

Use RTI, promote 'Naturenomics': Experts tell Assam MLAs



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[L-R] Chief Information Commissioner Himangshu Shekhar Das addressing Assam legislators while CDPS Executive Director Washir Hussain and businessman, founder Balipara Foundation



Syed Miraz Ahmed 10 January 2017 10682 views

Experts called upon legislators in Assam on Tuesday to push for formulation of a three pronged peace [policy](#) to tackle insurgency, urged the elected representatives to elicit information related to public interest through use of the right to information and press the State Government to prepare a development strategy by merging nature with economics.

The suggestions were made during the sixth and final phase of Sabal Bidhayak, a series of orientations initiated by the Assam Legislative Assembly in collaboration with Guwahati-based research institute, Centre for [Development](#) and Peace Studies. About 30 speakers representing different fields from within and outside Assam addressed the legislators since the programme was [launched](#) October [2](#) last year by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

Addressing the gathering that included several civil society representatives, Assam's Chief Information Commissioner Himangshu Shekhar [Das](#) said that the use of [RTI as](#) a tool to seek information in the [state](#) is very low and that it is only about one-tenth of the national average. He also disclosed that of the total [RTI](#) applications filed, around 80 per cent are moved by [10](#) to 15 individuals. [Das](#) added that very few [RTI](#) applications are filed by intellectuals, media personnel and women. He called upon the Assam MLAs to use [RTI](#) in a big way to seek information from government departments to serve the people better.

Speaking on the occasion, Nath Gopal Mahanta, Head, Department of [Political](#) Science, Gauhati University said that the government should come up with a peace [policy](#) at three levels—macro, micro and district [level](#). The macro [level](#), he said, should involve the Central Government, the micro [level](#) should be initiated by the [state](#) government and the district [level](#) peace [policy](#) should [deal](#) with the fragmented militant groups. He emphasized the need to involve the civil society and consider

their views during the peace negotiations and eventual signing of peace agreements.

In his address, L R Bishnoi, Additional Director General of Police (BTAD and Railways) said insurgency has come down in Assam but pointed out that militant groups from the State are active on the [Myanmar](#) China border making it necessary for the security forces to be on guard. He said an effective counter-insurgency strategy could include, apart from consistent joint operations, use of advanced technological gadgets, breaking support network of rebel groups, joint action with neighbouring states, strengthening infrastructure and coming up with rewards and appreciations for security officers.

Making a presentation on “Assam, Naturenomics, [Conservation](#) and Role of Legislators”, Ranjit Barthakur, business [leader](#) and founder of Balipara Foundation, said that Assam urgently needs to formulate a development plan by merging nature and economics since the State’s biggest assets are its natural resources. Barthakur said that since six million people in Assam are directly involved in the State’s tea industry, Assam should have a Tea Ministry. He also cautioned that the tea industry in Assam could be adversely impacted by climate change in the next two decades.

Wrapping up the event, CDPS Executive Director Wasbir Hussain thanked the legislators for their participation and engagement during the interactions with resource persons. He said some of the best practices suggested by various designated speakers could be replicated by the MLAs in the respective constituencies. [Principal](#) Secretary of the Assam Assembly, Mrigendra Kumar Deka, making his concluding remarks, said the programme was a [success](#) and must have benefited the legislators. He thanked CDPS for designing and executing the programme in collaboration with the Assam Assembly.

Syed Miraz Ahmed

Writes, edits and researches. In 2013 he was conferred the Rotary International District 3240 Young Achiever Award for his work in the area of environment and digital journalism. In 2006 he was awarded first in the category of Wildlife Photography by the Department of Environment & Forests and Tourism, Government of Assam.

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