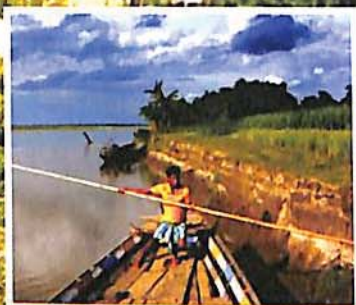


North East INDIA

The Human Landscape

**Edited by
MANIS KUMAR RAHA**



NORTH-EAST India is one of the most attractive regions of India. Its attraction is not only for its extraordinary natural beauty but also for its diversities in different levels. One can find the marked natural diversities and also diversities in ethnic level. The people who belong to different tribal and non-tribal groups, live in different states of this region. They have different genetical make up, different ethnicities and identities, different economic, social, political and religious systems. While some of the biological and cultural parameters are common among some of them, for many others these are quite different. All these have made each ethnic group of this region a distinct and unique one. All these colourful and friendly people have made the ethnic mosaic of India distinct and unique in the world. Through this book the contributors have tried to highlight some of the important aspects of the economic and social life and also bio-demographic pattern of some of the ethnic groups of this part of India. There are thirty articles written by eminent and experienced academicians and scholars incorporated in this book, and all these scholarly, important and valuable articles will provide fresh information about the people of India's North-East region to the readers and surely enrich their knowledge about this part of India and the people living here.

About the Editor

Dr. Manis Kumar Raha, M.Sc., Ph.D. (b.1937) got his degrees from the University of Calcutta. He joined Cultural Research Institute, Government of West Bengal and served it till 1970. He joined Anthropological Survey of India, Government of India in 1970 and served this organization in different capacities till January 1995. In 1981 he completed a course on Management Development Programme from Indian Institute of Management, Joka, Kolkata. In January 1995, he retired from Anthropological Survey of India as Joint Director. During his service tenure he undertook anthropological research among both tribal and non-tribal people of West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Madhya Pradesh and Sikkim. He is still continuing his research work. He was elected as the President, Anthropology and Archaeology Section of 83rd Indian Science Congress in 1996. He was the paper setter, examiner and moderator of P.G. and M.Phil. Classes of different universities and also Ph.D. Guide and examiner. He was editor and also in editorial board of different scientific journals and also Visiting Fellow of Dibrugarh University, Assam and Rajib Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. He is the Life Member of different academic organizations and served many of these in different capacities. He has already written or edited 30 books, written over 200 articles and over 140 book reviews.

NORTH EAST INDIA

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MANIS KUMAR RAHA

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*To my friends
Dipak, Parimal, Asit, Pijus, Rupen
and
Viswanathan (Rambabu)
and
In memory of my friends
Aloke, Kishor, Sunil, Kamal, Arun and Mukul
who are no longer on this beautiful Earth.*

Preface

My first book on North East India entitled, *North-East India: The Human Interface* which I edited along with my friend, Late Prof. Alope Kumar Ghosh, was published in 1997 and its new edition was published in 2008. Since then I kept myself busy with other publications, research work and some other jobs. In the beginning of the second quarters of 2011 I started thinking to edit another book on North-East India, the region which is ethnicwise and culturally one of the most interesting and attractive places in India. On finalizing the theme I started requesting eminent academicians and scholars for their contribution. Most of these learned and experienced academicians and scholars are either staying for a long period in this region or belong to one of the states of this region. They have long research experience on the people of this region and are also keeping good relation with the people there. Others, who live outside North-East India, also have good research experience and knowledge about the land and people of different states of North-East India. In response to my request I got an overwhelming response from most of those academicians and scholars. They belong to different disciplines like Anthropology, Sociology, Tribal Studies, Geography, History, and Economics. At first I thought of editing a book on livelihood pattern, resource utilization and survival strategy of the people of North East India, but the response of the contributors compelled me to broaden the theme of my book. I am really highly impressed of the response I got from them, and for which I am truly grateful! to all of them. And this book is the out come of this exercise.

North-East India with its rich natural diversities and resources attracted and still attracts people from different parts of India, and other places even across the border. They settled on the virgin soil of this region alongside the indigenous people there. This helped in the formation of greater diversities of socio-cultural and bio-genetical aspects of life of

the people there. Naturally these ethnic, socio-cultural and bio-genetical diversities have attracted the attention of social scientists including social anthropologists, bio-geneticists, physical anthropologists and others since long. Many of them studied and are still studying the people there, both tribal as well as non-tribal. Even then many of the ethnic groups have not been studied yet, and so, very little is known about them. Therefore, more and more studies among different people of this part of India are essential as these will definitely help in understanding these people and also understanding the problems these people there are facing. And the knowledge about them and their problems at the same time, will surely help the planners to formulate the development plans properly and the administrators to put these in action.

Apart from many academicians and scholars of both Indian and foreign, who have keen interest on the land, people and the environment of North-East India, even the common people, also show interest to have some general idea about the region and its people. So this publication on North-East India will surely help all of them who want to know something more about North-East India and its inhabitants and the environment, and therefore, their knowledge will definitely be enriched.

Manis Kumar Raha

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From the beginning to the finalization of this book, I got much encouragement from my friend, Sri Sarajit Kumar Chatterjee, IPS (Retd.). He is a great scholar and has vast knowledge about North East India. I am really grateful to him. I am also thankful to Dr. Satyabrata Chakraborty, Sri Kanchan Mukhopadhyay, Dr. Debashis Basu, Dr. Goutam Kumar Bera and Prof. Sarit Kumar Chowdhury. They have given me name of different academicians and scholars who could contribute papers in this book. I requested many of them, and many of them have contributed papers in this book. I would never forget the response I got from the contributors of this book who on my request, contributed articles in this book. Without their help and cooperation I could not have published this edited volume. I gratefully acknowledge their kind help and cooperation. Sri Mantu Ram Das and Sri Khudiram Bag have helped me immensely from the very beginning in typing some of the articles and correcting the edited articles through their computers. They did the same in case of my earlier books also. I am grateful to them. I must express my gratitude to Mr. Ashok Kumar Mittal and all the staff members of Concept Publishing Company (P) Ltd., New Delhi for publishing this book on North-East India. Mr. Ashok Kumar Mittal has always come forward to help me with books and also encouraged me to continue my writing habit. I am really grateful to him. My elder sister, Hashi De has always cleared the burdens those could cause hindrance against my academic exercise. I express my deep sense of gratitude to her. Finally, I have no hesitation to express my gratefulness to all the people of North-East India because their help and cooperation only have enabled the contributors of my book to write articles for my book, and I have been able to publish this volume.

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Introduction

In that Golden Age, when Man was young
When the whole race was vigorous and strong;
When nature did her wondrous dictate give,
And Taught the Noble Savage how to live...
When every sense to innocent delight,
Th' agreeing elements unforced invite.

Mrs. Aphra Behn

(from Elwin 1960:37)

The Northeastern part of India, where eight states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, are situated, 'is the sentinel of the Indian continent' (Chatterjee, 2010:1) and the habitat of a large number of tribes, castes and other groups. While many of them are the indigenous people, others are immigrants who came and settled in this part of India in different period of time. 'It is the meeting place of various ethnic and linguistic groups, i.e. Austric, Indo-Mongoloid, Tibeto-Burman and Aryan, who entered into this area during different historic and pre-historic periods from all directions' (*ibid*). Das is also of the opinion that 'a series of immigration brought the Mongoloids to North-East India from the North, Northeast and Southeast' (2004:8-9). In fact from the earliest times India has received successive waves of foreign peoples with diverse languages, culture and racial affiliation' (Chatterjee *ibid*:31). With the opening of tea estates in this region, a large number of people, mostly the tribal people, were inducted in this region as labourers from West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and some other areas. The past history of the region also gives proof of the incoming of several waves of people in this region. As a result the North-East India 'has witnessed the synthesis of cultures right from the

prehistoric times' and 'The culture of North-East India has evolved through several centuries of fusion' (Chatterjee *ibid*:31).

During the colonial rule the whole of North-East India, barring Tripura, Sikkim and Manipur was under the Province of Assam. 'Indeed, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya were very much its constituent parts then, while the administrated portions of Arunachal Pradesh were its affiliates' (Chatterjee *ibid*:37). But during post-independence period the undivided Assam was reorganized. In 1969 the Autonomous State of Meghalaya was formed of the parts of the State of Assam. Ultimately in 1972 Meghalaya became 'a full-fledged state comprising three hill districts of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo' (*ibid*:563). Nagaland became full-fledged state in 1963 and Mizoram in 1987. In 1987 Arunachal Pradesh (earlier NEFA) as a State, was formed. So North-East India was then formed of seven states, namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. In 2002 Sikkim became a member of the North-Eastern Council. So, now we get all those eight states in North-East region of India.

Surrounded by different foreign countries like Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, North-East India is strategically very important. In spite of this importance this region remained secluded and isolated for a long time. The colonial rulers in the pre-independence period did not do much for the development of this region. They adopted the policy of keeping this region isolated so that the waves of independence movement could not enter this region and stir the hearts of the people here and so they would never join the said movement. Even then the British Rulers were not successful in preventing the movements and agitations of different groups of people here against the British policy and British rule.

But after independence, particularly after Chinese aggression in 1962, the Government of India turned its attention towards this region and sanctioned and implemented a number of development projects for the improvement of this region and its people. But the region is so much ecologically divided and partly inaccessible and also inhabited by so many ethnic groups with varied economy, social structure, religion and political ideologies, that it became a hot spot of different burning problems of varied intensity. The governments were also facing great difficulty in implementing the development schemes properly. Chatterjee has rightly said:

The multi-racial, multi-linguistic, even multi-religious character of the region brings in its train a plethora of problems. The

problems of the region are indeed intriguing, ranging from social, cultural, political and economic to ethnic, religious and linguistic. The increasing magnitude of such problems has made North-East India a sensitive area where a spark is enough to put the entire area to flame (2012:18).

No doubt several attempts have been made to dilute the problems of socio-political tensions and several prescriptions have been placed to solve the same. But the results of these attempts were not as satisfactory as was expected. 'The raising problems of poverty, unemployment and privatization of land ownership...' are keeping the burning issues alive. The ethnicity and identity problem is another very important issue that is also keeping the socio-political crisis active.

The people of North-East India can be grouped into two major categories, tribal and non-tribal. While most of the tribal people are distributed in the hilly region, the non-tribal populations, mostly Hindus, inhabit in the plains and valleys

Thus North-East India may be regarded as a miniature India, an epitome of the subcontinent. The region provides shelter to varied people having divergent socio-cultural traditions, speaking different languages and exhibiting different physical features and biological make-up (Das, 2004:4).

At present a large number of ethnic groups live in North-East India. They belong to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other ethnic groups (Raha & Ghosh, 2008:20).

All these ethnic groups differ from one another

in their socio-political structure, as well as economic activities. Their activities are conditioned by traditions, customs, norms, values, etc. and their economic activities are inseparably linked with certain social systems... (Buragohain 1990:8).

Each of these groups of people has its own characteristic features, and each of them differs from the other by one or more distinguishing features.

Different ecological conditions present in different parts of this region, have added environmental diversities to this region. Deep forests, difficult hills and mountains, large rivers, plateaus, plains, high rainfall, high altitude regions, etc. all have increased the attraction for this region (Raha & Ghosh, *ibid*:20).

In such diverse ecological set up and weather conditions, the people who live here, have basic characteristics of heterogeneity and different biological make-up. It is the meeting place of two major races of man kind, viz. Caucasoid and Mongoloid (Das, 2004:14). These people have settled in different types of settlements. Their material culture is distinct by varieties and shows 'clear impression of their culture.' They also have diverse economic activities. They practice different types of cultivation-shifting, terrace and also settled. While in the hilly region many of them practice shifting and/or terrace cultivation, in the plains they are settled cultivators. Though agriculture is the main livelihood of the people of North-East India, still in the present day many of them are found to remain engaged in different other occupations like labour, service, business, weaving, household industry, etc. Many of them are also tea garden labourers. While most of them are living in the societies with patriarchal form, some of them still prefer matriarchal form of societies. Like many other societies, people here have different social sub-divisions, moity, phratry, clan, family, marriage, kinship, etc. They have different systems of social control and practice different religions like Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and even animism (Raha & Ghosh, 2008:20-21).

In this book entitled **North-East India: The Human Landscape**, I have included thirty articles written by distinguished academicians and scholars, and these articles have highlighted various problems imbedded in the economic, social and bio-demographic aspects of the people there. I have divided all these articles into three parts. Part-One includes fifteen articles on occupational pattern and economic situation of the people. Part-Two covers eleven articles dealing with the socio-cultural aspects and lastly, Part-Three has accommodated four articles three of which are on demographic issues and the last one on the effects of tuberculosis on the people.

As said above I have included in this book, a total of thirty articles, and I am fortunate to get articles from all the eight states of North-East India. Apart from five articles on North-East India in general, I have included five articles on Arunachal Pradesh, nine articles on Assam, one article on Manipur, two articles on Meghalaya, one article on Mizoram, five articles on Nagaland, one article on Sikkim and one article on Tripura. Partwise, I have included three articles on Arunachal Pradesh, four articles on Assam, one article on Mizoram, four articles on Nagaland and one article on Sikkim in Part-One. In addition there are two articles on North-East India in general in this part. In Part-Two I have included two general

articles on North-East India, two articles on Arunachal Pradesh, two articles on Assam, one article on Manipur, two articles on Meghalaya, one article on Nagaland, and one article on Tripura. Lastly in Part-Three I have include one general article on North-East India and three articles on Assam.

Further in this book I have arranged the articles of each part statewise. Each part starts with the general articles covering the whole of North-East India. Then in order come articles on Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and finally Tripura. Following this order, Part-One begins with the article by Shri S.K. Chatterjee, I.P.S. who has shown different aspects of economy of North-East India. He has covered the text of his paper through a discussion on the points like funding pattern, communication, power generation, rural economy, urban development, minerals, oil and gas, industry, handicrafts, trade and commerce, service sectors, poverty and its elimination, etc.

The next article is by Mr. Mithilesh Kumar Sinha who has in his paper, analyzed the perspective of socio-economic growth and examined the level of inter-state regional disparities in North-East India. He has also noted the causes of inter-state disparities and hindering factors to development.

Prof. Amitava Mitra and Mr. Kaju Nath have examined the challenges of development, economic condition and livelihood linkages of the people of some villages of Arunachal Pradesh.

Arunachal Pradesh has a large number of tribes and the Noctes is one of these. Through his article Dr. R.P. Athparia has tried to show the occupational pattern of the Noctes, a tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

Mr. Tame Ramya's paper is on the role of forest in the life of the tribal people of Kurung Kumey district of Arunachal Pradesh. To these tribal people, forest is a very important source of livelihood as it supplies many forest products, very vital for these people.

The article by Prof. Lipi Ghosh was on the 'predominance of alien moneylenders' in the late 19th century Assam who had a motive to expand their trading interest and not for acquisition of the peasant's holding.

One of the very important resources of Assam is tea gardens. Prof. R.K. Kar and Sr. Molly Kaniampadickal have jointly attempted to show, in their article, the nature and extent of the gainful employment of the women in the tea estates of Upper Assam and their engagement in household work also.

The Rabhas are an important tribe of Assam who are mainly found in Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang districts. Fr. K. Jose SVD, in his paper, has dealt with the resource utilization of the Rabhas and changes in their socio-economic life.

The paper of Dr. P.K. Guha deals with the population structure and occupational diversification of the Moria Muslims of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam.

Not much research works are done on the people of Mizoram and their social and economic life. However, Dr. Mita Sarkar (Das) has attempted to analyse the economic activities of the people of Mizoram.

Dr. Lucy Zehol has examined the experience of the rural Naga women as resource managers and how their experience raises some gender issues in resource management.

Livelihood and health care are very important for the survival of any group of people. Lack of sufficient resources and health care system may cause fatal. Dr. Pranjal Boruah has tried to show through his article the livelihood pattern and healthcare of the Ao Naga of three villages of Mokokchung District of Nagaland.

Dr. Manoj Kumar Singh has also written article on the Naga of the Nagaland. He has discussed about the nature and extent growth and development of agriculture in Nagaland.

Another article on the Naga is by Dr. Mita Sarkar (Das) who has highlighted the land use pattern among the Naga of the Nagaland and importance of land use pattern on their social and economic life.

The article on the Lepcha of Sikkim is written by Dr. Sudhansu Gangopadhyay who has highlighted the variation in the management of the land resources among the Lepcha, and has shown the way they use their traditional wisdom in the management of the resources.

The first article of Part-Two is of Dr. Manis Kumar Raha. He has written his article on the life and activities of the tribal people in North-East India. North-East India is inhabited by a large number of tribal groups. In many states of this region they are numerically dominant. They belong to different ethnic groups and have different economy, different social organization, different system of social control and religious beliefs and practices. Through his article Dr. Raha has tried to show the way of life of these tribal groups of North-East India.

Dr. Gadadhara Mohapatra through his article has shown the impact of globalization and the changing nature of the tribal identity in North-East India.

Prof. Tamo Mibang in his paper has lucidly discussed about the societal development with reference to Arunachal Pradesh. His view is that every product is the result of co-operative efforts of many people 'beyond the boundary of caste, creed, sex and religion'. And the development should be done peacefully, harmoniously and with co-operative efforts.

The landscape in Arunachal Pradesh is variable and similarly the people living here, belong to different ethnic groups. So obviously their cultural life particularly their economic pursuits are also variable. Prof. Ranjana Ray has tried to show this.

The water is essential for the survival of human life as also millions of other organisms like vegetations and animals. But the same water when comes through floods, causes havoc to the human, animal and vegetation life. While hundreds of people die every year in India due to flood, which also damages crops and causes death of domestic and wild animals. Dipa Patir and Prof. N.K. Gogoi have discussed in their paper, how the Mishing have formulated adaptive strategies during flood for their survival.

Dr. Dilip Kumar Bhuyan has in his paper discussed about the role of education in the adoption of scientific method of agriculture by the Mishings of Assam and how education has brought social change among the Mishing.

The ethnic identity is very important in the life of any group of people. A group or a section of it may revolt if the members feel that their ethnic identity is at stake. Through their paper Dr. M.C. Arunkumar and Akhuan Gangmei have highlighted the problem of identity among the Kabui of Manipur.

The Maan is a little known Scheduled Tribe of Meghalaya with about thousand population living in six villages of West Garo Hills. The author, Prof. Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri, has tried to focus the social formation along with the historicity of the tribe 'to relocate their position with reference to time and space'.

Dr. Surojit Sen Gupta's paper is based on socio-economic and cultural relation among the people who live in the neighbourhood of Laban in the city of Shillong, Meghalaya.

The Nagar are a very important and numerically very large tribe of Nagaland and also of North East India. Prof J.J. Roy Burman's paper is an ethnographic study on the Ao Naga of Nagaland. Through his article Prof. Roy Burman has briefly touched upon different aspects of the life of the Ao Naga of Nagaland.

The Reang is the second largest tribal group inhabiting in different parts of Tripura. Dr. Goutam Kumar Bera's paper is the last paper of Part-Two of this book where Dr. Bera has given the ethnographic details on this tribe.

In Part-Three we have four articles and the first article is by Dr. Debashis Basu who has attempted to assess the status of population of North-East India and 'its dimension with reference to the national demographic perspective'.

The paper by Prof. Indira Barua and Dr. Deepanjana Dutta Das discusses about the socio-demographic aspects of the Sema Naga of the village Lalpahar of Tinsukia district, Assam.

Arundhati Phukan Gogoi and Prof. Sarthak Sengupta have highlighted the effects of migration on the demographic pattern of some tea garden labourers (the Munda, the Oraon and the Savar) of Assam in their paper, and also examined the variation that is present in their reproductive characteristics.

The last paper of this book and also of this part has been written by Debolina Biswas and Prof. Sarthak Sengupta. The authors have discussed in their paper factors which might help tuberculosis to remain alive and active in some population groups of two districts of Upper Assam.

With the above thirty articles written by eminent academicians and scholars I have embellished this book. The intention, I have, is to provide our learned readers some more information about different aspects of life and activities of some of the population groups of different states under North-East India. No doubt there are a good number of publications (articles, books, reports, etc.) on North-East India already in the market, and through these one can get some information about the people of North-East India and their life and activities. But in comparison to the vastness and variations of the area and variations in the biological and cultural life of the large number of ethnic groups living there, the number of publications present in the market, could provide not much of information. So more number of studies and publications on North-East India are required so that interested people can come to know more about this region and the people living there. In a similar way I feel that this edited book of mine will be able to part with some fresh information to the people of all walks of life who are interested in North-East India and its people. In fact what I feel is that no information whatever may be its nature and depth, will go waste. Someway it will be useful to certain sections of people, people of certain disciples, if not for all the people.

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PART ONE

ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

Down to Earth—Economy and Resources of North East India

S.K. Chatterjee

Till 2002, North East India was a cluster of seven States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura, popularly known as seven sisters. Only in 2002 Sikkim was added to it. At present the North East of India constitutes these eight States. The term



'North-East' may uphold an image of a homogeneous state, but is practically a region of intense disparity and distinctness and a politically sensitive one as well. The states of this region are as different from each other as chalk is from cheese. The eight states that comprise the region, reflect ecological and cultural contrasts between the hills and the plains; there are also significant elements of continuity. Available medieval and modern records indicate interdependence and interaction between the hills and plains.

The entire hill and mountain sector forming about 70 per cent of the region, is dissected by a large number of major rivers with deep gorges flowing into the main river system. The remaining part of this region is plains area and is formed by the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys of Assam and the Imphal Valley of Manipur. Flanked by hills and with the mighty Brahmaputra slashing a central path between its north and south, the North East is bounded by the States of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura with Assam comprising the heart. Arunachal Pradesh lies to its north and Sikkim a little away in the North West. The North-East India encompasses the vast verdant plains of the Brahmaputra Valley and the several chains of wooded hills and mountains. It embraces the whole of the hill ranges north, east and south of the Brahmaputra Valley as well as the western slope of the great mountain system lying between West Bengal and Myanmar. It covers an area of 2,62,179 sq. km. bounded by Bhutan and Tibet on the north, Myanmar on the east and south and Bangladesh on the south and west. The region is almost isolated from the rest of India except for a narrow strip of land connecting it with the rest of India through West Bengal, popularly known as the Siliguri Corridor or "Chicken's Neck".

The North-East India possesses a very marked individuality. Some writers often describe it as a miniature India—an epitome of the sub-continent. Anthropologists consider it as a paradise for their research, an anthropological museum. The lovers of nature describe it as the Switzerland of the East. The botanists and zoologists find in the region all the pleasure of rare discoveries among the varied fauna and flora of the land. The vegetation of this region is the richest in India and probably in Asia. The region favours luxuriant growth of a variety of forests in the form of tropical moist evergreen, semi-deciduous and wet temperate conifer forests. The region is considered to be the original home of many citrus, cereals and orchid species. More than 50 per cent of the total mammalian fauna of the Indian subcontinent is represented in this region; all kinds of cats from Royal Bengal Tiger to Clouded Leopard, Leopard

Cat, Wild cat, etc., inhabit this region. It is the home of Binturong (*Arctictis binturong*), so also the hoolock (*Hylobates hoolock*), the only true ape found in India. Meghalaya has the highest concentration of elephants per sq. km. of forests. For the philologists and ethnologists, North-East offers a fertile field for research, a melting pot of two diverse traditions—the East and the West, the Mongoloids and the Caucasoids. Zoologically this tract stands at the junction of Indo-China, Indo-Malayan and Indian sub-regions of the Oriental regions of naturalists (Chatterjee, 2010: 26-27).

North-East India, which is the sentinel of the Indian continent, is the homeland of a number of social and ethnic groups. The ethnic history of the region is extremely complicated. It is the meeting place of various ethnic and linguistic groups, i.e. Austric, Indo-Mongoloid, Tibeto-Burman and Aryan, who entered into this area during different historic and pre-historic periods from all directions. The population of the North-East is characterized by an enormous diversity, which this region acquired along with the inflow of varied groups of immigrants over several millenniums.

This land-locked region covers an area of 2,62,179 sq. km. of uneven surface. It accounts for 7.9 per cent of total geographical area of the country. It supports a population of 45,387,982 which accounts for 3.75 per cent of total population of 12,10,193,422 of India, according to the 2011 Census.

Arunachal Pradesh (83,743 sq.km.) happens to be the largest, and Sikkim (7,098 sq. km.) to be smallest State in terms of area whereas the heaviest concentration of population is in the State of Assam (3,11,69,272) and the smallest number is in the State of Sikkim (6,07,688). The density of population in the region is very much uneven. The hills are sparsely populated mostly by the tribal people. The density of populated areas is in the plains inhabited mostly by the non-tribal people. The density of population is the highest in Assam with 397 persons per square kilometre, closely followed by Tripura with 350, while it is the lowest in Arunachal Pradesh where it is 17 persons per square kilometre.

The largest number of tribal communities lives in this part of the country, most of them have been designated as Scheduled Tribes in Independent India. The tribal population of the hills and plains of North-East India can be divided into the following five broad groups: (1) Arunachal tribes; (2) Nagas; (3) Lushai (Mizo)-Kukis; (4) Bodos; and (5) Khasis. According to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, as amended till 2010, 138 tribes/groups of tribes have been enlisted as Scheduled tribes in the eight States of North East India. If the tribes/

sub-tribes included under the same serial number, are counted as separate tribes then the number would be 310, which will further increase if all the tribes/sub-tribes coming under the generic term 'Any Naga tribe', 'Any Mizo tribe' or 'Any Kuki tribe' are mentioned individually. There are ongoing movements for recognition of some other communities as Scheduled Tribes. Taking all these facts into consideration, the number of tribal communities living in this region, will be more than 400.

However, all these tribal communities are not homogeneous one, but a medley of different races divided into numerous tribes, sub-tribes, and clans, different in origin, myths and traditions, distinct in language/dialect, diverse in physique, character, culture, manners and customs, dress, eating habits and traditional socio-political organizations depending upon the peripheral geographical locality, although basically they are more or less the same having much in common affiliations, common heritage, religion, values, norms, common idea of liberty and decencies. But they were, as we find even today, sometimes in conflict with one another and with the outsiders as well.

The States of Mizoram (94.46%), Nagaland (89.15%), Meghalaya (85.99%) and Arunachal Pradesh (64.22%) are the tribal majority States and about half of the population of Tripura (48.54%) belong to the ST/SC category. The followers of Christianity are in majority in the three States of Nagaland (90%), Mizoram (87%) and Meghalaya (70.3%) while those of Hinduism are in majority in Tripura (85.6%), Assam (64.9%) and Sikkim (60.09%). In Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur no religious community can claim majority though the Hindus remain a major force in both the States. Buddhists have a sizeable following in Sikkim (28.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (13.0%) and Mizoram (7.9%).

The multi-racial, multi-linguistic, even multi-religious character of the region brings in its train a plethora of problems, ranging from social, cultural, political and economic to ethnic, religious and linguistic. Divisive forces are very much active in this region which is embroiled in armed insurgency in one part or another since the emergence of Independent India. Some basic data about the North East States are given in Table 1.1

Economy

India adopted the policies of globalization, liberalization, privatization and market economy in the wake of economic crisis of 1991. The New Economic Policy (NEP) launched by the Government in 1991, had the clear objective of integrating the Indian economy with the rest of the

Table 1.1: NER States: Various Indicators.

State	Area	Population lakh persons	Literacy rate (%)	Infant mortality rate (per '000)	Poverty ratio based on MRP consum- ption	Per capita GSDP(Rs.)	Forest coverage (%)	Per capita electricity consum- ption (kwh)	Road length km/1000 sq. km area
	2001	2011	2011	2005-06	2004-05	2004-05	2003	2004-05	2002
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Arunachal Pradesh	83,743	13.83	66.95	61	13.4	21,919	61.55	144.8	219.38
Assam	78,438	311.69	73.18	66	15.0	15,661	34.45	85.3	1140.9
Manipur	22,327	27.22	79.85	30	32.4	16,299	78.01	70.05	512.1
Meghalaya	22,429	29.64	75.48	45	25.2	20,775	42.34	352.2	426.5
Mizoram	22,081	10.91	91.58	34	13.2	30,357*	75.71	133.7	229.8
Nagaland	16,579	19.81	80.11	38	14.1	26,129+	52.05	87.2	1267.9
Sikkim	7,098	6.08	82.20	34	5.2	26,215	82.29	397.7	284.4
Tripura	10,486	36.71	8.75	52	15.2	24,984**	60.01	113.1	1554.1
NER States	262179	453.88		45#		18,032	54.52	110.4	660.9
India	3287240	12101.93	74.04	57	25.50	25,944*	23.57	411.1	755.4

Note: # Simple averages used for NER;

++ refers to its estimated value for 2004-05;

+ Refers to estimated per capita GSDP for 2003-04 and 2004-05;

* Per capita GDP at factor cost (RE) from RBI, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy, 2005-06.

- Sources: 1. Indiafacts.in/India-census 2011/census 2011 population percentage for Col.1.
 2. Statistical Abstract of India (2006), used for Col. 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, downloaded from www.mospi.nic.in
 3. Table 14 for Col. 3.
 4. Table 7.20 of North Eastern Region Vision 2020 used for Col. 4.
 5. Table 17 for Col. 5.

World. The policy instruments consist mainly providing all facilities to the private sector for starting new industrial ventures by removing all kinds of government restrictions which had been a characteristic feature of the Indian economy from 1950. The NEP has marginal impact on the people of North East India. This is due to economic backwardness of the region with its semi-feudal anarchy in land relations which is the basic anchor of the economy of the region. The possibility of foreign and domestic investment in a big way for North East India's economic development is not so bright. The investment if any, is likely to be limited to the service sector (Datta Ray, 2008:1-4).

The Centre announced the North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP) on December 24, 1997 for attracting investment in the areas of industry and infrastructure and removal of regional disparity through sustainable economic development for raising per capita income of people and better standard of living.

The policy ensures continuance of 100 per cent excise duty exemption in respect of finished products made in the North East. Capital subsidy would be enhanced from 15 per cent of the investment in plant and machinery to 30 per cent. Further, the limit of automatic approval for capital subsidy has been announced to Rupees 1.4 crore from Rupees 15 lakh. Again, for grant of capital investment subsidy higher than Rupees 1.5 crore but up to a maximum of Rupees 30 crore, the decision would be taken by an Empowered Committee. What is noteworthy is the eligibility of new as well as existing units to enjoy incentives for a period of 10 years. The industrial units could be located anywhere in the region and there would be no distinction between thrust and non-thrust industries as it existed earlier. Besides 100 per cent income tax exemption, there is provision of eligibility for reimbursement of 100 per cent insurance premium. The inclusion of service sector, bio-technology and power generating industries within the policy framework is likely to bring about a qualitative change in the pace of industrialization. But the extension of similar benefits to other special category States later has robbed the NER of whatever benefit it could enjoy from this Policy. Better law and order situation, better infrastructural facilities like power and transport system and nearness to mainstream market, domestic investors have shown their preference for these states for investment. This is true in the case of foreign investment also. Unfortunately, not a single large scale industry came up in the region, rather during the period from 2001 to 2005 as many as 19,940 small industries were closed down due to the various reasons including lack of governmental help (Alam, 2008: 71). The policy having

proved to be a damp squib for the NER, the States of this region are now engaged in an all out offensive in favour of an alternative package with additional incentives for the region.

Funding Pattern

All the North-eastern States are listed in the Special Category States and their funding pattern is different. Till 2008, the funding of any central social sector projects was shared between the Centre and the States in the ratio of 75:25. As a special dispensation, in September 2008, the Centre decided to increase its share in the funding for various flagship programmes like the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) administration, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), and the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) from 75 per cent to 90 per cent for the North-eastern States. So long only the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) followed the 90:10 funding pattern for the North-eastern States (Chatterjee 2010:881-882).

As the benefits of economic development have yet to steadily accrue to the Region, efforts have been initiated in this direction in the recent past through various supportive measures. In October 1996, the then Prime Minister announced “New Initiatives for North Eastern Region” and stipulated that at least 10 per cent of the Budget(s) of the Central Ministries/Departments would be earmarked for the development of North Eastern States. With the approval of Parliament the Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources was constituted from the financial year 1998-99. The broad objective of the Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) scheme is to ensure speedy development of infrastructure in the North Eastern Region by increasing the flow of budgetary financing for new infrastructure projects/schemes in the region. Both physical and social infrastructure sectors such as Irrigation and Flood Control, Power, Roads and Bridges, Education, Health, Water Supply and Sanitation — are considered for providing support under the Central Pool, with projects in physical infrastructure sector receiving priority.

In 2000 the institutional arrangements for administering the Non-lapsable Central Pool had been streamlined. The guidelines to administer the Pool were revised. The Committee to administer the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources was also reconstituted. The reconstituted Committee is headed by Secretary, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and has representation from Ministries of Finance, Home Affairs

and Planning Commission. Financial Adviser to the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region has been included as a member. Representatives of Union Ministry/Departments, whose proposals are to be considered in a particular sitting for funding under NLCPR, are also invited.

For identification of projects under Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources, States are asked to submit, before the beginning of the financial year, a prioritized list of projects with a short write-up on each project. The earlier practice of receiving projects throughout the year directly from the various state departments concerned has been stopped. Now the Planning and Development Department of the state concerned is the nodal department for NLCPR and that department is DoNER's interface with all other departments of the state. The Committee scrutinizes the projects in the lists in order to identify and finally retain the suitable projects for detailed examination. Detailed Project Report (s) for such retained projects are then prepared by the state concerned. These project proposals are thereafter examined in consultation with the concerned Central Ministry/Department. The recommendations/views, thus received are placed before the Committee to administer the Non-Lapsable Central Pool, which considers the proposal and accords approval. After approval of the Committee, funds are sanctioned and released by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region on submission of an implementation schedule. Subsequent releases are made only after receipt of Utilisation Certificate of earlier releases.

Infrastructure Development

The biggest constraint in the NER has been the poor state of infrastructure in regard to roads, railways, waterways and power. At 66 km/100 sq. km area, the road length in the region is lower than that the average of the country (75 km/sq. km) and the quality of roads in the region is extremely poor. The total railway track length in the entire region is 2,592 km, with broad gauge track confined to Assam. Inland waterways in the Brahmaputra and smaller rivers, such as the Kolodyne in Mizoram and Barak in Assam, have become virtually non-functional after the partition of the country and at best, they can be used for the transportation of goods and not people. Air connectivity to the region is poor: three of the state capitals do not have airports, and feeder services from Delhi/Kolkata/Guwahati to the state capitals where airports exist are scarce. Most intra-regional connection is routed through Kolkata, which is expensive in terms of both time and money.

Infrastructure deficiency in the region remained a major concern. So infrastructure projects in the NER were given the status of “national projects” with a special funding pattern. “An ambitious programme of road building has been taken up under the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme and Rupees 31,000 crore are being invested in roads in the 11th Five Year Plan period (2007-12).” the Prime Minister said while releasing the Northern Eastern Region Vision 2020 document on July 2, 2008 (*The Hindu*, July 3, 2008). The ambitious East-West Road Corridor project that will provide road connectivity with Southeast Asian countries will open up the land-locked North-East for public and private investments. The proposed Moreh-Tamu-Kalewa-Mandalaya-Bangkok Road and the Ledo-Moegaung-Kunming Road are much-hyped symbols of economic integration. Of vital relevance to this trans-national corridor is the internal road connection between commercial hubs and cities of the region. There are, however, relaxed guidelines for rural roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana so that even the farthest hamlets on the border are linked by road. Performance of this rural development programme in the region is quite encouraging with 99.74 per cent performance in Arunachal Pradesh followed by 92.85 per cent performance in Nagaland, and by 62.95 per cent in Tripura during 2005-06 (Singh, 2008: 322-323).

Port

The recent visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Myanmar on May 27-29, 2012 is likely to open new doors for the North-east. The Kaladan project which India is helping to develop, would benefit the NE the most. It will bring more volumes to Kolkata Port, opening up a new transit route to the NE from the mainland. The project includes developing the Sittwe port in Arakan state and a multi-modal transport system from there to Mizoram. The distance between Kolkata and Sittwe is about 540 km. From Sittwe, the Kaladan river would be made navigable up to Kaletwa, a distance of 225 km. From there, a 62 km highway would take the traffic to Mizoram border. A road from the border would link the project to National Highway 54 to Assam (*The Times of India*, May 4, 2012)

Airports

Fifty airports and airstrips spread across the North East and with 600 flights a week were the target to be achieved in the 11th Plan. Of them

only Baljek airport, 30 km from the district headquarters of Tura in Meghalaya was inaugurated in October 2008 by President Pratiba Patil. It is yet to be made operational. Moreover, in the wake of the persistent threat from China, the army is giving top priority towards easy connectivity with the remote border areas by development of the unused small airfields and construction of all-seasons good metalled roads.

Railway Network

Geographically isolated, the main hurdle to development and progress in North-East is the poor state of transport and communication infrastructure. The Railways has an ambitious plan to link all North-East state capitals by rail by 2016, provided the State Governments ensure early handover of land. As of now, Assam (Guwahati) and Tripura (Agartala) are connected, and Nagaland (main railhead Dimapur) and Manipur (Jiribam) are on the railway map. But Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Meghalaya have no railheads of their own. Very recently Union Minister of State for Railways Bharat Singh Solanki informed Parliament that the Centre has a Rs 17,495-crore outlay for 13 projects in the North-East. He also said a dedicated North East Railway Development Fund had been created to finance the execution of national projects (Lama, *Statesman*, May 28, 2012).

After much delay, work on the 84-km Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal railway line is progressing smoothly after the Centre sent security forces to the work site. The first locomotive engine traversed a distance of 12 km from Jiribam to Dholakhal on March 22, 2012 (*The Times of India*, March 24, 2012). Hopefully the project will be completed by 2016, as promised by the Prime Minister.

The 40-km Dimapur-Zubra (16 km from Kohima) railway link has run into trouble because the owners are demanding exorbitant prices for the land. Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio recently said that if the owners' demands were to be met then the entire cost of the project—Rs. 850 crore—would have to be spent on compensation for land acquisition alone! (Lama, *Statesman*, January 9, 2012).

A 15-km rail line is under construction between Agartala and Akhaura, a Bangladesh railway town along the border in order to link Agartala with Bangladesh's railway network. Dhaka has already allowed the north-east access to Bangladesh's river and seaports, including Ashuganj, Mongla and Chittagong. Dhaka has already approved India's proposal to construct a bridge across the 110-metre wide Feni River that flows along

Tripura's fringe line to link the state's southernmost border town of Sabrum with the seaport in Chittagong, just 70 km from the international border. The project will be taken up soon at an estimated cost of Rs. 14 crore. The extension of the railway line to Sabroom would improve connectivity to the Chittagong port. Access to the Chittagong port and opening up of the inland water route could lead to economic resurgence of the region.

Meghalaya is the only state which is not connected by rail. The railway line to Byrnihat from Guwahati (25 km) was first mooted by P.A. Sangma when he was state chief minister in 1988-89. At that time, the Khasi Students' Union opposed the railhead vehemently, arguing that it would merely encourage the influx of outsiders. Many agitations shook the state. But the discontent on railways continues even today. The KSU is as defiant on this issue as it was then, and without enough arguments to back up its chagrin, except to say that railways would create influx. Hopefully in course of time the KSU will see ground realities and change its mind.

Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Barak Valley will open up only after the completion of the metre gauge conversion of the 208-km Lunding-Badarpur-Silchar hill section. The foundation of broad gauge conversion project in this section was laid in 1996 by the then Prime Minister Deve Gowda and it was to have been commissioned by 2005. Originally estimated at Rs. 640 crore, the cost had already shot up to Rs. 3,990 crore. It is doubtful if the project will be completed by December 2013, as indicated by a senior Railway Board Member.

Another project, the Bogibeel road-cum-railway bridge, the fourth and the longest over the Brahmaputra is behind schedule. Work started in 2002 at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,767 crore was to have been ready in 2008-09. Progress is reportedly slow and no one can say for certain when it will be ready. The construction of this bridge finds mention in the Assam Accord of 1985 (Lama, *Statesman* May 28, 2012).

If the Railway projects are executed within a stipulated timeframe it will, no doubt, do away with the landlocked North-East's transport and communication bottlenecks.

Power Generation

Power is the basic infrastructure requirement for the growth of industries as well as economy of any State. The degree of economic growth is correlated with the generation and consumption of electricity. Table 1.2 will indicate State-wise generation of Thermal/Nuclear/Hydro power in the North-eastern States as on December 31, 2011.

Table 1.2: State-wise Generation (Thermal/Nuclear and Hydro)
(In MW) (As on 31.12.2011)

States	Thermal				Nuclear	Hydro (Renewable)	RES (MNRE)	Total
	Coal	Gas	Diesel	Total				
Arunachal Pradesh	0.00	0.00	15.88	15.88	0.00	0.00	78.83	94.71
Assam	60.00	239.00	20.69	319.69	0.00	100.00	27.11	446.80
Manipur	0.00	0.00	45.41	45.41	0.00	0.00	5.45	50.86
Meghalaya	0.00	0.00	2.05	2.05	0.00	198.00	31.03	231.08
Mizoram	0.00	0.00	51.86	51.86	0.00	0.00	36.47	88.33
Nagaland	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	28.67	30.67
Sikkim	0.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	52.11	57.11
Tripura	0.00	148.50	4.85	153.35	0.00	0.00	16.01	169.26
All India	104021.38	17742.85	1199.75	122963.98	4780.00	38748.40	20162.24	186654.62

Source : Ministry of Power, Govt. of India. Quoted in North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEFDI) Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com

The Union Government is pushing for 157 hydro power schemes with an installed capacity of 57672 MW in the North-East including Sikkim for meeting the shortfall in the country's power generation. Of the 133 projects already allotted to the States, 125 projects, with an installed capacity of 32,883.40 MW, have been given to private developers. The Central public sector undertakings have got eight power projects with an installed capacity of 8,735 MW. Of the total 133 projects, 36 are mega ones, with each having an installed capacity of 350 MW and above. The rest (25 MW and above) involve construction of large dams. So far only four projects have got the final clearance and are in various stages of construction. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has granted pre-construction (scoping) clearances to over 50 projects under the EIA notification 2006. Final environmental clearance has been given to 13 projects.

The Centre has identified the ecologically fragile Arunachal Pradesh as the powerhouse of the country. According to an estimate of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) and private power developers, this State bordering China has the potential to generate over 57,000 MW of hydropower. Arunachal will get 12 per cent free power from each project. The State Government collected revenue in terms of processing fee and upfront premium to the tune of Rs. 1320 crore (as on September 30, 2010) from the allottee owner-developers (*The Hindu*, June 2, 2012).

Work for the construction of a mega dam over the river Barak at Tipaimukh in Manipur's Churachandpur district for the 1500-MW Tipaimukh Multipurpose Hydrel Project was started on 16 December, 2006, when its foundation was laid. The Rs. 8,138-crore project is being

executed by the state-owned National Hydroelectric Project Corporation and Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam. The Tipaimukh Dam controversy has been raised at various Indo-Bangladesh meetings.

The Tamanthi Dam on the Chindwin river in Myanmar is being built by the National Hydroelectric Project Corporation of India and Colenco Power Engineering Ltd. Switzerland at an estimated cost of \$ 3 billion. The dam will be 80 meter high and, when completed, will have an installed capacity of 1,200 MW. The project will supply power to Myanmar and also India's North-East States.

The foundation of a 52-MW power plant at Ramchandranagar near Agartala was laid by the Union Power Minister in February 2011. It will be run by water and the heat emitted from the existing thermal power project. This is the second combined cycle power unit in the region after Kathalguri in eastern Assam. This Rs. 290 crore project of the NEEPCO will be commissioned within the next 30 months.

The Rs. 2,000-crore 726-MW gas-based project in south Tripura's Platana is being set up jointly by the ONGC and the Tripura Power Company Limited. Four North-eastern States—Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Manipur would buy power from this plant.

When these projects are completed, North-East not only will be a power-surplus region but will also be instrumental in changing the industrial face of India.

Table 1.3 will indicate the State-wise number of villages electrified and un-electrified in the North-East. It will appear therefrom that apart

Table 1.3: State-wise Number of Villages Electrified and Un-electrified in NER
(As on 31.03.2011)

States	Total Inhabited Villages (As Per 2001 Census)	Villages Electrified (Provisional)		Unelectrified Villages
		Numbers	%age	
Arunachal Pradesh	3863	2195	56.8	1629
Assam	25124	22059	87.8	881
Manipur	2315	1997	86.3	318
Meghalaya	5782	3428	59.3	1968
Mizoram	707	570	80.6	137
Nagaland	1278	823	64.4	455
Sikkim	450	425	94.4	25
Tripura	858	491	57.2	301
India	593732	500920	84.4	55785

Source: Ministry of Power, Govt. of India, quoted in NEFDi Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

from Sikkim, Assam, Mizoram and Manipur the other five States are far away from the all-India average of 84.4 per cent, the worst defaulters being Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Meghalaya. The position is likely to improve when the on-going projects are completed.

Rural Economy

The pattern of agricultural growth has however remained uneven across regions and crops. The NEER continues to be a net importer of food grains even for its own consumption. In spite of covering 7.7 per cent of the country's total geographical area, NEER produces only 1.5 per cent of the country's total food grain production. Agriculture provides livelihood support to 70 per cent of the population of NEER. Table 1.4 gives an idea of state-wise area, production and yield of total food grains in 2009-10, whereas Table 1.5 provides information on State-wise area, production and yield of total cereals in 2009-10.

Table 1.4: State-wise Area, Production and Yield of Total Food grains, 2009-2010

(Area : '000 Hectare, Production: '000 Tonne, Yield : Kilogram/Hectare)

States	Area	Production	Yield
Arunachal Pradesh	198.6	308.9	1555
Assam	2695.6	4481.1	1662
Manipur	188.7	338.9	1796
Meghalaya	132.2	239.1	1809
Mizoram	59.6	62.4	1047
Nagaland	282.1	354.2	1256
Sikkim	78.4	117.3	1496
Tripura	254.7	647.9	2544
Total	6549.8	3889.9	1660

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India, Quoted in NEFDi Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

The region produced 6.5 million tonnes of food grains including 6.4 million tonnes of cereals in 2009-10. It is not self-sufficient in food grains and other items. At present, of about 39 lakh hectares under cultivation, nearly 37 lakh or roughly 94 per cent is under food grain production. At about 1660-1790 kg/hectare, land productivity is very low in the region. Despite a vast potential, only 20 per cent of the net sown area is under irrigation. Almost 95 per cent of the region's soil is acidic with pH value below 5.6. *Jhum* cultivation, widely practiced in the hills by the tribal

Table 1.5: State-wise Area, Production and Yield of Total Cereals in NER, 2009-2010.*(Area : '000 Hect., Production : '000 Tonne, Yield : Kg./Hect.)*

States	Area	Production	Yield
Arunachal Pradesh	189.7	299.2	1577
Assam	2580.3	4416.5	1712
Manipur	174.2	331.7	1904
Meghalaya	128.2	235.6	1839
Mizoram	55.7	55.9	1004
Nagaland	248.6	319.5	1285
Sikkim	65.2	104.4	1601
Tripura	248.2	643.4	2592
Total	3690.1	6406.2	1790

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India. Quoted in NEFDi Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com

population, has kept productivity low and contributed to deforestation and erosion of soil. The target should be to increase food grain production in the NER to 75 lakh MT in 2010, 87 lakh MT by 2015 and 110 lakh MT in 2020, which would require accelerating the growth rate to 2 per cent in the first phase, 3 per cent in the second and 4 per cent in the third phase. (North Eastern Region Vision 2002: 26).

There should be different strategies for accelerating growth in agriculture in the plains and the hills. In the plains, the goal should be to increase crop intensity by better utilisation of irrigation potential and cultivation of short-duration crops. Controlling the annual floods in the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys and strengthening embankments to control soil erosion should be an important part of strategy for the development of agriculture in Assam and parts of Arunachal Pradesh. Though the Brahmaputra Board has emerged as a regional institution to design, implement and monitor flood management strategies in the valleys of the NER, it has failed to evolve a workable solution. In the plains, increasing the land area (about 1.5 million hectares) under double-cropping to 25 per cent in a phased manner would considerably enhance productivity. Measures such as expanding area under High-Yielding Varieties (HYV), more balanced use of organic manure and chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and steps to balance soil conditions to reduce soil acidity are needed. It is also important to expand the area under cultivation by bringing under cultivation, the cultivable waste land and areas developed under the command area development. This implies increasing the productivity of land in a phased manner (North Eastern Region Vision

2002: 26). It is good that the success of Assam and Tripura in raising production of rice has earned for the two states “Krishi Karman Awards” in 2011, instituted by the Government of India for the first time in that year.

In the hills, the tribal population has, for generations adopted shifting (*jhum*) cultivation. While the strategy should be to wean them away from this practice, this has to be done not through displacement, which would endanger their food security, but through persuasion and demonstration of alternative livelihood systems and building their capacity to engage in productive and sustainable livelihoods. In hilly areas, it is important to expand horticulture, floriculture, plantation crops and organic farming.

Interestingly, the region’s agro-climatology is suitable for commercial floriculture, medicinal and aromatic plants, and ornamental horticulture. The North-East has the potential to mimic Holland as a floriculture hub. Already states like Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are supplying rich shades of anthuriums, lilioms, carnations and roses to different parts of the country and abroad. The youth could be trained in standardization and packaging of cut flowers and also in managing the whole production chain.

The region is a mega biodiversity area and a hotspot of generic erosion. The forests have 8,000 of the 15,000 species of flowering plant occurring in India. The species richness is the highest in Arunachal Pradesh, where over 5,000 flowering plants occur, and the lowest is in Tripura with 1,600 species. The region is natural habitat of orchids that are much sought after in Europe, America and West Asia. Almost all the hill states have a favourable climatic condition for commercialization of orchid cultivation and this area needs to be explored. Of the 1,300 species of orchids reported from India, the region has the highest concentration: about 700 species. Meghalaya alone has 124 species of orchids.

Though all the forests of the North-East are repositories of medicinal herbs, Arunachal Pradesh is acknowledged to be the storehouse of an eclectic range of medicinal plants and exotic flora. *Taxus baccata*, also known as the yew tree, the bark of which is used to manufacture Taxol, an anti-cancer medicine, particularly effective in treating ovarian cancer, used to grow profusely along the high reaches of the Meghalaya plateau. Today, the *taxus bccata* is almost extinct. Bio-piracy, coupled with ignorance about the plant’s efficacy as a medicine, has made it a threatened species. Several rare species of plants and herbs have been destroyed through destruction of forest cover. Another plant, *Bogonia tessaricapa*, locally known as *rebe*, which was thought to have been extinct was

rediscovered in the Arunachal forest in 2004. This plant has long been known as a cure for stomach ailments and its extracts are also used to ward off mountain leeches. There may be several such medicinal plants and herbs which are waiting to be discovered.

The region produces large varieties of pineapples, oranges, strawberries, peaches, pears, plums, cashew nut, and capsicum. The Darrangiri banana market in the Garo Hills is the largest in Asia. The Garo Hills has emerged as possibly the largest producer of pine-apples in Asia and first in cashew nut output in India. The hill district of Tamenglong in Manipur is known for its sweet oranges. Sikkim has the highest production of, and the largest cultivated area of cardamom in India. India is the world's largest ginger producer, accounting for over 50 per cent of the total production, and of that more than half is produced in the north-eastern states, with Meghalaya producing 45,000 tonnes, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (25,000 tonnes), Mizoram (22,000 tonnes) and other States. Ginger is produced as a cash crop mostly in '*jhum*' fields spread over the hills and tribal areas of the entire region. The produce is mostly marketed in the fresh form as a vegetable. Though mainly used in cooking as a flavouring agent and to a smaller extent in medicinal and veterinary preparations, of late it is also being used for the manufacture of several by-products like oil, ginger oleoresins, starch from spent ginger in soft drinks and ginger powder.

Bamboo is another crop native to the region. Bamboo is the lifeline of the region, and 63 out of the 136 species found in India occur here. Of the States, Mizoram is heavily dependent on bamboo, as the State harvests 40 per cent of India's 80-million tonnes annual bamboo crop. Bamboo expanses cover nearly 6,500 sq. km in the sub-tropical evergreen forest—about 31 per cent of Mizoram's area. The "green gold" could make Mizoram a rich state. While the total bamboo yield is about 32,37,689 tonnes per year, consumption is only 28,315 tonnes per year. The surplus can be methodically utilized for generating huge resources (Chatterjee, 2010: 873). Bamboo-based industries for producing laminated walls and ceilings are the need of the hour in a high seismic zone. The youths should be exposed to better technologies for adding value to bamboo. So far the plant has not been cultivated on a commercial scale. Scientists say a bamboo grove of 10 square meters can fetch approximately Rs. 2000 on maturity of approximately 100 bamboos at the rate of Rs. 20 in local prices. This means that the bamboo cultivation can fetch approximately Rs. 20 lakh over a period of five years from a well-organized and well-maintained area of one hectare.

Apart from tea and coffee, natural rubber cultivation has been taken up in a big way in the North-eastern States. In Tripura, where rubber cultivation began in early 1960s, about 4,000 hectares are added to cultivation every year. In Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, rubber cultivation is spreading rapidly even with constraints that were seen as insurmountable nearly a decade ago. In each of these States, average productivity hovers around 1,200 kg per hectare, the national average being around 1,800 kg. A total of 4.5 lakh hectares have been identified as suitable for rubber cultivation in the North-East. The Rubber Board estimates that an investment of Rs. 1.85 lakh is needed for developing a hectare of rubber plantation in Tripura. It takes up to seven years for the rubber plants to be tapped (*The Hindu*, January 18, 2012). Some, however, believe that expansion of rubber cultivation reduces soil fertility and it should be replaced by other crops.

There is tremendous potential for cultivating horticultural crops in the hills, but success depends on the development of rural infrastructure including transportation infrastructure, cold storages, processing facilities and marketing support. Extension services need improvement, with better provision of good quality seeds, inputs and seedlings. At present much of the research in horticulture is conducted by the Horticulture Department of Assam Agricultural University in Jorhat, which needs to be upgraded to a national-level research organisation capable of serving the entire region. The Assam Small Farmers' Agri-business Consortium (ASFAC) station in Guwahati too will have to be upgraded to undertake research and development of horticulture for the benefit of the region as a whole. Expansion of horticulture in tribal areas to replace jhumming is a challenging task and the strategy for this has to be worked out carefully.

The people of the region are predominantly non-vegetarian but the production of meat, fish and eggs is inadequate to meet the demand. Few regions in the world are endowed with so much bio-diversity and evergreen grasslands ideal for dairy, livestock and poultry development and vast wetlands for fisheries. Yet the region imports about 50 per cent of its milk consumption, over 87 per cent of the eggs consumed and almost 55 per cent of its fish consumption from outside (North Eastern Region Vision 2020, p. 28).

The total fish production was 2.77 lakh tonnes in 2008-09 and 2.98 lakh tonnes in 2009-10 of which 2.62 lakh tonnes and 2.77 lakh tonnes, respectively, were inland fish production. The State-wise fish production and inland fish production in NER is given in Tables 1.6 and 1.7.

Table 1.6: State-wise Fish Production in NER:

States	(In '000 Tonne)		
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11 (Up to 31.12. 2010)*
Arunachal Pradesh	2880	2650	2285
Assam	206150	218822	145618
Manipur	18800	19200	15531
Meghalaya	3959	4210	3184
Mizoram	2891	3042	1899
Nagaland	6175	6360	5250
Sikkim	168	168	150
Tripura	36000	42268	35725

* Figures are Quantity in Tonne.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India, quoted in NEFDi Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

Table 1.7: Inland Fish Production in NER

States	(Tonne)		
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10**
Arunachal Pradesh	2830	2880	2650
Assam	190320	206150	218822
Manipur	18600	18800	19200
Meghalaya	4000	3959	4210
Mizoram	3760	2891	3042
Nagaland	5800	6175	6360
Sikkim	175	168	168
Tripura	36245	36000	42268
India	4207346	4637896	4862843

** Figures are provisional.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Govt. of India, quoted in NEFDi Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

Nature has already gifted the region with adequate rainfall, a salubrious climate and an undulating topography that is ideal for fish-rearing. Under the World Bank-aided Assam Agricultural Competitiveness Project's Fish Intensification Programme covering *beels* and ponds, fish production has gone up by four to five times in every *beel* or pond where renovation, desilting and deepening were carried out. And given the high price of every species of fish, the farmer fetched as much as Rs. 60,000 from a one-bigha pond which makes it more profitable than conventional farming. The other good news is the steady growth of fish seed production

in Nagaon district where farmers were trained in fish seed production and then assisted to grow spawns and fingerlings.

There is need for incentives to small farmers to convert a part of the agricultural land into fish pond and to adopt the Bangladesh practice of rearing fingerlings first in a small adjacent tank and introduce them in the pond where they become large. But this will succeed only when ponds are protected from leaching of chemical fertilisers or pesticides which points to the need for community management that could facilitate spread of the proven Indonesian model of a single pond based duckery, poultry and fish farming where fish thrives on poultry droppings and horticultural plants cover all sides of a pond enriching the soil. If adopted, on a significant scale, a “blue revolution” could be a reality in Assam and elsewhere in the North-East where wetlands of about 250,000 hectares exist unutilised and capable of massive ‘spin offs’ in the regional economy. Together with “blue” and “white” revolutions, the North-East could emerge as an agricultural power, get out of “Central Dependency Syndrome” and move on to a sustainable growth path (Rangan Dutta, *Statesman*, June 27, 2011).

In recent times, the governments of Assam and Meghalaya have embarked on a radical policy shift from developing urban centres to reaching out to rural hamlets with livelihood projects. They will now concentrate on multipurpose livelihoods for the rural poor. Leading economists of the world have found that single livelihoods will not be able to pull those living below the poverty line to catch up with the rest of the population. To come out of the black hole of poverty, people would need at least three livelihoods. This is what the Meghalaya’s River Basin and Livelihoods Development Programme aims to do. River basin are good for fish rearing, for rice and vegetable farming, for bee-keeping (apiary) and also for cane and bamboo works, weaving and a host of other related activities (Mukhim, *Statesman*, February 27, 2012).

North-East India lives in its villages. Crop cultivation is still the only occupation, but over the years, agricultural funding has decreased instead of increasing. If adequate attention had been paid to investments in agriculture, floriculture and horticulture, to veterinary services and fisheries, to sericulture and weaving, the states would not have been so economically backward. A thrust to agriculture and allied activities requires significant government initiatives in terms of providing rural infrastructure and extension services. An extensive rural road network is necessary to increase the mobility of people as well as the movement of goods, while the electrification of villages is necessary for increasing

crop intensity and spreading rural industrialization. Extension services are critical both for enhancing production and improving marketing and, therefore, need significant upgradation. Establishment of a network of cold storage facilities and information centres and organization of marketing and financial support through self-help groups will have to be initiated on a large scale.

Urban Development

The growth of urban settlements in the North-East is not always an outcome of a social process. Rather it is the result of conscious administrative efforts. The urban pockets have been superimposed upon the traditional tribal set-up partly in carrying out politico-economic dictum and partly in providing for urban facilities to the administrative personnel recruited from outside the territory.

The NER witnessed different urbanization levels before and after the independence of the country. While in the pre-independence period the region was almost rural with less than 5 per cent of its population living in urban settlements, the scenario was very different in the post-independence phase. Right from the onset of the second half of the twentieth century the region started witnessing surprising increase in its level of urbanization. The reasons are diverse. Firstly, there was a massive reorganization of the administrative and political boundaries in the region which resulted in the creation of many new States like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Secondly, the region attracted impressive development projects from the State and Central Governments. Thirdly, the contribution of Christian missionaries in the region in terms of the upgradation in the quality of life of the tribal people is no less noteworthy. It invested in the education and infrastructure sectors and thus played an important role in the enhancement of the level of urbanization in the region (Khawas, 2006: 256-57). Besides, several other important factors like the partition of the country, allocation of the specific funds by the Central Government for the development of the urban areas, etc. might have influenced the levels of urbanization in the region.

The States like Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh which were rural until 1950, started getting urbanized in the post-independence period with tremendous pace altogether. This is particularly true in case of Mizoram where urban population rose from about 25 per cent in 1981, to 46 per cent in 1991 and almost 50 per cent by 2001. Arunachal Pradesh also

Table 1.8: Trends in the Levels of Urbanisation

States	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.70	6.56	12.80	20.41
Assam	2.34	2.41	2.74	2.92	3.11	4.29	7.21	8.82	9.88	11.10	12.72
Manipur	25.39	21.56	20.83	19.26	19.47	0.50	8.68	13.19	26.42	27.52	23.88
Meghalaya	2.83	3.46	4.07	5.52	6.87	9.66	15.27	14.55	18.07	18.60	19.63
Mizoram	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.54	5.36	11.36	24.67	46.10	49.50
Nagaland	3.05	1.63	1.76	1.54	1.85	1.94	5.19	9.95	15.52	17.21	17.74
Sikkim	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.99	4.22	9.37	16.15	9.10	11.10
Tripura	3.70	2.98	2.54	2.50	2.45	6.67	9.02	10.43	10.99	15.30	17.02
Northeast	4.20	4.01	3.99	3.65	4.22	3.57	6.87	10.17	16.03	19.72	21.50
India	10.84	10.29	11.18	11.99	13.86	17.29	17.97	19.91	23.34	25.72	27.78

Source: p. 259 of Urbanisation in the Eastern Himalayas: Emergence and Issues (ed) Karubaki Datta, 2006, New Delhi, Serials Publications.

witnessed appreciable level of urbanization in the last 30 years which reached almost 21 per cent by 2001.

The State of Manipur which had accommodated over 25 per cent of its population in urban areas by the turn of the 19th century itself, saw continuous decline in the share of urban population, so much so that by 1951 it came down to less than 1 per cent. The share of urban population, however, again started gaining in pace in the post-independence period and reached about 28 per cent by 1991, but again declined to about 24 per cent by 2001. In the rest of the States the levels of urbanization are below 20 per cent even in 2001. Table 1.8 will clear the picture.

Consequently, towns of different sizes have come up in the NER. There were 196 towns in 1991 which rose to 245 in 2001, an addition of 49 towns in a decade, as shown in Table 1.9.

Table 1.9: Number of Towns in 1991 and 2001 in North East India

States	1991			2001		
	Statutory Census			Statutory Census		
	Towns	Towns	Total	Towns	Towns	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	0	10	10	0	17	17
Assam	75	19	94	80	45	125
Manipur	28	3	31	28	9	37
Meghalaya	7	5	12	10	6	16
Mizoram	22	0	22	1	21	22
Nagaland	8	1	9	8	1	9
Sikkim'	8	0	8	8	1	9
Tripura	12	6	18	13	10	23
Total	160	44	204	148	110	258

Source: p. 275 of *Urbanization in the Eastern Himalayas: Emergence and Issues* (ed) Karubaki Datta.

The largest increase was in Arunachal Pradesh—from 10 to 17. Assam and Tripura also registered sizeable increase. Other States, however, did not witness much addition of new towns in the last decade. Moreover, States like Mizoram and Nagaland did not see any addition of new towns at all.

While most of these towns are emerging as multi-ethnic settlements, there are some which are inhabited by a particular ethnic community. For instance, in Arunachal Pradesh, Zero is inhabited by the Apatanis, Tewang by the Monpas, Teju by the Mishmis, Along by the Galongs, Deomali by the Wanchos and so on (Sengupta 2006: 314).

Most state capitals and urban centres of the North-East are unplanned. They have grown disproportionately, both in terms of human and vehicular population. Their ability to look after the sewerage and garbage is suspect. Guwahati, with garbage overflowing into the main roads, is a classic example. Shillong, too, is not far behind. The once clear and clean Umkhrah river has turned into a natural sewer absorbing the solid waste of a burgeoning population. It is the same with Imphal, Itanagar, Gangtok and Aizawl. Even urban basic services appear to have failed citizens. Following the rise in land prices owners are filling up their ponds for sale. Constructions are coming up on such land in and around Agartala in a big way defying safety rules. In the early part of August 2009 the Centre signed two agreements with the Asian Development Bank, one for Rs. 1,000 crore for the improvement of urban facilities and amenities in Aizawl, Agartala, Gangtok, Kohima and Shillong and the other for Rs. 500 crore for widening the East-West corridor now under construction. All that the Centre needs to do is to adopt a pragmatic result-oriented approach with proper accountability, and concentrate on completing ongoing projects (*Statesman*, August 12, 2009).

Guwahati, known as the gateway to the region, is developing at a mad pace. One is appalled to find plush residential quarters in the heart of Guwahati city that are shooting up to 12 storeys. This in a region known to be in an active earthquake zone (Zone V)! Land prices in Guwahati and Shillong are skyrocketing! A walk along the roadside near Shillong's pastoral Umiam Lake shows the massive depredation of forests and abrupt instances of urbanization and commercial use of land. The feeder rivers and water-bodies that are supposed to flow into Umiam Lake are now affected by these structures in the lake's catchment areas. Soon after the monsoon is over, the lake starts drying up to the extent that islands on it look like weather-beaten bones.

The authorities in Guwahati are said to have suddenly woken up to the perils of a high seismic zone and decided to go in for a technical audit of about 1,500 multistoried buildings which have come up over the past 10 years. Similarly, the Tripura government has also initiated a move to identify buildings which have sprung up in and around Agartala by ignoring safety regulations (Chakrabarty, *Statesman*, December 12, 2011).

Chief Ministers of North-eastern states have realized rather late in the day that ruralization as opposed to urbanization is the answer to most problems. The more the rush for urbanization, the greater are the problems of overpopulated cities, with their diminishing capacities, to cater to the civic requirements of people.

Minerals

This region is endowed with oil, natural gas and huge mineral resources such as coal, limestone, iron ore, mica, gypsum, gold, sillimanite, fireclay, kaoline, pyrites, different kinds of road-building stones, and uranium. The uranium deposits at Domisariat in the West Khasi district of Meghalaya are of a high grade capable of generating 1500 MW. Efforts by the Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. to mine the ore has met with stiff opposition from the civil society of Meghalaya, led primarily by the Khasi Students' Union. The movement has gained momentum after three rivers in the Jaintia Hills have turned toxic due to mining activities (Mukhim, *Statesman*, March 19, 2012).

Coal deposits are assessed at 371 million tonnes in Assam, 584.01 million tonnes in Meghalaya, 91 million tonnes in Arunachal Pradesh and 17.2 million tonnes in Nagaland. Deposits of nickel-cobalt minerals in the Tuensang and Kohima areas have been discovered.

Oil and Gas

The NER has been pioneer in India in exploration and production of petroleum. Asia's first successful mechanically drilled oil was in Makum (Assam) way back in 1867. This was followed by the first commercial exploration of crude oil at Digboi (Assam) in 1889 making the beginning of oil industry in India. In the year 1959, the Oil India Limited (OIL) and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) were set up in India for exploration and production of hydrocarbons. Crude oil is available at Naharkatiya, Moran, Hugrijan, Rudra Sagar lake in Assam and in Tripura. Oil struck in the Wokha area of Nagaland is officially stated to be of better quality. Oil Refineries have been established at Digboi, Noonmati, Bongaigaon and Numaligarh. Total reserves of oil in the NER are estimated at 158 million tonnes (Chatterjee, 2010:875).

The Government of India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2011 with Jubilant Oil and Gas Private limited, a firm registered in the Netherlands and listed on the London Stock Exchange but which operates out of Noida near Delhi, for exploration in Tamenglong, Churachandpur and Jiribam districts of Manipur (Laba, *Statesman*, April 2, 2012).

Industry

Apart from tea plantation, oil exploration, some coal mining and extraction of timber, there was little value-addition activities in the NER. Development of the region in a systematic manner took place only after Independence under the Five Year Plans, mainly in the 1960s. During the post-independence plan period, a number of major industries based on the rich mineral and forest resources like the Fertilizer factory at Namrup, cement factory at Bokajan, Paper Mills at Jagi Road and Badarpur have been set up under the Central public sector. In the State public sector also a number of industries have come up (Chatterjee 2010:875). A Green Field Industrial Corridor will be set up in Arunachal Pradesh by the Union Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry for which an amount of Rs. 75 crore will be provided by the Central Government. With the setting of this Corridor industrial growth could be visible in the State soon (*The Hindu*, December 5, 2011).

A State-wise principal characteristics of annual survey of industries in NER in 2007-08 is given in Table 1.10

Handicrafts

Handicrafts of the area are a novelty. Wood carving and textiles of Nagaland, basketry and cane work of Tripura and pottery and textiles of Manipur have a huge market not only outside the region but outside India also. Nagaland's handloom and handicrafts are famed for their superior quality. The beautiful hand woven tribal shawls, Naga *mekhalas*, and handbags are exquisitely and intricately designed and have won worldwide appreciation. Naga weavers narrate stories of crimes, passion and adulterer in the linen and give a fabric a personal touch. Since designs from the Naga tradition are not protected by the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), these are freely copied and the Nagas are losing out on much of what is rightfully theirs.

The women of the North-East are good weavers. They produce beautiful traditional garments for their livelihood. However, the import of foreign products is reducing the demand for the traditional tribal products which provide employment to women.

Trade and Commerce

When the **Look East Policy (LEP)** was conceptualized in the corridors

Table 1.10: State-wise Principal Characteristics of Annual Survey of Industries in NER (2007-2008)
(Value Figures in Rs. Lakh and Others in Number)

States	Factories	Fixed Capital	Productive Capital	Invested Capital	Workers Engaged	Total Persons Engaged	Wages to Workers	Total Emoluments	Total Input	Gross Output	Depreciation	Net Value Added	Interest Paid	Rent Paid
Assam	1859	891081	1237240	1301965	113132	134284	42729	75245	2705324	3104360	71563	327473	6463	36889
Meghalaya	90	61033	116154	83251	4574	5587	2950	4839	110950	171468	6549	53969	1088	4060
Tripura	340	24494	45797	46419	20696	22896	3579	5035	60280	76615	1987	14348	296	1213
Nagaland	104	2792	5201	6953	2494	2974	501	743	9646	13606	244	3716	41	222
Manipur	69	1141	1972	2006	2442	2722	569	681	4623	5825	107	1096	31	81

Source: Compiled from Various Reports of Annual Survey of Industries. Quoted in NEFDI Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

of power in New Delhi, the North-East was nowhere on the radar. It was a foreign policy shift after this country realised that ties with Southeast Asia were as significant as those with the Western world. Also, the growth of China's economic and political clout around the region must have given New Delhi the impetus to start looking eastwards, but mainly through the sea routes. It is in this context that Visakhapatnam became an important sea port and made major gains by trading with and through Southeast Asia. India was not even remotely thinking of any trade through land routes in the North-East.

The improved intensification of economic linkages with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) motivated India to enter into the second phase of its LEP, which preeminently emphasizes the development of the North-East because of its proximity to South-East Asia. The North-East India being a landlocked region, its trade and commerce with the rest of India makes it non-viable. It is easier, faster and more lucrative for Meghalaya and Tripura to send their products via Bangladesh. Similarly, it makes sense for Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram to trade with Myanmar. The LEP envisages the North-East region not as a periphery of India but as a centre of a thriving and integrated economic space linking two dynamic regions. The ethnic origin of the people is also more similar to the people of the South Asian region than that of the Indian mainland. The North-eastern region would be the India's gateway to this vast ASEAN region and a free trade relation is expected to be established between India and the ASEAN countries.

The LEP can bring focus on the North-East, allowing for not only visibility and increasing border trade but also opening prospects for a social intermingling that will result in opportunities in education, health and tourism. The LEP may effectively address the most chronic problems of the youth of the North Eastern Region, i.e. the problem of unemployment. They will get job directly as well as indirectly.

At present two trade centres—one in Manipur at Moreh-Tammu sector, since April 1995 and another in Mizoram at Chaimphai-Rih sector since January 2004 are operating between the two countries. An Integrated Check-post at Moreh on the pattern of the Wagah Check-post is coming up.

The tradable items permissible through Moreh are 22 commodities and there is a proposal to increase it to 44 commodities. Major export items include cement, engineering goods, transport equipment, motorcycles, iron and steel, medicine, chemicals and allied products and cotton yarn. The items imported from Myanmar through barter mechanism

include betel nuts, turmeric, red kidney beans (*rajma*), *kuth* roots, gram, resin, dry ginger, etc. The volume of trade at the Moreh-Tamu Border Point in 2001-02 was worth Rs. 95.48 million and in 2009-10 it was Rs. 298.19 million, which indicates an average increase of 39 per cent. The LEP and the related innovative measures to promote and enhance trade link with Southeast Asia provide Manipur with a comparative advantage. The Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN has also opened up newer vistas for trade with these countries.

While the NE could import from Myanmar through the land route items like rice, pulses, beans and teak, the scope for export of finished goods from the NE would open up. The industrial raw materials could arrive in NE from Kolkata via Sittwe port. NE should not be a corridor for transit of goods. There must be processing and value addition in the region. To take advantage of the possibilities, the road network must develop in the NE. Production facilities would have to be set up and warehouses built to supply manufactured items to Myanmar markets smoothly. Besides, facilities at border trading points must be developed. Efforts are under way to develop infrastructure at the border trade point at Phi-Zowkathar in Mizoram sector by upgradation of the Rhi-Tiddim and Rhi-Falam Road segments in Myanmar. There is a proposal for a MoU on the Rhi-Tiddim Road between India and Myanmar, connecting Manipur directly to Tiddim for border trade. Besides, the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh trilateral highway is also on the anvil. The Border Roads Organization is already building the Tamu-Kalayamyo Road that would help in border trade (*The Times of India*, May 4, 2012, 13).

A major portion of the trade between the two countries is unofficial. Businessmen or traders from Imphal, Kohima, Silchar, Aizawl, Shillong, Guwahati and Kolkata work through the local agents at the different trade centres like Moreh, Champhai and Lungmalong on Myanmar border. A large section of the population, including people in public life and administration, educated unemployed youth, common men, women and children are involved in unofficial trade as a means of their earning. The introduction of new trade routes like the proposed railway link between Delhi and Hanoi (Vietnam) will create more job opportunities for both the educated and uneducated youth of NER, uplift the socio-economic conditions of the region, mitigate the insurgency problem in general and check illegal cross border trade of the region in particular (Th. Binarani Devi: 2008, 320).

Although the policy has been in place for a decade and a half, the NER has gained very little. Indeed, there is considerable potential for the

policy to benefit the region but that would call for a qualitative change in the relationship with the neighbouring countries, particularly the larger countries of Bangladesh, China and Myanmar to improve connectivity, provide for better management of water resources of the region including flood control, foster trade and improve cultural exchanges.

Service Sector

Tourism

With its moderate climate most of the year, the NER is ideal for tourism. This region offers visitors a rare fiesta of unique natural beauty, brightly painted antique monasteries, challenging rivers, chains of blue, drowsy hills, tribal crafts showcasing the antiquity of protected cultural traditions and indigenous sports that have survived the passage of time. Each State has its own hidden treasures and their mesmerizing appeal underscores the unchained melody that heralds their ancient linkages.

The natural beauty of the region is awesome. If properly addressed, it is a factor which can make the region an international tourist destination. Where one can find enthralling mountain slopes and cool alpine climate on the one hand, and giant water bodies, rivers, torrential rainfall and primary tropical forests on the other! The region can offer tourists diverse and unparalleled experience such as one gets in Switzerland, Brazil or Bali in Indonesia.

This is a sector with a very high potential for generating income and employment. The focus, however, should be on high-value tourism which will require close collaboration with the private sector hospitality industry, building high-quality infrastructure and well-targeted promotion. Several tourist circuits could be developed in the region, depending on the attractions and experiences they present. Annual music and dance carnivals, held in different parts of the North East, with national and international participation, like the Hornbill Festival conducted annually at Kohima in December and Sangai Tourism Festival in Imphal, could attract visitors. Similarly, tourist visits and circuits could be built around the colourful Bihu festival in Assam and Dusshera festival in Manipur. The rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna of the area are invaluable resources for the development of eco-tourism. Unequaled opportunities for mountaineering, trekking, skiing, river-rafting, adventure tourism, studying the rich flora and fauna and the diverse wildlife make the region unique. Boat cruises on the Brahmaputra would be exciting

and memorable. However, this should be done in a sustainable manner, keeping in mind the fragile environment.

It is often overlooked that North East is a *Craft Heaven*, and craftsmanship is jealously guarded as a part of the heritage by almost all the tribes in the region. *Craft Tours* can be organized for the visitors. *Tex Tourism* has been a success in many South East Asian countries including Thailand, Laos and Vietnam.

The number of tourists both, foreign and domestic, visiting the North-East in 2009 and 2010 is given in Table 1.11.

Table 1.11: Domestic and Foreign Tourists Visit North East, 2009 and 2010

<i>Tourist Inflow</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
No. of Domestic Tourists	5772068	6166269
No. of Foreign Tourists	47658	50950

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, quoted in NEFDi Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

It will appear from Table 1.11 that 57.72 lakh domestic tourists visited North-East in 2009 and 61.66 lakh in 2010, registering an increase of roughly 7 per cent. In the case of foreign tourists the increase was also to the tune of roughly 7 per cent.

So long the foreigners were required to obtain Restricted Area and Protected Area Permits to visit certain areas of the North-East. So strict are the rules that even those from the region who have foreign wives find it difficult to get permits for their spouses and children. With a view to attracting foreigners, the Centre has withdrawn the restriction imposed on the foreigners under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958 of obtaining Protected Area permit to travel to Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. This concession was extended to all foreigners excluding Pakistani and Chinese with effect from January 1, 2011. The relief, however, won't be applicable to foreigners who would like to go to Arunachal Pradesh. So Arunachal Pradesh is the only state left in the North-East where foreigners are required to take prior permission before any visit. Citizens of some specified countries, including Pakistan and China, continue to require prior approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs before their visit to these three states (*The Times of India*, January 1, 2011).

Unfortunately, tourism projects are limping in most of the States for dearth of funds and lack of proper planning. If the Centre is really serious to make tourism a trailblazer, it must formulate a uniform tourism policy

for the North-East. Only an integrated plan with the cooperation of all the States can explore the region's immense potential. What actually discourages people from visiting the region, particularly Nagaland and Manipur, is not the sense of insecurity but the lack of infrastructure, mostly communications and basic amenities of a desired standard. Individual States with resource constraints can do little unless tourism is treated as an integrated plan encompassing all the North-East States. All the eight States have to adopt a common tourism policy and develop a modern outlook of tourism culture to either make waves or sink together.

Information Technology Industry

Other important services that present an opportunity for development are in the financial sector including banking, and insurance, the information technology industry. The IT industry, however, requires significant capacity building, a larger emphasis within the education system towards mathematics and science, and creating the environment to induce information technology companies to operate in the region. Some information technology companies have found significant potential for sourcing employees in the region, and it is important to create favourable conditions for their operation. Creation of education and training facilities for the youth of the region in Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabling Services (ITES) could provide a great impetus in generating a pool of personnel increasing employment opportunities for the youth.

Banking

Financial infrastructure is essential for economic development. The spread of banks was thin in the NER. Even as late as 1969, just before the nationalization of banks, there were only about 74 bank offices in Assam with deposits of Rs. 33 core. The position has, however, changed perceptibly. In 2010 there were 2277 bank offices in the NER which increased to 2479 in 2011 and the deposits in the banks were a whopping Rs. 97,783 crores in 2011, the state-wise break-up are given in Tables 1.12 and 1.13, respectively.

Education

Education plays a very important role in promotion of economic, social,

Table 1.12: State-wise number of offices of Commercial Banks—2010 and 2011

State	As on March 31st	
	2010	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	81	88
Assam	1494	1558
Manipur	81	84
Meghalaya	214	221
Mizoram	99	101
Nagaland	91	96
Sikkim	77	83
Tripura	240	248
Grand Total (All India)	88203	93080

Note: 1. Data are as per information reported by banks.

2. Data on number of offices include administrative offices.

Source: Master Office File (Latest updated version) on banks, DSIM, RBI. Quoted in NEFDi Databank downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

political and institutional development. Education promotes development of all the sectors including agriculture, industry and social. Sustainable development cannot take place without investments being made in people. It is now widely accepted that the improvements in the quality of people as productive agents, must be a central objective of development policies. Access to educational institutions promoting skill development is a prerequisite for providing trained man power. As per 1991 census literacy rate of NER was 58.09 per cent (All India 52.2%), in 2001 it was 68.5 per cent (all India 64.8%), and in 2011 it was 74.35 per cent (all India 74.94%). Table 1.14 gives an idea about the growth of literacy in this region.

Some of the north-eastern states are ahead of the national average in respect to literacy. Mizoram's effective literacy rate is as high as 91.58 per cent, Tripura with 87.75 per cent is second, Sikkim with a 82.20 per cent of literacy rate occupies third position. Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya has a literacy rate 80.11 per cent, 79.85 per cent and 75.48 per cent respectively. However, the performance of Assam (73.18%) and Arunachal Pradesh (66.95%) are below the national average of 74.04 per cent. The most spectacular increase in literacy rate in this decade was registered by Tripura with 14.56 per cent, closely followed by Sikkim (13.39%), Nagaland (13.52%), Meghalaya (12.92%) and Arunachal Pradesh (12.61%).

Table 1.13: State-wise Distribution of Deposits and Credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks in NER, 2011
(As on March 31)

State	Deposits				Credit				Credit Deposit Ratio
	Amount (in crores)	Per cent share in total deposits	Per capita deposits (in Rs.)	Deposits per office (in Rs. lakh)	Amount (in crores)	Per cent share in total credit	Per capita credit (in Rs.)	Credit per office (in Rs. lakh)	
Arunachal Pradesh	5422	0.1	43691	6305	1220	0.0	9831	1419	22.50
Assam	59101	1.1	19334	3930	21053	0.5	6887	1400	35.62
Manipur	3537	0.1	14443	4261	1159	0.0	4733	1396	32.77
Meghalaya	9797	0.2	37379	4515	2351	0.1	8970	1083	24.00
Mizoram	2629	0.0	26185	2656	1131	0.0	11265	1142	43.02
Nagaland	5265	0.1	23410	5661	1346	0.0	5985	1447	25.57
Tripura	8731	0.2	24145	3653	2739	0.1	7575	1146	31.37
Sikkim	3301	0.1	53938	4026	1245	0.0	20343	1518	37.72
All India	5426508	100.0	46321	6090	4076867	100.0	34800	4575	76.54

Note: Population per office, per capita deposits and per capita credit figures are worked out on the basis of population figures as on March 1, 2011 supplied by the Office of the Registrar General, Government of India.

Source: Quarterly Statistics on Deposits and Credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks, March 2010 & 2011, RBI, quoted in NEFDI Databank, downloaded from db.nedfi.com.

Table 1.14: Literacy rate of North-eastern States and percentage change in literacy: 2001 and 2011

State	Literacy rate (%) 2001	Literacy rate (%) 2011	Decadal difference (%) (2001-2011)	All-India ranking	
				in 2001	in 2011
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Arunachal Pradesh	54.34	66.95	12.61	33	34
Assam	63.25	73.18	9.93	25	26
Manipur	69.93	79.85	9.92	22	16
Meghalaya	62.56	75.48	12.92	27	24
Mizoram	88.80	91.58	2.78	2	3
Nagaland	66.59	80.11	13.52	20	15
Sikkim	68.81	82.20	13.39	17	13
Tripura	73.19	87.75	14.56	13	4
All India	64.83	74.04	9.21		

Source: Statement 24 Ranking of States and Union Territories by literacy rate: 2001 and 2011. www.imaginmor.com/census-of-india-2011.html

The higher educational institutions like colleges and universities have also come up in nearby urban centres. Considering that the present modern higher learning set-up in this region has an antecedence of a little more than 100 years, the growth in the number of institutions of higher learning here has, indeed been spectacular. With each of the States now having at least one Central university, the latest tally of universities serving this region now stands at eighteen, which includes two Agricultural universities at Jorhat and Imphal. The Department of Biotechnology has set up an Institute of Bio-resources and Sustainable Development at Imphal. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) National Research Centre exists in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. There is the North Eastern Space Research Organisation and a regional Centre of the Indira Gandhi National Open University also. Besides, with an Indian Institute of Technology at Guwahati, an Indian Institute of Management and an Indian Institute of Medical Science at Shillong, the Regional Medical College at Imphal, one National Institute of Technology (deemed university) in each of the eight States, the region now hosts a number of institutions of excellence. The number of universities, colleges and polytechnics in this region as on September 30, 2009 is given in Table 1.15.

Table 1.15: Number of Universities, Colleges & Polytechnics*(As on 30th September, 2009)*

State	Universities	Arts, Fine Arts, Social Work, Science and Commerce	Engineering/Technology/Architecture	Medical Education/Teacher Training	Total Colleges	Polytechnics
Arunachal Pradesh	2	17	3	1	23	3*
Assam	6	337*	9	7*	40**	10
Manipur	1	59	3	1	5	3**
Meghalaya	2	88	2	3	4	118
Mizoram	1	23	0	2	2	29
Nagaland	1	45	0	0	3	74
Sikkim	3	5	2	3	2	18
Tripura	2	16	2	4	1	29
All India	40	14321	2894	2074	3357	25938

Note: ** repeated from 2006-07, * repeated from 2007-08, ^ repeated from 2008-09

Source: Statistics of Higher & Technical Education 2009-10 quoted in NEFDI Databank, downloaded from db.nedfi.com

The higher educational institutions have encouraged the students to go for higher studies. The opportunities in government service for qualified persons have attracted the villagers to modern education. Spread of education has changed the attitude of the villagers in many respects. Now many of them are aware of the various rural development programmes and various economic opportunities available outside the village periphery. At the same time, it also created apathy towards agriculture on which their village economy still has a greater dependence.

Healthcare

Focus on other aspects of human development such as basic health needs is equally important for capacity development. The States of the NER have a poorly developed health care delivery system both in terms of healthcare personnel and healthcare institutions and infrastructure especially in rural and tribal areas. The shortage of medical specialists and lack of tertiary facilities in several states needs to be addressed, along with issue such as the high incidence of AIDS, cancer, malaria, and other diseases, and the wide gaps in rural-urban provisioning of basic services. The health and nutrition status of the region especially for children and women requires to be raised.

Table 1.16 shows the population served per doctor, per hospital bed, per hospital and per bed in all allopathic establishments in the different States of the North East and compares the last three sets of figures with the corresponding all-India averages. The Table shows that the population served per doctor is quite high in all the States of the North East. It also shows that compared to the all-India average, the population served per hospital bed is higher in four out of the eight States of the North East, namely Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Assam. According to the Figures given in Table 1.16, in all the eight States of the North East, the population served per hospital is higher than the all-India average and the population served per bed in all allopathic establishments is higher than the all-India average in Tripura and Assam (Dasgupta, 2008:77-78).

Table 1.16: Population Served Per Doctor, Per Hospital Bed and Per Hospital in the North East

State	Population Served per doctor	Period to which data relate	Population served per hospital bed	Population served per hospital	Population as on	Population served per bed in all allopathic estabs. On 1.1.02
Arunachal Pradesh	3755	31.12.1999	880	83600	1.1.2002	475
Assam	11980	1.1. 1999	1782	84183	1.1.1991	1410
Manipur	2820	31.12.1991	1378	125737	1.1.2001	931
Meghalaya	5581	31.12.1990	1958	347714	31.3.2000	738
Mizoram	10360	1.1. 1999	863	81000	31.3.2001	465
Nagaland	6292	31.12.1991	1747	99059	31.3.2000	848
Sikkim			834	292000	1.1.2002	449
Tripura	4693	1.1.1999	1800	118185	1.1.2001	1420
All India			1503	66758	1.1.2002	1124

Source: p. 78 of *Globalization and North East India 2008* (Eds) Bamal J. Deb & Others.

North-East India can offer medical treatment to patients from across the border at its hospitals. Training for health personnel from Myanmar and other neighbouring countries could be offered at institutions in the region, such as the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences and the Indian Institute of Public Health in Shillong and the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal.

Problem of Poverty and Its Elimination

Economic growth and social justice are two inseparable objectives of the economic efforts. Therefore, apart from growth acceleration poverty elimination is another important criterion to be studied to judge the positive impact of the new economic policy on an economy. Higher growth rate of the economy does not mean economic development in the real sense of the term. Higher economic growth is not meaningful, if a large section of the people suffers from acute poverty which manifests in poor quality of life, deprivation from basic amenities of life, malnutrition, illiteracy and low human resource development. Thus economic reforms aim not only at a higher rate of economic growth but also at tackling the problem of poverty and unemployment.

An analysis of the percentage of population below poverty line of the North-eastern States during the period 1973-74 to 2004-05 as given in Table 1.17, reveals that all the States except Manipur have achieved the distinction of alleviating the economic condition of their population to a great extent with Sikkim leading the NER States with only 8.40 per cent of its population below the poverty line in 2004-05, followed by Mizoram (17.30%), Arunachal Pradesh (17.60%), Nagaland (18.50%), Assam (19.70%), Tripura (20.10%) and Meghalaya (30.70%) in that order. Meghalaya with 30.70 per cent population below the poverty line is rather on the higher side of the poverty line.

Table 1.17: Per cent of population below Poverty Line

State	1973-74	1983-84	1993-94	2004-05 (based on MRP Consumption)
Arunachal Pradesh	51.93	40.88	39.35	17.60
Assam	51.21	40.47	40.86	19.70
Manipur	49.96	37.02	33.78	38.30
Meghalaya	50.20	38.81	37.92	30.70
Mizoram	50.32	36.00	25.66	17.30
Nagaland	50.81	39.25	37.92	18.50
Sikkim	50.86	39.71	41.43	8.40
Tripura	51.00	40.03	39.01	20.10
All India	54.88	44.48	35.97	32.80

Source: Table A 13.2 of India Development Report 2011 (ed) D.M.Nachane, 2011, Oxford University Press, pp. 287-88.

Growth Trajectories

The economy of North-East India has got its definite identity due to its

peculiar physical, economic and socio-cultural characteristics. Per Capita Net State Domestic Product (PCNSDP) gives a rough idea about the economic condition of NER with respect to all-India level. Table 1.18 gives the State-wise break-up of Per Capita Net State Domestic Product during the period 1980-81 to 1996-97. It will appear there from that all the States of NER except Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are below the all-India level for the years 1985-86 to 1994-95. This Table shows the economic backwardness of the region in general and Assam in particular.

Table 1.18: Per Capita Net State Domestic Product (at 1980-81 prices)

State	(in Rupees)					
	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Arunachal Pradesh	1571	2119	2710	3265	3304	3059
Assam	1284	1510	1544	1585	1606	1628
Manipur	1419	1598	1739	1986	1993	—
Meghalaya	1361	1412	1733	1673	1808	1837
Mizoram	1289	2658	4474	7743	—	—
Nagaland	1448	1653	1916	2270	—	—
Tripura	1307	1240	1646	1898	2113	2197
India	1625	1857	2267	2533	2664	2814

Source: p.200 of *Globalization and North East India* (ed).

In India, the growth rate of income per capita almost tripled from 1.5 per cent during 1951-81 to 4.2 per cent during 1981-2009. Within the latter period, growth accelerated from 2.8 per cent in the 1980s to 4.2 per cent in the 1990s and then surged to 6.1 per cent in 2001-2009. Table 1.19 shows the Net Domestic Product Per Capita Growth Rates (%) in the following North-East States for the period 2001-2009.

Table 1.19: Net State Domestic Product Per Capita Growth Rates in States (%)

State	2001-09
Assam	3.53
Arunachal Pradesh	5.34
Meghalaya	3.01
Sikkim	6.19
Tripura	5.85
All-India	6.1

Source: p.49 of *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVII No. 3, January 21, 2012.

Sikkim's NSDP was more or less at par with the all-India average while Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh were not much lagging behind.

More or less the same pattern was revealed when the growth pattern of State Domestic Product (SDP) by major sectors from 1981-2007 of seven States of NER, excepting Mizoram which was excluded from the study due to lack of database for the related variables, was analyzed. The SDP data have been classified into three parts: agricultural SDP, industrial SDP and SDP originating from the services sector. The agricultural sector consists of agriculture and allied activities, fishery and forestry. The industrial sector includes mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, electricity, gas and water supply. The services sector comprises the rest of the sub-sectors. The SDP data are incorporated in Table 1.20.

Table 1.20: Growth Pattern of SDP by Major Sectors from 1981-2007 (at constant 1999-2000 prices, in % per annum)

States	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Arunachal Pradesh	4.73	11.59	7.52
Assam	1.72	5.17	5.56
Manipur	3.02	7.32	4.15
Meghalaya	3.41	7.72	5.81
Nagaland	8.61	13.60	5.27
Sikkim	5.31	8.57	10.40
Tripura	3.04	11.08	8.24
North-east region (NER)	2.31	6.12	5.82
All-India	3.22	6.43	8.31

Source: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Volume xlvii No.6 dated 11-2-2012, p.73.

As one would expect, there is a considerable variation in the performance of individual states in respect of sectoral growth. It is seen from Table 1.20 that during 1981-2007 four of the North-East States, viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim have grown at a rate higher than all-India standards in respect of agricultural SDP. Within the NER, Nagaland has been diagnosed as the top-growing State followed by Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur and Assam. In respect of the industrial sector, all the North East States except Assam have grown at a rate higher than the all-India standards. Within the NER, Nagaland has been identified as the top-growing State in terms of income-generation from the industrial sector, followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, whereas Assam secured the bottom place in the list. The growth pattern of services sector SDP reveals that Sikkim and Tripura have grown at a rate higher than the all-India standards during the study period. Within the NER, Sikkim has been identified as the top-

growing State in terms of income-generation from services, followed by Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh, whereas Manipur secured the bottom place in the list. It also shows that though Assam contributes around 70 per cent of total GDP of NER during the period 1981-2007, its performance in respect of sectoral growth is among the poorest in the region (*Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. xlvii no.6, p.73).

Social and economic progress achieved by the North-eastern States can be assessed by the Human Development Index (HDI) prepared by the Planning Commission. Human Development Index is a composite of variables capturing attainments in three dimensions of human development, viz. economic, educational and health, which is worked out by a combination of measures: per capita monthly expenditure adjusted for inequality, a combination of literacy rate and intensity of formal education, and a combination of life expectancy at age 1 and infant mortality rate. The Human Development Index of the North-eastern States, given in Table 1.21, indicates that the ranks of some States such as Mizoram, and Manipur are quite high throughout this period while that of Nagaland and Sikkim were high for two consecutive decades (1981 and 1991), and that of Meghalaya for only one year, i.e. in 1981. Other States are below the national average. Compared with other Indian States, levels of socio-economic development of North-Eastern States do not lag much behind.

Table 1.21: Human Development Index by State, 1981, 1991 and 2001

States	Ranked with respect to all-India 32 States/UTs in					
	1981		1991		2001	
	Value	rank	Value	rank	Value	rank
Arunachal Pradesh	(0.242)	31	(0.328)	29	(0.328)	
Assam	(0.272)	26	(0.348)	26	(0.386)	14
Manipur	(0.461)	4	(0.536)	9	(0.536)	
Meghalaya	(0.317)	21	(0.365)	24	(0.365)	
Mizoram	(0.411)	8	(0.548)	7	(0.548)	
Nagaland	(0.328)	20	(0.486)	11	(0.394)	
Sikkim	(0.342)	18	(0.425)	18	(0.425)	
Tripura	(0.287)	24	(0.389)	22	(0.389)	
India	(0.302)		(0.381)		(0.472)	

Source: Table A 13.1 of India Development Report 2011 (ed) D.M. Nachane, for 1981 and 1991 and Table 17.4 of Globalization and North East India (ed) for 2011.

Environmental Degradation

Sustainable development, that is, 'meeting the present needs without compromising those of the future' (WCD, 1987), involves important inter-generational equity considerations, including those related to the environment. Environment is of importance not only because of its effects on the psychic and non-economic welfare, but also because of its impact on production over the long-term (World Bank, 2000).

Strategies of development such as big river dams by displacing a huge tract of tribal habitat, denudation of forest cover to build roads and other structures are bound to have serious impact on the ecology of the area. Industrialization has brought in its train pollution of the environment. Black carbon or soot emitted by diesel engines is threatening the North-eastern skies and its people. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of WHO, has announced that diesel engine exhaust causes lung cancer in humans (*The Times of India*, June 14, 2012, p.15). The Barapani Lake (local called it Umiam Lake) at Shillong has become polluted due to throwing of all solid garbage of the city (Mukhim, *Statesman*, August 8, 2011). Loktak in Moirang, 50 km south of Imphal, is the largest freshwater lake in the eastern region and is also known as the "Floating Lake" because of the presence of *phumdis*, a heterogeneous mass of vegetation, soil and organic matter in various stages of decomposition. The Centrally-sponsored prestigious 105 MW Loktak hydro-electric power project, commissioned in the late 1980s, draws water from the lake. The water level of the Lake has fallen dangerously making everybody jittery about their very existence (Lama, *Statesman*, April 20, 2009).

There are four major rivers in Meghalaya—the Kupli (Kopili), Umngot, Lukha and the Myntang. The Kupli and Lukha are already heavily polluted. Only the Umngot and Myntang are, perhaps, still pristine. The North Eastern Electric Power Corporation which generates hydro power from the Kupli river, has encountered several problems on account of the low pH content of the water. The seepage of acidic water from the coalmines adjoining the Lukha river was responsible for the pollution of the river (Mukhim, *Statesman*, 28 November, 2011).

A lot of tree cover has been lost due to wanton destruction of forests by the timber mafia for quick bucks by illegal felling of trees. The government has even sold parts of Keibul Lamjao National Park in Loktak Lake considered the last sanctuary of the nearly-extinct brow antlered deer, locally called *sangal*. Reports say the government has already sold

parts of the park to 14 private individuals, complete with *pattas* (Lama, *Statesman*, November 28, 2011).

There are reports of encroachment on the Intanki National Park in Nagaland by illegal settlers. About one-fourth of the total area of 20,200 hectares have already been encroached and encroachers are buying land in the National park for Rs. 1000 an acre. Similarly the Rangaphar Reserve Forest which earlier covered over 8,800 hectares has shrunk to 176 hectares after fifty years of encroachment (Bera, *Sunday Statesman*, 9 January, 2011).

There is now nationwide concern that the drinking water scenario in India is evolving into a major crisis and tough measures need to be taken. Groundwater, the major source of rural supply, is fast depleting in many areas because of an expanding village irrigation network. In many areas, groundwater levels have shrunk by four to five feet. With the groundwater level decreasing drastically in most of the States in the North-eastern region, a total of 7,067 habitations across the region have been identified as “badly arsenic-affected” and another 29,030 as “fluoride-affected”. The situation has deteriorated following the unusual prolonged drought. Even Cherapunjee in Meghalaya, once the wettest place on earth, is now drying up (Chakrabarty, *Statesman*, March 15, 2010).

Civil society groups pointed out that the on-going massive power projects were not based on informed a priori consent of the people. As such, projects would completely alter the life of a river, and hence, disparage climatic stability and affect rainfall, soil quality, underground water and the overall fragile ecology of the region. As the livelihood of tribes, communities and others living in the North East solely depends on cultivation, animal rearing and forest and mineral resources, any attempt to industrialization driven by forces of the capital and the state is bound to frustrate and anger a huge section of indigenous and other people rooted in the region (Biswas, *Statesman*, August 9, 2010).

Water Management

The waters of the Brahmaputra are shared by China, India and Bangladesh. The Tsangpo, also called the Yarlung Tsangpo, the highest river in the world, originates at Tamlung Tso Lake in Western Tibet, southeast of Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar, and later forms the South Tibet Valley and the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon before entering India at Tuting in Arunachal Pradesh. On entering India, the river is called the Siang and it flows for many a mile to meet the Lohit river, where it

transforms into the Brahmaputra. Speculation about China building a dam on the Tsangpo at the great Bend, had started since the 1990s. China initially denied the allegation but admitted in April 2010 that it was, indeed, building the Zangmu Dam on the Brahmaputra. But it allayed all fears that the project would impact the downstream flow to India. However, with news that the same river which used to be several kilometres wide at Pasighat in east Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh has narrowed into several channels, leaving behind a bed that is dry and sandy, there are serious concerns about what will happen further down in lower riparian states. Given China's phenomenal thirst for power (hydro, thermal, nuclear, solar) to fuel its ever-growing manufacturing industries, the prospects of it damming every upstream river and/or diverting the flow of those rivers is real (Mukhim, *Statesman*, March 12, 2012).

Meanwhile, the Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists has expressed concern over a number of dams on the Brahmaputra inside the Tibetan region of China. The umbrella organization of environmental journalists based in the Asia-Pacific region argues that once the dams on the 2,900-km trans-boundary river are commissioned, there will be a massive ecological effect in the North East and also in Bangladesh. The saline water of the Bay of Bengal will enter south Bangladesh and destroy the aquatic life and agricultural field (Thakuria, *Statesman*, March 11, 2012, p.8).

The Way Forward

The market oriented economic reform programme leads to the process of globalization. Innovation like money and private property which had no place in the traditional tribal economy, are playing a remarkable role in the process of change. New avenues for earning money, job opportunities in public services, government contracts, trading, sale of commercial products etc. already created a new horizon replacing traditional notion of self-sufficiency of a tribal village.

The growing educational standard, economic opportunities, interaction with different ethnic groups, emerging communication system as well as declining land-man ratio etc. are cumulatively playing an effective role for emerging occupational diversification in the North East. The people are now more in favour of doing business, getting contracts of small construction works or white-collar jobs. As a matter of fact, there has been a shift in the sectoral contribution from the primary sector (Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry and Logging, Mining and Quarrying) to

the tertiary sector (Construction, Electricity, Gas, Water, Transport, Communication, Trade, Finance and Real Estate, Community and Personal Services).

In Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and elsewhere, the service sector the main growth engine, is now largely under the control of local entrepreneurs, be it hospitality, tourism and transport, healthcare, education or construction. Even in manufacturing and financial services where there was little “local” presence before, local entrepreneurs have set up a good number of these. Grant of dealership of vehicles, two-wheelers, petrol pumps and all kinds of “white goods” by national manufacturing companies primarily to “sons of the soil” as a matter of policy or some form of compulsion has prompted the growth of entrepreneurship and associated activities.

While there are legislations to protect land from being sold to non-tribal people on the logical argument that this would make it an unstoppable project, the same legislation is not applied to the tribes who have the right to own and purchase land not only in the hills but in the plains as well.

Community ownership of land and resources which was the hallmark of a tribal society has given way to individual ownership. Absence of a land-ceiling law has spawned a new rich land-owning class in the tribal society, leading to high incidence of landlessness, rural poverty and gross income inequality—features unknown, till recently, in tribal rural society. The emerging tribal rich are engaged in over-exploitation of mines and forests placed under their control in Sixth Schedule areas to reap short term gains regardless of the impact on the environment, ecology and future generations (Chatterjee, 2010: 864-870).

One may look at this stage the long-standing but somewhat erroneous perception that the region has been stagnating largely due to the lack of adequate central concern and investment. The per capita transfers under the aegis of the Finance Commission, Plan transfers and aggregate transfers during plan periods from 1969 to 1985 as shown in Table 1.22, will give an idea about the position of the North-eastern States vis-à-vis the other States. All the North-eastern States (Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram attained statehood in 1987) are listed in the Special Category States and the disproportionate per-capita transfer of resources is too glaring. While the All India average of per capita transfers during this entire period was Rupees 1,765, it was as high as Rupees 17,998 in Nagaland, followed by Sikkim (Rupees 11,313), Manipur (Rupees 8,528), Meghalaya (Rupees 8,502), Tripura (Rupees 5,227) and Assam (Rupees 2,650).

Table 1.22: Per Capita transfers under the aegis of Finance Commission, Plan transfers, other transfers and aggregate transfers during Plan periods
[In Rupees]

States	Fourth Plan (1969-74)	Fifth Plan (1974-78)	Annual Plans (1978-80)	Sixth Plan (1980-85)	Total
Assam	472	483	408	1287	2650
Manipur	815	1724	1351	4638	8528
Meghalaya	818	1350	1034	5300	8502
Nagaland	3080	3546	3120	8252	17998
Sikkim	—	1912	2592	6809	11313
Tripura	481	1039	814	2893	5227
Average of All States	248	318	288	911	1765

Source: Annexure X.12 at pages 328-330 of the Report of the Commission on Centre-State Relations, Part I.

The North-eastern States, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir have continued to gain significantly from the awards of the successive Finance Commissions since then.

Arunachal Pradesh has the distinction of receiving 85 per cent of its administrative and development costs from the Centre. The Centre's share for Nagaland and Manipur stood at 80 per cent, Mizoram 72 per cent, Meghalaya and Tripura 70 per cent, Assam 51 per cent and Sikkim 40 per cent (Deb, 2008:20).

The allocation of funds by the Central Government for North East India is high. In fact, Central funding leaves little incentive to raise local taxes and resources—always politically unpleasant—and creates a central dependency syndrome. State revenues are almost non-existent; non-plan expenditure including that spent on security is very high. The total dependence on central funds and direction has promoted passivism and encouraged corruption. It has created a government monopoly in employment which is destroying the work ethic of a modern economy.

The Annual Plan outlay for the year 2012-2013 was Rupees 3342 crore for Arunachal Pradesh, Rupees 10,500 crore for Assam, Rupees 3,500 crore for Manipur, Rupees 3939 crore for Meghalaya, Rupees 2,300 crore for Mizoram, Rupees 2,300 crore for Nagaland, Rupees 1877 crore for Sikkim and Rupees 2250 crore for Tripura. It means an outlay of Rupees 2.409 in Arunachal Pradesh, Rupees 0.334 in Assam, Rupees 1.285 in Manipur, Rupees 1.363 in Meghalaya, Rupees 2.108 in Mizoram, Rupees 1.162 in Nagaland, Rupees 3,104 in Sikkim and Rupees 0.513 in Tripura per thousand person. If we remember the fact that the plan outlay

during the same period per thousand person for the neighbouring States of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was Rupees 0.2836, 0.222 and 0.411, respectively, then it will help remove the long-standing but somewhat erroneous perception that the North East has been stagnating largely due to the lack of adequate central concern and investment.

As a matter of fact development analysts could raise a question: is the region getting value for money from the approximately Rupees 30,000 crore being spent annually in the region, as stated by no less an authority than Union Minister of State for Commerce Jairam Ramesh? A substantial part of this amount is for the creation of productive assets and investments in roads, industries, technical and scientific education, research and training, telecom, health care, surface communications, etc. Certainly the region is not getting its due 'returns' from these investments due to poor implementation and low quality services. M.S. Swaminathan also does not mince words when he says, "outlay is, however, not getting converted into socially meaningful outcome" (Swaminathan, *The Hindu*, 2009). The Prime Minister has repeatedly expressed his concern over lack of governance and development in the region. He even publicly alleged in December 2008 that corruption in Mizoram under the MNF Government had reached epidemic proportions (*The Hindu*, November 26, 2008). There are charges of corruption against many politicians but North East India does not enjoy the reputation of probing such charges.

A survey conducted by the Association of Democratic Reforms, New Delhi and a Kohima-based youth organization gives an idea about how many rich politicians are there in States considered backward or undeveloped. Nagaland reportedly has 59 crorepatis. The Nagaland People's Front (which rules the State since 2003) tops the list with 26, followed by the Congress 13, the BJP's six, the RJD's two, the NCP and the UNDP one each. There are nine Independents in the category. Former Nagaland Chief Minister K.L. Chisi reportedly has the highest assets of Rupees 46.77 crore. Nukulotshi of the NPF has Rupees 41.82 crore, Congress Legislature Party Chief S.I. Jamir has Rupees 35.33 crore and Neiphiu Rio (Chief Minister since 2003) has Rupees 15.13 crore. There is no reason to believe the figures have been manipulated, these being the mandatory disclosures by candidates contesting the elections. They, however, need not worry getting into the taxmen's net because tribals are exempt.

According to the Meghalaya Election Watch, an NGO, the State has as many of 27 Crorepatis—mostly belonging to the Congress. Former Deputy Chief Minister, Deborah C. Marak, reportedly has assets worth Rupees 122 crore—the highest (Chatterjee, 2010: 888).

In the age of globalization no country, far less a region, can live in isolation within a protective cocoon. The world is opening up and so also India. An investment climate, conducive to industrialists, entrepreneurs and others, has to be created so that the LEP, formulated for the economic growth of this region, becomes successful. In the NER, there is still restriction between the States in mobility of human being, goods and services, through the restrictions of Inner Line Permit/Restricted Area Permit etc. and other government restrictions on possession of land entrepreneurship and business permit. People from the plains are not allowed to settle and cannot own properties. In Meghalaya, most cement companies are owned by non-tribal companies operating on the *benami* model.

Establishing peace, security and responsive governance are essential prerequisites for development. An integral part of a vision of development is of peace and harmony, and free from violent confrontations. Armed conflict has taken a heavy toll on economic progress, goodwill and happiness in the region. Governance is weak and there are widespread leakages – of revenues that should have accrued to the public exchequer, of expenditures on various development schemes due to rent-seeking of various kinds, and of large amounts of funds through rigging of contracts, according to the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) report. It is a fact that armed conflict, going back more than five decades, “has dampened private investment in potentially productive sectors”. The NIPFP adds, “nor have the initiatives by the Central and State Governments to accelerate development through various plans had the desired results. The system is full of leakages, perverse incentives towards economically productive initiatives and rent-seeking behaviour.” It describes the widespread practices of parallel tax collections, random extortion, kidnapping and similar acts which may be characterized as ‘roving banditry.’ Added to poor governance, they create a situation of extreme tension and pressure, especially on the weak and vulnerable (*North Eastern Region: Vision 2020*, p.41).

Significantly since 1996 several bold initiatives have been taken by the Central Government by augmenting Central investments in different spheres of the economy with primary focus on the region’s infrastructure in order to bring about perceptible changes in economic governance of the region. In fact, state intervention in the economy of the region has become more strident to prepare the ground for absorption of market oriented economic reforms. In the past one decade, central packages, new industrial policy, creation of non-lapsable pool of Central resources,

creation of a Department for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) in September, 2001 on the recommendations of the Shukla Commission and its subsequent upgradation to a full-fledged ministry in May 2004, and revamping of the North Eastern Council have created the required springboard for development leap forward. The North Eastern Region Vision 2020 document brought about jointly by the Ministry of Development for North Eastern Region and the North Eastern Council provides the blue print for the development of the NER. Since fund is not a constraint, as assured by the Prime Minister himself on a number of occasions, what is required is the machinery, both political and administrative, to translate that vision into a reality.

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