

People's Dialogue on Development Discourse in North East India Sparks Inclusive Conversation



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Dibrugarh - The North-East Affected Area Development Society (NEADS) and the Environmental Forum of Assam, in collaboration with the Centre for Social Work Studies at Dibrugarh University, successfully hosted a two-day 'People's Dialogue on Development Discourse in North East India' from August 28th to 29th. The event, held at the Vikshan conference hall of Dibrugarh University, gathered a diverse group of regional stakeholders to engage in insightful conversations aimed at reshaping development approaches in the North-East.

The North-East region of India, known for its cultural diversity and unique geography, has often been a focal point for discussions on development, infrastructure, and socio-economic growth. However, a disconnect has persistently existed between top-down development initiatives and the perspectives, needs, and aspirations of indigenous communities. This initiative sought to bridge that gap by providing a platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

The event saw a remarkable turnout, featuring participants from civil society organizations, local community leaders, indigenous representatives, development workers, academics, and students. This diversity ensured a comprehensive exchange of ideas that captured the region's developmental challenges.

Dr. Nitul Kumar Gogoi, Chairperson of the Centre for Social Work Studies, extended a warm welcome to all participants, while Professor Deb Kumar Chakraborty, DEAN of the School of Social Science, delivered an inaugural address shedding light on various aspects of development policies in the region, their potential implications, and the vital need for community participation.

The intensive agenda covered a wide range of topics, including climate crisis, sustainable agriculture, resilient livelihoods, infrastructure development, transboundary water governance, and cultural preservation. Various sessions, including panel discussions and interactive workshops, provided a platform for participants to share experiences and best practices for integrating traditional wisdom with modern development paradigms.

A key focus of the consultation was amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and indigenous peoples. NEADS's effort to prioritize their participation underscored the importance of an equitable and inclusive developmental approach.

Tirtha Prasad Saikia, the Director of NEADS, emphasized in his remarks that the objective of this collective dialogue was to identify community-specific needs, people's aspirations, and priorities to ensure that development interventions are tailored to local contexts.

The event also stressed the necessity for synergy among diverse stakeholders to achieve sustainable and people-centric development in the region. Attendees underscored the importance of localized ownership of development initiatives, participatory decision-making, and the integration of indigenous knowledge into policy formulation. The dialogue highlighted the power of inclusive discourse in shaping holistic and effective developmental approaches. By uniting individuals with varied perspectives and backgrounds, NEADS has taken an important stride towards building a sustainable community.

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