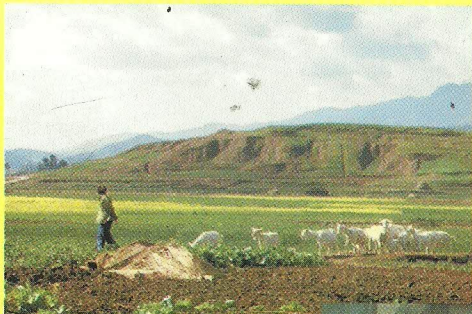


# ECONOMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-EASTERN STATES



**AMALESH BANERJEE**  
**BIMAN KAR**

*Economic Planning and Development of the North-Eastern States* is a forward-looking research work on the economy of the North-Eastern States which have enormous wealth of resource endowment and need careful attention for appropriate strategy for development. The volume focuses attention on the existing stock of situation of the states, the productive resources, industrial potentials as well as growing aspirations and dissensions. However, it goes beyond that usual polemics and problems—it rather concentrates on the future course of action necessitated for accelerated and sustainable development within our magnificent democratic dynamics; it envisages a regional economic planning for radical transformation of the economics of these States towards a higher level of development.

Part one of the book emphasises on the planning and growth of the economies of these States. It makes an outline of the resource planning on a regional basis so that inter-state flow of output and welfare redistribution is possible. This is based on the analysis of experience of agriculture, industry and administrative experiments done so far in this region. The Plan encompasses the gradually changing cultural ethos of the ethnic groups and, at the same time, corresponding transformation of the economies of these States under a composite and integrated development strategy. While analysing the experience of small states in various fields the book emphasises that democracy has surely to be practised at the grassroot level but economic progress and policy has its own logic; one does not compensate for other.

Three focal aspects of the volume are emphasis on regional planning, environmental development and industrial regeneration under composite investment programme.

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# Economic Planning and Development of North-Eastern States



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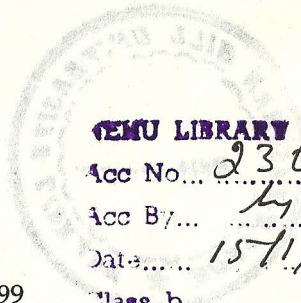
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## Preface

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Three focal aspects of the volume are emphasis on regional planning, environmental development and industrial regeneration under composite investment programme.

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BIMAN KAR

Preface

Regional Planning and Development of the North-Eastern States is a forward-looking research work on the economy of the North-Eastern States which have enormous wealth of resource endowment and need careful attention for appropriate strategy for development. The volume focuses attention on the existing state of situation of the states, the production resources and industrial potentials as well as growing aspirations and discontents. However, it goes beyond that usual policy and problems - rather concentrates on the larger issues of a long term and a realistic and sustainable development within our regional framework. In doing so it envisages a regional economic pattern of a better distribution of the economics of these states towards a higher level of development.

Part one of the book emphasises on the planning and growth of the economies of these states. It makes an outline of the resource planning on a regional basis so that inter-state flow of output and welfare redistribution is possible. This is based on the analysis of experience of agricultural industry and alternative experiments done so far in this region. The plan encourages the gradually changing cultural ethos of the ethnic groups and, at the same time, corresponding transformation of the economies of these states under a composite and integrated development strategy. While analysing the experience of small states in various fields the book emphasises that democracy has to be practised in the process of socio-economic progress and that it has its own logic and does not compromise for other ends.

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# Introduction

## Part I

### Planning and Development

The first part of the book discusses the importance of planning and development in the context of the modern world. It explores the various factors that influence the process, including economic, social, and political conditions. The author emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and long-term approach to planning, one that takes into account the needs and aspirations of all segments of society. This part of the book provides a theoretical framework for understanding the complexities of development and offers practical insights into how these challenges can be effectively addressed.

In the second part, the author delves into the practical aspects of planning and development. This section includes detailed case studies and analyses of successful development projects from various countries. The author examines the strategies and policies that led to these successes, highlighting the role of government, the private sector, and international organizations. This part of the book is particularly valuable for practitioners and policymakers who are looking for concrete examples and lessons learned to inform their own work. It also discusses the challenges that remain and offers suggestions for future research and action.

## Introduction

*Amallesh Banerjee*

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Two important factors have made the study of economies of the north-eastern states attractive today. One is the prolonged destructive flood over four months every year and the other is the widespread violence that takes life almost everyday. Economic analysts wail despondency, administrations take arms, politicians play the game and individual families fall victim to the senseless extortions. It is a pity that the area of the country which heralded the independence before the rest of the country tested it has now become the area of unrest. The present volume is an attempt to explore the causes of those unrest, and at the same time, outlines an action programme for turning a new chapter of prosperity.

Seven sisters, the seven states, are like the different complexion of the rising sun. They are individually and collectively bright enough to blaze in glory. We attempt to capture those possibilities and emphasize that an appropriate planning strategy can usher in a new chapter of prosperity. Originally the state of Assam has been vivisected and the compact small states have come up. We attempted to find out the potentiality of these states, their experiences in different

fronts and pitfalls. However, the state of Assam still remains the main centre of attraction on different respects, for communications and opportunities. Even on serious economic assessment major states are counted in which Assam only finds place among the north-eastern states. In this perspective one will introspect the utility of this exercise. However, we attempted to examine the economy of this area as a compact unit without being absessed with the individual small states. The issues, therefore, come up are like these :

- (a) are the state and the economy different;
- (b) why differences among the states grow overtime;
- (c) does the development process so far augmenting the cohesion and prosperity of the states;
- (d) are the autonomous councils resolving the dissension?

Some aspects of these broader issues are taken up here, while major issues, connected with development planning, are examined in the next chapter.

### **States and Economy**

States are administrative units in our federative structure. There were different categories of states and union territories. Some of the smaller sub-states blossomed into full states, and some union territories are also getting statehood. Although administrative steps and gradual process of maturity of administration that determines the statehood of an otherwise sub-state and union territory, this also implies that a gestation period is required for a historically backward administrative unit to become a full-fledged state. This signalling of manurity is an important factor for economics also. Protection culture, ethnic group, historically inherited area and backward zones are some of the indicators for formation of states. Area of a state and formation of state are thus continually changing, even apart from those factors, due to political expediency. New states are coming on any of these specious groups.

But economic basis of formation of a state is hardly considered. States are to be supported by their economic structure. Unless a small state becomes sufficiently viable on economic terms it will remain weak and even dependent on

central grants perpetually. But economic prosperity of a state unit depends on factor endowments, geographical position, private capital flow and government initiative. Again, without sufficient factor endowment even private capital does not flow if the state is logistically disadvantaged and market and infrastructure is not sufficiently developed. Commonsense conditions of industrial location are not sufficiently ripe in many states and hence the private capital flow is always shy. Hence, unless the governments fill up this gap in private capital flow in any significant extent, the state will languish in lagged process of development or underdevelopment. Then the governments in small states are always in resource crunch. Ultimately the central government is held responsible for backwardness of the state.

Constitutionally none of the three lists are comprehensive and the central list is more dominating than the state list while the central government can forcefully change a state government, it can hardly develop a state economically by one stroke. The fallacy of disproportionality between the central power and the state power on the one hand, and equal disproportionality between the political and economic power of a state itself are important issues impeding the development of a state. Implications of such state policy for planning and economic development of the country is examined in the next chapter. This will obviously lead to top sided development, concentration of economic power and inequality. Some states will grow at a rapid pace but some other may be lagging behind as a result of centralised planning. For the present some aggregate picture of the state finance may be pointed out as a synoptic condition of states, particularly, the smaller states. State fiscal deficits and debt are two key financial indicators. In an aggregate sense, as the RBI annual report 1997-98 indicates, between 1985-1998-99 the development expenditure and GDP ratio of the states is declining and that of non-development and GDP ratio is rising. More surprisingly, social sector/GDP ratio is declining significantly. Gross fiscal deficit as percentage of GDP of the states over last eighteen years, from 1980-81 to 1998-99, is rising; equally their revenue deficit is also rising. This indicates weakening resource position of the states; their own resource base is faltering. The debt burden is also rising due partly to

their own declining resource and partly to their rising debt to the central government.

About the disaggregated picture of our north-eastern states the position is worse. Of the total outstanding liabilities of the states loans and advances from the central government in 1997 constitute 68 per cent for Arunachal Pradesh, 43 per cent for Mizoram, 52 per cent for Meghalaya, 76 per cent for Goa, to take an example of another small state from other part of the country. All these indicate that financial resource base of the small states are not rising and their development depends on the central government initiative. This indicates a different development strategy when states are endowed with high physical resources but low financial power and where the conventional development theories are not applied.

### **Dissension and Development**

Dissension prevails in north-eastern states, as in many other parts of the country ever since early seventies. When some of our north-eastern states under consideration were just on formative stage. It is a dissent against the existing structure of society, polity and economic programme and rising expectation which is often misguided by interested agents, national and international. Two types of forces have worked together to make a section of the people restless. On the one hand, spread of education and international information through modern media have made the younger generation to look forward for a better style of living as against their traditional social and cultural bounds, on the other hand, the development deficiency and infiltration of opportunities forces in the changing economic panorama of the hill regions have made the growing generation search for an alternative yet undefined and nebulous to them. The problem is not the formation of state or council which on the surface, appears to be main, but it is a problem of formulating a cohesive and complete vision of social and economic development and adjusting that with the existing administrative and economic pattern. The rapidly changing demographic and cultural background of the people of hill north-eastern states has to be equally consistent with the corresponding changes in economic programme. Growing

enlightenment and aspiration of the people has to be met with equally rapid change of economic programme which we try to outline in the next chapter.

This transitional dynamics of the society and economies is misguided and exploited by foreign agents and interested groups. Ethnic and economic adjustment programme is being misdirected in negative direction. The efforts of constructive implementation of programmes are threatened and the chances of improving the conditions are wasted. It has been found in other parts of the contemporary world that nationalist questions has to be resolved by different factions with a forward looking spirit of accommodation within the national framework. Sectorial strife and the ethnic intolerance are detrimental to the process of growth and development with accommodation. Modern theory of social choice and welfare is antithetical with intolerance. Increasing social welfare is possible only when the different groups in the society are awoken with the spirit of adjustment and accommodation. Correspondingly economic and structural framework has to be adjusted. This is an arduous task which calls for great vision on the part of ethnic groups, administrators and political leaders.

Above all, most of the north-eastern states are late in the process of planned development which most of other states in the country have been experiencing over decades. A radical development programme is essential for rapid transformation of the north-eastern states. Planning process that we have been following has to be changed consistent with contagious regional factor endowments and aspirations of the growing generation. This will cover the widening gap of inequality among the states and will equally meet aspiration gap of the younger generations.

We can briefly identify the issues of search which have to be resolved in future course of action and which our different authors sought to highlight.

- (a) There has been a rapid rise in population due to internal and international migration. Settlement of Nepalese and people from neighbouring Bangladesh in an otherwise quiet homestead of hill population, gave rise to the problem of adjustment. Combined with growing original population, these new

- population stream posed the problem of settlement all in respect of social, political and economic.
- (b) In this perspective the first step is the land settlement. Since the cultivable agricultural land is very limited in the hill region, the extended cultivation by the growing population created tension and land settlement requires careful programme for increasing output, and protection of environment.
  - (c) Employment programme for the new educated generation of the region is an important issue, state governments are in diverse pulls. Employment generation and income propagation from old agricultural mode of cultivation has to be supplemented by new areas of manufacturing activities.
  - (d) Political courage of accommodation among the various groups of Bodos and Santhals, Nagas and Kukis, Mizos and Reangs etc. are important for peaceful settlement of dissension. Historically, various ethnic groups lived for long time in harmony and peace and they will have to live together as they have been doing since long. But forceful extortion and annihilation are quite opposed to development. However, the aspirations of sub-nationalities have to be met with appropriate action.
  - (e) Neglect of industrial programme is very burning issue. We shall see that during successive five year plans industrial progress and employment generation is very unsatisfactory in north-eastern states, as in many other states.
  - (f) Development of infrastructure of rails and roads is an urgent issue that will hasten the process of development. To break the isolation and to bring the land-locked people of the hill states to the mainstream, massive programme of investment is essential.
  - (g) The forest and environment is the very important asset of the hill economy. Forest land usurption, denudation, and occasionally natural calamities of flood and landslide are the urgent issues to be settled. Over three months during the monsoon every year Assam, Arunachal and adjoining states experience

devastating flood which destroys hearth and home of millions and crops.

- (h) Finally, the cultural conflict has grown among different ethnic groups who are now having greater mobility and interaction with other groups. Earlier bounds of cultural practice of different ethnic groups are now interacting in a national-international horizon. This openness of the societies brought overshooting shocks which have to be absorbed with increasing awareness and acquaintance.

It is an irony of our political and economic management overlast fifty years in free India that the valorous and nationalist people who have first held atop the free India flag under the Azad Hind Government have now turned sore and rigidly striving to be isolated from the mainstream. Surely greater warmth, vision and catholicity and positive programme will bring about turn of faith, co-operation and commitment of the people of the region to the nation at large. We outline an action programme in the regional frame of north-east in the next chapter.

### Outline of the Study

It appears that physical planning is at a mismatch at the national level and outcome at the regional level is the violent expression of the feeling of neglect and deprivation. Regional exploitation of resources for regional and national development has to be balanced carefully. Growth and dimension of north-east is an expression of that asymmetrical outcome of the distance and centralised planning part one of the valuable facesses the central issues. Realistic regional planning to capture the asymmetrical relation between growth and distribution resulting in dissension has been set out in the part one. The resource base of the region calls for regional planning. Growth experience of different states and particularly Assam, the major state among the set of north-eastern states, signals for greater action programme to assimilate the dissension now prevailing in the region. Hill economy requires a different type of planning for hills and plains together so that forest and plain land and the dwellers

thereof are complimentary to each others' need. Planning for hill economy of Tripura is a symptomatic of that idea.

Although agricultural land for cultivation is limited in these states except Assam, agriculture did not flourish to the desired extent. On the other hand since the forest resources are abundant and the tribal and non-tribal, both depend on forest resources for food and fuel, the north-east economy of India is now faced with twin question of increasing the forest resources for food and fuel of the region as also to meet the requirements of export. Globalisation poses a serious problem of combining these two tracks with the fundamental question of protecting environment. As a case study of Arunachal Pradesh, it is found that not serious attention is given to strike that balance.

Next to ethnic violence, is the ownership of land as the most sensitive issue of contention. The traditional system of community ownership of land is now gradually giving way to private ownership. Development of land market and removing inequality in some ownership of land is a grievous problem in the north-east. This is for three reasons : the tribals are living on forest resources, the low availability of agricultural land and finally the jhum or shifting cultivation. Growth of population has made the land market competitive in the classical sense. Increasing number of people are, therefore, becoming landless. In fact small holding and landlessness is a serious problem of agriculture in these hill states. In the absence of non-farm employment in the rural area the problem of unemployment, marginal farming and landlessness are increasing in the rural area. This an important source of tension in all north-eastern states. Part II thus combine the theoretical and empirical issues of environment in the weak of globalisation and the serious problem of agrarian relation. It calls for serious attention of reform agricultural land for augmenting production and employment.

Energy production and consumption is an important indication of development. North-eastern states have abundant potentiality of energy generation. However, this vast possibility of hydel power generation from the boundless resources of water and utilization of those for small and big industries is still awaiting for exploration. The industrial map of north-east is still at incipient stage, and the small industries of different

states are catering to the local needs. Handloom industry and possibilities of other industries are discussed in the Part IV.

The novel experiment of Autonomous District Council and the North-Eastern Council is the centre of discussion in the Part IV. The debate between council or state is now at the forefront of national politics and development strategy. We argue in the Chapter II and in the Part IV also that potentialities of autonomous district council are yet to be reaped. Without the problem of small states, the autonomous district council can be para-state for prosperous development of small regions. Above all the small states in the north-east, the North-Eastern Council can stand out as a planning forum and implementing agency. The success of the autonomous district council and importance of NEC as an integrating agency has been examined in this part.

What is the financial position of the small states of the north-east? Are the financial institutions sufficiently disbursing credit to the small industries and farmers in this region? Part V highlights this position and also the centre state financial relation. It has been found that there is not enough possibility of augmenting the credit absorption of these states if industrial programmes are not carefully implemented. Small states are perpetually indebted to the central government which hardly pay serious attention to the income generation of these states. Big states receive major attention and small states receive little attention.

Development of human resources through liberalisation and globalisation has now become the strategy of the market economy. How the north-eastern states fair in this respect? It has been found that human resource development and entrepreneurship programme is no better in these states than the rest of the country but there is enough possibility of extension of entrepreneurs programme in these states for regeneration of industries and setting up cluster of new small scale industries. The Part VI thus highlights the new concept of development strategy—the human resource development.

### **Political Economy**

We have been following the democratic process of economic

development. Democratic decision-making emphasises on the aggregate weightage and the dominant opinion based on number. The small states of our country are continually changing the political stand due to the alignment for the small ruling parties of the state with the ruling party in the centre. Economic development and even allocation of fund is often affected by larger political force at the centre. As such small states suffer and their potentiality of development remain untapped.

It is, therefore, necessary for the smaller states to have larger representation in the Assembly and Parliament so that they are treated as important in the number game. By special provision each smaller state should have larger number of representation in the Parliament.

In the entire industrial picture of these states massive public investment is required for infrastructure and communication development. It is well-known that public investment is very often guided by political economy. We, therefore conceive of a separate decision-making and implementing authority in the North-Eastern Council.

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