



## **REPORT**

### **FIRST REGIONAL MEETING OF THE STATE BIODIVERSITY BOARDS OF NORTH EAST INDIA**

**4<sup>TH</sup> – 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2012**

***Shillong, Meghalaya***

During the seventh meeting of the State Biodiversity Boards, organized by the National Biodiversity Authority, in December 2011, a decision was taken to organize a conference of the State Biodiversity Boards of North East India considering the special status and value of the biodiversity in the North East. This call was based on the unique diversity of the region in terms of biological resources and traditional knowledge but also due to the vulnerability of the region to biodiversity loss and misappropriation of biological resources.

As a sequel to this decision, the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) organized the first regional meeting of the State Biodiversity Boards of North East India in Shillong, Meghalaya. The Meghalaya Forest Department served as the host of this event. The meeting was held on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, May 2012 with the participation of seven of the eight North-Eastern State Biodiversity Boards.

Shri Ranjan Chatterjee, IAS, Senior Advisor and Consultant, Planning Commission, Government of India, Dr. K M Bujabuarah, Vice Chancellor, Assam Agriculture University and member NBA as well as representatives of NBA participated in the meeting along with a large number of experts from the region, including representatives of BSI, ZSI and NEHU. Twenty one participants represented the State Biodiversity Boards. Apart from them, Dr S.V. Ngachan, Director, Indian Council for Agricultural Research, Shillong, Shri A.K. Rana, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, Manipur also participated in the meeting. The Meghalaya delegation consisted of Shri. P.B.O. Warjri, IAS,

Chief Secretary and Chairman, Meghalaya Biodiversity Board, Shri. V.K. Nautiyal, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force and the members of the Meghalaya State Biodiversity Board. Nearly one hundred delegates participated in the meeting.

The inaugural session was held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012 with Shri Ranjan Chatterjee, IAS, Senior Advisor and Consultant, Planning Commission, Government of India as Chief Guest and presided over by Dr Balakrishna Pisupati, Chairman, NBA. This was followed by various technical sessions in which presentations were made by the State Biodiversity Boards on implementation status of the Biological Diversity Act and Rules. They also presented the challenges faced by the State Boards.

These presentations were followed by group discussions on two principal issues viz., (i) Institutional challenges faced by the SBBs and their solutions and (ii) Approaches for better coordination and developing networks for NE India. Presentations were made after the group work on the outcomes, prominent among which is the need to establish a special regional programme for NE India. The participants called for a North Eastern Regional Forum for SBBs which would be the interface between SBBs and NBA. The Chairman NBA addressed the various challenges which were stated to have been faced by SBBs, arrived at through group discussions and attempted to provide solutions. He also addressed the interpretation of various provisions of Biological Diversity Act.

In the concluding session, the Chairman NBA suggested some strategies for securing biodiversity conservation in North East viz. community based conservation considering that the ownership of resources rests with communities, linking of conservation needs to livelihood based on traditional knowledge, importance of rights based approach in community protocols, creation of special conservation areas (Biodiversity Heritage Sites). He pointed out that progress in implementation of the Biological Diversity Act can be better achieved by networking among the SBBs of North East and sharing of expertise among the SBBs. He advocated the need for pooling together the cooperation of all the stakeholders in biodiversity conservation. He listed several critical needs which need to be addressed immediately to secure better progress in implementation of Biological Diversity Act prominent among which are:

- (i) Enhancing technical and legal expertise,
- (ii) Need for enhanced financial support for the region,

- (iii) Need for the state governments to understand the nature and responsibility of SBBs and BMCs that are statutory bodies for better provision of funding and facilities for optimal performance of the Boards,
- (iv) Increasing social awareness on biodiversity and traditional knowledge related issues,
- (v) Developing linkages with other activities, programmes, initiatives of Government Agencies being implemented in the region and at state level.

The conference made two important recommendations in the course of the deliberations:

- (i) The National Biodiversity Authority shall create a Regional Office at Shillong to cater to the needs of the North Eastern Region,
- (ii) Steps would be taken to create Biodiversity Chair in the University of the North-East. The Assam Agricultural University would do so for Assam while in Meghalaya, the North East Hill University would be the ideal institution for this.

The Senior Advisor and Consultant, Planning Commission, Government of India assured full support of the Planning Commission for this. The meeting ended with a collective call to make the forthcoming CBD COP 11 meeting in Hyderabad a success and making use of this event to show-case the unique diversity of NE India.