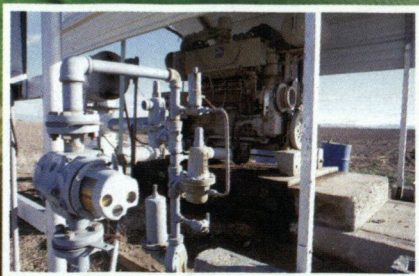
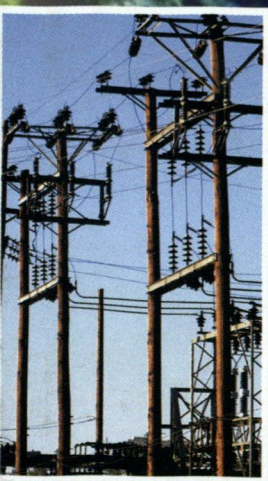


Development Issues in North-East Region

Kangki Megu



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The present economic experiences have reaffirmed the notion that the invisible hands of market would always continue to accelerate growth process in a sustained manner. Market oriented development strategies have to encourage private sector involvement in the development process, limiting the government's role as a facilitator and developer of private sector through the investment in building physical infrastructure and human resources so as to create an environment conducive for private sector development. The past decade has shown a shift of paradigm in this direction i.e., from government as main engine of development to private initiatives. In the context of the process of privatization and liberalization, the people of north-east region need to be encouraged to decide and take initiative in improving their condition by their own enterprise and hard work. In order to answer such questions, a seminar was organized by the Department of Commerce, Dera Natung Government College, Itanagar on 8th and 9th February 2005. The present volume is a collection of papers presented in the seminar.

Rs. 650



KANGKI MEGU (b. 1972) (M.Com) is presently working as a Lecturer (Sr.) in Dera Natung Government College, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. He had presented about 10 research papers in regional/national seminars. He has also a good number of research papers published in various journals/periodicals and has edited books. He is also a life member of Social Science Research Institute of Arunachal Pradesh (SSRI), an NGO actively working in social science research of Arunachal Pradesh. The present volume is an outcome of a national seminar organized by the author in February 2005.

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KANGKI MEGU



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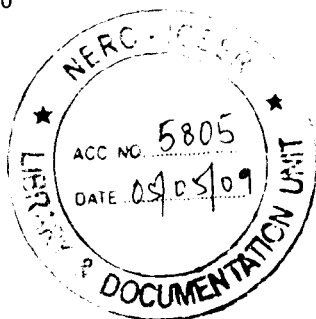
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CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>Backgrounder</i>	ix
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xxi
<i>List of Tables, Figures and Map</i>	xxiii
1. Eco-tourism in the North East India —Promotion for Sustainable Economic Development — <i>Mithra Dey and Nikhil Bhusan Dey</i>	1
2. Sustainability of Tourism Entrepreneurship in the North-East India—An Appraisal of Problems and Prospect of Accommodation Industry in Assam — <i>S.S. Khanka and Anjan Bhuyan</i>	7
3. Strategy for Economic Development in Arunachal Pradesh — <i>R. Kamaraj, M.K. Jana and K. Rajendra Babu</i>	33
4. Tourism — A Great Economic Force for Development —Special Reference to Assam — <i>Porag Sarmah</i>	41
5. Prospects of E-Marketing in Travel and Tourism Business in North Eastern Region — <i>Naresh Kumar and Ashok Kumar Pandey</i>	47
6. Impact of Regional Rural Bank Finance on Rural Economy of Arunachal Pradesh—An Assessment — <i>R. Tamuli and Tasi Kaye</i>	55
7. Entrepreneurship Development in the North Eastern Region —With Special Reference to Meghalaya — <i>E. Kharkongor</i>	67
8. Development of Entrepreneurial Skills—An Effective Way to Cope with Competitive Market Economy — <i>Amrit Lal Ghosh</i>	75

9. Role of Governance Institutions in Sustainable Human Development in Manipur 81
—*G.P. Prasain and K.H. Dhiren Meitei*
10. Path of Economic Development 91
—An Experience from Arunachal Pradesh
—*M.A. Salam*
11. Human Resource Development of Arunachal Pradesh in Respect of Education 97
—*R.K. Mandal*
12. North-East's Economy—It's Changes, Challenges and Remedies 111
—*Anjan Kumar Baruah and Prasanna Kalita*
13. Re-Engineering Assam as a Brand—From Marketing Perspective 119
—*Amalesh Bhowal*
14. Eco-Tourism vis-a-vis Prospects of Economic Development in Arunachal Pradesh 135
—*Shiva Nand Jha*
15. Pisciculture Activities in Arunachal Pradesh 151
—A Boon Towards Economic Growth
—*P. Nath*
16. Liberalisation and Foreign Direct Investment in NE-Region 157
—*Th. Prabha Devi and Mainnam Bobo Singh*
17. Arunachal Pradesh from Subsistence Economy to Market Economy—Hindrances and Prospects 167
—*Ashok Kumar Pandey and Naresh Kumar*
18. Khasi Mandarin (*Citrus Reticulata Blanco*) Production in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh 177
—An Investment Analysis
—*Manesh Choubey*
19. Globalisation and North-East Economy —A Micro Analysis with Special Reference to the Development of Small Scale Industries 189
—*Minto Ete*
20. Tourism as an Alternative Strategy for Economic Development of the NE-Region 195
—*Seema S. Singha*

21. Arunachal Pradesh as an Emerging Power House	203
— <i>Ram Krishna Mandal</i>	
22. FDI in India—With Special Reference to North-East	209
— <i>Th. Prabha Devi</i>	
23. The Degradation of Common Property Resources in a Market Economy—Some Issues and Challenges in Arunachal Pradesh	215
— <i>M.A. Ibotombi Singh</i>	
<i>Index</i>	225

BACKGROUND

The North East Region (NER) of India comprised of eight states namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. These eight states of NER together have a population of 39 millions as per 2001 census and constitute about 3.8 per cent of the total population of the country. It covers an area of 2.62 lakh sq.km accounting for 7.9 per cent of the total land space of the country (NEDFi, quarterly data bank 2005).

Statistics are available in plenty that portray about the resource potentials of the region. The region is bountifully endowed with biodiversity, hydro-power potential, oil and gas, coal, limestone and forest wealth. It is ideally suited to produce a whole range of plantation crops, spices, fruit and vegetables, flowers and herbs, much of which could be processed and exported to the rest of the country and worldwide. Markets must be developed and problems of transportation, power, infrastructure, finance and services overcome. Its natural beauty, serenity and rich flora and fauna invite trekking and tourism. In terms of potentials the following are the strength of this region:

Tea: Northeast produces more than 50 per cent of tea in the country. Tea being an agricultural plantation crop and a major revenue generator, it plays a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the States of North Eastern Region of India. Assam is the largest producer of tea in India. The recent technical survey carried out by the Tea Board indicate that there is possibility of bringing sizeable areas under tea in the States of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. As new clones proven for their quality and yield are being used for plantation in these States, the quality of teas to be produced in these regions are expected to be far superior. There is also good scope for producing organic teas from these regions since tea is being planted in virgin areas. In view of the positive developments,

there is good scope for export of good quality teas also from the other North Eastern States in the long run. While good quality produce is assured in the years ahead, the focus would be on marketing of the output in a more systematic and value added form in order to reach the peak of the value chain both in traditional and non-traditional markets.

Bamboo: The region has abundant bamboo resources. About 65 per cent of bamboo in the country and 20 per cent of the world are grown in the region. The heavy rainfall and temperate climate has assured an abundance of bamboo and cane in the region over the ages. Out of 136 species of bamboos found in India, 63 species in 22 genera are found in Northeast India, spread over an area of 30,500 sq.km. Distribution patterns of bamboos in the region reveal that the species of *Bambusa*, *Dendrocalamus*, *Dinochloa*, *Cephalostachyum* and *Neohouzeoua* are mostly confined to the lower altitude ranging between sea level and 600 m. ASL. Species of *Arundinaria*, *Chimonobambusa*, *Semiarundinaria*, *Sinobambusa*, *Thamnocalamus* and *Phyllostachys* are found in altitudes between 800 and 3500 m. The largest contribution to the growing stock is from *Dendrocalamus strictus* (45%), followed by *Melocanna baccifera* (20%), *Bambusa bambos* (13%), *D.hamiltonii* (7%) and *B. tulda* (5%), with the rest sharing 6%. About 25 species of bamboo are considered rare in Northeast India.

Tourism: The eight States of the North Eastern Region form part of the East Himalayan region, which extends from Sikkim eastwards and embraces the Shillong Plateau of Meghalaya. The rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna of the area are invaluable resources for the development of eco-tourism. The Region is endowed with diverse tourist attractions and each State has its own distinct features. The attractions are scattered over the entire region and are largely located in remote areas within highly fragile environments. These attractions and the people of the Region constitute the tourism resources at large.

Handloom and Handicraft: From time immemorial handloom industry has been playing a vital role in the economy of the north east region. The traditional skill of handloom weaving was not only a status symbol for the women-folk but it was also an indispensable aspect of the socio-economic life of the people in this region. The NER has a rich and fairly ancient tradition of handloom weaving. On a conservative estimate there are about 1.3-ml handlooms and nearly 1.4 ml weavers in the entire region. The total production of

handlooms in the NE region is valued around Rs.1145 million on an annual basis. The commercial production of cotton handloom is oriented heavily towards meeting the requirement of the local market. In Assam, items like Gamucha, Chaddhar, Mekhala, Lungi and dhoti etc. which are basically the local dresses, dominate the product mix. The pattern is almost identical in the other states. In Arunachal Pradesh the traditional 'Galley' and 'Galluk' account for bulk of the production. In Meghalaya, items like 'dakmanda' (a traditional dress worn by Garo women) 'dhara' or 'jainsems' (worn by Khasi and Jaintia ladies) and dakhana (tribal dresses) are the most popular articles of manufacture. Shawls and skirts are the major items in respect of Nagaland. Near about 70% of the production of cotton handloom fabrics in Manipur, comprise phanek (lungis) and scarf/shawls, though of late, some diversification in the product mix is being undertaken in the state. In Tripura, over 90% of the production is still being accounted for by janata and plain sarees, gamucha and lungis. The Mizo lungi locally known as a 'puan' has a share of over 80% of the total handloom fabric production in Mizoram.

Handloom and Handicraft sector in the Northeast has a strong potential to stand on its own and act as an engine of growth for the entire region. The artisans are endowed with considerable amount of human capital. However, they are constrained by the insignificant size of the market for their product.

Biodiversity: the northeast India, being at the confluence of three major bio-geographical realm of the world, is extremely rich in floral and faunal biodiversity with several endemic species. Northeast India is blessed with a wide range of physiography and ecoclimatic conditions. The State of Assam has extensive flood plains, while Khangchendzonga in Sikkim stands 8586 m. tall. Cherrapunjee in the State of Meghalaya holds the record for the highest rainfall in a single month (9,300 mm) as well as the most in a year (26,461 mm) in India, while the nearby Mawsynram has the world's highest average rainfall (11,873 mm). The forests in the region are extremely diverse in structure and composition and combine tropical and temperate forest types, alpine meadows and cold deserts. There are regions, for example, in the State of Sikkim, where the faunal assemblages also change rapidly from tropical to subtropical, temperate, alpine and finally to cold desert forms.

Oil Resources: Northeast accounts for slightly less than half of the total crude oil production in the country. The North Eastern Region has been a pioneer in the country in as far as exploration

and production of Petroleum is concerned. Asia's first successful mechanically drilled oil well was drilled in Makum (Assam) way back in 1867. The first commercial discovery of crude oil was however, made in the year 1889 at Digboi (Assam) and this also marked the beginning of oil industry in India. In the year 1959, the Oil India Ltd. (OIL) and Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) were set up and since then, these two state owned companies have been continuously engaged in the exploration and production of hydrocarbons in the North East.

Water Resources: Endowed with a sub (extra) tropical type of monsoonal climate, the region shows remarkable variability of weather and climate on a regional scale and forms a distinct climatic zone within the Indian landmass. Comprising mainly of the basins of three of the large river systems of the world viz. the Brahmaputra, the Barak (Meghna) and the Irrawady, the NER possesses the richest treasure-trove of water resources in India. It possesses about 30% of the total water resources potential and about 41% of the total hydropower potential of India. The per capita and per hectare availability of water in this region is the highest in the country. The NE India is one of the wettest as well as most acutely flood prone zones of the world.

Horticulture: Each state has vast possibilities for growing a range of fruit and vegetables, tuber crops, tapioca and spices. This region is home to certain citrus and rice strains and is yet to be completely mapped for the full range of its biodiversity. Productivity could also be greatly improved in the case of citrus, pineapple, banana and other varieties through tissue culture and the development of breeder seed farms. Likewise, vegetables Ratoon crops like banana can be replaced by more productive and disease free annuals. The hills can exploit niche markets and provide off-season fruit and vegetables to the plains, including Bangladesh.

All the States in the NER are Special Category States whose Development Plans are centrally financed on the basis of 90% Grant and 10% Loan. Further, the Special Category States are allowed to use up to 20% of the Central Assistance for Non-plan expenditure. Development of NER has always remains high on the agenda of both the central Government and the respective states government. The North East Council (NEC) which was set up in 1972 has been playing a major role. As a regional planning body it has taken up a series projects for balanced regional development of the region. To provide further focus to the development initiatives

of this region, the Government had also setup Department of North East Region (DONER) in 2001.

Per capita devolution of Central assistance to the state plans in NER is among highest in the country; the average per capita Central Assistance for state plans in NER was placed at Rs. 1,546 in 2001-02 as compared to Rs. 356 at the All-India level. The government of India has also been providing special central assistance in respect of some of the states in the region for special programme such as the Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) and Border Area Development Programme (BADP). Other policy initiatives includes, announcement of a new industrial policy for NER (Dec 1997) which encompassed a comprehensive incentive package to stimulate development, creation of non-lapsable central resource pool (1998-99) to ensure speedy development of infrastructure in NER, the PM special packages. In addition, Projects of inter-State nature in the Region are funded through by the North-Eastern Council (NEC), which has a separate additional budget for the purpose. Thus this region is not lacking in policy attention and programmes. The flow of funds is also not a problem.

The Realities

The regional economies are simple, heavily deficit and dependent on the rest of the country for many basic needs. All seven units are special category states whose development plans are almost entirely centrally financed on the basis of 90 per cent grant and 10 per cent loan. The development funding pattern for the special category states accords them built-in preferential treatment. There is no agricultural surplus and limited capital formation and entrepreneurial skills. Assam had seen development activities around tea, oil and timber; the region is, however, basically pre-industrial despite a number of saw mills and plywood factories, a few cement plants and other miscellaneous enterprises apart from oil and coal. Handlooms and handicrafts, once the pride of the Northeast, are on the decline but have a considerable potential if given contemporary functionality through design, marketing and other inputs.

After independence, some efforts were made to diversify the economic activities, but industries that came up were mostly remaining concentrated in certain pockets of Assam. The prospects for modern industries are not encouraging, as there is a lack of local or regional markets and distance from the main land of the country. Another important reason for the economic stagnation of the

Northeast is the socio-economic resistance of the people and the structural rigidity of the society. Development has been a major casualty of insurgency and rampant violence. Hence, the region continues to remain mainly dependent on subsistence agriculture. Further, the agriculture has not undergone any significant transformation and the most primitive farm practices of slash and burn (jhum) is still dominating the sector. It is an irony that despite being an agriculture economy, the northeast remains food deficient.

The hilly States of Northeast are the most densely administered region of the country. Uncontrolled and unproductive employment in government sector resulted in the stagnation of the development process. On the whole the economy of this region reflects underdeveloped agrarian societies with very weak industrial sector and inflated services (government) sector. Today, the saturation point has reached in most of the NE States. The number of employment seekers is swelling; the time has matured that educated youth must search for alternative means of employment and the hope lies with the concept of self-employment initiatives.

In the lights of the above, a seminar had been organized on the topic "*Transition from subsistence economy to market economy: challenges of economic development in northeast region*" in order to find ways and means to overcome the tremendous pressures and problems of economic development of the region, that mostly rely on the central assistance. The past decade has shown shift of paradigms from restricted economy to open economy and from government as main engine of development to market forces and private initiatives. *In view of this shift, it is imperative to sensitize the people of the region on this concept so that the people of this region should not be left behind in developing the private initiatives and harvesting the new yield of employment opportunities.*

The present volume is collections of papers presented during the seminar that addresses the problems and potentials of development of northeast region, from multidimensional angles and outlines the priorities of today. Dr. Nikhil Bhusan Dey, Prof. Department of Commerce, Assam University, Silchar and Dr. (Mrs) Mithra Dey, Sr. Lecturer in Zoology of G.C. College, Silchar has jointly prepared a paper on the title, "*Eco-tourism in the North East India—Promotion for Sustainable Economic Development*". The paper focus on development of tourism sector keeping in view environment aspects of the region. The main thesis was that economic development without environmental consideration can lead to serious

environmental damages which in turn would not only impair the quality of life but also the very economy for which this was intended. The paper suggested some strategies which could help to achieve the goals in this direction. The measure includes the improvement of communication system, creating awareness on eco-tourism, identifying potentials in the sphere of handicrafts, organizing cultural functions and above all encouraging local entrepreneurs to participate in the process.

The next paper was by Shri Anjan Bhuyan, Lecturer in Commerce, Darrang College, Tezpur which was collaborated with Prof. S.S. Khanka, Dean, School of Management Science, Tezpur University, Assam. The title of the paper was, "*Sustainability of Tourism Entrepreneurship in Northeast India: An appraisal of problems and prospects of accommodation Industry in Assam*". The paper addresses the problems of accommodation industry in Assam that support the tourism sector. The paper suggested for training local entrepreneurs in this sector with the support of the state which could help both tourism and accommodation sectors.

The subsequent paper was by Dr. M.K. Jana, Dr. R.Kamaraj and Dr. Rajendra Babu with the title, "*Strategy for Economic Development in Arunachal Pradesh*". The paper was an attempt to identify the shortcoming in the existing developmental initiatives in Arunachal Pradesh and offer alternative strategies like developing horticulture, food processing and development of tourism sector to boost the economy of the state.

Another paper was on the theme, "*The Degradation of Common Property Resources in Market Economy: Some issues and challenges in Arunachal Pradesh*", by A.I. Singh, Senior Lecturer in Economics of Dera Natung Government College, Itanagar. The paper was an attempt to measure the degree of degradation of common property/land resources in Arunachal Pradesh in the last few decades.

The next paper was made by Shri Porag Sarmah, Lecturer in Commerce of Jagannath Barooah College, Jorhat on the title, "*Tourism—A Great Economic force for development with special reference to Assam*". The paper had a very strong argument in favour of tourism as a potential sector for promoting the economy of a state especially in northeast region. Citing the example of Spain, Austria, Greece and Switzerland, the author hoped that adequate foreign exchange for the country could be earned by tourism sector.

The sixth paper was by Dr. A.K. Pandey, Sr. Lecturer in Commerce entitled, "*Prospects of E-Marketing in Travel and Tourism Business in North Eastern Region*", prepared in collaboration with Dr. Naresh Kumar of J.N. College, Pasighat. Obviously, the authors had made an innovative approach to the problem that examined the application of emerging technology in the tourism business.

Another paper was prepared by Dr. Tasi Kaye, Lecturer, Department of Commerce, Arunachal University which was jointly prepared by Dr. R. Tamuli on the title, "*Impact of Regional Rural Bank Finance on Rural Economy of Arunachal Pradesh: An assessment*". The new scheme such as Self-Help group and Kishan Credit Cards has been introduced recently in the state to capacitate the rural entrepreneurs. The Rural Banks can promote the economy of the state with those schemes.

Dr. (Mrs.) E. Kharkongor prepared a paper on, "*Entrepreneurship Development in North East Region with special Reference to Meghalaya*". In her paper she highlighted the causes for underdevelopment of Meghalaya's economy and identified the area like rich flora and fauna and exotic horticultural species of the state and scope for processing industries for acceleration of economic development.

Dr. Amrit Lal Ghosh in his paper, "*Development of Entrepreneurial Skills: An Effective Way to Cope with Competitive Market Economy*", suggested an integrated approach for such skill development with an integrated approach based on awareness, motivation, training and follow up measures.

The subsequent paper was joint one prepared by Dr. G.P. Prasain and Dr. K.H. Dhiren Meitei entitled, "*Role of Governance institution in sustainable Human Development in Manipur*". The paper tried to assess ineptly the role of institutions in sustainable human development. Dr. Meitei presents a very gloomy picture of Government institutions responsible for human development. The author hoped that transparency and responsiveness, access to information, public grievances etc. to improve the quality of life.

Another paper was by Dr. M.A. Salam of Bomdila College on the topic, "*Path of Economic Development: An experience from Arunachal Pradesh*". The paper discussed the characteristics of subsistence economy in the context of Arunachal Pradesh and connected the development in the state as lopsided.

Dr. R.K. Mandal on the topic, "*Human Resource development in*

North East Region with special reference to Arunachal Pradesh". Dr. Mandal cited the example of West Germany and Japan as testimony to crucial role of a country and suggested to go about that way also in our country.

"North East Economy: Its Changes, Challenges and Remedies" by Dr. Anjan Kumar Baruah in collaboration with Prasanna Kalita, held that while the volatile law and order situation in the region poses hindrances on the path of economic development, the agro-based trade and industries could ameliorate the poverty in the region.

The subsequent paper was by Dr. Amallesh Bhowal on, *"Re-Engineering Assam as a Brand: From marketing perspective"*. This was an innovative approach suggesting social marketing as a strategy for market promotion in the state. The author had highlighted certain key areas for marketing Assam as brand viz. tourism, export of local produce, foreign and domestic policy, people, culture and heritage etc.

Dr. S.N. Jha's paper is on the topic, *"Eco-tourism vis-à-vis Prospects of Economic Development in Arunachal Pradesh"*. Dr. Jha underscored that economic development can be accelerated in Arunachal Pradesh by promoting eco-tourism. However the infrastructure like transport network and other communication means have to be developed. He highlighted the eco-tourism potential of the states and suggested the measure to develop it.

Another paper was on the topic, *"Piscicultural Activities in Arunachal Pradesh"* by Dr. P. Nath. The mainstay of Dr. Nath's paper was that keeping in view the huge diversity of aquatics resources especially that of fishery, the piscicultural activities in the state could be encouraged in the rural areas to boost the rural economy.

"Liberalisation and Foreign Direct Investment in North-East Region" is jointly prepared by Th Prabha Devi and Mainnam Bobo Singh. The paper focus on the emerging trends and patterns in the inflows of Foreign Direct Investment in India after the wake of economic liberalization initiated in the year 1991. The finding shows that the total inflow of foreign investment in Indian Economy is short of the expected target and the inflow pattern also concentrated on in relatively develop states of India. The North-East Region, which is at lower stage of development remained extremely low in attracting FDI in comparison to other developed states of the country.

"Arunachal Pradesh from Subsistence Economy to Market

Economy: Hindrances and Prospects" is another paper jointly prepared Dr. A.K. Pandey and Dr. Naresh Kumar. In this paper the authors pleaded for maintaining the balance in the societal structure and economic equilibrium in the process of transitions.

Dr. Manesh Choubey prepared the paper entitle, "*Khasi Mandarin production in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh—An Investment Analysis*". He advocated for proper initiative required in commercial production of oranges which can create huge self-employment opportunities.

In his paper "*Globalisation and North East Economy (A Micro Analysis with Reference to the Development of Small-scale Industries)*" Mr. Minto Ete highlighted the importance of small-scale industry in North East region. Due to poor infrastructure, socio-economic and political problem in the north east state, the development of medium and large are very few and negligible. He strongly argues for the development of small-scale industries as an alternative solution for industrialisation in the north east region and specializes in those areas in which the region has comparative advantages.

In her paper Dr. Seema S. Singha, present an impressive analysis for tourism development in northeast region. The author highlights the major constraints towards the growth and development of tourism and also attempts to identify all possible measures to focus the tourism vision of the states so as to boost up economic development of north east region.

R.K. Mandal in his paper, "*Arunachal Pradesh as an Emerging Power House*" highlighted the hydro-power potentials of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which is estimated at baout 27,000 megawatt (more than 32 per cent of the total hydro power potentials of the country). The paper also highlights the present power scenario in the state and also the power policy of the state Government.

Dr. Prabha Devi's paper was on the topic, "*FDI in India with Special Reference to North East Region*". The inflow of FDI in the North East Region was attributed on her paper as low public investment.

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