs was assured.

There was hardly any time left before the rains, which normally knocks the door in February. All difficult situations like shortage of funds, shortage of staffs, remoteness of site, adverse weather conditions and conditional acceptance of villagers were dragging the momentum built only on one strength of " Abhi nahin to kabhi nahin".

Work started amidst of communication disruption and delayed delivery of the equipment, but the biggest problem of taking peripherals to other side of mighty Lohit river through a hanging foot suspension bridge of 230 mtrs length …in fact a real pendulum….. was life time experience. By the end of February it was satisfying that the idea started taking shape on ground, and the crucial works were done with unmatched precision to make things happen in one shot. Morale of the team was all time high on the placement of equipment exactly on the foundation kept ready. Few days left for the curing were not less then years and villagers started purchasing electrical gadgets to get connected with the rest of the country day-to-day basis.

The 24th April,05 was the day where the pains dissimilated with the gain of first site of beam coming from the bulb in perfect hours of dusk. Villagers were not believing that their days of dark nights are over and they can husk the rice here itself for which they used to go miles. The smile on a wrinkled man's face and gratitude in the swollen eyes was the reward we can never equate. The moment is still alive in our heart and will go with me.



One gets great satisfaction to see smile on the faces of the villagers

The project was since then handed over to the village community who themselves are running and maintaining it smoothly since last two years. The project has also benefited our soldiers guarding the border as their out post is also now electrified! The administration has also provided a DTH and TV and thus villagers are now connected to the modern world!

Very recently I, as Secretary to Governor and Secretary Planning trekked for 14 kilometers to the last Indian village, Gelling on the Indo-China border in the Siang Valley. There also a small 50 KW project has been commissioned which will provide electricity to two border villages. Very shortly Aruanchal Pradesh Governor will be visiting this remote border village on foot and inaugurate the project. A similar project is commissioned at Singha in Upper Siang district which requires four days foot march to reach from the nearest road head. One feels proud to see such developments in extremely remote areas close to international border and gets great satisfaction to see smile on the faces of the villagers. In fact, a silent revolution is being undertaken in Aruanchal to illuminate the various border villages. ❑

(Email : arunachali@yahoo.com)

The Story of North East Vision 2020

Jayanta Madhab



There is now a Vision for the North Eastern region. The Eleventh Plan has included most of the proposals and provided ample resources to implement them

PREPARATION OF Vision or Long Term Plan is nothing new in India. Started with the Congress initiated Bombay Plan in mid forties of the last century, followed by the First Five Year Plan in 1951 and series of Plans thereafter produced short term visions. Scientist and Former President Dr. Abdul Kalam's India 2020; A Vision for the New Millennium, published in 1998, had a twenty years perspective. The inspiration was to "convert developing India to developed India by 2020." Thereafter, the Planning Commission constituted a Committee in 2000 to prepare a Vision 2020 document under the Chairmanship of Dr. S.P. Gupta, a member of the Planning Commission. The report of the Committee examined many issues but the ones "stand out most powerfully are employment and education." Its central conclusion is that India has the opportunity to emerge as one of the worlds leading economies over the next two decades, provided her citizens have self confidence, the self reliance, the will and the determination to realise their individual and collective potentials. At the same time, a number of states had prepared Vision 2020. Assam is one of the states from the North East prepared a Vision 2025 document in 2002.

On the North East, two important works need to be mentioned. The L.C. Jain Committee Report (1990) on Development of Assam and the High Level Commission on the North East popularly known as Shukla Commission's Report on 'Transforming the North East' (1997) provided direction for the development. The later defined five basic deficits: a basic need deficit, an infrastructure deficit, a resource deficit, a two-way deficit of understanding with the rest of the country and a governance deficit.

The author is adviser to the Chief Minister of Assam.

Soon after Dr. Manmohan Singh took over as Prime Minister of India, he felt the necessity of preparing a vision document for the North-Eastern region. While attending the full North Eastern Council (NEC) meeting on April 12, 2005, he defined the Council as "mini planning commission" and where plans should not just be made for the people but also by the people. Specific questions like "what should our village look like in 2020… what should our children be taught in schools and colleges…. what new means of livelihood they would like to adopt and what training facilities would they like to have…." are needed to be answered. With the blessings of the Ministry of the Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), the NEC started the ball rolling by addressing an open letter to the people of the North Eastern Region urging them to join in the effort "Let us dream, Let us think, Let us plan for the future."

C-NES (Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research), a non-government umbrella organisation with bases in all the constituent states of NEC was chosen to prepare a 15-year perspective plan for the region based after ascertaining the views of the people from the grassroots level upward. After brainstorming with civil society group leaders, intellectuals, professionals of the region, C-NES developed a questionnaire. Fifteen villages from each district of eight states were covered with 40,000 questionnaires. Workshops were held in each state to present the findings to stakeholders and public and to seek responses. The focus of C-NES was on the process as much as on the product.

C-NES report called "Winds of Change, Hope for Renewal: Listening, Learning and Implementing " was submitted to NEC in 2006. At the same time, NEC requested the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) to prepare a Vision 2020 document for the region. The document would draw up a design and implementation strategy for progressing towards peace and prosperity. "The vision was to be based on the aspirations of the people of the region; it would set clear goals and identify the challenges and reform required in policies and institutions to reach the goals." The Ministry of DoNER constituted a Steering Committee comprising eminent persons chaired by Shri B.G. Vergese, to guide the preparation of the vision document.

A three volume report named "Peace, Progress and Prosperity in the North Eastern Region: Vision 2020" was prepared. Before finalising the draft, authors composed from the NIPFP and the Jawaharlal Nehru University visited and held discussions in all the North Eastern states. The Union Minister for DoNER, Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, attending all the Steering Committee meetings provided valuable inputs.

After putting through a scrutiny amongst a number of reputed experts on the fields, the Minister felt that the document further needed to be enriched and required a strong North Eastern connection. Thus, another Committee constituting of six eminent economist, social scientist, journalist, university professors from the North Eastern states were constituted. One volume report was prepared by them leaving the second and the third volume of NIPFP untouched. Thus, what finally emerged is a composite exercise by C-NES, NIPFP and a Committee of experts from the North Eastern states.

On July 3, 2008 in the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh amidst the presence of Union Ministers, Governors and Chief Ministers of North Eastern States, launched the Vision 2020, a compendium of various strategies, proposals and action plans for achieving peace and prosperity in the NE Region and for its people.

In addition, the Union Minister of DoNER requested all the State Government of the NE region to prepare State Vision 2020 documents in line with the Ministry's Vision 2020. Some States had prepared and others have sought assistances from consultants to prepare the document.

The whole process took more than three years. As a result, the effective years to implement the Vision 2020 got reduced to eleven years. It is an uphil task for the states to achieve the targets within the time span.

The Setting

The North East composed of seven sisters, baring the two princely states of Manipur and Tripura, were

part of Assam administration till the early seventies. Sikkim, as a part of North East, was added only recently. Assam was industrialised fairly early amongst the states of India with tea, oil and forest products. Tea started in 1834 followed by the steamer services in 1847 and then by the railways. Oil refinery started in 1890; followed by the sawmills. Population density was low; there were ample resources. No wonder, therefore, Assam's per capita income was higher then the average of India's and rice productivity was similarly higher in 1950-51. Successive events and disasters created havoc for the economies of the North East. First, the division of the country (1947) followed by the great earthquake (1950), the Chinese invasion (1962), Naga, Mizo, Boro, Manipuri and ULFA and other movements and insurgencies, some still ongoing; and lastly, closed border with rather inhospitable neighbouring countries led Assam and other North Eastern states to fall much behind the India's economic growth race. Take the case of Assam, the biggest state in the North East, its per capita income was higher then that of India in 1950-51, but by 1980-81 growth rate had fallen behind as a result there was a gap in per capita income of Rs. 749; it widened to Rs. 3776 in 2000-01 (1993-94 prices) and further increased to Rs. 7632 in 2007-08 (1999-00 prices). Some smaller states have done better in the last decade. The people of the North East are tired of stagnation; and aspire to see their region emerge peaceful, strong and would like to march on the path of economic, social and cultural progress towards prosperity and well-being. They would like to see every family in the region have the opportunity to live a secure life with dignity and self-respect. They would like to acquire capabilities and self-confidence to shape their own destinies. They would like to enjoy peace and achieve sustainable progress and prosperity.

The Challenges

Though North East is geographically bound together, expect Sikkim, there is a great amount of diversity amongst the states. Except the two valleys, the Brahamputra and the Barak where bulk of the population lives, the rest is dotted with hills of various heights. The population density is as low as 13 per sq. km in Arunachal Pradesh to 340 in Assam. The region is known to be the home of over 200 of India's 635 tribal groups, speaking a variety of languages and dialects with strong tradition of social and cultural identity.

The biggest problem facing the North East is the lack of adequate and reliable infrastructure. Building infrastructures like power, road, rail, river routes and airports in the fragile hills and in plains crisscrossed by innumerable rivers is both time consuming and costly. Lack of access to markets both within India and outside deters the producers and farmers to produce for surplus. While some progress has been made in social infrastructure like education, health, a lot more to be done.

Just as in some others parts of India, improvement in governance, from the grassroots level, Panchayats and Village Council or equivalent, upto the State level institution, is the key to successful implementation of any plans and projects. Equally, important is the creation of proper developmental climate. It is paramount that the State governments and its institutions including grassroots level organisations capacities to plan, to implement and to administer need to be augmented for successful implementation of the strategy.

The Strategy

The strategy propounded in the Vision document has six components:

- Empowerment of the people by maximising self-governance and participatory development through grassroots planning. This will help in creating conditions for development, in determining pattern of development based on the resources of the region according to the needs and aspirations of the people.
- Rural development with focus on improving agriculture productivity and creation of non-farm employment opportunities.
- Development of sectors with comparative advantage such as harnessing the enormous hydropower potential, tourism, agro processing, sericulture and investment in manufacturing based on available resources.
- Improving skills to enhance their productivities, to generate

a class of entrepreneurs and to increase capacities to implement plans and programmes.

- Augmenting infrastructure like road, railways, inland water, air transportation, power through hydro, coal, bio-fuel, and communication network. Connecting Myanmar and through it to China and South East Asia. Developing transit routes through road, rail and inland water cargo across Bangladesh to rest of India. Access to Sittwe port of Myanmar and Chittagong in Bangladesh will provide outlets to the outside world. Creation of a hospitable investment climate for private investment is an important element in the strategy.
- All these will require huge investment; and, therefore it is imperative that adequate fund flow for public investment needs to be assured. Most of the funds, at the beginning will have to come from the Central Government, and partly from State Government, and later, when congenial atmosphere is built up, private sector participation is likely.

The Plan

In simple term, to catch up with the India's per capita income, assuming that India's GDP grows at 9 percent constant, the North Eastern States have to accelerate its collective Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth rate from the present level of 5.34 percent to 12.95 percent during 11th to 13th five year plans, according to NIPFP estimate. The acceleration starts from 10 percent in the 11th Plan to 16.37 percent in the 13th Plan. By 2020, the average per capita income of the North Eastern States will equal to, that of India's at Rs. 87,459 from the base level of Rs. 22,139 (2006-07) a rise of about 400 percent. Of the NE states, Assam has the toughest job to accelerate from 6.35 percent (2002-07) to 20 percent (2017-20).

Obviously, the acceleration of growth rate at such pace would require massive increase in investment and significant improvement in productivity. NIPFP estimated that the acceleration process would require Rs. 2,11,613 crores during the 11th plan, Rs. 505,499 crores in the 12th plan and Rs. 6,12,779 crores in the 13th plan. The total cost works out at Rs.13, 29,891 crores at a constant capital output ratio of 4. However, if a declining capital output ratio is assumed, which is likely, the cost comes down to Rs. 11,56,785 crores.

On the face of it, these are astronomical figures. During the Tenth Plan Period (2002-07) the plan expenditure of the NE States amounted to Rs. 75,464 crores comprising of State Plan, Central Ministries/ Central Sector, DoNER and NEC plan. This,however, excludes investment made by public sector enterprises and private investment. Comparing with the Tenth Plan investment, the Eleventh Plan requirement for achieving 10 percent growth rate is in the order of Rs. 211,613 crore estimated by NIPFP. This is more than 2.5 times the Tenth Plan investment.

The proposed Eleventh Plan capital investment to be made by the NE States, as table-1 shows, has increased from Rs. 30,383 crores to Rs. 74,278, an increase of 144

Table1: Estimated NER Plan Expenditure for Eleventh Plan (Rs. Crores)

Source of funding	Total X plan	Total XI Plan estimates	% growth	Per Capita Expenditure
State Plan	30383	74,278	144	19046
*Central Ministries/ Central Sector	39,441	98,251	149	25193
NEC	2511	7,394	194	1896
NLCPR	3129	3,095	--	794
Total NER	75464	1,83,018	143	46928

* These exclude PSU Expenditure

Information gathered from the Planning Commission and other sources.

percent. Central Ministries and other Central Sector Schemes allotment has increased by 149 percent; and NEC's allocation increased by 194 percent. Altogether an increase of 143 percent over the Tenth Plan expenditure.

Admittedly, 143 percent increase in proposed expenditure is a big jump. If the Public and the Private sector enterprises investment in organised and unorganised sectors are added, the total investment, consisting of State and Central Government, Public and Private sector investment together, may not be far off the targeted expenditure of Rs. 211,613 crores during the Eleventh Plan. Table 2 gives a glance of Private investment in the organised industry in March `08.

Table: 2 Private Sector Live Investment From NER

(Cost in Rs. Crores)

State	March-2002		March-2008	
	No.	Total Cost	No.	Total Cost
Arunachal Pradesh			5	22734.40
Assam	14	4640.00	38	10611.26
Meghalaya	14	337.50	19	2257.10
Nagaland			1	0
Sikkim			16	5666.86
Tripura	1	2.50	10	588.44
North-East Total	29	4980.00	89	41858.06
All-India	2888	589566.74	8435	3614767.46
Total Project Costs in NE as % of All-India		0.8		1.2

Note: Data for Manipur & Mizoram not available. No investment in Nagaland.
Source: CMIE Survey

Prior to Independence, North Easts' trade routes were through Myanmar for the South East Asia and Bengal (eastern part is presently Bangladesh) to rest of India. Both Chittagong and Calcutta ports were accessible for export. Rail, steamer and roads were used for transportation of goods. With the partition and successive political developments in Myanmar and Pakistan, these routes had become unusable and uneconomical. Even after sixty years of Independence situation have not improved much. Talks have been going on for developing the Sittwe (Akyab) port in Myanmar and opening up more trade points on the Bangladesh- North East border for exports. None, however, could replace the economic benefits obtained from earlier routes. On the other hand, if, however, North East concentrates on goods and services like IT related industry, tourism, petroleum products, high valued goods or unique products transportation cost may not be the deterring factor.

Inclusive Growth

The Eleventh Five Year Plan's theme is Inclusive Growth. In its forward of the document the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh wrote: its "ultimate objective is to achieve broad based improvement in the living standards of all our people. Rapid growth is essential for this outcome…. However, it is not by itself sufficient. We also need to ensure that growth is widely spread so that its benefits, in terms of income and employment, are adequately shared by the poor and weaker section of the our society." The NER Vision 2020 documents clearly states "the key component of the strategy of inclusive growth must be inclusive governance as the means of empowering the disadvantaged with the aim of enabling them to overcome their poverty: It is the effective empowerment of the disadvantaged through the effective devolution of functions." Thus emphasis is given on investment in rural areas, on education and health

care, urban renewal, backward regions. Lot of space has been devoted to the question of governance.

The three hundred page NER Vision 2020 document focuses on development issues and on the strategies adopted for achieving a higher growth rate to equalise the per capita income with rest of India by the year 2020.

The Task Ahead

There is now a Vision for the North Eastern region. The Eleventh Plan has included most of the proposals and provided ample resources to implement them. If the States and the Centre can create an enabling environment, private investment will fill up the gap.

The main constraint is the states capacity to spend meaningfully the huge amount of resources available for the Eleventh Plan. As mentioned elsewhere NE states own plan size increases by 2.5 times; and, equally the total size of the Plan inclusive of Centre, States, DoNER and NEC rises from Rs. 75000 crores to Rs. 183,000 crores. The internal capacity of the states to deploy fruitfully these kind of resources is in question. There are serious doubts that existing capacities will not be able to handle these resources unless efforts are made to increase the capacity of the state government organs are undertaken forthwith.

The government financial rules and regulations need substantial revision. These were essentially control oriented and made long before the development era. While there must be control, the system need to be development oriented. Computerised file monitoring system could be introduced to increase the efficiency and reduce the time gap.

Equally, implementing departments' capacities to transform ideas into plan, plan to project and from project to design sketches with financial, resource and manpower planning is seriously questioned. In fact, the Controller and Auditor General of India has raised questions on the capacities of the state apparatus to handle meaningfully the vastly increased forthcoming resources.

Further, that money has been efficiently used and for the purpose for which it has been allotted to must be very closely monitored and reported. Not only the Government, central, states and local level but the citizens are equally entitled to know how the money is being spend and the results thereof. After all, it is their taxed resources being spent by the governmental agencies.

Both the centre and states need to engage themselves on this serious issue. One year of the plan is about to end. If the desired results are to be obtained, serious efforts need to be made sooner rather than later. ❑

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BRO expand wings in Arunachal

In order to speed up construction of roads in the state, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has created Arunak, another Border Road Task Force (BRTF).

Official sources said recently that the new task force under the charge of a chief engineer would set up its office at Gorubanda along the Assam-Arunachal border, where Papum Pare district administration had allotted 30 hectares of land. With this, the number of BRTF engaged in road development work in Arunachal will go up to three with project Vartak and Udayak already functioning.

The border road construction in Arunachal received a major boost with the Centre allocating Rs 600 crore to Project Vartak for 2008-09, a triple jump from the previous year's annual allocation of only Rs 200 crore.

Project Udayak, looking after the eastern sector bordering China and Myanmar, had also received a hike in allocation.

Of the 70 roads being built by the government on Sino-India border 20 are under Vartak in the Arunachal sector, which have been mandated to be completed by 2012. ❑

(Courtesy : Newspapers)



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DO YOU KNOW ?

What is Monetary Policy?

Over a peroid of time, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy has come to assume greater importance with the significant bearing that it has on the economic activities of the common man. Thanks to the RBI's enterprising moves over some years, the policy which was earlier meant mainly for channelising flow of funds to the agricultural and industrial sectors, now lays equal emphasis on financial inclusion, customer services on various fronts and above all, the country's financial stability.

What is the monetary policy?

It is through it that the RBI announces its policy on the monetary front for the year. Normally, the RBI governor while making the policy statement focuses on the following areas:

- Maintenance of financial stability and enabling the growth of sound financial institutions. This should, in turn, promote monetary stability and allow economic units to carry out their business with confidence.
- Ensuring monetary stability for businesses and for economic activities in order to promote growth
- Maintenance of a stable payments and currency system and facilitation of safe and efficient execution of financial transactions
- Promoting a stable financial structure of markets and systems and helping it operate with optimum efficiency.
- Regulating money and credit supply in the economy to help maintain price stability to a reasonable extent
- Ensuring credit allocation that is in line with national economic priorities

How many times in a year is the monetary policy statement made?

Earlier, the policy was announced twice a year- the main policy in April, followed by a review in October. The timing of the policy was linked to the agricultural system of the country. The reason why it was termed as the busy season and slack season credit policy. However, in keeping with the dynamic economic and financial situation in the country, during 2006 RBI decided to make it a quarterly event so that it could mould the policy on the basis of the latest developments in the relevant areas.

Accordingly, having announced the main policy in April, governor Subba Rao has made the statement reviewing the policy recently.

How does the RBI prepare the policy?

In the wake of the progressive integration of financial markets both domestically and across borders, and the fast-paced changes taking place in technology and institutional architecture, RBI has adopted a participative process in the conduct of financial sector policies.

The consultative process has been made braodbased, with the participation of experts from different areas of the financial sector, academics as well market functionaries. Policy initiatives are calibrated to meet the demands of a country-specific situation while also keeping in mind international best practices.

How does it help the banking industry?

In recognition of the sweeping changes underway in the financial system, the credit policy emphasises corporate governance practices, risk management and pricing techniques, and prudential norms for the banking industry. It underscores the need to ensure

the quality of credit in the context of the rapid expansion of bank credit in 2005-06. Banks are urged to undertake a comprehensive assessment of segment-wise credit with special reference to those sectors in which credit has been expanding rapidly, or where credit flow should be augmented.

What are the key areas the monetary policy has dealt with in the last one year?

After raising the reverse repo rates (the rate at which RBI lends resources to the banks), during the last fiscal, the central bank has reduced it drastically this fiscal by 250 basis points in two parts, within a weeks span. It has also reduced the cash reserve ratio and bank rate recently.

As part of its efforts to refine and augment the channels of delivery of bank credit, RBI has emphasised an integrated approach to financial inclusion and on developing an appropriate environment for extending financial services to all segments of the population. It has asked banks to explore the need for credit counselling and distress relief for vulnerable sections, especially farmers.

Second, it has facilitated the development and application of new technology in the financial sector for achieving global standards in respect of payment and settlement systems.

Third, to strengthen and rationalise compliance standards in banks, RBI has evolved a mechanism for transparency in banking practices to obviate potential irregularities, streamline the functioning of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and implement prudential measures in the financial sector for ensuring financial stability.

How does the monetary policy impact us as individuals?

Till recently, the policy included an announcement on interest rates. The interest costs of banks would immediately either increase or decrease. A reduction in interest rates would prompt banks to lower their leading rates as well as borrowing rates. So if you want to place a deposit with a bank or take a loan, it would offer you a lower rate of interest. On the other hand, if there were to be an increase in interest rates, banks would immediately increase their lending as well as borrowing rates.

How does the monetary policy affect the domestic industry and exporters in particular?

Exporters keenly look forward to the monetary policy since the central bank always makes an announcement on export refinance, or the rate at which the RBI will lend to banks which have advanced pre shipment credit to exporters. The current preshipment export credit rate offered by these banks is 9 per cent; the RBI extends export refinance to them at 7 per cent. A lowering of these rates would mean lower borrowing costs for the exporter. The most important issue that the monetary policy has addressed until now has been that of interest rates. ❑

(Courtesy : Newspapers)

Cabinet nod for hydel project in Arunachal

The Cabinet committee on economic affairs (CCEA) took a host of key decisions, including approving Northeastern Electric Power Corporation's (Neepco) 110-mw hydel power project at Pare in Arunachal Pradesh involving an investment of Rs 574 crore. The government also approved a biotechnology public-private partnership programme to encourage discovery and innovation in the sector. The idea is to provide support on cost sharing basis for high-risk discovery and innovation. The government has earmarked a budgetary support of Rs 350 crore for the programme during the 11th five-year plan. Besides, the CCEA approved setting up of integrated check posts at 13 border points at a cost of Rs 635 crore. The Union Cabinet gave its approval for increasing the ceiling has been increased to Rs 3,500 per month from Rs 2,500 per month from 2006-07 till 2009-10. ❑

IN THE NEWS

- The Union Cabinet cleared two long overdue projects in the country - construction of the parliament building and the Indian chancery complex in Kabul. The foundation stone for the parliament building was laid by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh over three years ago.
- Govt. approves rail link to Sikkim : Sikkim will soon be connected with the rest of the country through a rail link with the government deciding to construct a 52.7km-long broad gauge rail track from Rangpo in Sikkim to Sivok in Bengal. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, which decided to implement it as a "national project" at a cost of Rs 1,339.48 crore.
- Govt nod for 6,000 model schools: The government has decided to set up 6,000 model schools at the block level on the pattern of Kendriya Vidyalayas. The proposed model schools will cost an estimated Rs 9,321 crore during the 11th plan period, minister of state in PMO Prithviraj Chavan said.

NEFR kick Starts railway work in Arunachal

The move to include Arunachal Pradesh in the railway map of the country started with the North East Frontier Railway (NEFR) raising the curtain on the Harmutty-Itanagar railway line.

The ambitious 22km railway line, with 18 major and 20 minor bridges, at an estimated cost of Rs. 91.80 crore, would be completed by 2010.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, during his maiden visti to the state on January 31, had announced the project, saying that the new rail link between Itanagar and Harmuty in Lakhimpur district of Assam would reduce the travel time to destinations outside the state and proved more economical access.

India Test Fires 'Shaurya' Missile

In a significant step towards boosting"second-strike" capabilities, India on 12th November, 2008 tested a new 600km range 'Shaurya' ballistic missile, which can be fired from underground silos unlike the Prithvi and Agni missiles.

The surface-to-surface missile, capable of carrying a one-tonne conventional or nuclear warhead, was successfully fired from a 30 to 40-foot deep pit with an in-built canister to mimic an underground silo.

The successful test-firing of the new state-of the art canisterised missile marks another milestone in the country's missile programme.



In the absence of Submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), Shaurya offers a viable N-strike option

- Surface-to-surface ballistic missile with 600 km range. Easy to hide and fire since it's stored underground
- Manoeuvrability makes it less vulnerable to enemy anti-missile defence systems. Prithvi and Agni missiles inducted so far are transported by vehicles or trains
- Two stage, solid-fuelled missile is capable of carrying a one-tonne conventinal or nuclear warhead.

Chandrayan-1 reaches for the moon

India's First Unmanned Lunar Mission Has a Perfect Take-Off

No dream is too big. India strived to prove just that amid highvoltage drama and euphoria in Sriharikota, as it successfully launched its first unmanned mission to the moon-Chandrayaan-1.

The rocket was injected into an initial orbit located 250 km at its nearest point to Earth and 23,000 km at its farthest.

India has become the sixth country in the world to take a spacecraft to the lunar orbit. Those who achieved the feat before include US, Russia, Japan, European Space Agency (ESA) and China. Early morning, dark rain clouds threatened to come in the way of India and her lunar ambitions. But with the countdown ticking, the dark skies had become more tranquil and didn't hamper the launch. "We were looking for a break between rains for the launch. We lost 10 hours in the countdown because of the weather and we almost lost all hope," said ISRO chairman G. Madhavan Nair.

Some of the tension gave away, when the 44.4-meter tall, 316 tonne lauch vehicle PSLV-C11, carrying the Chandrayaan-1 space craft, lifted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota at 6:22 am. PSLV-C11, chosen to launch Chandrayaan is an upgraded version of Isro's workhorse polar satellite launch vehicle. Because in this case, the six strap-on motors, strapped on to the first stage, carry 12 instead of 9 tonnes of solid propellant. Over 1,000 scientists have been working on the lunar mission at a budget of Rs 386 crore.



Did you know

- It cost Rs 3.86 billion ($79 million) and had a take-off weight of more than 1.3 tonne.
- The rocket carried 11 pay-loads—five from India, two from the US, and one each from Germany, Britain, Sweden and Bulgaria.
- 1,000 scientists have worked on the project for four years.

A deep thunderous rumble disrupted the stillness of the morning as the rocket blasted off in a burst of red and orange. It was hardly visible for a couple of seconds before disappearing into the clouds. Scientists in the mission control room were clasping and unclasping their palms in nervous anticipation as they waited for the orbital injection to happen. About 18-20 minutes later, the scientists broke out in jubilation after the satellite was injected into an initial orbit.

"It is a historic moment as far as India is concerned. In our journey to the moon, the first leg has performed well. It is travelling as a distance of 23,000 km apogee and 250 km perigee," Mr Nair said. Others involved in the mission were more emotional about the launch. "We have sent our baby to the moon and it has started taking the first few steps," said a visibly relived M Annadurai, who is the project director for Chandrayaan. ❑

(Courtesy : The Economic Times)

Discontents of Peace and Conflict Transformation

Rajesh Dev



The consequent schisms between ethnic groups deflate the "trust" among communities in a specific state or area and the casualty is the notion of shared democratic governance in the region

IT IS not simply the social and cultural plurality, but the diversity of narratives on 'northeast' that demands an earnest engaged concern. For in most part, the narrative frames through which northeast is being described is as variegated as the dense heterogeneity of the region. These narrative "representations" to a great extent determine the way the region is envisioned and correspondingly envisions itself. What we find eventually portrayed is a "North-east" that is collectively either a "paradise unexplored" or more typically as "conflict-ridden". The implicit assumption is that there is an innate, natural, uncontested and fixed content through which the "region" can be represented and also reproduced.

In the sense of the "paradise unexplored", the "region" evokes an exoticised mystery that is arcane and enigmatic. In the sense of the "conflict-ridden" this exotic and incomprehensible mystery about the region evokes a political suspicion that becomes the dominant rhetorical trope for justifying "normalising" and "controlling" efforts of the "periphery". The execution of laws like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the choice of former Army generals and Intelligence officials as governors whose loyalty is only to the "Centre" are its manifestations. In dominant perceptions it seems a common predicament of "collective [durable] disorder" provides the "region" its common identifiable essence.

Indeed a romanticised "monochromatic" image that the rest of the country embraces about the region certainly flattens and stereotypes the diversity of cultural values and plural lifeworlds. The stress on the apparent homogeneity of the region too firmly involves also a loss of autonomy of the diverse social and cultural lifeworlds.

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Yet indeed many feel that the multicultural and multilingual character of the region is worthy of emulation and reproduction since traditionally it was this multilingual, multicultural spirit that formed the bedrock for a fluid cultural exchange that sustained the depth of a plural vitality, until its modern "freezing" in territorialized identities.

A dense ethnic heterogeneity that forms the founding claim of the region has, however, in recent times got manifested as exclusivist ethno-political consciousness of identity with a common pattern of protracted and proliferating ethnic conflicts permeating the region. However, contrary to standard assessments that attribute conflicts in areas of dense diversity to "ancient hatreds", in the Northeast 'ancient hatreds' do not form the faultlines of contemporary assertions.

Nevertheless the motivating and constitutive claim in all the assertions has been the stress on the "distinct ethnic and cultural identity" rationalised through an evocation of embedded group-identities. Agreeing with Benedict Kingsbury, we may reiterate, therefore, that ethnic identity [in the region] has transformed from being a "prosaic description without much significance [into a] concept with considerable power as a basis for group mobilisation" . Ethnic group solidarity has become "an appealing form of self-expression and potentially an attractive and effective strategy" for claims-making in India's north eastern region.

Some of the ethno-national assertions and conflicts in this region may have historical justifications for their armed opposition and ideological resistance to the state and proximate ethnic groups and may therefore elude resolution through conventional peace processes. Yet a large number of contests in the region justify their rhetorical and sometimes armed opposition motivated simply by the perception of an alleged "discrimination" and "neglect" accompanied by the fear of being "swamped away" by "outsiders".

Our efforts at reconciliation of such contests and claims have often unreflectively designated almost all the contests and claims as standard unambiguous "recognition" claims simply seeking cultural representation and autonomous indigenous voices. The consequent accommodating processes for an assumingly authentic representation of such pervasively diverse voices and claims have been undertaken through the fabrication of "political and ideological structures" that defer to an exclusive cultural distinctiveness.

These "political and ideological structures" is based on a recognition principle that "cultural groups in their distinctiveness are to be recognised" and thus assigns an a priori significance to certain "core" ethno-cultural markers as the constituents of identity and certain "core" ethnic groups as worthy of such recognition. The recognition principle is therefore, based more on measure of ethnopolitical claims rather than on the "presumption of cultural equality" .

This evolved matrix of accommodation devolved through such "politics of recognition" while allowing a cultural community, social and political control over its destiny by prioritising the distinctiveness of culture of the "recognised" group, however, also inadvertently insulates the 'recognised' group from engaging in any dialogic interaction with other proximate groups. The proximate 'unrecognised' groups who are often conceived in highly denigrative terms are transformed into a perpetual adversarial 'Other' and relegated often to the margins of the new institutional arrangements. A subtly insidious yet occasionally manifest social oppression based on ethnic difference between the "recognised" and "yet to be recognised" ethnic groups is released by these structures and is in evidence in many parts of the region.

Consequent hierarchisation of ethnic group relations that results from such polarized institutionalization in the region not only spawns ethnic competition but the militarized nature of the competition draws ethnic groups into a "security-dilemma paradigm". This justifies the need for "preventive self-defence" and armed resistance by an increasing number of ethnic groups that results in escalatory ethnic conflicts pursued by ethnic insurgents.

The ethnic inequity resulting from the control of the institutions would be remedied, it is believed, only through ethnic self-rule and control of ideological and institutional spaces. Therefore, territorial spaces have become the most prized element of identity with groups that possess existent 'homelands' are raucously defending its purity and attempting to consolidate its

margins; while groups that just "imagine homelands" are making competitive bids to present historical blueprints for 'recognition' of such claims.

Thus the templates designed to cauterise conflicts that results from the politicised diversities and plurality of the region, assign an "ontological foundation" to ethnic difference in its negotiating strategies resulting in an ethnic hierarchy that makes post-conflict ethnic reconciliation difficult. In such a structural setup the identity of the dominant ethnic groups and the political institutions merge to reflect a subtle yet poignant ethnic character of the political society and deployment of a profligate premium upon ethnic identity as the source of all social and political entitlements .

In a fractured plural society, such institutional mechanisms seem to generate alienation among, proximate yet marginal, ethnic groups who feel no stake in such an ethnically-derived post-conflict structure, leaving the ethnic fractures open to reconstruction, aggregation and mobilisation. Such alienating perceptions have enhanced the feeling of deprivation among non-dominant and marginal ethnic groups. It is this feeling of deprivation, dispossession and discrimination that forms the foundation and motivation for ethnic mobilisation and in most cases even armed resistance. Many scholars agree with the reading that "ethnic mobilisations in Northeast India are responses to, and artefacts of, official policy" .

Now in a socio-political condition where ethnic identity becomes the primary and singular source of awarding entitlements, the "repertoire of possible identities" that one can adopt to qualify as a beneficiary is indeed limited. Fittingly, the most effective, advantageous and proximate available tool for collective mobilisation and action is simply ones' ethnic identity and therefore, activation and consolidation of groups identities to "attain group aims" through contesting presentation of blueprints for ethnic homelands has become a typical feature of political mobilisation and consequent inter-group conflicts in this region.

Undeniably the 'accommodating' institutions that followed such "differential fact" of ethno-cultural claims provided embedded groups with culture-protective institutional advantage, yet it has nonetheless institutionalised a belief that receiving a fair share of entitlements as citizens are the results of ones' ethnic identity, and therefore, 'recognition' of ethno-cultural difference is the key to resource-pie distribution.

This mounting spiral of ethnic polarization, inter-ethnic conflict and the social hostility expressed in clichés of "glorious past" of contesting ethnic groups intensifies the legacies of mistrust and mutual hatred. It is in such polarized contexts that "competitive confrontation" and contests for ethnic supremacy between "ethnic contenders" becomes inevitable.

The typical scenarios of disputes between the Garos and the Khasis in Meghalaya on the degree of development activities in the Garo Hills; the formation of the "tribal conclave" in Manipur as a collective group to bargain for cultural recognition and development initiatives for the tribal areas in the state; the formation of the Zeliangrong Revolutionary National Front, an ethnic insurgent group in Manipur and its subsequent attack on Member of Parliament Charenamei's house accusing him of ignoring the community's development proposals because of ethnic bias; the accusation of unequal resource allocation and claims for equal representation by sixteen tribes tribe in the Barak Valley Hill Tribes Development Council perceived as being dominated by the Hmar tribe are all indications of the emerging bases of conflict in the region.

A poignant picture of such exclusive processes of peace-making was revealed in a recent interaction with a Reang elder who sadly stated that Pathian or God Himself would be turned out of Mizoram if he was a Vai-chhia or an "other", rather than a "Mizo". The Reangs, as we may be aware, are an impoverished minority tribe seeking "recognition" of their distinctive cultural identity in Mizoram. The systematic social and political prejudice the Reangs encounter in the state is grim reflection of the superficiality of peace in the state.

Of course, such models of peace-building efforts may have its rationale; it inevitably imposes serious disadvantages on those who are not 'recognised' in a similar manner but share the territory of those who have been 'recognised'. Such conflict transformation initiatives are inherently conflictual since it strengthens some ethnic groups while weakening others, necessitating claims-making on ethnic terms and encouraging potential ethnic fractures and inevitable counter-mobilisations by such 'non-recognised' aggrieved groups who develop ethnic fears

about security and survival. Trust-building is never an assigned objective of these peace initiatives being designed for a multi-ethnic and polycultural milieu.

Another aspect of this process of conflict transformation is that it treads a thin line between justice and reconciliation when such resolution strategies compelled by the requirement fo r peace secures immunity to sections of insurgent leaders, besides authorising unlawful operations of rehabilitated members of erstwhile ethnic militias . Such a development impacts upon the legitimacy and legality of an already embattled democratic political system and creates fratricidal splits that cannot be unified through the post-conflict structures. A process that authorises a one-time oppressor morally invalidates the peaceful resolution because mere structural changes do not entail ideational change in the oppressor, despite commitments towards such protection of the marginalised and 'unrecognised' groups.

Surely, such a peace process allows the transformation of "enemies into adversaries" but the salience it attributes to an exclusive cultural community makes it difficult to establish a consensual and integrative political community. This is because the redistribution of power consequent to the creation of post-conflict institutions manifestly redistributes power only in favour of the 'recognised' groups marginalising other groups and thereby leaving a potential threat for subsequent contests.

The negative social images remain unresolved and embedded. Thus the ideational realms and internal dynamics that motivate such antagonisms and contests largely remain outside the ambit of conflict transformation initiatives. Oddly enough, institutional mechanisms and policy prescriptions instituted through this kind of 'recognition politics' not only reinforce the symbolic repertoire that form the political capital for emergence of the conflicts in the first place but also provide structural incentive to its *reification*.

Since the strategies of such instituted peace are not transformative they are unable to change the ideologies and belief systems that motivate the dynamics of these conflicts and also fail to forge a political template of inclusion, tolerance and participation of various ethnic groups within a multicultural paradigm. The technique merely caps manifest antagonisms between ethnic groups without any mechanisms for cross-cultural conciliation and cooperation and as such merely transforms "public domain contests" into "private domain discontent". The consequent schisms between ethnic groups deflate the "trust" among communities in a specific state or area and the casualty is the notion of shared democratic governance in the region. ❑

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AFC scripts a success story

In what could be termed as the rising from the ashes, the Assam Financial Corporation (AEC) in the last financial year has booked a profit over Rs 6 crore, overcoming the loss incurred by it during the last 14 years.

"The corporation has booked a record profit of Rs 6.68 crore in the last financial year, which is, in fact, the highest ever in the 54-years history of the AFC," said corporation chairman Abhijit Barooah recently. He said that the net profit of the Corporation stands at Rs 6.05 crore after paying the relevant taxes. A turn of the loss-making has been started during the year 2006-2007, when the Corporation earned a profit of Rs 42 lakh.

Describing the success story, Barooah said that sanction of loan had come to a complete halt at AFC till 2003-2004. With the improved profit, the net worth of the Corporation that was negative for many years has now reached Rs 10.30 crore.

It may be mentioned here that, the AFC, a joint SFC of four North-eastern states in which the Assam Government has the highest equity share, has altogether 10 branches at Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura along with one special branch for micro finance at Guwahati. To keep the present momentum intact, the AFC has taken up an ambitious plan of lending Rs 700 crore in the next five years to units of this region.

The State Government has provided Rs 10 crore as an interest-free loan to the AFC for micro financing. ❑

(Courtesy : The Sentinel)

The Story of a Bamboo Windmill



It is possible that this innovation might help the salt farmers to become self reliant

TO MAKE Indian development process more inclusive, there is no escape from building upon the creative and innovative experiments pursued by common people at village or semi-urban level. Many of these experiments lead to development of innovations, which can improve productivity and generate employment. However, the purpose of a particular innovator may often be to solve his problem alone. There is no reason for him to share the knowledge, innovation or practice with other people in different regions. Sometimes, ideas and innovations get diffused through word of mouth. But many times, these ideas remain localized. In the process, potential growth and social development gets constrained. Following is an exceptional story of two brothers from Assam, who not only solved their own problem of irrigation through their ingenuity but now are also helping many others to improve their living standards. Traveling some two thousand and five hundred kilometers away from the place of its origin, the technology found use in Gujarat, where it is now realized that it has the potential to improve the lives of tens of thousands. Thus, the story becomes important from the perspective of cross pollination of ideas, from one part of the country to another, for the betterment of the society.

Mehtar and his brother, Mushtaq, from Darrang, Assam, while growing paddy in winter season (also called bodo paddy), needed irrigation from the well. Continuous pumping by hand involved a lot of effort and drudgery. At the same time, pumping out water by using diesel sets was a big drain on their resources.

Mehtar pondered over the problem and looked around for a solution. It was after a while when his sharp eyes started minutely observing the working of sewing machine. He noticed that the circular movement of the hand drive wheel caused the up and downward movement of the needle. This

This is the first article on the innovation series from National Innovation Foundation, Ahmedabad,



This innovation might help the salt farmers to become self reliant

formed an image in his mind, which was the genesis of the solution that he was going to come up with.

One fine day, while resting on the lush grass by the side of his field and lazily watching the clouds, he observed a kite in the sky. A sudden gush of wind soared it high in the sky, which triggered the thought of harnessing wind power in some way as a component of the solution he had in mind.

He concluded that if he could develop a large wheel, which could run on wind power, and connect this wheel (turbine) to the handle of the hand pump, he might pump out water continuously as the turbine rotates and came up with this windmill made from bamboo.

While the working principle of this windmill is similar to conventional ones, the use of low cost, locally available material like bamboo instead of costlier metals for the framework and the direct drive to do the automatic pumping of water from the tube well is the innovator's contribution.

This and thousands of other such examples have been spotted and documented by the National Innovation Foundation (NIF) with the help of the Honey Bee Network (HBN), which has been engaged in scouting such talent from the back yards of the country for the past twenty years. Drawing upon the experience of the HBN, NIF, set up in 2000 with the help of Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, is striving to scale up these innovations from the unorganized sectors of the society by providing them the most required hand-holding support.

With major contribution from the HBN, NIF has been able to build up a database of more than one lakh ideas, innovations and traditional knowledge practices from over 450 districts of the country. Through the collaborations with CSIR, ICMR, BSI and other R&D institutions, NIF helps in getting these technologies validated and value added. Pro bono arrangement with patent firms has helped NIF to file 182 patents (including seven filed in USA and a PCT application) on behalf of the innovators and outstanding traditional knowledge holders of which twenty-nine patents have been granted in India and four in USA. Micro Venture Innovation Fund (MVIF) at NIF has provided risk capital for 113 projects, which are at different stages of incubation and the total amount disbursed is more than ten million rupees. Receiving nearly four hundred product inquiries from around fifty five countries for various technologies, NIF has

succeeded in commercialising products across countries in five continents apart from being successful in materialising thirty cases of technology licensing with the help of partner agencies. Hundreds of technologies have also diffused through farmer to farmer social networks.

In this particular case, NIF awarded the innovation in its Fourth National Biennial Competition and also filed a provisional patent application in India in the innovators' name. NIF also supported the innovator through its cell in Guwahati and provided him support from the SIDBI-supported MVIF for further development of the innovation.

This innovative windmill found its use in the salt pans in the Little Rann of Kutchh, Gujarat. In order to make salt, the salt farmers have to draw out underground saline water, which normally they do using diesel pump sets. The average expenditure per season on fuel and maintenance comes to be between Rs 50-60, 000. These workers often have to borrow money at very high rates of interest to buy diesel and run pump sets. Apart from polluting the environment, the noise from these diesel pump sets disturbs the wild life as well.



Working principle of the windmill is similar to conventional ones

The idea, here, was to use the windmill connected hand pump to draw sub-soil saline water to make salt and cut down these costs and provide an environment friendly solution. The salt farmers showed a lot of interest in the windmill. Subsequently an experimental demonstration was made by Grassroots Innovation Augmentation Network-West (GIAN-W), the grassroots technology incubator based at Ahmedabad, in the Little Rann of Kutchh, in association with VIKAS & SAVE, Ahmedabad based NGOs working for empowerment of salt farmers in Gujarat, in January 2008. Both the brothers had come from Assam to work with salt workers in Dhangadra, Little Rann of Kutchh and develop a locally suited model.

Based on the feedback received, GIAN W got the design improved and developed a multi-directional model, and installed it at the Little Rann of Kutchh with the help of VIKAS and at Sasan Gir through Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRASP) for pumping water from tube well for irrigation in April 2008. With the help of another innovator, Shri Banjibhai Mathukia, a static wind mill was also installed in the village Kalawad, Junagad district of Gujarat for trial by GIAN W in July 2008.

While the original windmill of bamboo costed only about Rs 5000, the one with iron parts and more suited to local conditions costs about Rs. 25-30,000. Nobody had thought that a windmill could be made at such a low cost. The amount invested in the windmill could be recovered in the first season itself given the expected savings in fuel and maintenance. It is possible that this innovation might help the salt farmers to become self reliant in the short term. ❑

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Problems of Envisioning and Re-visioning

Patricia Mukhim



Good governance and development are twin inputs that could spur the region into a new growth trajectory

IF THE country works on a five year plan how is it that states, which are by no indicators homogenous, do not have a similar exercise? And if states do not have five year plans then on what basis are the country plans based? Thus far states have only produced annual plans which are unimaginative and not based on any real assessment of the needs of people. They are mere articulations of the planning departments of state governments What these plans attempt to do is to dovetail into the country plan tailored for them by the Planning Commission. Hence we have a basketful of schemes which might probably suit a few states but not others. A country as geographically and culturally diverse as India with varying climatic conditions, can, at best, have a common regional plan. But even that would have to address state-specific needs and priorities based on a participatory planning process at the grass roots.

The Planning Commission is now talking about the 11th Plan. Did the states carry out any exercise so that their needs are reflected in the 11th Plan? Or did we simply endorse what was written by Planning Commission experts and tried hopelessly and unwittingly to fit our annual plans into those five-year plans? State wise consultations of the draft of the 11th plan are a mere eye-wash because those consultations were largely governmental and had little top do with the public.

On closer examination, the idea of states merely endorsing what the Planning Commission writes for them is a major reason for their skewed development. This takes away the autonomy of states. It reduces the states to seekers of dole and subsidiaries of the Planning Commission. That states like Nagaland and Meghalaya which repeatedly drum up the slogan of greater autonomy and self determination do not think it necessary to contest this greatest

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example of patronage democracy is paradoxical.

If states do not have five year or ten year plans then how can they move ahead? No wonder they jump into the most popular and profitable bandwagons. States that are endowed with mineral resources should have an inventory of those resources and also definite plans as to how those resources would be deployed, by whom and how long they would last. The outcomes from the deployment of those mineral resources should be clearly indicated. So also the environmental and other impacts of mining be made available especially to those likely to be directly affected, so that they can give their prior, informed consent. The state has no right to go against popular mandate. If we had a coherent action plan we would not have knee jerk reactions each time a company tries to set up mining infrastructure in our states. Similarly we will eliminate the middlemen (interest and pressure groups) who raise the bogey of revolt against all forms of industrialization 'in the name of the common man' but who abruptly stop their protests if they are sufficiently compensated.

The reason why states cannot develop along the desired trajectory is precisely because they do not know where to go. Without a long term plan no human being can progress in life. Yet states which represent the hopes and dreams of millions continue to grope in the darkness of uncertainty and incoherence. The only people who benefit from short term, impulsive moves are politicians, bureaucrats and of course the corporate businesses. They would prefer to work in an environment of uncertainty and get their work done by lubricating the official process. In the North East, the appalling atrocities of Nandigram are sanctimoniously prefaced to every speech in every public meeting as if we do not have similar instances in our backyards. Is Nandigram worse than the abandoned coal mines in Jaintia Hills which have changed the entire landscape of the place forever? How many square kilometers of forests have been denuded? How many streams and rivers poisoned with sulphuric acid? What are the environmental consequences of not following the proper closure of mines?

Yet this silent onslaught on the living environment remains unspoken because mines in states like Meghalaya are privately owned and there is no mechanism for extracting social responsibility and accountability from mine owners. They operate with a licentiousness that is frightening. Having acquired vast wealth from mining coal their attitude is one of effrontery and arrogance. Affluence leads to influence. The coal mafia exercise tremendous clout in Meghalaya. They can bring down a government and install one of their choice. This happened in the recent past and will continue to happen. Coal money pays for the comforts of the rulers in our state. So why should they upset the equilibrium? The danger is that peoples' groups and their ability to engage with the government on these issues is still very weak and unorganized. Even if environmental issues are raised they are muted and diluted by money power.

The absence of a state five year plan actually has serious consequences. We do not have a time line within which infrastructure can be created. For instance, if a state knows exactly how many kilometers of roads are needed for connecting every village to the district headquarters and how much of that can be achieved in a year or in five years, we would not need to be pushed into making roads on political expediency. For infrastructure requiring more intensive and extensive planning such as power generation we would have to have a more long term plan but a time line as well. Clear indicators about the financial involvement and the time within which the project is expected to be completed are crucial to limit time and cost overruns.

The Leshka power project in Meghalaya, conceived in the 1980's is still in the implementation stage. Delay in kick-starting the implementation has not only increased the project cost by about ten times but it has other dimensions as well. Meghalaya has been experiencing acute power shortage in the winter months. This has had to be supplemented by the national grids at a cost that the State can ill afford. Once the Electricity Board is corporatised, and this is happening very soon, the State will no longer subsidise power to the consumer. This will add to per unit cost of electricity which will have to be borne by every consumer with a working meter. These are the long term consequences of a not going according to a definite plan and a schedule. So far no one has been held accountable for these vagaries in the planning process. People have been passive and generally laid back. They have been happy

gossiping about corruption with no specific instances to nail any single politician or bureaucrat. Now with the right to information, hopefully some of these unpleasant narratives of kickbacks and intrigues in the politician-bureaucrat-businessman nexus will be unearthed and people will be held accountable.

Thus far states have been run like business houses but without financial accountability. Money has just flowed in from New Delhi with no questions asked. Funds have come in depending on the clout and political affiliations with the government at the Centre. A good number of projects are invisible on the ground because there has been no physical monitoring. We the people have lived with this and more. Can we allow this daylight pilfering by the political class to continue and at what cost? It is time that people ask their states to come up with a five, ten or twenty year plan based on authentic needs and priorities. People should come up with social audit parameters to monitor and evaluate every project implemented. They must also demand that memoranda of understanding between individual states and national and multinational firms doing business there, be made public.

Notwithstanding the constraints in development the North East has to move forward. It is time to shift our focus from non-events. To my mind conflict in the region has become a non-event yet it subsumes all other attempts at progress and development. Non-state actors will always try to capture the limelight by throwing bombs on ordinary citizens or gunning down high profile people. But this has reached a watershed. Today people want to get on with life and catch up with development.

Every state has a repertoire of development projects which will in turn fuel the engine of progress and launch a new set of entrepreneurs. In January this year the meeting of non-resident North Easterners from across the globe under the banner of Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters (FASS), held at Guwahati is a path-breaking event. This is essentially an attempt by the NRNE's to revive ties with their homeland by investing a range of resources, from professional expertise to specific projects.

Assam's tea industry is, from all indicators, looking up and export markets have been identified. The recent international tea conclave in Assam is a pointer to the fact that the cup that cheers continues to be Assam's unique selling point (USP). The Union Ministry of Commerce's Special Tea Protection Fund (STPF) has in a large measure been responsible for rejuvenating sick tea gardens and encouraging small and medium tea growers. The largest ever tea consignment of tea from Assam were loaded on to the Singapore Airlines cargo freighter at Kolkata. The consignment of forty eight tonnes is going to London through Amsterdam. Prior to this around thirty tonnes of Assam tea have been exported. Tea export from Assam has shot up following trouble in the Darjeeling Hills. Assam produces around 450 million kilograms of tea every year and earns a revenue of Rs 1000 crores from tea export.

Assam's Industries and Power Minister, Mr Pradyut Bordoloi who also heads the North East Industries Minister's Forum, was optimistic that the special incentives under the revised North East Industrial and Investment Policy would hike up investments in various sectors. Known to be a pragmatic theorist, Bordoloi also feels that the region needs to go on a course correction. Instead of making peace a pre-condition for development the whole notion should be put on its head. 'Development, must now be the pre-requisite for peace and the government of Assam had made development its thrust area. Meghalaya is now the proud location of a premier management institute – the Rajiv Gandhi Indian Institute of Management. Hopefully this institute will become the hub of an eclectic group of students and faculty which will add value to the region.

Tripura's new regional medical colleges are all set to be trail blazers in medical education in the region. To the credit of the Manik Sarkar government one of the medical colleges has come after much haranguing with the Central Government. Tripura is making great strides in agriculture and is all set to become the rubber exporting zone of the country, overtaking even Kerala.

Nagaland and Mizoram have both concentrated in enhancing the value of the bamboo. Both states have invested extensively in bamboo technology and the results are visible. At the recent Indo-Thai business week, both states exhibited exquisite bamboo furniture and souvenirs that even the Thai people found hugely attractive.

With all the hiccups that it experiences, Manipur is moving ahead with its objective of enhancing power generation from the Tipaimukh dam. The State has enormous potential

even in the area of arts and bamboo crafts which are known for their exquisite designs and slick finishing. Pottery from the Ukhrul Hills of Manipur created from black clay finds its way into the markets of Mumbai.

What is needed is a participatory approach to project identification and people's inputs in the preparation of project reports to avoid future clash of interests.

There is no doubt at all that peace is important but the roots of conflict lie in paucity of opportunities for livelihoods. Good governance and development are twin inputs that could spur the region into a new growth trajectory. ❑

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NORTH EAST CAN PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR

Food processing industries have been accorded top priority in the country. Today, India is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world contributing 9% of the global output. The country also tops in the world in production of banana, mango, tomato, potato, onion, green peas and coconut. In the milk sector also, India is the largest producer of milk displacing the United States of America a few years ago.

Being the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables with an annual production of around 150 million metric tonne, only two to three per cent of the total fruits and vegetables and 15 percent of milk produced in our country are processed and converted into value added products. There is also a huge loss of 25 to 30% of the produce due to lack of efficient post-harvest management and also lack of adequate infrastructure like grading, storing, packaging, poor handling, transportation etc. In the developed countries, on the other hand 60 to 70% of fruits and vegetable are processed. However, the food-processing sector has emerged as a key industrial sector in India. This industry ranks fifth in size, contributing 6.3% to GDP, 19% to the country's industrial labour force and 13% to exports. Statistics reveal that the domestic market has received a shot in the arm and similarly the exports of processed fruits and vegetables from our country have also been increasing from $166.77US million dollars in 2004-2005 to $ 297.97 US million dollars in 2006-2007.

In the North East also, the congenial agro climatic and soil conditions offer a great potential for development of food processing industry, both for domestic as well as for export. The entire region is endowed with a variety for fruits and vegetables, spices along with a number of other food crops, medicinal plants etc. Though the region produces a wide range of fruits and vegetables and spices crops etc., yet the industries under food processing sector are still negligible. Out of the total 95,000 SMEs in the region, about 6,500 (7%) industries are under food processing sector. On the other hand, the use of processed food is becoming popular in the region due to various socio-economic changes such as increase in population, increase in income level, urbanization, changes of taste and food habits, increase in the number of working couples, improvement in the living standard of people etc.

Besides a large number of hotels and restaurants, tourists centres, hostels, military and para-military organisations and institutions etc. also consume a large quantity of processed and other food items in the region. The demand for processed food items are likely to grow in the near future.

However, before setting-up of any food processing industry in the region, the entrepreneur is to make a thorough market survey, see whether the fruits, vegetables or any other food crops are available locally (depending on the type of industries), the power position or availability of power, soft water, skilled labourers, packaging materials etc. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries recently initiated a number of schemes to create an impact for promotion of food processing industries in the country in general and the North eastern region in particular.

Such policy gives special thrust for developing food-based industries in the region by developing general infrastructure, market linkages, technology infusion and support services to the entrepreneurs. There are various other schemes too from other Ministries and Departments. Entrepreneurs of North East should take these opportunities immediately. ❑

(Courtesy : The Assam Tribune)

Potential for Tourism Industry

Sunil Kumar Saikia



The state has rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna necessary for making and developing tourism as a potential industry

TOURISM IS one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Every year about six percent of the world's population cross international frontiers. According to a recent study, world tourism generates 15 percent of world GNP and domestic tourism is assumed to be nine times greater than international tourism. According another study by World Tourism Organisation around 1.5 billion tourists will be visiting foreign countries annually by the year 2020, spending US$ 5 billion everyday. Tourist's arrivals will grow by an average 4.3% a year while revenue will increase by 6.7% a year. It is forecasted that by 2020 tourism industry would be single biggest industry in the world. It was also predicted that some Asian countries particularly China, India, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong etc will be the prominent tourists destinations along with South Africa and European countries.

In India also, the Government has been taking many new initiatives towards making the country into the top tourist destination of the world. India's share in global tourism is expected to reach 1.5% by 2010 According to World Travel and Tourism Council report, the tourism and travel industry of India contributes substantially every year to the GDP and provides 30 million jobs in the country. The report has envisaged that overall economic activity stimulated by this industry would grow at the annual rate of about 8.4% over the next decade. This growth would result in the industry accounting for more than one in 15 jobs and contributing about 6.9% to GDP by the end of 2010 AD. In the domestic sector also more than 30 million domestic tourists will be visiting different parts of the country every year.

The north-eastern region on the other hand has also tremendous potential for developing the tourism industry. The rich natural beauty, exotic flora and fauna serve as invaluable resources for the development of tourism in the region.

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The entire region is endowed with diverse tourist attractions and each state has its own distinct features. However, the entire north-eastern region including Arunachal Pradesh accounts at present for a mere 0.4 percent domestic tourist arrivals and less than 0.1 percent of foreign tourist arrivals in India. Though the tourist arrivals (both domestic and foreign) to this the entire region is very nominal, but experts focus a tremendous growth of this sector in the coming decades. According to the experts tourism industry in the region has to be developed in a more planned way and needs to be marketed more vigorously and with joint efforts, because the benefits of tourism are not only in terms of economic benefit alone, tourism has wider implications encompassing social and cultural benefits as well.

Within the North Eastern Region, Arunachal Pradesh is one of the states known as the land of rising sun, is the remotest and one of the loveliest states in the region. With its numerous roaring rivers, lofty mountains, snow clad peaks, dynamic blend of flora and fauna and delightfully variegated climate, perfect for holidaying any time of the year. The state is located most strategically as it is bordering with China in the north, Bhutan in the west, Myanmar in the east and the state of Assam in the south. It has a total international boundary of 1628 km. The state is the largest state in terms of area in the entire north- eastern region. Itanagar is the capital of the state.

The state is a horse-shoe shape territory has beautiful mountains and valleys. The heights of the mountain peaks show a great variation ranging from 1,823 to 7000 metres. The highest peak is Kangte (7000 metres) is located in Tawang area. Out of the total geographical area of 83,743 Sq. Km in the state, the Himalayan mountainous ranges alone occupies about 7,000 Sq.Km in the northern borders which again crossed with mountain ranges turning towards North South. These divide the state into five valleys viz. the Kameng, the Subansiri, the Siang, the Lohit and the Tirap. Siang is the largest valley among them with lush green forests, deep river valleys and beautiful plateaus. Its rivers are ideal for angling, boating and rafting and its rugged terrain is ideal for tracking, hiking and holidaying in a charming environment.

People and Culture

The population of Arunachal Pradesh as per the 2001 census was 10.91 lakhs . The sex ratio was 901 females per 1000 males. The average density of population was only 13 persons per sq. km. as against all India average density of 324 persons. The literacy rate was 54.74%. The state has at present 14 districts, 12 towns and 3,649 villages.

There are 25 main tribes and number of sub- tribes (more than 110). Yhese tribes are mainly dominated by three major cultural groups viz: the Monpas, the Adis and the Noctes and Wanchos . The Monpas are acclaimed mountain agriculturists, rear livestocks, skilled weavers, traders and believe in the Tibetian-Lamaist type of Buddhism since time immemorial. The Adis (including other major tribes like Apatanis, Akas, Nishis/Daflas, Mishimis, Hill Miris, Tangsas, Tagins, Sulung etc) although traditionally practice jhuming (shifting) cultivation are now extensively practice wet-rice cultivation and have considerable other agricultural economy like horticulture, pisciculture, etc.. Most of these tribes still follow traditional tribal forms of worship. They worship the Sun and the Moon God known as Dony-Polo. The third group comprises Noctes and Wanchos live in the adjoining Nagaland border in the Tirap district. Like other tribes in the state they are also mountain agriculturists and believes/practise elementary form of Vaishnavism. Almost all the tribes and sub-tribes are traditionally skilled weavers. A few tribes also practise handicrafts. The colourful people of Arunachal have rich cultural heritage. So, they are the greatest attraction of this beautiful land.

Rice, meat, fish, vegetables and fruits seem to have constituted the main diet of the Arunachali people.

Important Places for tourist attractions

Tawang : Tawang is a land of the Monpa tribe and a Buddhist pilgrimage site, where the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetans, goes to preach and pray. Tawang is famous for Buddhist monastery (known as Tawang Gompa). Mountains overlooking the Tawang valley surround this world famous monastery. The monastery is said to be 400 years old. One can see the beautiful bazaar area, craft centre, and landscaping.. While going to Tawang, the road is very zig-zag and stiff and will be reaching at the great Sela Pass, which is at a breath taking height of 13,714 ft and it is the world's second highest pass. Near to the Sela Pass, there is a famous welcome dragon gate and a temple called Jeswantgarh . Jeswantgarh is actually a memorial place to a brave solder who single handedly tried to hold of approaching Chinese army during 1962 Indo-China war. On the way to Tawang tourists can also



Sela Lake in Tawang of Arunachal Pradesh

see and enjoy numerous beautiful waterfalls, small lakes, traditional villages, movement of yaks etc. Near to Tawang one can also visit, Taksang Gompa, PTSO, a wonderful sight seeing place and a natural lake called Sageshar lake. The local people of Tawang known as Monpas are colourful people living in the high altitude border areas of the district of Tawang and West Kameng. The local Monpas tribes of Tawang differ from the other tribes of the state in their religion, techniques of building stone and mud houses and their tradition of trans-Himalayan indigenous trades through the caravan routes with Assam, Bhutan and Tibet.

In Tawang, there are number of good hotels. Tourists can also stay in Government Circuit House and other Tourist Lodges. A heavy woolen cloth during winter and light woolen cloths during summer is a must for every tourist. Best time to visit is from September to April.

Tawang can be reached from Bomdila (187 km) by bus or share taxi. Its entry and exit point is Bhalukpung. The nearest railway station is Rangapara (340 km), which is located in Assam. The nearest airport is Tezpur (347 km). The distance from Guwahati to Tawang is 537 km.

Bomdila: On the way to Tawang, another tourist place called Bomdila, the district headquarter town of West Kameng can also be seen i.e it has to be passed through. Bomdila is at a height of 2,530 mtrs offerings wonderful panoramic views of Himalayan landscapes and snow-clad ranges. The Buddhists monastery here is worth visiting. It has a craft center producing very fine carpets of colourful designs and masks. One can also see apple orchards in the nearby areas of Bomdila town. Around the area there are good trails for trekking enthusiasts. It is an ideal tourist destination. Besides Circuit House, Inspection Bunglow and Tourist Lodge, there are number of good hotels in Bomdila .

Dirang: From Bomdila to Tawang, the first stop-over is at Dirang, another beautiful place in Arunachal Pradesh. Dirang is offering tourists to visit the apple orchards, sheep breeding farms and a few kilometers from Dirang, there is a hot spring where people go for a holy dip to wash away sins and diseases and of course to visit the Kalachakra Gompa.

Tipi: While going to Bomdila and Tawang, one can enter the orchid research center, after crossing the Bhalukpong, border of Assam Tipi in West Kameng district, generally

known as the Tipi Orchidarium. It is a glass house with over 7500 orchids. Arunachal has the largest range of orchids in India. At Tipi, scientists are creating new hybrid species using the latest techniques of biotechnology. It can be reached from Tezpur by bus or car.

Itanagar: Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh is a beautiful historic city, also known as the 'land of the down lit mountains'. It is located in Himalayan foothills of Papumpare District. Here the most attractive sites for the tourist are Itafort, Buddhist Monastery, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum, Emporium, the Zoo, the Ganga lake etc. The Ganga Lake (6 km from Itanagar) is a beautiful spot for outing, picnics and boating. The other attractions for the tourists are tracking, hiking, and angling on the river Dikrong. In nearby Naharlagun (only 10 km from Itanagar) tourists can see Craft Center and Polo Park. Itanagar can be reached from Guwahati (381 km), Tezpur (216 km), North Lakhimpur (65 km) and Bandardewa (22 km) in Assam by bus and car. Banderdewa is its entry and exit point. The nearest railway station is Harmoti in Assam (33 km from Itanagar). The nearest airport is Lilabari, which is 67 km from Itanagar. Another airport is at Tezpur (216 km). There are number of reasonably good hotels in Itanagar. It is best to visit from October to May.

Namdapha Wildlife Sanctuary: Namdapha is one of the most unique wildlife sanctuaries in India. It is located on the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains in the Changlang district of the state. The sanctuary is the natural habitat of tigers, leopards, the clouded leopard and snow leopard. It is also the place of rare hoolok gibbon, hornbill (the state bird), red panda and capped langur. Elephants, samber, barking deer, wild bear, monkeys etc are also found here. It is also home for large variety of birds like great Indian hornbills, peacock, kaleen, tragopan, eagles etc. A large variety of ornamental and aromatic plants are found in the sanctuary. Some of the most endangered varieties of orchids are also found here. The sanctuary was brought under Project Tiger in 1983.

Namdapha is accessible from Dibrugarh, Tinsukia or Margherita town via its entry point at Miao (22 km). The distance from Dibrugarh airport is 110 km.

Parasuram Kunda: Parasuram Kunda has been a centre of Hindu pilgrimage from time immemorial. The Kalikapuran of Hindu Mythology states that to atone for the sin of matricide initiated by his father, Parasuram as per the advice of some sages came to bathe in the kund in this remote land. The axe that was stuck to his hand fell away after taking the holy bath here.. It is believed that a dip in the kund on Makar Sankranti day is sufficient to wash away ones sin. During Makar Sankranti in January an Annual Mela (big festival) is held every year The Kunda is about 25 km from Tezu and 56 km from Roing. The nearest railway station is at Tinsukia which is 165 kms away.The area is home to the Mishimi, Khampti, Singphos and Idu Mishimi tribes.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the other important places of tourist interest are Pasighat, Ziro, Tezu, Khunsa, Along, Malinithan, Bhismaknagar, Roing including Mayodia Pass etc In addition some important festivals like Mopin Festival of Adis, Losar Festival of Monpa, Nyokum Festival of Nishis, Reh Festivals of Idu Misimis, Loku Festival of Nectas, Ojiiyale Festival of Adis, Mol Festivals of Tangsas, Kban Festival of Miris and the famous Buddha Mohutsav etc can also be included for tourist attractions.

However to attract more tourist to this state some ground works like wide publicity, good transport and communication facilities, clean accommodation, varieties of food including popularizing of local food, efficient tourist guide, entertainment, shopping facilities, telephone and E.mail facilities are to be developed. Though government is making considerable efforts to develop this sector, but more and more local people, particularly the youth must come forward and take this as a challenge by educating the local people, preserving the wild life and other monuments, offering various facilities and hospitalities to the tourists like setting up of various category of hotels, resorts, restaurants, tourist cottages, wayside dhaba, luxury buses, taxis, tour and travel agency, trekking and angling facilities, gliding facilities, PCO, local handloom & handicrafts selling counters at the tourist sites etc.

In conclusion, we can say that there is considerable potential for developing of tourism industry in Arunachal Pradesh. The state has rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna necessary for making and developing tourism as a potential industry, but the local people, particularly the youth need proper guidance, motivation, help and co-operation from all the concerned departments and organizations, banks, experts and professionals. ❑

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A Treasure Trove

Deepak Roy



If properly developed tourism can become a booming industry in Arunachal Pradesh. The state provides abundant scope for angling, boating, rafting, trekking and hiking

ARUNACHAL PRADESH, 'the land of the dawn lit mountains', is one of the most pristine areas in India. The history of Arunachal Pradesh is a virtual treasure trove of myths and fascinating traditions, but the recorded history of this state is available only from the 16th century onwards, when the Ahom kings began to rule Assam.

There are practically no records relating to the earlier history of this area except some oral literature and the number of historical ruins found mainly in the foothills dating approximately from the early Christian era.

In 1826, the British exercised their control in Assam after the treaty of Yandaboo concluded on 24th February 1826. Before 1962, Arunachal was popularly called North Eastern Frontier Agency and was constitutionally a part of Assam. It was administered by the Ministry of External Affairs until 1965 and subsequently by the Ministry of Home Affairs through the Governor of Assam. In 1972, it was constituted as a Union Territory and renamed Arunachal Pradesh. On 20th February in 1987, it became the 24th state of the Indian Union.

The McMahon Line separates it from the zone of control of the People's Republic of China to the north. Arunachal Pradesh is one of two main disputed regions between India and China, the other being Aksai Chin: the People's Republic of China does not, recognize the state of Arunachal Pradesh, nor the McMahon Line. Instead, the PRC government refers to the region as occupied by India.

Arunachal Pradesh is a thinly populated hilly tract lying on the north-east extremity of India comprising roughly 83,573 kilometer square of area. The Pradesh is known to be rich in flora, fauna, hydro electricity and mineral potential. Arunachal Pradesh is bounded by

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independent countries on the three sides and by Assam and Nagaland in the south. It has Bhutan on its west, the Tibet region of China on its northern border and Myanmar on the eastern border.

The terrain mostly consists of sub-montane and mountainous ranges with the Himalayan range along the northern borders criss-crossed with ranges running north-south. The rivers have created broad valleys in these areas.

The Brahmaputra, India's major river enters Arunachal Pradesh from Tibet and flows into Assam. The state gets as much as five hundred centimeters of rainfall and this account for the large number of rivers and lakes in the region apart from extensive forests. The rivers Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap have divided the plains of Assam into valleys.

The administrative set up of Arunachal Pradesh and its changing district boundaries correspond broadly to natural boundaries of river basin. Even the boundaries of Sub-Divisions, Community Development Blocks and Administrative Circles within the districts have also been directly affected by the terrain features, though there is no cadastral survey conducted till date for clear cut demarcation of administrative boundaries.

There are 16 Districts, 37 sub-divisions, 155 circles, 17 towns, 69 blocks and 3862 villages constituting an elaborate administrative structure for diffusing developmental activities in the state .

In distribution of population, Arunachal Pradesh can be divided into six natural regions. The first two regions are the Western parts of Kameng District and Tirap District where there are comparatively large concentration of population. The upper, the middle and the lower belts of the remaining parts of Arunachal Pradesh constitute other three distinct regions. The concentrated population pockets on the foot hills constitute the sixth region.

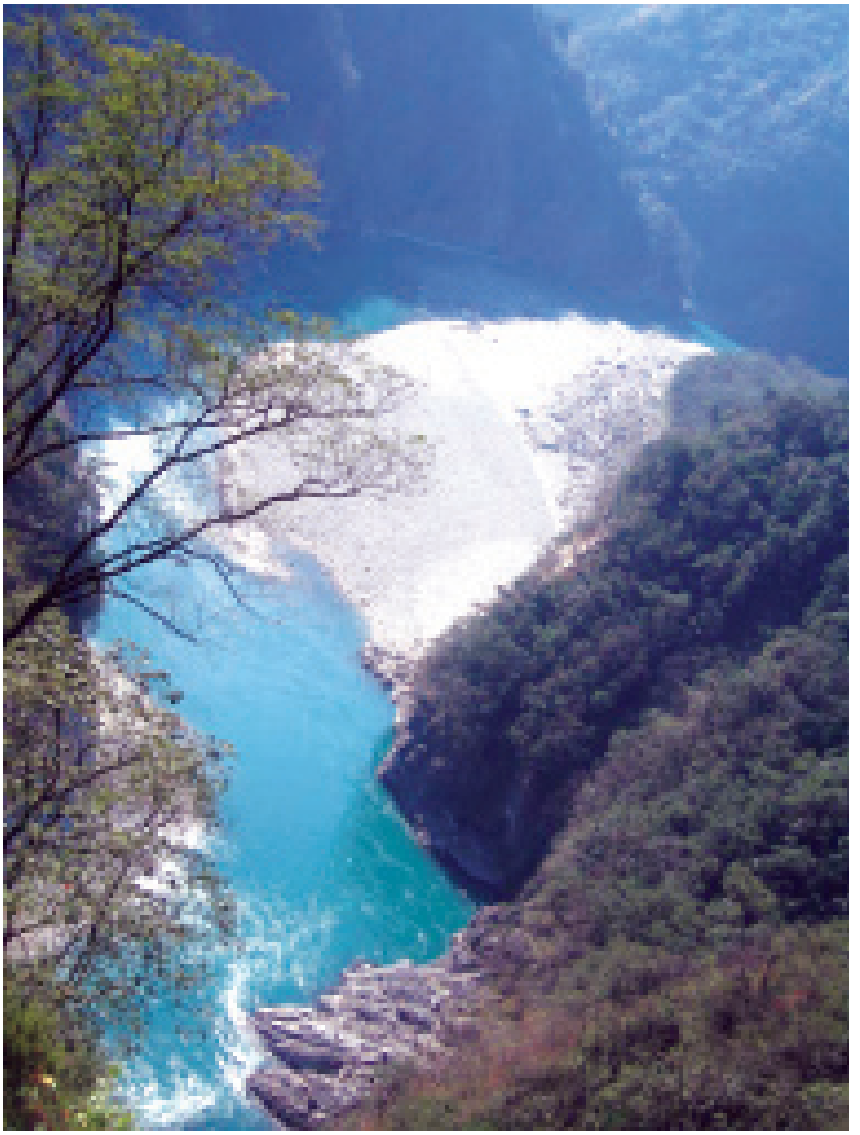
Arunachal Pradesh is a human laboratory. The sparse population of Arunachal is predominantly tribal in character and there are about 26 major tribes which are divided into hundred s of sub tribes. These groups have distinct culture. In the16th century the Ahom Kings influenced the region. The population is of Tibeto-Burmese linguistic origin. The tribe consisted of the Daflas, Bangnis, the Monpas and they are influenced by Buddhist ideals. The Miri along with the Daflas and Tagin lived in the hills. The Apatanis are believed to be more advanced. They are agriculturists. Besides this the Abor who call themselves as Adi lived in the valley of Arunachal Pradesh.

In Arunachal Pradesh , the agricultural practice of shifting cultivation also known as jhum cultivation or rotational agro-forestry, prevalent since prehistoric times, is being carried out by traditional tribal societies even today. Over the years, many of these societies got pushed into employing distorted versions of shifting agriculture. Vested interests are using these distortions to press for outlawing the traditional shifting cultivation. However, efforts to wean farmers away from shifting cultivation have not been very successful .Traditionally a village community owns/controls the forest land and decides on such rotational cultivation pattern. Thus the community cultivates land for its livelihood while practising conservation and taking care of the ecological balance.

Paddy, millet and maize are the major crops. The indigenous vegetables are sweet potatoes, brinjal, ginger, chillies, pumpkin, cucumber, and local cowpea. Pine apple, oranges, lemon, lichi, papaya, banana and peach walnut, almond etc are also grown in Arunachal Pradesh

The state has several medium industries based on its forest products. Plants to produce cement and fruit processing units have also come up in the state. There are a number of craft training centres and the states handloom industry has made good progress. The people are experts in cane and bamboo basketry work. Wood carving and black smithy are found in certain villages. Iron scrapers, spear head, and Daos required for day-to-day use are made in several villages.

Mineral resources found in the state are clay, marble, limestone, graphite, pyrite. Arunachal Pradesh Mineral Developmemt and Trading Corporation Limited was set up in 1991 and Namchik-Namphuk coal fields are under APMDTCL. The small scale cottage industry consists of weaving, cane and bamboo work and silver smithy etc. To provide training to craftsmen there are two industrial training institutes at Roing and Daporijo.



Scenic beauty of the Snowclad Silver Mountain Peaks of Arunachal

The dances, performed by the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, have been broadly divided into four groups. Ritual dances form the first group, which may again be divided into five sub-groups. The second group is the Festive-dances which forms the recreational part of festivals. Then there are the Recreational dances which neither form part of any particular festival nor ritual. The fourth group is the Pantomimes and Dance-dramas which narrate a mythical story or illustrate a moral.

In Arunachal Pradesh festivals are celebrated throughout the year... in fact festivals form an essential part of the life of the tribals. Most of the festivals are related to agriculture and celebrated in a ritualistic manner. Festivals are celebrated either to thank God for his divine intervention or to pray for a good harvest. Dances form an essential part of their festivals and are performed to express their joy of life. Some of the important festivals are Mopin and Solung of Adis, Losar of Monpas, Sherdukpens and Boori-Boot of the Hill Miris, Dree of Apatanis, Si-doni of Tagins, Nyokum of Nishis, Reh of Idu Mishmis etc. Animal sacrifice is a habitual ritual in all festivals.

In 2004 researchers discovered an unknown species of macaque monkey on an expedition to the forests of Arunachal Pradesh. The new species was given the designation Macaca munzala, but was also known as the Arunachal macaque after the region where it was first seen.

The availability of cane and bamboo in abundance have made Arunachal Pradesh famous for its cane and bamboo articles. Bamboo and cane are used to make colourful basket mats, cane belts, attractive smoking pipes, jewellery etc. It is also used traditionally by the tribal population for constructing their dwellings, common household utensils, furniture, and even weapons such as bows and arrows, spears, armour, and implements like dibbles, hunting and fishing traps. Most of the household are engaged in making bamboo and cane articles

Weaving is another important household industry in Arunachal. Among the tribes the Apatanis are the most advanced weavers. The tribal use bark fibres extracted from trees, goat's hair, human hair besides cotton and wool for weaving. They make ceremonial coats and shawls, and embroidered cotton cloth, handbags, skirts and lungis (loin cloths), shawls, sashes, carpets etc.

Wood carving is a traditional craft among number of tribal communities in Arunachal Pradesh. The main centre for woodcarving in the state is the Wancho area of Tirap district. They make figure heads, warriors, miniature morung, figurines depicting different vocations common to rural life, animal figures, colorful masks and images of Lord Buddha.

The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh make various weapons and tools with metal for their own use. Each tribe specialises in making different items. Daos, arrow heads, knives and iron bracelets as jewellery are some of them. Besides this, products made out of other metals like brass, bone, silver, gold etc. are also produced by the tribes. Some common products are ornaments, dishes, sacred bells, smoking pipes etc

The textile patterns found among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh such as Adi, Mishmi and Apatani are invariably of geometric pattern. Most popular motives are Zig-Zag lines and angular designs. The floral and Zemorphic patterns are more or less geometric form. The simple and straight lines, stripes and Aa bands and similar other patterns are most common. Contrasts and combination of colours are quite popular. The highly disciplined Adi and Apatani concentrate on simple straight line, while the strongly individualistic Mishmis go in for great celebration of pattern.

The state of Arunachal Pradesh offers a dazzling array of flora and fauna that is sure to enchant any tourist. More than 500 rare species of Orchids are found here.

Arunachal Pradesh is bestowed with huge hydroelectric potential and is speculated to become the 'Power House' of the country if this hydroelectric potential is tapped.

The identified hydroelectric capacity in respect of Arunachal Pradesh as per re-assessment study as on 30-04-2006 comes to 50,328 MW and so far only about 0.8% of this capacity has been tapped owing to the difficult geographical terrain and inaccessibility of possible project sites.

In a landmark move towards making this state Power House of India, the State Government on 21st of September, entered into Memorandum of Agreement with power giants viz., National Hydroelectric Power Corporation and National Thermal Power Corporation and also with North Eastern Electric Power Corporation for harnessing 10,230 MW of hydroelectricity capacity out of the Central Electricity Authority estimated hydroelectricity capacity of 50,238 MW. These power giants would pump in around RS 42,242 Crores.

The state Government is taking a programme of electrification of all the houses in the State. An amount of Rs. 550.00 crores will be spent to provide electricity through solar power as well as small hydropower project to all villages along the State border.

If properly developed tourism can become a booming industry in Arunachal Pradesh. The inner-line permit system creates hindrance and puts barriers in development of tourism in the state. State Government should do away with the inner-line permit system and make Arunachal Pradesh more accessible to tourists .Another major hinderence to tourism is lack of proper road and air connections to remote areas of the State.

The widely scattered archeological remains at different places in Arunachal bears testimony to its rich cultural heritage. Arunachal Pradesh invites tourists to relax in its picturesque hills and valleys, enjoy its salubrious climate and meet its simple and hospitable people, with their glorious heritage of arts and crafts and colourful festivals that reflect their ancient faith in the inexorable power of nature.

The visitor has a wide variety of options to pick from. There are places of worship and piligrimage such as Parasuramkund and 400 years old Tawang Monastery, or the sites of archeological excavations like Malinithan and Itanagar, the serene beauty of lakes such as Ganga lake or Sela lake or the numerous variations of scenic beauty of the snowclad silver mountain peaks and lush green meadows where thousands of species of flora and fauna prosper. In addition, the state provides abundant scope for angling, boating, rafting, trekking and hiking. Besides, there are a number of wild life sanctuaries and national parks where rare animals, birds and plants will fascinate the visitor. ❑

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Upcoming Institutes of Indian Medicine

S K Chadha

NORTH EASTERN Institute of Folk Medicines

North Eastern region is one of the bio-diversity hot spots in the country and is rich in bio-diversity especially in therapeutic and economical in medicinal plants of the Himalayan region. The people in this region have been using medicinal plants for centuries. There has been no systematic harnessing of these natural resources for scientific uses and commercial exploitation. The bio-resources and traditional practices in the region have not been fully studied and as a result have not been utilized for mainstreaming healthcare. Most of the tribes and communities of the region have their own folk medicine traditions which have been used by them for centuries. The potential available in the traditions of folk medicines and tribal health practices in the region can only be utilized in community healthcare by means of an institution like mechanism which would document, validate and develop these traditions.

- The Department of AYUSH (Deptt. of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy) Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is setting up an institute namely 'North Eastern Institute of Folk Medicines (NEIFM) based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee of the Planning Commission on AYUSH in the 11th Plan. This would ensure the protection and dissemination of the knowledge contained in folk medicines and traditional health practices in the region by way of systematic documentation and by making its repository of natural resources used in folk medicines and local health traditions.
- NEIFM will come up at Pasighat (East Siang District) on a total cost of Rs. 32.88 crore. The State Government has allocated the land for setting up the institute. The institute has started functioning from a rented building at Pasighat and will be fully functional by end of 2010. This is going to be first of its kind of institute in the country as no such institute exists at the moment. It will be set up in phased manner and care will be taken to ensure that its documentation and research activities are taken up systematically. This institute would develop linkages with other States of North East and other regions of the country and would become a premier institute of folk medicine and traditional health practices in the country.
- The institute will be developed as apex human resource

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development center of Folk medicinal knowledge and will be adequately linked to health system of the region so that community health programmes can be taken up. This will help generate public awareness about the potential of Folk health practices and traditional health knowledge in disease-prevention and health promotion. This Institute will provide a platform for creating economic opportunities for growth through documentation, sustainable harvesting of natural resources, cultivation of medicinal plants, setting up drug manufacturing and community health facilities of traditional medicine. The main objectives of the institution are as follows:-

i) Documentation, validation, sustenance and preservation of folk medicine, health practices and healing traditions.

ii) Capacity building of traditional healers and regional scientific cadres on traditional health knowledge and folk medicine.

iii) Research into the local health traditions, customs and practices.

iv) Development of strategies for harnessing socio-economic benefits from the traditional and folk health knowledge and resources.

v) Translation of research findings into practice for larger usage and further studies.

vi) Networking within the North East and other parts of India to build up mentoring partnerships and linkage development.

North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda & Homoeopathy

- The North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Homoeopathy is proposed to be set up in the campus of North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health & Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) in Shillong, Meghalaya where 20 acres of land has already been allocated for this. The Institute would also provide trained medical personnel and would also provide tertiary care facilities in Ayurveda and Homoeopathy for the region. The proposed Institute would help in the meaningful utilization of Central funds earmarked for the North East and would propagate Ayurveda and Homoeopathy as a part of the National Policy of improving health care and mainstreaming AYUSH systems in the region.

- Co-locating this Institute in the NEIGRIHMS will make it convenient for the public to avail of Allopathic and AYUSH medical services in one location. Cross referral of patients between the Allopathic and AYUSH institutions would also be possible. In addition to this, certain common facilities existing in the NEIGRIHMS would be shared and this would lead to economy and efficiency.

- This Institute will be first teaching institute of its kind after Guwahati. As far as medical education is concerned, the Institute would have an admission capacity of 50 students in Ayurveda and 50 students in Homoeopathy. This will produce Ayurveda and Homoeopathy graduates who will help in healthcare deliver in the region. A 100 bed Ayurveda Hospital and a 50 bed Homoeopathy Hospital are to be set up. A Documentation -cum -R& D Center and an Ayurvedic Pharmacy would also be set up. Residential facilities for students and staff would be provided in the campus.

- The Institute would be an autonomous organization registered under the Societies Registration Act. The Ayurveda and Homoeopathy hospitals are to completed by December, 2009 and the college is to be completed by March, 2010. Admissions in the 1st BAMS and 1st BHMS courses are scheduled to start in July, 2010.

- The cost of the first phase is estimated at Rs. 67.51 crore out of which Rs. 56.50 crore is towards non-recurring expenditure and Rs. 11.01 crore for recurring expenditure. ❑

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Science and Technology Interventions

R K Gupta
S K Gupta



Specific attention need to given for providing scientific inputs for exploration and exploitation of natural resources on a sustainable basis and formulating management plans

BIO-GEO-GRAPHICALLY, Arunachal Pradesh (AP) is situated in the Eastern Himalayan province, the richest bio-geographical province of the Himalayan zone. Diverse topographical and climatic conditions in the state has favoured the growth of luxuriant forests, which are the home to myriad plant and animal forms adding beauty to the landscape. Considering the rich flora and fauna in the state and keeping in view the need for conserving depleting bioresources and sustainably developing the same for improving the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor and providing them better quality of life, there is a need for significant Science & Technology (S&T) inputs in the following thrust areas:

The Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) and Biotechnology

The PGR are the basic biotechnological tools to ensure food security for the present and future generations, and for which we have to identify and preserve: the Agricultural crops, Horticultural crops, Floricultural crops including Orchids, Medicinal and Aromatic plants, Forestry – Timber and Non-Timber species, and Sericulture.

(a) Agricultural crops: Some of the important areas where biotechnology can help in improving agricultural productivity include, development of high-yielding varieties of crops -- cereals, pulses and oil seeds and stress tolerant varieties against humidity, water logging, low temperature, pests and diseases. Micro-propagation protocols need to be developed for selected elite clones for large-scale production and distribution to farmers. Promotion of Bio-fertilizers and biological control of pests and diseases is another area of importance, besides, R&D in the area of genomics for molecular characterization of plant's species, transgenic, molecular breeding, etc. Organic agriculture has expanded world-wide. Keeping in view the increasing demand of organic food products, the traditional agriculture being practiced in some

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parts of the state could be propagated throughout the state.

(b) Horticulture and Floriculture: Large scale biotechnological interventions are called for in conventional horticultural and floricultural crops particularly for collection, selection, breeding and improvement of indigenous Germplasm, with focus on the production of high-yielding and disease/ pest-resistant varieties. Utmost importance is to be given to clonal selection and development of package and practice for cultivation/ plantations. Tissue culture technology also need to be promoted for large-scale production and distribution of quality planting materials of fruit and vegetable, besides development of post-harvest technology, improving shelf life and value addition. In addition, the focus should be on development of micropropagation protocols, hardening and distribution of quality planting materials, Mycorrhyzal studies and development of protocols for biological hardening and improvement of tissue cultured orchid plantlets.

(c) Medicinal and Aromatic plants (MAP): Arunachal Pradesh has a great potential for the cultivation of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants keeping in view the eco-climatic conditions in the state which favour their mass cultivation. Apart from the traditional use, some of the MAPs can be effectively used for commercial and industrial activities. Because the economic returns from MAPs are several-fold higher than those of traditional cash crops and horticultural crops, their large scale cultivation can contribute significantly towards employment generation and economic development. This calls for: Documentation of indigenous agronomic practices followed by the farmers; Preservation of Intellectual Property Rights; Strengthening of traditional techniques of cultivation through cost effective and appropriate technology; Value addition to the MAP products to meet potential market demand; and Establishment of processing facilities as to provide employment opportunities to locals while enhancing cultivation and reducing the pressure on natural resources. Regular training of farmers is essential to keep them informed about the latest developments and market demand. Universities and research institutions could play an important role in identifying prominent MAPs which are not only endemic to the region, but also have good domestic and global market.

(d) Forestry: The forests of Arunachal Pradesh possess a phenomenal range of biological diversity. The forests are also home to sizeable tribal population which continues to live in close association with nature and utilizes a wide variety of forest resources for sustenance and livelihood. In order to replenish the vanishing forestry species in the state, there is an immediate need to take up genetic improvement of useful multipurpose tree species and their fast regeneration through various biotechnological tools. In spite of huge potential for bamboo in the State, it is depleting at an alarming rate. There is a need to ensure sustained availability of bamboos through Genetic improvement and their Mass-propagation. Apart from cultivation and conservation, it is essential to establish vital links between the rural artisans and the urban consumers.

(e) Sericulture: Sericulture has a high employment potential and nearly 60 lakh persons are engaged in various sericulture activities in the country. In recent years, Seri-biotech research has acquired prominence to harness the benefits of molecular biology research in sericulture. Genome analysis of mulberry silkworm using molecular markers has led to DNA profiling of silkworm genotypes through PCR based Random Amplification of Polymorphic DNA (RAPD) and DNA fingerprinting with micro-satellite probes. Distinct and unique DNA profile which is specific to diapausing and non-diapausing strains has been identified. Keeping in view the climatic conditions in the state, selected species of Quercus griffithii (for tasar) and Ricinus communis (for muga) may be propagated extensively.

Bioinformatics

India has achieved considerable success in the software industry. Biotechnology and bioinformatics are two new knowledge-intensive sectors often cited as possibilities for repeating the software success story. Bioinformatics is the application of computer technology to the management of biological information. The need for bioinformatics capabilities has been precipitated by the explosion of genomic information resulting from the Human Genome Project and other attempts at genomic sequencing. Keeping in view its large potential for generating high quality employment opportunities, state like A.P. may explore possibilities for setting up infrastructure for bio-informatics education and research.

Tele-education (TE)

Tele-education is creating new environment for training, learning and interactive discussions. It is opening new vistas for transforming the way we live, act, think, learn and communicate. Barrier due to distance is vanishing to provide various lectures/courses in far-flung areas for the benefit and development of people across the region, country, continents, etc.

The educational satellite EDUSAT was launched on 20th Sept. 2004 by the Indian Space Research Organization with the objective to spread education through 'two-way virtual classroom' approach. A.P. being sparsely distributed in a large geographical area and many parts of the state difficult to cover under normal education dissemination mechanism, this system can be extremely useful and highly relevant for the masses. Therefore, A.P. needs to gear up to acquire these facilities. Apart from the pre-school, school, college and higher education, these programmes may be extended to cover non-formal education and developmental communication. The scope of the TE in the state may also include literacy drive, to career education, to technology transfer, and vocational and community education. Programmes must be developed for the community on health, hygiene, nutrition, agriculture, cottage industry, hazard mitigation, environmental education, etc. TE Units may be established at convenient locations in the communities where expert guides will browse, search and assist the interested registered learners in collating information and educational materials. TE can also include activities under a well-designed Computer Literacy Programme by linking selected educational institutes of the state with core centres like IIT-Guwahati. IGNOU Programmes can also be made available to the target audience.

Telemedicine (TM)

ISRO's satellite based Telemedicine network, which started in 2001 on an experimental basis, is aimed at linking remote/ rural district hospitals with super-specialty hospitals in major cities via INSAT. While ISRO provides the software, hardware and communication equipment as well as satellite bandwidth, the specialty hospitals provide the infrastructure, manpower and maintain the system. ISRO's telemedicine network has matured into an operational system and now covers 250 hospitals - 208 – Remote/rural/district hospitals/ health centres connected to 42 specialty hospitals located in major cities and 8 – Mobile Vans. The first telemedicine centre of A.P. has come up in the General Hospital, Naharlugun, in 2004, under the "Providing Urban Facilities in Rural Areas" programme sponsored jointly by ISRO, NEC and State Govt. It links the medicos of the state to there in other states. The 2nd Centre of TM is in the Ramakrishna Mission Hospital, Itanagar, Tawang and Bomdila. It would be really useful to expand the TM network in the state so as to reach the unreached.

The present status of S&T including R&D and the inputs needed particularly the biotechnological interventions in the field of agriculture, horticulture & floriculture, Medicinal & Aromatic Plants, forestry and sericulture, Bio-informatics, Tele-education and Tele-medicine have been emphasized. The research establishments of the State in collaboration with the Agriculture Dept. should carry out research programmes on both field crops in use and wild varieties and carry out selection, screening and development applying biotechnology on the selected ones and transfer the technology to the farmers and industries. The generation of biomass energy will lead to increase in rural economic activities from the plant products. Extension and training to the farmers would help to boost the agro -industries throughout the state. For all-round development based on S&T, the state needs to establish an institutional mechanism for undertaking multidisciplinary research in biotechnology, generate scientific manpower and provide scientific and technological inputs for industries. The 'Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development", Imphal is a beginning in this direction. The immediate objective of the S&T interventions should be biodiversity–survey, conservation, propagation & utilization, improving agricultural, horticultural & floricultural productivity and value addition to farm produce besides expansion of tele-education and tele-medicine networks in the state. The following suggestions could provide a roadmap for development of S&T in the state:

- Keeping in view the rich flora and fauna of the state, there is a need for a detailed action plan on development of Biotechnology in the state by bringing together people from various fields like Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture and the Scientists working in the University and other educational institutions.
- Specific attention need to given for providing scientific inputs for exploration and exploitation of natural resources on a sustainable basis and formulating management plans for the same.
- The State Council of Science & Technology needs to focus on capacity building and human resource development and also dissemination of rural and appropriate technology for enhancing the growth potential with special emphasis on rural development. The State is extremely short of S&T manpower, which has affected even the availability of Science teachers in the State. Therefore,

development of S&T human resource is utmost importance to the State.

- The State Govt. also need to support R&D programme addressing state specific problems and exploitation/ utilization of locally available raw materials, like Bamboo for development of new and useful products.
- The State S&T Council needs to establish active interface and linkage with Central Departments/agencies viz. Department of Science and Technology (DST), Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) for identification and implementation of location specific programmes for the development of the State. There are a large number of schemes of these departments under which the State S&T Council may seek funds for specific projects and programmes, particularly in the areas of biotechnology, societal application of S&T etc. ❑

(Email : skguptanscplan@yahoo.com)

FASHION TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE AT SUALKUCHI

Though application of modern technology in textile industry is a must to cope with the present trend of open market, but it has hardly influenced the artisans of Sualkuchi who were habituated with the traditional technology in silk-industry. Resistance to using modern technology has been the bane of the weavers, master weavers and entrepreneurs who face marketing problems on a regular basis. Even as there is a high demand for Sualkuchi silk attire in European markets, due to technological stagnation lack of interest to introduce innovations in the age-old silk industry, the town has not been able to meet such demands.

Realising the potential that the town has in regard to production of quality silk clothes, the Kamrup district administration in collaboration with NEC and the NIFT, Kolkata has set up the Sualkuchi Institute of Fashion Technology at Sualkuchi. This maiden institute of fashion technology would provide a common platform for fashion and design education, research and training. The prime objective of setting up such an exclusive institute is to enhance the livelihood of a sizeable population and also to create a new brand for Sualkuchi silk.

The institute would cover areas of conducting intensive integrated training programme on fashion and textile design, exploration and development of a design bank specific to the Sualkuchi region through conduct of computer-aided desigining programmes, training and introduction of contemporary designs, colours, schemes, methods of practice to ensure development of products consisting both apparel and home furnishings and to conduct research and development on product diversification and design innovation, etc.

Meanwhile, the Kamrup district administration has completed the construction of the institute buildings comprising lecture rooms, seminar hall, separate hostel facilities for girls and boys, dying and processing room, quality control and testing, handloom pattern making and stitching laboratories with the latest machineries and modern facilities. The education structure will emphasise hands on experience through practical set ups and state-of-the-art technology. The institute will also have an updated library-cum-resource centre which will provide the latest information on colour forecast, fashion trends and industry happenings to the trainees.

The duration of the training programme has been fixed for six weeks per batch which include 25 trainees. The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Kolkata will implement the integrated training programme on fashion and textile design by deputing experienced faculty members and industry experts and the course curriculum, training modules have been designed by NIFT by using a range of work based teaching and learning techniques to ensure the trainees gain a practical, strategic and operational understanding of design development, product diversification and management skills.

After completion of the course, the trainees would get, a detailed overview on designs innovation, product diversification, colour forecast and fashion trends, etc which will widen their perspectives. ❑

(Courtesy : The Assam Tribune)

Agriculture Sector - Intra Regional Disparity

Rabindra Kr Choudhury



The benefits of earlier green revolution did never reach this part of the country, and the north-eastern region badly needs a fresh green revolution

BASICALLY AGRO-BASED is the economy of north-eastern region. Its relative poverty can be easily grasped from the fact that it earns only 2.7 percent of national income to feed 3.8 percent of India's population and the major reason is its low productivity of farm sector. The agricultural occupation offers livelihood to around 78 percent of the region's population of which 60 percent are cultivators, 10 percent are agricultural labourers and 8 percent source their income from allied activties. Thus, the fate of the regions' economy is closely linked to the fate of its agriculture.

In every state of the region, there is a considerable quantum of cultivable wasteland, varying from 0.6 percent of reporting area (in Arunachal Pradesh) to 20 percent (in Meghalaya). The absolute size of cultivable wasteland in the region as a whole presently comes to 8 lakh hectares, and since the average yield rate of foodgrains in 1520 kg. per hec. (in 2002-03), the annual loss works out to 1.2 lakh tonnes on this account.

Apart from this, a considerable amount of farm land gets lost due to erosion, besides large scale damages done to crops on account of floods and droughts that are mostly a regular occurance in Assam, the largest state with almost 70 percent of the region's population. According to a study report of the Asian Development Bank, the ever-widening Brahmaputra river has been eroding an annual average of 3,900 hectare of land, mostly cultivable, for the last 34 years. The productivity of land in the state, on an average being 1400 kg. of foodgrains per hecare. The annual loss of crops in Assam

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would come to around 600 tonnes due to land erosion alone.

Size of Operational Holding

According to agricultural experts, the size of operational holding below two hectares is uneconomic and, so, are either small or marginal holdings. Save Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, all the states of the region exhibit uneconomic holdings ranging from 0.97 hectare in Tripura to 1.77 hectare in Meghalaya, the average size for Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland being 3.73 hec. and 6.82 hec. respectively as against 3.61 hec. in Punjab and 1.6 hec. in the country as a whole. What is, however, more important to note is that as much as 60 percent of the region's operational holdings belong to the size group of less than 1.0 hectare, while 18 percent, accounts for the size of more than 2.0 hectare. Such extensive scale of tiny plots under the existing pattern of technology are grossly uneconomic and unsuitable to scientific cultivation, proper tilling and application of improved implements. The expenses on account of labour-time, cattle power and other inputs are naturally high and result in low productivity.

High Production Cost and Poor Input-base

Though detailed up-dated data on cost-structure is not available, an earlier study made by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy suggests that the cost of producing jute in Assam is higher by 10 percent to 20 percent over the same for Bihar, Orissa and other jute producing states. The same is the story for most items of food crops, particularly rice, wheat and pulses in the region and therefore, food items in large scale have to be imported from outside. As against 2.6 percent of India's population, the gross cropped area of Assam presently works out to 2 percent with also its productivity lower than the country's average by more than 10 percent. For the region as a whole, the all-India proportion of population and gross cropped area in figures are 3.8 percent and 2.7 percent respectively. The yield rate being low, one can easily imagine the extent disparity between the demand for and supply of food as well as non-food crops from the region's own production and, hence, of the quantum of their imports from outside.

It is, again, purturbing to note that irrigation facility which happens to be the most important input for crop productivity has remained at India's one of the lowest level in north-eastern region. Thus, Assam which accounts for 72 percent of the region's gross cropped area is a state with the poorest level of irrigation at just 5.5. percent of cropland and its gross irrigated area during the period from 1990-91 to 2000-01 could register only a marginal increase from 2.03 lakh hectares to 2.26 lakh hectares.

Though gross irrigated area has increased in some other states like Tripura, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, their aggregate increase accounts for only half a lakh hectares during the period. It is also disturbing to note that the gross irrigated area of Meghalaya and Manipur during the decade, 1991-2001 recorded a decling by 41 percent and 13 percent respectively. As ratio of gross irrigated area to total cropped area, however, all the states of north-eastern region except Tripura has registered a decline in the period as against an increase in the corresponding all India ratio from 34 percent in 1990-91 to 40 percent in 2000-01. One could also note here that the picture is no different in the region's highest-irrigation state, Manipur where, too, the gross irrigated area as ratio of gross cropped area has declined from 39 percent in 1990-91 to less than 36 percent in 2000-01. What is noticeable here is that such ratio relating to Manipur, which was 5 percent higher than the corresponding all India ratio in 1990-91 went down to lower than the same by more than 4 percent in 2000-01.

The major cause of foodgrains deficit with lower productivity and higher cost of production, therefore, appears to be the lack of irrigation facility besides lack of drought and flood management. It is astonishing that the all India proportion of the region's total irrigated area still remains at 1.0 percent as against its demand for foodgrains working out presently to 2.7 percent of the country's total.

Poor Infrastructural Build-up

Though infrastructural facilities, in general, in the region are at their lowest level, the most important components without which no headway could be made to agricultural development, particularly in its largest state, Assam, are improved power supply,

effective flood control measures, a wide network of irrigation system and farmers' training in technicalities of agriculture backed by extension services and adequate credit supply system. Notwithstanding hundreds of crores of rupees being spent every year to save crops and cattle from the furies of floods and soil erosion, no improvement worth the name could be noticed even after decades. Mismanagement, misuse of resources, lack of monitoring, absence of proper accountability, fearlessness of wrongdoers, etc., happen to be the main reasons. Though, for example, thousands of water pumpsets were installed, most of them were found to be unoperational soon owing to the supply constraint of energy or defective instruments. Apart from this, public expenditure on R&D activities which could largely improve productivity in total agriculture is too meagre in the region. What is badly needed for improved infrastructure is a substantial quantum of public investment and its purposeful use.

Poor yield-rate of crops

The yield rate of crops in the region is naturally low. The per hectare productivity of foodgrains in the region as a whole in 2002-03 works out to 1520 kg. as against all India average of 1562 kg. The lower yield rate of the region is mainly due to low productivity of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, since the same for all other states is higher than the all India rate. What is more purturbing is that the yield rate of foodgrains in Assam at 1419 kg. per hectare in 2002-03 is not only lower than the rate of the country as a whole, but is also at the lowest level among all states of the region and that, too, with respect to every item of foodgrains.

Though yield rate of rice as well as total food grains during 1992-2003 has registered an increase in all the states of the region against a decling in the country as a whole, the yield rate of rice was higher than all India in Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. On the other hand, though yield rate of wheat in all the states of the region was lower than the country's average (in 2002-03), that of pulses except in Assam was higher. The highest yield rate of total foodgrains marked by Manipur at 2305 kg per hectare followed by 2197 kg. in Tripura as against 1520 kg in the region and 1562 kg in the country as a whole.

With respect to non-food crops, the yield rate of cotton is lower than all India average in the region except for Mizoram, while that of rape seed and mustard in higher in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. While only Nagaland is found to have better than all-India productivity in jute, all the states of the region fair worse in case of sugar cane and banana. Potatoes grow at higher than national average rate only in Tripura, while the yield rate of turmeric is a distinct advantage for Mizoram at 9,333 kg. per hectare as against all-India productivity of 4580 kg. With respect to ginger, however, the productivity of the region is much higher than at the national level except in Tripura and Manipur, the largest yield rate being registered by Nagaland at 13,500 kg per hectare as against 6,052 kg as the region's average and only 3,420 kg. as the country's average.

Allied agriculture

Livestock farming is a distinct advantage in the region with its cattle population accounting for more than 4 percent and milch cattle at 4.8 per cent of India's total. However, its milk production is poor at only 1.4 percent (as in 2003-04) due to unscientific farming. Fish production presently accounting for 4.5 percent of the country's total could also have a bright future in scientific farming is patronised in the major producing states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur. Prospects of egg production is also high in the region with 3.6 percent of India's total production. In spite of this, more than the region's production quantum has to be imported, to meet the demand.

There is also a great possibility of horticultural production in the region. Of the total volume of fruits produced in the country, as much as 6 percent is grown mainly in Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. A special mention should be made of pineapple in which the region enjoys almost a monopoly status with 40 percent of the country's total grown in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura.

While cultivable wasteland through appropriate means need to be brought under cultivation, the continued loss of crops and crop land, has to be arrested through proper flood control measures. Since operational holdings are mostly of uneconomic size, strong measures to consolidate land under

cooperative farming strategy need be attempted. Again, since income-earning capacity from non-farm sectors is poor, the growth rate of agriculture must be substantially higher than the region's population growth not only to achieve self-sufficiency but also to feed the agro-processing sectors besides ensuring food security. Because of the fact that irrigated area as proportion to cropped area is deplorably low in Assam at only 5.5 percent and much below all India level in other states of the Region, an all effort is necessary achieve a quantum jump in its irrigation facility. The fact that manipur with the region's highest irrigation-intensity is also the state with highest yeild rate of food grains in the region, shows how urgently is irrigation needed here.

Since the yield rate of wheat is lower and that of pulses is higher than all-India average for all the states of the region except Assam, the crop composition may be encouraged in favour of pulses particularly in highest producing states like Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland with their productivity ranging between 933 and 1000 kg. per hectare as against all-India yield rate of only 556 kg. Though productivity of sugar cane in the region is lower than the national average, that of mustard and rapeseed is higher in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram which should be encouraged to specialise in these crops. Apart from this, the region has ample possibility of large scale production in the allied areas of diary farming, poultry farming and pisciculture.

The proficiency of north-eastern region in horticulture is well known. Banana is produced in all the states of the region and has much wider scope under a better farming technology. In the intra-country sphere, a distinct advantage is found to be enjoyed by Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya with respect to ginger productivity, while the same should be said of Mizoram with regard to turmeric as against the country's poor rate of productivity. Again, as much as 40 percent of the country's pineapple is produced in the states of Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur and Assam. The production of these crops should obviously be encouraged in the region's high-yielding states.

Within the north-eastern states themselves, there is a comparative advantage of cotton production in Mizoram, Sugar cane in Nagaland and Tripura, rape seed and mustard in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram, jute in Nagaland, potato in Tripura, rice in Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram, wheat in Nagaland and Tripura and pulses in Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. One could note here that the benefits of earlier green revolution did never reach this part of the country, and the north-eastern region badly needs a fresh green revolution. ❑

Railway Development Fund for NE

The Central Government has initiated the process of creating a Non-lapsable Rail Development Fund to fund the four national projects.

The projects including the Bogibeel rail cum road project, Rangia-Murkong selek, Azara-Byrnihat, Jiribam-Imphal Road and Dimapur Kohima new lines has been given the status of national projects. The projects are to be funded through normal Gross Budgetary Support of Railways to the extent of 25 per cent and balance 75 per cent as additionally to be provided by Ministry of Finance.

Though boulder supply for guide bund and protection works have almost been completed, earth work and bridge works are also in progress. The project is targeted for completion by March 2012.

About the dudhnoi-Depa Project connecting Assam and Meghalaya by rail, Shri Velu Minister of State for Railways said that survey for alternate alignment from Dudhnoi to Mendhipathar as suggested by the State Government has been completed and proposal for land acquisition has been submitted to the State Governments.

(Courtesy: The Assam Tribune)

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A Beacon of Hope for Women in Kargil

Tashi Morup

FAR AWAY from the heated demonstrations and raging politics in Kashmir and in Jammu, a silent revolution is in the offing in the Kargil district of Ladakh in J&K. Governed by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Kargil is going for second LAHDC polls soon. The tension is palpable but what is striking is that for the first time a woman is in the fray among 237 candidates for 26 seats of councillors.

Taking on the system is not easy particularly for a woman but Zahira Bano decided to contest from Trespone of Suru valley. The constituency is considered to be the stronghold of Aghas and Shiekhs, Shia religious leaders who according to Zahira impose on women strict established social rules and faith. She believes that women deserve a better deal and is determined to emancipate them from the clutches of orthodox and conservative society they are living in.

39-year old Zahira says, "Women have been relegated to do household drudgery like donkeys with only the role of reproduction to play. I have been to Delhi, Bombay, Jaipur, nowhere you find such a state of women as you find in Kargil reeling under a society suppressive towards women. Even in Iran they talk openly about women's rights in their parliament and there is no pressure as such, I have seen it in cassette films." .

The move has caused ripples of disapproval and even opposition from various sections of society. Even her parents imposed pressure on her to quit. But Zahira who knows that her journey is motivated by a cause far greater than the ties of immediate family is unfazed. She radiates an inner strength and resilience and states "At worst my relations with my parents will get severed, so be it" Her young team of campaign volunteers are often in the eye of the storm They receive threats from sections of the local population, a dire warning to quit or face eventualities. Handling such situations with equanimity has been as challenging as pursuing the agenda for women's' rights.

The plight of women move Zahira who speaks with anguish about the unheard woes of Kargili women ranging from marital practice of polygamy to serious health concerns. Speaking openly on some of these issues, she says "Nowadays it has become a fashion among men to keep two-three wives, often leaving the woman to her plight with kids to take care of and with absolutely no support," She cites a case of a woman from Hardass village whose husband left her to marry another woman She came to Zahira crying and desperately seeking a job so that she could feed her kids. According to her almost "30 percent of womenfolk" are caught in such horrifying situations.

Even during preganacy, childbirth and post-natal care, there is a lack of support d from within society. Elaborating on the nightmarish experience that many women go through, Zahira says, "It is just for about a week a child bearing mother is kept on the hospital bed with a simple 'cha and taki' (local tea and bread) unlike in Leh where women are taken good care of during pregnancy or delivery."

Nargis, her associate from Baru village adds, we continue

with our unending household drudgery until the last hours of delivery. Women like Nargis have been drawn to Zahira's cause and charisma and is part of a dedicated group 500-1000 women to change perceptions and ground realities for women.

Two key organisations called Women's Multipurpose Society and Women Welfare Committee Kargil have been established where women get training in embroidery skills. This small step enables them to earn an income and have an independent economic identity.

Says Nargis " We have sincerely cast our votes in all elections, yet later they (councilors) refuse to listen to our demands to give women the benefits through government schemes. Now we are with her with full support." Today she earns about 2000 to 3000 rupees a month by selling embroidered Kabba (design on blankets) to locals, government employees and the army. She believes that to live in the modern society, it is necessary to raise income levels which is useful for buying copy, pencils, books for school going kids.

While these small significant steps mark the journey, for Zahira, sky is the limit . Women according to her have equal abilities as men. They can work as contractors and be absorbed in government departments such as agriculture, PWD, block development, horticulture, handicrafts. They can get benefit from many existing government schemes on their road to progress.

Soldiering on, Zahira herself has been nurtured by an unexpected source, her grandfather-in-law. "My grandfather in law was a great human being having independent thoughts, for which he has to leave his own village along with his family," Zahira says. His son, Zahira's father-in-law was the first to set up a school in Kannaur for which they were hounded out and settled in Kargil town. Following the tradition of his family, Zahira's husband Ashique Ali is also supportive and is happy that his wife is doing something positive for society.

The heads of the two religious institutions IKMT and Islamia school say that in the future path the time has come to take everybody along including women . Expressing his views on the first time woman candidate in council elections, Azgar Karbalai, Chairman, LAHDC, Kargil says "It is a very positive sign, we want women to come forward.". During his tenure as a General Secretary of IKMT Women's Day in celebrations started in Kargil.

Whether Zahira represents a drop in the ocean or a wave that is sweeping over Kargil holding the promise of equal opportunities for women, remains to be seen. One thing is for sure though. The spark which arose from one individual has lit up the lives of others and is causing its light to shine on the darkness within Kargil society. ❑

(Charkha Features)

Cross-LoC Trade Opens after Six Decades

After a gap of over six decades, India and Pakistan restored cross-LoC trade by launching truck services on the Sringar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalkote roads, scripting a new chapter in bilateral ties.

Governor N.N. Vohra flagged off the goods laden trucks which marked resumption of trade ties between the divided parts of Kashmir after 61 years.

Three trucks carrying gifts (fruits and vegitables) were also flagged off by H.H. Tayabji, adviser to the Governor from Rangar international trade terminal in Chakan-de-Bagh in Poonch amid tight security. ❑



Kashmiri people wave after trucks were flagged off at Salamabad towards the LoC

Transport Infrastructure

Krishna Dev



Infrastructure development is a fundamental prerequisite for realizing the vision of progress towards peace and prosperity and for creating an investment climate and market development

INDIA'S NORTH EASTERN Region consists of eight states – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura – occupying 262,179 square kilometers and with population of 39 million (2001 census). The region is rich in natural resources, especially water and forests, and there is a feeling that it could potentially be one of the wealthiest regions of India. However, several indicators reveal a different picture: in spite of some progress in a few of the northeastern states (for example, Mizoram), overall growth rates over the past years have remained low, poverty incidence (especially in Assam) is high, there are still a number of areas subject to continued violence, and there is an abundance of reports documenting natural resource degradation, depleting the very assets that are usually highlighted as offering the greatest potential for growth and development in the North Eastern Region.

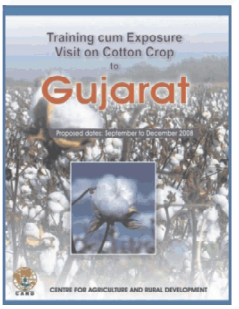
Infrastructure development is a fundamental prerequisite for realizing the vision of progress towards peace and prosperity and for creating an investment climate and market development in the North East. In fact, this is a basic prerequisite for development and has a strong complementarities with measures to improve health and education as well as industry and services. Expansion in the supply of basic infrastructure is extremely important for the development of the region. Apart from delivering essential services that improve the quality of life and livelihoods, these elements of the infrastructure are crucial for establishing a stable and peaceful society and hence for the `progress and prosperity of the region.

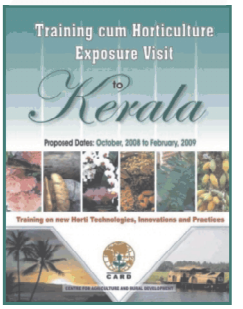
Poor quality of infrastructure seriously limits India's growth potential in the medium term

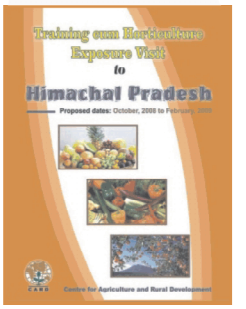
The author is Consultant, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi.

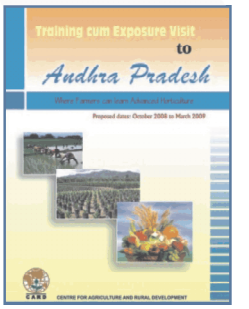
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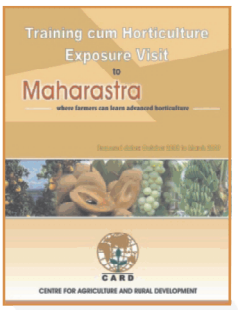


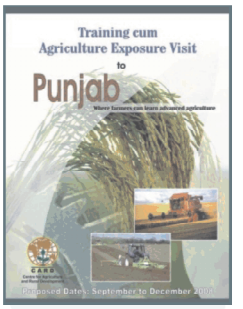


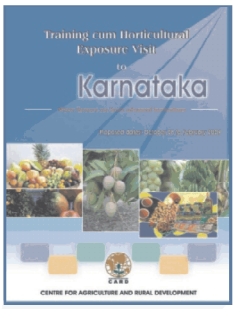


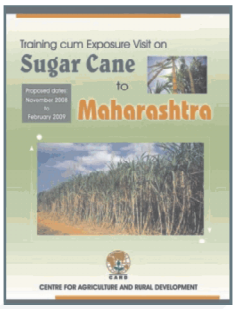


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YE-12-08/6

and the Eleventh Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for development of both rural and urban infrastructure defined to include power, transport, telecommunication, irrigation, drinking water, sanitation, storage and warehousing. The total investment in these areas was around 5% of GDP in 2006-07 and the Eleventh Plan aims at increasing this to about 9.34% of GDP by the 2011-12.

Chronology of development approach in the North East

- 1971: North East Council (NEC) was formed for integrated development of North Eastern India.
- 1974: Launching of Hill Area Development Programme (HADP).
- 1981: Planning Commission set up Task Force for study of Eco-development in the Himalayan region.
- 1992: Planning Commission set up Expert Group on National Policy for Integrated Development in the Himalayas.
- 2001: A new Ministry 'Department of Development of Northeast Region (DONER) was formed

Transport

Transport infrastructure is of great importance in the region to strengthen its integration within itself, with the rest of the country and its neighbours, as well as to transport people and goods more effectively within and out of the region. It is a vital input for the proposed shift from subsistence agriculture to cash crop based farming, as well as the planned development of industry and the service sector. Most of the area in the region is hilly and undulating with low population densities, accompanied by low per area production of goods. In the hilly terrain, what it is in the NER (except in Assam and some parts of other states) development of inland waterways is the most expensive. Similarly, rail connectivity in such a terrain is not only time consuming but would need prohibitive investments, probably beyond the means of the nation. It is road connectivity which would play a dominant role in fulfilling the transportation needs of the public. Air connectivity would certainly play a role for a limited segment of people and goods.

Roads

Construction of roads is of the highest priority for both Central and State Governments in the region. In the Eleventh Plan, under the various interventions of the Department of Road Transport and Highways, a very massive road construction initiative has started. The completion of this initiative has the potential to change the connectivity quality in the North Eastern Region.

The main grid of transportation of goods and passengers in the North East is the road network of 82,000 Kms. This network is most developed in the Assam (35000Kms) and Arunachal Pradesh (15000 Kms). The five other main States in the region have networks ranging from 5000 to 9000 Kms. The vast majority of roads, around 56000 Kms are unpaved (Kutcha) roads, which are generally unsuitable for transport of heavy goods.

The Department of Road Transport and Highways has been paying attention to the development of National Highways (NHs) in the North-Eastern region and 10 percent of the total allocation is earmarked for this region. The total length of NHs in the NE, including Sikkim, is 6880 Kms and these are being developed and maintained by three agencies-the State PWD, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for the North Eastern Region (SARDP-NE) would cover improvement/ construction of 8737 kms road. Phase-A covering 2304 km has been approved for implementation and Phase-B the length to be covered is 4570 Kms. The likely target date of completion of Phase A is 2012-13. Phase-B has been approved only for the preparation of DPRs. The objectives of the programme are as under:

Phase-A

- Connectivity of all State Capital towns with NH through atleast 2 lane road
- To provide connectivity to Dibrugarh to properly connects it with rest of the country, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar
- To provide improved road to Nathula, (the trade route with China); and ,

- To improve identified strategic roads

Phase-B

- To provide 2-lane connectivity to the remaining 51 District Headquarter towns of NER (there are in all 85 District Headquarter towns of NER, 23 are already connected by 2-lane road and connectivity to 11 District HQ is provided under Phase-A of SARDP-NE).
- To provide inter-connectivity of all the State Capital towns by at least 2-lane NH
- To improve certain roads of strategic importance
- To provide improved connectivity to remote and backward areas, and
- To improve road connectivity to border areas, Land Custom Stations and neighbouring countries

The Asian Highways project covering a road network of about 65,000 km. and passing through 15 countries is lying dormant for more than 40 years. The objective of this project is to promote and coordinate development of international road transport for connecting all the capital and industrial cities, sea routes and places of tourist and commercial interests in the Asian region. The proposed roads in the Asian Highways project would connect the NER not only with Bangladesh but also with other East Asian countries. This will give a big boost to the development of this region. This project, therefore, needs to be pushed through for implementation.

Rail

To providing rail connectivity to all States in the North Eastern Region is a national priority. The railroad network is limited to 2500 Kms and lies almost entirely within the State of Assam (2466 Kms), with short stretches in Tripura (45 Kms) and Arunachal Pradesh (1 Kms). Only 960 Kms of this network consists of standard gauge track suitable for haulage of bulk goods and the majority of the network is made up of narrow gauge track suitable for small trains and transportation of passenger and transportation of smaller cargo.

There are some obvious short-run projects which need completion at the earliest. For example, the Bogibeel rail bridge across the Brahmaputra was commissioned in 1996 as a ten-year project but the work started only in 2002. This rail-cum-road bridge has implications for connectivity not only for Assam but also for Arunachal and Meghalaya. Similarly, there is an urgent need for a rail link into Sikkim. The more important issue from the long-term point of view is strategic planning that will develop the rail network with the aim of increasing inter-state connectivity. In addition, rail connectivity has to be integrated with developments in the other avenues of transport being proposed for the NER as a whole (World Bank 2006). Some useful rail links are already under planning and a few of them have almost been completed and are likely to be broad gauged. These are Jiribum to (near) Imphal and Dimapur to (near) Kohima. Another line from Azara (near) Guwahati airport to Bunnia in Meghalaya is in progress. Another line which is an extension from Kumarghat to Agartala in Tripura is near completion.

For Meghalaya, it is desirable to open a broad gauge railway line from Lumding in North Cachar Hills in Assam to Jowai in the Jaintia Hills. A broad gauge railway line along the Indo-Bangladesh international border in Meghalaya linking the western and southern parts of Assam can also be considered. This will open the mineral resources of Meghalaya for development.

It has been decided to create a dedicated fund for the national projects of North East with 25% contribution from the Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) of railways and the remaining 75% to be provided as additionality from the general revenue with these scaled funds, railways has been directed to ensure completion of all the sanctioned works within the Eleventh Plan period.

Air

The terrain of the region and very tenuous land link with the rest of the country makes air connectivity a sine qua non for trade and commerce, tourism, realization of the potential for horticulture and floriculture in the region, promotion of higher and technical education and even for reducing the image deficit that the region suffers from.

In general, air connectivity is also expensive in the hilly areas because of the terrain, which is the

reason for the paucity of airports in other hill areas in the country: (most have versions of a helipad). In NER, air travel has been made possible by central subsidies for air travel to and from NER (excluding Assam).

In general, air connectivity is also expensive in the hilly areas because of the terrain, which is the reason for the paucity of airports in other hill areas in the country: (most have versions of a helipad). In NER, air travel has been made possible by central subsidies for air travel to and from NER (excluding Assam). Despite this, air connectivity was extremely unreliable prior to 2002 as the limited traffic made the use of Boeing jets uneconomical and led to irregular flight schedules. However, since 2002 the introduction of smaller ATR planes has made flights within NER somewhat more reliable though Kolkata still seems to be the hub rather than Guwahati. On the other hand, Guwahati seems to be more the natural hub for air traffic within NER. Air connectivity needs substantial investments and participation from both the Government and private investors. The Sixth Sectoral Summit of NEC on Air Connectivity in Aizawl declared inter-alia the objective of "operationalizing upto 50 airports/airstips in the North Eastern Region by the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan, and providing upto 600 flights per week within the region, by using the appropriate type of aircraft, making the required improvements in existing airports/airstrips in a time bound manner".

During 11th Plan, three Greenfield airports, one each at Packyong in Sikkim, Itanagar In Arunachal Pradesh, and Chiethu in Nagaland would be constructed. In addition, some existing airports in NER would also be taken up for expansion/modification, so as to make them operational for scheduled flights.

Waterways

The main network of 1800 Kms of navigable waterways of the Brahmaputra and Barak system has been designated National Waterways (NW)-2 which is currently used for the transport of bulk goods, but expansion of the transportation sector is limited by the lack of transport and overhaul facilities and natural restrictions in the river system due to sedimentation and shallow water levels. Development of the major waterways could extend the transport network for bulk goods and ferry services by 4000 Kms.

A number of infrastructure developments have been proposed to expand the inland waterway network linked to NW-2 and improve port facilities. A 45-meter-wide canal stretch is planned for the Brahmaputra River from the Bangladesh border to Dibrugarh, 750 kilometers east, with a permanent terminal at Pandu, 24-hour navigational facilities, and floating terminals at nine locations along the canal. For the Barak River, there is a proposal to construct a 40-meter-wide channel for the entire waterway, including four terminals at strategic overhaul locations. Such investments would enable the further development of several cargo routes and ferry service routes along NW-2.

There is also a range of other waterways besides NW-2 that could be developed and contribute to the economic growth of the Northeast and promote Indo-Myanmar cross-border trade.

The third major option for increased inland water transport is the further development of the international Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route for water transport. The development of this route would increase options for goods movement to and from the Northeast and peninsular India through the Sundarbans and Bangladesh, improving the accessibility of the Northeastern Region.

Importance of Inland Water Transport

One of the key development constraints for the Northeast over the past decades has been its geographical isolation. Certainly the advances in air flight have brought markets closer to the North East, but the relatively high proportion of bulky goods in the region's economy requires the further development of a means of transport suited to the movement of such goods to other regional markets – inland waterways. Specifically, the use of inland waterways as the main network for transportation of bulk goods in the Northeastern Region has a number of advantages:

- Cargo transportation to the Northeast through the Sundarbans and Bangladesh via the NW-2 waterway system and

via the Meghna-Barak waterway system follows a shorter route than that taken by the rail or road network;

- During the flood season, other modes of transport are often not in operation, and inland waterways are the only viable option for transport of goods between the Northeast and the rest of India. Basic commodities, such as foodgrains, need to be transported to the Northeast during the flood season; again, inland waterways are highly suited to such bulk transport;
- Bulk commodities and large cargo used for industrial production and large-scale construction projects can be transported through inland waterways after import and clearance at the Kolkata and Haldia ports;
- With further development of NW-2, 6 million metric tons are projected to be transported by 2020, a sevenfold increase compared to 2004;
- The projected increase in economic activity as a result of the development of inland water transport has been forecast to generate an additional 27,000 jobs by 2020, with total earnings estimated at Rs. 900,000 per day, and the overall projected rate of economic return on investments in inland water transport is around 15 percent; and
- Related development and multiplier effects in the hinterlands as a result of this increased activity have not been projected, but are estimated to be significant.

While implementing these projects mentioned above, several constraints are encountered, which, put the entire region into high volatile vulnerable region, are as under:

- Land Acquisition: There has been inordinate delays in the land acquisition in some States due to procedural formalities, court cases and lack of full co-operation from the State Governments concerned.
- Environment and Forest clearance: there have been considerable delays in getting the forest clearance both at the Central and State level.
- Shifting of utilities: Shifting of utilities of different types such as electric line, water pipelines, sewer lines, telecommunication lines which were to be completed with the assistance of the concerned utility owing agencies took a considerable time.
- Law and Order problems: In many States, works have been affected because of adverse law and order conditions and activities of anti-social groups. In addition, the stoppage of works by the local population demanding their additional demands was also frequent.
- Poor performance by some contractors: Performance of the some of the contractors has been very poor. Cash flow problem has been one of the major reasons for poor performance. The termination of such contractors often results in long-drawn litigation and further delays in completion of works.
- Insurgency: The region has as many as 30 armed insurgent organizations' operating and ranging from secession to autonomy and rights to self determinations.
- Natural Calamities: Endemic floods, landslides, cloud bursts, avalanches are common features of the region. The entire region comes under the highest Risk Zone in seismographic classification.

The recent visit of the President of India Smt. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil to Assam and Meghalaya on her first visit to the North Eastern States will really push the pace of accelerating the transport development activities in the region as she also inaugurated the Baljek airport in West Garo Hills in Meghalaya. Also, the conferences like 'North – Eastern States', "Investmart-2008" which was held on 14th October 2008 at New Delhi and organized by Ministry of Development of North Eastern ERegion (DONER) will provide an excellent platform for both the States as well as prospective investors to share information, investment plans and projects. Such kinds of National Conferences would also to help in bringing the North Eastern Region significantly visible in the industrial map of India. ❑

(E-mail: kd.krishnadev@gmail.com)



Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss
Hon'ble Union Minister for
Health & Family Welfare

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Smt. Panabaka Lakshmi
Hon'ble Union Minister of State
for Health & Family Welfare



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Banking Ombudsman Scheme

Sheetal Kapoor

THE INDIAN banking system, with one of the largest banking networks in the world, has witnessed a series of reforms over the past few years like the deregulation of interest rates, dilution of the government stake in public sector banks (PSBs), and the increased participation of private sector banks. The growth of the retail financial services sector has been a key development on the market front. Indian banks (both public and private) have not only been keen to tap the domestic market but also to compete in the global market place. New foreign banks have been equally keen to gain a foothold in the Indian market.

With the opening up of the Indian markets in 1991, banking sector has received maximum number of foreign players. Now we have both nationalized as well as foreign players providing a variety of services in the banking sector.

Consumer grievances in banking services originate from the breach of contractual and non contractual obligations of banks. While consumer courts are empowered to deal with deficiency of service arising out of contractual obligations, Ombudsman is positioned as an additional and distinct redressal forum to deal with both contractual and non-contractual breaches of expected performance by the banks. Most of the non-contractual obligations of banks are created by the customer service guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Contractual issues include questions of negligence and delay that could lead to claims of actual loss and damages. Contractual issues normally get segmented into deficiency of service and become litigations in consumer redressal agencies which are popularly known as consumer courts. Non-contractual disputes are based on statutory guidelines of central bank, industry standards as determined by competitive markets, and professional codes / ethics of fair practices adopted by the institutions. In case of consumer grievances against the bank it can approach the consumer courts or the Banking Ombudsman.

Banks have also been found using unfair means such as, muscle power to recover loans. Recently Justice J. D. Kapur, President of Delhi Sate Consumer Redressal Commission on observing the use of coercion by banks remarked that "forcibly repossession of financed car cannot be permitted". He further observed "that if the car owner are defaulters on loan repayment, the bank should take clearance from civil court for taking repossession of the loaned vehicle". Further he said "that no court has given the right to repossess vehicle forcibly". The Supreme Court has also pulled up the banks for resorting to muscle power to recover loans from defaulters. With rising expectations, banking sector in India has to raise the bar for customer service by being responsible and responsive.

The number of complaints received by the Banking Ombudsman Offices has also increased in the last five years, with a more than three folds increase in 2005-06 from the previous year after the Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 2006 was notified. The maximum number of complaints dealt with during the last five year period included complaints regarding deposit accounts, deficiency in servicing loans and advances and delay in collection of cheques/bills. However in 2006-07, the largest share of complaints received were in credit cards. Some of the type of complaints received in credit cards are issue of unsolicited cards, non-despatch of account statements in time, levy of excessive service charges, levy of late fees despite payments being done on time, refusal to cancel credit card, freezing of cards without informing

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the card holder, and harassment by recovery officer.

Who is a Banking Ombudsman

'Ombudsman' is a Swedish word, meaning 'legal representative', Worldwide it stands for an official appointed by the government to investigate individuals' complaints against public authorities. Ombudsman was initially started in Sweden 1809 and adopted in many countries years thereafter e.g. Finland, Denmark, Norway, New Zealand, Mauritius, Guyana and United Kingdom.

In India also there is a fast track alternate dispute resolution mechanism for banking sector known as the Banking Ombudsman. In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act 1949 (10 of 1949) the Reserve Bank of India formulated the Banking Ombudsman Scheme on 14th June 1995. The Banking Ombudsman is appointed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to redress, through reconciliation or mediation, customer complaints against certain deficiency in the banking services. The Banking Ombudsman is in the rank of Chief General Manager or General Manager and is a quasi judicial authority. This scheme creates a redressal system of grievances against deficiency in banking services of all commercial banks, regional rural banks and scheduled primary co-operative banks. In public interest and in the interest of banking policy, the extent and scope of the authority and functions of the Banking Ombudsman were enlarged on 14th June 2002, empowering the Ombudsman to act as an Arbitrator for specified disputes and putting regional Rural Banks also under the umbrella of the Banking Ombudsman Scheme.

Thereafter, in 2006 Reserve Bank once again enlarged the extent and scope of authority and functions of Banking Ombudsman by revising the Scheme with effect from 1st January 2006.

Scope of Banking Ombudsman Scheme

15 Banking Ombudsman have been appointed and their offices are mainly in State Capitals. The Scheme provides a free, fair and speedy forum to consumers and it is the procedural characteristics which make it a success. Minimal paperwork, no expenses, no repeated visits, no legal wrangles – these continue to be striking features of the Scheme. Coupled with this, is the fact that a mechanism has been put in place whereby the voice of an individual can be pitted against Institutions which till 1995 seemed impervious and invincible.

Salient Points About The Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006

The Banking Ombudsman is a quasi judicial authority and has the power to summon both the parties - bank and its customer, to facilitate resolution of complaint through mediation. The extent and scope of the new Scheme is wider than the earlier Schemes of 1995 and 2002 in that the new Scheme also provides for:

- Online submission of complaints.
- The institution of an 'appellate authority' (Deputy Governor of RBI) for providing scope for appeal against an award passed by the Ombudsman both by the bank as well as the complainant.
- Inclusion of ATM/Debit cards operations.
- Inclusion of Credit card operations.
- Inclusion of bank subsidiaries to the instructions of Reserve Bank on ATM/Debit card operations or credit card operations.
- Inclusion of failure to provide or delay in providing a banking facility (other than loans and advances) promised in writing by a bank or its direct selling agents.
- Inclusion of complaints received by Central Government or Reserve Bank and forwarded to Banking Ombudsman for disposal.

Period within which a complaint has to be framed has been modified to "not later than one year the complainant has received the reply of the bank to his representation or, where no reply is received, not later than one year and one month after the date of the representation to the bank".

The complaint is made before the expiry of the period of limitation prescribed under the Indian Limitation Act, 1963 for such claims.

In the case of complaints arising out of credit card operations, the Banking Ombudsman shall, while determining the amount of compensation payable, take into account the loss of the complainant's time, expenses incurred by the complainant, financial loss, harassment and mental anguish suffered by the complainant.

The banks covered by the scheme shall ensure the purpose of the Scheme and the address of the Banking Ombudsman are displayed prominently in all the offices and branches of the bank and to ensure that a copy of the Scheme is available with the designated officer of the bank for perusal in the premises of the bank.

The banks covered by the Scheme shall appoint Nodal Officers at their Regional/Zonal Offices.

The adjudication of pending complaints and execution of the awards (already passed before coming into operation of the Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006), will continue to be governed by the provisions of the earlier

Banking Ombudsman Schemes, 1995 and 2002.

Non-Resident Indians

The Banking Ombudsman can consider complaints from Non-Resident Indians having accounts in India in relation to their remittances from abroad, deposits and other bank-related matters.

Filing Complaints

For filing a complaint before the Banking Ombudsman, it is essential for a complainant to first attempt to find a satisfactory solution directly with his bank by making a written representation to the bank named in the complaint. A consumer can file his complaint before the Banking Ombudsman if

(a) the reply is not received from the bank within a period of one month, after the bank concerned has received his representation,

(b) the bank rejects the complaint,

(c) the complainant is not satisfied with the reply given to him by the bank.

Procedure of Filing a Complaint

The complaint should be made before the expiry of the period of one year (after the cause of action has arisen) and it should not be for the same subject matter that was settled through the Banking Ombudsman in any previous proceeding. The complaint cannot be made even if the case is pending before any court, tribunal or any other forum.

A complainant can file a complaint with the Banking Ombudsman simply by writing on a plain paper. He can also file it online (at www.bankingombudsman.rbi.org.in or by sending an email to the Banking Ombudsman. There is also a prescribed form for filing a complaint, which is available with all the branches of the banks.

Who Should File A Complaint

The complaint can be filed by the following persons

(a) consumer himself

(b) An authorized representative (other than an advocate) of the complainant.

Cost of filing a complaint with the Banking Ombudsman

This is a free service provided by Reserve Bank of India for facilitating consumers. The Banking Ombudsman does not charge any fee for resolving customer complaints.

The Essentials

The complaint should contain:

- The name and address of the complainant.
- The name and address of the branch or office of the bank against which the complaint is made.
- Facts giving rise to the complaint supported by documents, if any.
- The nature and extent of the loss caused to the complainant.
- The relief sought from the Banking Ombudsman.
- A declaration about the compliance of conditions which are required to be complied with by the complainant.

Resolution of Complaints

The Ombudsman would pass an order only if the terms of settlement offered by it are acceptable to the complainant in full and final settlement of his complaint.

Rejection Of A Complaint By The Banking Ombudsman

The Banking Ombudsman may reject a complaint at any stage if it appears to him that a complaint made to him is:

i. frivolous, vexatious, malafide or without any sufficient cause or

ii. that it is not pursued by the complainant with reasonable diligence or

iii. in the opinion of Banking Ombudsman there is no loss or damage or inconvenience caused to the complainant or

iv. beyond the pecuniary jurisdiction of Banking Ombudsman or

v. in the opinion of the Banking Ombudsman the complicated nature of the complaint requires consideration of elaborate documentary and oral evidence and the proceedings before him are not appropriate for adjudication of such complaint.

Process followed at the Banking Ombudsman

- Through conciliation or mediation, the banking ombudsman tries to promote a settlement between the consumer and the bank named in the complaint.
- If the terms of settlement (offered by the bank) are acceptable to the complainant in full and final settlement of his complaint, the Banking Ombudsman will pass an order as per the terms of settlement which becomes binding on the bank and the complainant.
- If a complaint is not settled by an agreement within a period of one month, the Banking Ombudsman proceeds further to pass an award. Before passing an award, the Banking Ombudsman provides reasonable opportunity to the complainant and the bank, to present their case.

Passing an Award

In passing an award the Banking Ombudsman takes into consideration the following:

- Documentary evidence placed before him by the parties.
- The principles of banking law and practice.
- Directions, instructions and guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India.
- Any other factors, which in his opinion are necessary in the interest of justice.

Procedure followed after the passing of an Award

- A copy of the award is sent to the complainant and the bank named in the complaint. It is open to the complainant to

accept the award in full and final settlement of his complaint or to reject it.

- If the award is acceptable to the complainant, he is required to send to the bank concerned, a letter of acceptance of the award in full and final settlement of his complaint, within a period of 15 days from the date of receipt of the copy of the award by him. (A complainant can make a written request to the Banking Ombudsman, for extension of time with the reasons for seeking such extension – he can be granted a further period of fifteen days for compliance)
- If the bank is satisfied with the award, within a period of one month (from the date of receipt of letter of acceptance from the complainant of the award in full and final settlement of his claim in the matter), the bank is required to comply with the award and intimate the compliance to the Banking Ombudsman. For complete compendium of cases handled by Banking Ombudsman please follow the following links .

Rejection of Award by Consumer

If the complainant is not satisfied with the award passed by the Banking Ombudsman, he can approach the appellate authority (Deputy Governor in the Reserve Bank of India.) against the Banking Ombudsman's decision within 45 days of the receipt of the award.

The rejection of an award by the complainant does not affect any other recourse and/or remedies available to him as per the law and s/he can approach the consumer courts.

Appeal by Bank against the Award

Within 45 days of the date of receipt of the award the bank has the option to file an appeal before the appellate authority (Deputy Governor in the Reserve Bank of India) under the scheme. The banks can appeal only with the prior sanction of their Chairman or, in his absence, the Managing Director or the Executive Director or the Chief Executive Officer or any other officer of equal rank.

Options Available To The Appellate Authority I.E. Deputy Governor Of Rbi

S/he may

i. dismiss the appeal
ii. allow the appeal and set aside the award.
iii. send the matter to the Banking Ombudsman for fresh disposal in accordance with such directions as the appellate authority may consider necessary or proper.
iv. modify the award and pass such directions as may be necessary to give effect to the modified award.
v. pass any other order as it may deem fit.

Like many other industries, which have passed through difficult periods of transition from a protected market to a free market, it is turn of the banking sector, which will now have to work on strategic outlook, customer focus, cost focus, service focus and pricing policy. From a time when banks were inward looking and insensitive to customers the clear winner now is the customer who has more alternatives and expects world-class products and service. Reserve

Bank of India and the Banking Ombudsman office are now taking agile initiatives while not loosing touch with the economic reality of consumers who reflect social inequalities and economic disparities. There is a third area between banks and customers which needs to be explored and tapped for reaching out to people of all sectors of society through Consumer Organizations so that in the arena of loud market reforms, computerization and globalization, the voice of the common man can also be heard. ❑

(Email : sheetal-kpr@hotmail.com)

National Consumer Day on 24th December

December 24th is observed as National Consumer Day every year. On this day in 1986 the Consumer Protection Act, received the assent of the President of India. Observance of the National Consumer Day contributes to generating awareness among consumers about their rights and existence of redressal agencies. Voluntary consumer organisations and educational institutions are involved to a great extent in strengthening consumer movement. Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India, is implementing a consumer awareness plan scheme for the 11th Five Year Plan to generate awareness among consumers about their rights and grievance redressal mechanism available to them. The plan scheme is being implemented under the banner of 'Jago Grahak Jago' multi media publicity campaign which has now become a household name and has helped to generate awareness in a big way. ❑