

National Seminar on Look East Policy and North East held at Golaghat



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Ritupallab Saikia 7 December 2011 10667 views

A national level UGC sponsored seminar on “Look East Policy and North East India” was held at DR College auditorium today. The seminar was organized by the Economics department of Debraj Roy College, Golaghat in association with Vox-Populi, an NGO. The open session of the workshop was presided over by Devojit Phukan, associate professor of the college. The welcome address was being given by Proip Kumar Saikia, Principal D.R. College. In the seminar Dr. Sunil Kr. Saikia, Head Center for Enterprise Development and Management, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Prabhat Bezboruah, prominent tea cultivator and Director of Bokaholla Tea Co. Ltd and Bidyananda Barkakoty, Chairman North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) presented their keynote address. The seminar was organised for enhancement of a social research base in the Northeastern region.

Speaking on the occasion Prabhat Bezboruah, prominent tea cultivator and Director of Bokaholla Tea Co. Ltd was of the opinion that, the country's look east policy is India centric whereas we need a Northeast centric Look East Policy. The policy makers in Delhi have little idea of the ground realities of the North Eastern states and the proof of which lies in the widespread social discontentment in this region which was the primary fuel of the many brands and phases of militancy that we have seen. He further said that the Stilwell Road is a vital link in connecting Northeast to Yunan and beyond into Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam and we as North-Easterners see no negatives in reopening this vital artery which will greatly facilitate the integration of this regional economy with the great ones further to our East. However, the mandarins in Delhi feel that a good road leading right to the border may encourage China to venture into a fresh expansionist thrust and their way of discouraging this is to leave the border road un-motor-able, so that Chinese may have a second thought about looking west.

Bidyananda Barkakoty, Chairman, NETA said that the Northeast region shares 98% of its border with China, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh, while a narrow strip of land constituting just about 2% measuring 27 km links Northeast with the rest of India. It is in Northeast India that South-East Asia begins and therefore Govt. of India should ensure that the Northeast plays the arrow head role in the country's look east policy but unfortunately the policy has remained a slogan and has not yet evolved into a harmonious and productive relationship with neighboring countries. He also point out certain issues which require immediate attention of the Govt. of India, such as setting up of Export Promotion Council (EPC) exclusively for Northeast region, signing of Transit Treaty between India, Myanmar and Thailand, setting up of Visa offices of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand at Guwahati, Air Cargo services should be introduced storage facilities at LGBI Airport, explore and promote use of Ranong port of southern Thailand as an alternative shipping lane connecting Malay peninsula with India etc. Barkakoty further added that maximum benefit of Look East Policy are being reaped by Kolkota and they were using Northeastern region as their flyover.

Dr. Sunil Kumar Saikia of IIE said that India's Look East Policy which was initiated in 1991 marked a strategic shift in India's perspective of the world. The term "Look East Policy" was mentioned for the first time in the Annual Report of the Ministry of External Affairs, 1995-96. India's look east policy would further open up new vistas for the country in general and the Northeast region in particular.

Ritupallab Saikia

BY RITUPALLAB SAIKIA

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