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Northeasterner's woes — Booklet for students in Delhi



[Rituparna Goswami Pande](#) · 01:15, 14 Jul 2007 · 17415 views · 3 min read



India's Northeast is a rainbow land blessed by nature's bounty. Its colourful, it's mysterious and it boasts of a medley of diverse people. The northeast is an ethno cultural frontier, encompassing much of India's rich but lesser known mongoloid heritage; a transition zone of linguistic, racial and religious strains. The states of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh are the seven states that constitute the northeast. They are also known as the seven sisters. All these states were parts of a single mother state—Assam. The hill tribes of the northeast are different from their counterparts in other states. They form majorities within recognized territories, where their distinctive cultures have flourished in relative isolation. This has enabled them to claim statehood or local autonomy and hence the repeated division of

Assam. Sadly however, for those living in the heartland of India, the northeast is a forbidden land, perhaps even a fearful land. Outsiders conceive of the northeast as a cauldron of violence with extremists groups like ULFA, BLT, NDFB, NLFT, NSCN etc. The true identity of the northeast seems to have got muffled under a cloak of terror and violence. As a result, northeasters all over the country are looked upon with doubt and suspicion and treated differently. The recent advisory by the Delhi police to youths from the northeast who are studying in the capital is a further proof of this prevalent sense of alienation of the NE. The advisory booklet has been seen by many as a ploy of segregating the region from the heartland. The comment on food habits and clothing in the booklet has not gone down well with the northeasterners. AGP MP, Arun Kumar Sarma and congress man Kirip Chaliha asserted the need for caution and security measures but at the same time they pointed out that comments on food habits and clothing were indeed unfair. . Maintaining decency in dress sense and behaviour are definitely mandatory and expected of every Indian and the northeasterners are no exception. For fashion is a universal phenomena and young people whether from Northeast, North, South or West cannot be divided or compartmentalized on regional basis. With the spurt in violence and crime against women in Delhi every student needs to be cautious, therefore the advisory booklet especially for the northeastern students is bound to encourage feelings of discrimination. At this juncture it becomes the duty of all northeasters living in the northeast to set examples and try to remove the misconceptions about the NE and present a true picture of the NE culture and hospitality.



Rituparna Goswami Pande

Journalist, writer

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