

Conference on “Mainstreaming the NER”, Feb. 12-13, 2016 in Kohima, Nagaland.

A two day National Conference “Mainstreaming of North-East” was held in Feb, 2016, at Kohima, in association with Govt. of Nagaland, Centre for WTO Studies, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India; NECTAR,GOI & PHD House, New Delhi.

The main objective of the two day conference was to identify the constraints to economic development in the NER of India. It must be recognized that the hill states in particular have small populations and must trade with the rest of the country to realize their economic potential. In addition, the NER occupies a strategic position in that 96 percent of its borders are with other countries and linkages with these countries must perforce keep the NER states in mind. Second, the NER states are largely labour short, high wage economies (with some exceptions) and hence the usual models of economic development are not directly applicable. Finally, the economies are largely agricultural and any strategy of economic development must focus on how to bring these economies out of the current state of being subsistence, agricultural economies.

With this in mind the conference focussed on constraints to development of the agricultural, floriculture and handicraft sectors with particular focus on the food processing industries. The focus was to present some research in these areas done by AEDR and associated organizations and bring the business and local interests (from the NER states) together in a brainstorming session to identify how some of the identified constraints can be removed. The conference was not a purely an academic exercise and the practical aspects of business in the focus areas were emphasized.

The Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. Zeliang inaugurated the conference. The key note address was delivered by Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti, MOS, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, GOI. The **conference** was a great success. It was widely participated by policy makers, senior Govt officials, experts and most importantly the people on the ground- outside and local entrepreneurs, social workers, NGOs. Almost all newspapers covered the event in detail. A **resolution** adopted at the end of conference to further continue the effort to tackle the problems in the development of NER, as stated above.

The main points in the resolution :

- To take **agricultural production** to higher **value added processing** increase income of farmers.
- For this two things are required:
 - I. one, to **identify product specialisation in the states** and
 - II. two, to **improve connectivity within the NER.**
- An essential requirement remains **to set up some organisation or task force which can facilitate inter-state co-ordination in matters of marketing, training, technology and production.**
- It was agreed that PHD Chamber, Delhi, & AEDR would **co-ordinate the next activity in the next 30 days;**
- **NECTAR would provide all technical assistance.**
- **DONER & NEC and North East State Governments will be approached for necessary support.**
- Technical agencies like **APEDA and specialised Product Boards would also be approached.**