



**25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of  
North Eastern Economic Association  
&  
National Seminar**

*February 14 -15, 2025*

*Organized by*

**Department of Economics  
Assam University**

(A Central University constituted by an Act of Parliament)

Silchar, Assam

### **About NEEA:**

The North Eastern Economic Association (NEEA) formed in 1997, is a nonpolitical, non-partisan, voluntary regional economic association with a national perspective with members from not just the north-eastern states but across the country. The objectives of the organization are to - undertake, promote, co-ordinate and collaborate in the study of socio-economic problems and issues with special emphasis on North East India; provide a common platform for interaction of ideas and exchange of experiences among the scholars; contribute in promoting an atmosphere conducive for research through dissemination of information and knowledge; contribute in promoting technical competence for teaching and research in economics and allied subjects.

### **About the Host Institute:**

Assam University came into existence in 1994 after enactment of the Assam (Central) University Act 1989. Since its inception this central university in southern part of Assam has made impressive strides in establishing itself as a premier institution of learning in North East India. The university's main campus, situated at Dargakona is about 20 km away from Silchar town. The campus is surrounded by lush green hillocks, natural lakes and picturesque tea gardens, with the mystical Bhutan and Barail ranges of hills at the backdrop. The sprawling university campus that is spread over an area of nearly 600 acres provides an ideal atmosphere for academic pursuits of forty plus departments under sixteen schools of studies of the university. Silchar is well connected with rest of India by road, rail and air. There is direct flight connection from Kolkata and Guwahati.

### **Theme 1: Role of Special Institutions in Socio-economic Progress of the Northeast Region of India**

In the post-independence period, at least two sets of special institutions have been created in the North-east region. The first category, comprising the regional councils / district councils / autonomous councils etc., was necessitated by the fact that many areas inhabited predominantly by tribal populations were not under active administration in the colonial period. So, after independence it was felt necessary to bring these areas into the modern administrative structure of the newly independent nation called India. The perceived purpose of these institutions was to enable the tribes, who have had their self-governing traditional institutions, to gradually converge and integrate into the modernised administrative structure of the country. The regional/ autonomous/ district councils were supposed to be the via media for transition from the traditional self-governing institutions of tribes to the integrated modern administrative structure of the country. However, over the years these institutions have proliferated and their presence has led to some problems also. For example, in Meghalaya the district councils were not abolished at the time of formation of the new state. Hence, in some parts of Meghalaya we see overlapping authorities of three government institutions, namely, the traditional self-governing institutions, the district councils and the state government. In some other areas, the empowerment of the locals through the district councils seems to have ended at the district level only. Percolation of power to the grassroots and women has not proceeded in line with what is envisaged under the Panchayati Raj Institutions. In view of the mixed performance of these institutions, it is now necessary to have a detailed review of functioning of these institutions from the perspective of whether they have served the cause of socio-economic progress of the region.

The second category of the institutions includes mainly the North Eastern Council and Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER). North Eastern Council – set up in 1972 – was necessitated following creation of several states out of the erstwhile combined state of Assam. There are many potential developmental projects in the region which are to benefit not just one state but two or more states of the region. To oversee such projects and to plan for the entire region, the NEC was envisaged as a regional planning body. However, for decades the NEC was kept under the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India, which induced many scholars to question its role as development planner. Rather it was seen as an agency of the central government to deal with the security concerns in the region. The DoNER Ministry, on the other hand, came into existence in the post-liberalization period, following the recommendations of the Shukla Commission to enhance flow of development fund to the

region to help it overcome its infrastructure deficit and backlog in basic services, Government of India came up with the following twin ideas. Each central government department would earmark 10% of its budgeted expenditure to be utilised in the Northeast Region. In the event of failure to utilise the allotted amount during a given financial year of creating, the unspent amount would be transferred to a Non Lapsable Common Pool of Resources(NLCPR) to be utilised in the future for development of the region. The DoNER Ministry was primarily started to administer and utilise the NLCPR fund. It has now been several decades since establishment of the NEC and also the DoNER. In view of this, it has now become pertinent to examine the working of the two institutions also and recommend their suitable reforms, if felt necessary.

**Some sub-themes/ questions that have been identified under this theme are as follows:**

- 1) Review of NEC's performance as an effective regional development agency.
- 2) Role of DoNER Ministry in enabling the region in overcoming developmental bottlenecks.
- 3) To what extent have district/autonomous councils succeeded in bringing governance closer to people?
- 4) To what extent have these councils been successful in accelerating the process of economic development in areas under their jurisdiction?
- 5) Have the councils been effective in efficient utilisation of allocation to these institutions?
- 6) Are these councils adequately empowered to perform their envisaged roles?
- 7) Have the councils been successful in evolving with time? Have they actively taken up institutional reforms related to women's empowerment and land rights?

## **Theme 2: Economic Transformation of Barak Valley and its Neighbouring Areas**

Fostering diffused and inclusive growth continues to be a significant development challenge well into the 21st century. As the country embarks on the phase of 'Amrit Kal' with the vision of transitioning India into a developed nation by 2047, economic transformation in the frontier areas of the North-East assumes significance. Barak Valley located in the Southern part of Assam bordering Bangladesh is an embodiment of untapped economic potential. Blessed with varied natural resources and abundant scenic beauty, and being strategically located on the coveted India-South-East Asia corridor, the region has tremendous scope for not only uplifting the economic fortunes of its own residents but also for contributing to the growth story of the state and the nation as a whole. Border trade, agricultural diversification, growth of MSMEs and tourism constitute four of the several key areas which could bolster the economic outcomes of the region. Also being the gateway to several North-Eastern states including Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, the economic well-being of the region is also indisputably intertwined with that of the neighbouring areas. However, the region is plagued by various challenges that perpetuate a state of economic stagnation. Historically, agricultural backwardness, the lack of large-scale industries, and infrastructural bottlenecks have been the primary obstacles hindering the region's growth process. In recent times, new challenges have emerged among which climatic changes and shift in demographic composition towards a younger and aspiring populace are at the forefront. On the political front, due to socio-political setbacks in the neighbouring regions in recent times implementation of Act East policy and the potential of taking the region forward may not be easy. The goal of Viksit Bharat cannot be achieved unless the geo-spatial development issues are addressed and potential of the backward but otherwise resourceful areas are realised. At the same time, developing blueprints for economic transformation necessitates informed and detailed research across a wide spectrum of development issues. Accordingly, the following sub-themes specifically focusing on the Barak Valley and its neighbouring areas have been selected under the theme of "Economic Transformation of Barak Valley and its Neighbouring Areas":

- 1) Geo-political tensions, Border trade and economic growth
- 2) Agricultural development, rural livelihoods and challenges of climate change
- 3) Infrastructure and economic development
- 4) Human Development and Social Sector Issues
- 5) Migration, remittances and the regional economy
- 6) MSMEs and structural transformation

## Researchers' Forum:

Besides the two main themes the Researchers' Forum segment welcomes papers based on on-going or completed research works related to M Phil, PhD, Post Doctorate or research projects. Under this young researchers and senior scholars are expected to present findings of their research work in any field of Economics or related disciplines. The scholars submitting papers for this segment should specify the basis of the paper (e.g., MPhil/PhD/Post-doc./Project etc.) and in case of being part of funded projects should acknowledge the sponsoring agency.

## Dates and Guidelines:

- Abstract (300 words): to be sent to [secretaryneea@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryneea@gmail.com) and [neea.aus@gmail.com](mailto:neea.aus@gmail.com) as document file on or before 15th November, 2024 with the subject: 'Abstract for NEEA 2025'.
- Acceptance: latest by 5th December, 2024
- Soft copies of full paper in MS Word (max. 5000 words): by 31st December 2024

## Registration Fees:

Category	With Accommodation	Without Accommodation
Members	INR 2500/-	INR 1500/-
Non-members	INR 3500/-	INR 2500/-
Research Scholars/Students	INR 2000/-	INR 1000/-

## Payments to:

Bank Account No. **20050110035450**

Name of Account Holder: **ASSAM UNIVERSITY PROJECT A/C II**

IFSC: UCBA0002005

*(Note: After payments of Registration fees, a receipt copy of the same must be sent to [neea.aus@gmail.com](mailto:neea.aus@gmail.com))*

## Best Paper Award and its Guidelines:

- There will be maximum three best research paper awards for young researchers.
- Maximum two scholars can author a paper and both must not be above 40 years of age.
- A proof of his/her age (e.g. class X Board Certificate or any other with date of birth mentioned) must be submitted along with the paper.
- For consideration of award, full paper should be submitted within the deadline. There will be no consideration based on abstract.
- Willingness to participate in the competition must be intimated while submitting the full paper.

## Contact details: [neea.aus@gmail.com](mailto:neea.aus@gmail.com)

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