

## DAY 2

# High-level Policy Dialogue on Prioritizing Nature and People in Businesses in the North-East Region



Co Hosts:



## Speakers:

- **Rijit Sengupta**, CEO, CRB
- **Sanjib Bezbaroa**, former Head of Sustainability, ITC
- **Atul Dev Sarmah**, Secretary General, MMGLD
- **Dr. Lohro S. Pfoze**, MP, Manipur
- **Shri Angshuman Dey**, IFS - Joint Secretary, Ministry of Development of North-east Region, Government of India

\* View the recording of the session [here](#)

The Government of India has through various policy interventions tried to facilitate private sector investments in sustainability/SDGs. The government of India, through NITI Aayog, has developed a system that helps in assessing the progress of different regions in meeting the 17 SDGs. Having high potential in natural resources, agriculture, handicrafts, sports, etc., *the north-east region is gradually becoming a hub for tourism (including sustainable tourism); a source of agri-commodities and medicinal plants; and a vibrant seat of arts, culture, and handicrafts.* The objective of the session was to brainstorm facets of a roadmap to position the region as a seat for purpose-driven businesses and industrial development; to identify factors that can facilitate businesses-driven sustainability/SDGs related interventions in the region and; to examine the need for and benefits from a multi-stakeholder platform on responsible business for the region.

As the moderator of the session, **Rijit Sengupta** welcomed the house and the distinguished dignitaries present on the dais. He commended the onset of this passionate initiative on sustainability and responsible business in the north-eastern region. He highlighted that this initiative could act as the bridge between the private sector, local stakeholders, and this picturesque region in the near future. According to him, the opportunities of the northeast are incredible with regards to various aspects of sustainability.

As an organization, CRB felt the need to start this conversation with senior parliamentarians to highlight and identify institutions which can add value to this movement.

Guest expert **Sanjib Bezbaroa** made an insightful presentation on behalf of CRB and MMGLD, by way of context setting. He added that there are areas in the North East which are experiencing complete droughts. He said that the North East does not have irrigation systems and is completely dependent upon rainfalls, making this a very serious issue. His presentation flagged certain sustainability focus areas for the North East, including:

- **Climate change adaptation – building resilience**
- **Channelizing CSR fund flow into the North East**
- **Focus on Human Capital**

He also touched upon an assessment of extreme weather events under climate change (2022) brought out by CSE. He further talked of the **need for capacity building at a district level** because the people at ground need to know what CSR interventions mean and need to talk of people as a medium for desired development.



Dr. Lohro S. Pfoze, MP, Manipur

**Dr. Lohro S. Pfoze**, extensively spoke on the phenomenon of climate change and the disastrous challenges that it poses to the North eastern region, which is known for its biodiversity hotspots and forest cover. He added that the time has come to accept that climate change is here and take necessary steps towards **climate change adaptation**. He expressed that **traditional wisdom coupled with environmental technologies can play a key role** in taking on the challenges of climate change. If businesses need to happen, development needs to happen, and then we must connect people, nature, and businesses together. People should be made aware that conducting business need not destroy nature, given how essential it is.

**Shri Angshuman Dey**, delivered his remarks and spoke from the heart as a North-easterner. He presented an overview of the prominent agriculture and horticulture sectors in the region. During his remarks he highlighted a very major challenge wherein states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim produce good quality Kiwi, Apples, Oranges, Pineapples, Cardamom etc., it is the **absence of a withdrawal mechanism to bring out these products from deep pockets, which has made it very difficult for the farmers to find markets outside this region**. Monitoring and use of empty trucks returning from the region could perhaps be a solution to start with.

The session also brought together a number of national and international actors who are interested in supporting this process. It was further discussed that natural beauty being the region's strength can be explored for sustainable tourist activities.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

- With proper transportation and storage facilities, organic products can find attractive markets in the region and outside including exports to South East Asia
- Since sports are considered to be an effective tool for promoting peace, development, and social progress (aligns with SDG 3 & SDG16), investments in sports can help engage the youth effectively for sustaining this forward movement.
- There is a pending need for data collection and analysis on the part of government entities, and a greater pending show of interest on the part of private entities. With a little push, the region can do wonders.
- The North East region as a whole is filled with untapped resources and unfathomable potential. The only wait is for entities to take the next step in tapping these, but sustainably.



L to R: Devosmita Bhattacharya, Programme Officer, CRB; Bhubaneswar Kalita, Member of Rajya Sabha; Rijit Sengupta, CEO, CRB; Sanjib Bezbaroa, former Head of Sustainability, ITC; Atul Dev Sarmah, Secretary General, MMGLD