



**DEPARTMENTALLY RELATED STANDING COMMITTEE
ON DEVELOPMENT (C) DEPARTMENTS**

2025-26

FIFTEENTH ASSEMBLY

SECOND REPORT

ON

GRANT NO. 11

**DEPARTMENT :
ACT EAST POLICY**

Presented to the House on 21st March, 2025

**ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT,
DISPUR, GUWAHATI-781006.**

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(i)

**COMPOSITION OF THE DEPARTMENTALLY RELATED STANDING COMMITTEE ON
DEVELOPMENT (C) DEPARTMENTS, 2025-26**

CHAIRMAN :

1. Shri Naba Kumar Doley, MLA.

MEMBERS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 2. Shri Prodip Hazarika | MLA & Member |
| 3. Shri Suren Phukan | MLA & Member |
| 4. Shri Darsing Ronghang | MLA & Member |
| 5. Shri Diganta Kalita | MLA & Member |
| 6. Shri Ramkrishna Ghosh | MLA & Member |
| 7. Shri Rekibuddin Ahmed | MLA & Member |
| 8. Smti Sibamoni Bora | MLA & Member |
| 9. Shri Abdul Batin Khandakar | MLA & Member |
| 10. Dr. Rafiqul Islam | MLA & Member |
| 11. Shri Ashraful Hussain | MLA & Member |
| 12. Shri Rabiram Narzary | MLA & Member |
| 13. Shri Jiron Basumatary | MLA & Member |

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Dulal Pegu, Secretary.
2. Shri Prodip Handique, OSD (Joint Secretary).
3. Smti. Hema Devi, Under Secretary.
4. Smti. Ruman Choudhury, Asstt. Language Officer.
5. Smti. Deepa Das Kakati, Committee Officer.
6. Smti. Sewali Bhagawati Sarma, Committee Officer.

(ii)

INTRODUCTION

1. I as Chairman of the Departmentally Related Standing Committee on Development (C) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on its behalf present this 2nd Report on Grant No. 11 relating to Act East policy on the Budget estimates for the Financial Year 2025-26, Govt. of Assam.
2. The present Committee, in pursuance of Rule 260 H (1) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Assam Legislative Assembly has been constituted on 30th December, 2024 by the Hon'ble Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly for a term of one year and accordingly Notification was published on 1st January, 2025.
3. The Committee has considered the Demand for Grant No. 11 on the Budget Estimates for the Year 2025-26 in its meeting held on 13th March, 2025.
4. The Committee has been befitted with the assistance rendered by the Government representatives during the course examination of the Budget estimates under the aforementioned Grant for the year 2025-26. The Committee has formulated its observations taking into consideration the valuable submission tendered by the Official witnesses, during the course of consideration of the Budget estimates.
5. The Committee wishes to keep in record the genuine services rendered by the Government Officials to the Departmentally Related Standing Committee on Development (C) Departments, Secretary as well as the concerned Officers and Staff of Assam Legislative Assembly Secretariat for their unstinted service devoted to the Committee during the preparation of this Report.
6. The Committee has considered the Draft Reports on 18th March, 2025 and approved it on the same day.

Dispur
Dated 18th March, 2025

Shri Naba kr. Doley
Chairman
Departmentally Related Standing
Committee on Development (C)
Departments
Assam Legislative Assembly.

GRANT NO.11

ACT EAST POLICY DEPARTMENT

The Budget provision under Grant No.11 of Act East Policy Department for the year 2025-2026 is given under the following table :-

BUDGET ESTIMATES

	Revenue	Capital	Total (Rs. in lakh)
Voted	63662.04	1921.83	65583.86
Charged	0.00	0.00	0.00

	Major Head of Account	Budget Estimates, 2025-2026 (Rs. In lakh)
2052	Secretariat General Services	15233.96
2205	Art & Culture	300.13
3451	Secretariat Economic Services	48127.94
4059	Capital Outlay on Public works	1035.04
4070	Other Administrative Services	838.81
4202	Capital Outlay on Education, Sports, Art & Culture	47.98
Grand Total		65583.86

The DRSC on Development (C) Departments in its sitting held on 13th March, 2025 and examined the papers and documents received from the Department and took evidences from the Departmental representatives.

Annual Report of the Department:

The Act East Policy Affairs Department, established by the Government of Assam in 2017, has successfully strengthened ties with Southeast Asian countries, leveraging the Indo-Pacific Ocean's strategic location. Despite its recent inception, the Department has played a vital role in enhancing diplomatic, strategic, economic, and cultural connections, significantly contributing to regional cooperation and development..

To promote trade, investment, and connectivity under the Act East Policy, the Act East Policy Affairs Department, Govt. of Assam organized the "Act East through Assam: Connectivity Conclave" on 27th May, 2022, in Guwahati. Supported by the Ministry of External Affairs and FICCI, the event marked 30 years of India-ASEAN friendship. Going forward, the second subsequent event in the series, "Act East through Assam: Connectivity Conclave", was organized on the theme "Inter Country Economic Corridor through North East of India for Inclusive Growth" on 16th February, 2024 at Hotel Radisson Blu, Guwahati from 10:30 AM onwards. In the said conference, valuable insights/ ideas/ thoughts were exchanged on strengthening economic relations between Northeast India and the neighboring countries with the several invited stakeholders. The conclave focused on identifying a way forward for establishing strong economic relations between Assam and the neighboring countries and to engage with regional Governments, International and multilateral agencies to make this thought a reality in near future.

Besides, the Department along with the Hon'ble Governor, Assam had interacted with HE Counsel General of Australia, Kolkata, Mr. Hugh Boylan on his visit to Assam on 10th June, 2024. In the discussion, HE the Consul General was briefed about the renewed focus of Govt. of Assam in bringing new age technology driven industries to Assam e.g. Tata Semiconductor assembly and Test facility. Australia being one of the most favoured destinations for Indian students, therefore, views were exchanged on how the Assam and Australian education system can work together for mutual interests. It has been assured from the Department to extend any support and cooperation in this stride.

Moreover, a meeting was held on 23rd September, 2024 in the Kaziranga Conference Hall, chaired by Principal Secretary Shri B. Kalyan Chakravarty, IAS, and organized by the Act East Policy Affairs Department. It was attended by key officials including Shri Narayan Konwar, IAS, and Shri Manvendra Pratap Singh, IAS, along with a 32-member Thai delegation. The discussion focused on areas of collaboration such as Industry 4.0, cultural and language exchange under NEP 2020, vocational training, tourism, investment promotion, trade, India- Thailand relations in doctoral and postdoctoral studies, language courses, student-faculty exchange, scholarships, and R & D. It was agreed that the Assam Government would work towards these objectives with the support and guidance of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Further, there has been exchanges with Japan – especially during the visit of its Ambassador to Guwahati; and with Bhutan – having witnessed the reciprocal visits of the HM King of Bhutan to Guwahati and Hon'ble CM of Assam to Thimphu.

Act East Policy Affairs Department in coordination with the Asian Confluence, is convening host the 5th Edition of "India Japan Intellectual Conclave (KIZUNA) - 2025" in Guwahati from 6th to 8th February, 2025. The KIZUNA - 2024 shall provide unique opportunity to showcase rich cultural heritage, economic potential, strategic significance of the entire NE Region and shall offer an ideal setting for meaningful exchanges and collaborations between Indian and Japanese stakeholders. In this connection, the Department has already started formal communication with H.E Mr. Hiroshi Suzuki, Ambassador of Japan to India.

Under the Act East Policy, the first Integrated Check Post (ICP) on the Indo Bhutan border was inaugurated at Darrangamela in Assam. It has been prepared by the Land Ports Authority of India under the Act East Policy. This ICP Darrangamela has state-of-the-art facilities including office complexes, parking areas, loading and unloading zones, weighbridges, warehouses, and residential quarters for officers. It also has an inspection area, plant quarantine system and parking facilities. The installation of this ICP is expected to further enhance connectivity and trade potential.

The Department has conducted the "Act East, Act Fast, Act First" session, held as part of Advantage Assam 2.0 in Guwahati, brought together key global and national leaders to discuss Assam's role in regional economic integration. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, along with Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam, highlighted Assam's strategic importance in strengthening connectivity, trade, and diplomacy under India's Act East Policy. The session emphasized Assam's transformation into a digitally empowered, economically vibrant state, driving growth with ASEAN and neighboring countries.

Global dignitaries, including envoys from Singapore, the EU, Bhutan, and Japan, praised Assam's investment potential, ease of doing business, and its emergence as a critical gateway for trade and collaboration. CM Sarma reiterated his vision of a "Viksit Assam" contributing to a Viksit Bharat by 2047", while international representatives expressed keen interest in fostering deeper ties with Assam across infrastructure, business and cultural exchanges.

Physical targets achieved during the last three years:

i. Conclave on "Act East Connectivity through Northeast":

With a view to facilitate cooperation in trade and investments, and to play a proactive role in furthering the objectives of the Act East Policy, the Act East Policy Affairs Department has as part of the initiative to organize a series of events to highlight the opportunities for trade, investment etc. that improved connectivity with the ASEAN c and other neighboring countries will bring about, held the "Act East through Assam: Connectivity Conclave", on the 27th May in Guwahati with support from the Ministry of External Affairs and FICCI as Industry Partner, in order to mark the first anniversary of the Government in Assam under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, and to commemorate "India – ASEAN friendship year".

ii. NADI 3.0 2022:

'NADI 3.0 2022', a flagship event in collaboration with the Asian Confluence and cohosted by Act East Policy Affairs Department, Government of Assam and Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India held in Guwahati from 28th – 29th May 2022. The conference focused on the region south of Himalayas from Ganga, Brahmaputra to Mekong as a contiguity of river basins with common challenges that require close cooperation beyond political borders.

The conference aimed at building confidence in the key role of Northeast in taking forward India's strategic initiative for energy and water security in the neighborhood and the Bay of Bengal region leading towards a vibrant and secure Indo-Pacific.

iii. Visit of Muktijoddhas of Bangladesh Liberation war to Assam:

As a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and Swarnim Vijay Varsh celebrations regarding celebration of 50th anniversary of 1971 Bangladesh's Liberation War, the Government of Assam, along with the High Commission of India in Dhaka and Ministry of External Affairs, organized a programme consisting of a visit to the State of Assam by 25 citizens from Bangladesh (15 Muktijoddhas, journalists and 4 youth members) from 16th to 20th July, 2022. The programme included courtesy meetings with the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Hon'ble Minister of Act East Policy Affairs and Chief Secretary of Assam. Visit of different tourist locations viz. Poa Mecca, Mahabahu Brahmaputra River Cruise Cars, Srimanta Shankardeva Kalakshetra etc.

iv. The Department has also hosted the Discussion for Indian Foreign Services (IFS) Officers for Phase-III Participants for their State Attachments.

v. As part of the "Powered by Partner" initiative, the Act East Policy Affairs Department collaborated with the Trend MMS Organization for convening the 3RD Edition of North East India Festival, on 27th, 28th & 29th October, 2023 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The programme was meant for building bridges and to promote bilateral trade, investment, tourism and people to people exchange between India and Vietnam.

vi. The Department of Act East Policy Affairs has prompted the line Departments like Higher Education Department, Medical Education & Research Department and Technical Education etc. to formulate a policy and subsequent Cabinet Proposal for an Educational Exchange Programme wherein, students from ASEAN and BBN (Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal) Countries shall be able to study in State's Engineering, Medical as well as other Professional Institutes and vice-versa.

vii. As part of the exercise to develop discourse among countries, multilateral agencies and International Institutions to brainstorm, plan and execute economic corridors for inclusive growth of the region with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh & Myanmar; the event in the series, "Act East through Assam: Connectivity Conclave", was organized on the theme "Inter Country Economic Corridor through North East of India for Inclusive Growth" on 16th February, 2024 at Hotel Radisson Blu, Guwahati from 10:30 AM onwards. In the said conference, valuable insights/ ideas/ thoughts were exchanged on strengthening economic relations between Northeast India and the neighboring countries with the several invited stakeholders. The conclave focused on identifying a way forward for establishing strong economic relations between Assam and the neighboring countries and to engage with regional Governments, International and multilateral agencies to make this thought a reality in near future.

viii. 5th Edition of "India Japan Intellectual Conclave (KIZUNA):

The Act East Policy Affairs Department, in association with Asian Confluence, hosted the 5th Edition of "India Japan Intellectual Conclave (KIZUNA) - 2025" on 6th – 7th February 2025 at Hotel Vivanta by Taj at Khanapara in Guwahati. The KIZUNA - 2025 has provided a unique opportunity for meaningful exchanges and collaborations between Indian and Japanese stakeholders.

ix. Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Darrangamela:

Under the Act East Policy, the first Integrated Check Post (ICP) on the IndoBhutan border was inaugurated at Darrangamela in Assam. It has been prepared by the Land Ports Authority of India under the Act East Policy. This ICP Darrangamela has state-of-the-art facilities including office complexes, parking areas, loading and unloading zones, weighbridges, warehouses, and residential quarters for officers. It also has an inspection area, plant quarantine system and parking facilities. The installation of this ICP is expected to further enhance connectivity and trade potential.

x. Visit by Australian High Commissioner:

In addition, the Department had an exchange of views with the Hon'ble Governor of Assam during the visit of His Excellency the Consul General of Australia, Mr. Hugh Boylan to Assam. During the discussion, HE the Consul General was briefed on the renewed attention of the Government of Assam in bringing new era technology driven industries like Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Facilities to Assam. Australia being one of the most favored destinations for Indian students, there was an exchange of views on how the educational systems of Assam and Australia can work together for mutual benefit.

xi. Visit by Thai Delegation:

On 23rd September 2024 the Act East Policy Affairs Department organized a meeting of senior State Government officers led by Additional Chief Secretary Shri Kalyan Chakravarty IAS with the visiting 32-member Thai delegation.

The discussions focused on areas of cooperation such as Industry 4.0, cultural and language exchange under NEP 2020, vocational training, tourism, investment promotion and trade, India-Thailand relations in doctoral and postdoctoral studies, language courses, studentfaculty exchange, scholarships, and R & D.

xii. "Act East, Act Fast, Act First":

Advantage Assam 2.0 The Department has conducted the "Act East, Act Fast, Act First" session, held as part of Advantage Assam 2.0 in Guwahati, brought together key global and national leaders to discuss Assam's role in regional economic integration. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, along with Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam, highlighted Assam's strategic importance in strengthening connectivity, trade, and diplomacy under India's Act East Policy. The session emphasized Assam's transformation into a digitally empowered, economically vibrant state, driving growth with ASEAN and neighboring countries. Global dignitaries, including envoys from Singapore, the EU, Bhutan, and Japan, praised Assam's investment potential, ease of doing business, and its emergence as a critical gateway for trade and collaboration. CM Sarma reiterated his vision of a "Viksit Assam" contributing to a Viksit Bharat by 2047", while international representatives expressed keen interest in fostering deeper ties with Assam across infrastructure, business, and cultural exchanges.

**Action Taken Report on the recommendations made by the Committee in
Report No. 1 of Grant No. 11 of 2024-25:**

**i. Integrated Multi-Year Project on Brahmaputra-Mekong
Business and Investment Forums :**

The Act East Policy Affairs Department, Government of Assam, had received a formal proposal for a collaboration with Mekong Institute (MI) as its Regional Partner to implement an Integrated Multi-Year Project on Brahmaputra-Mekong Business and Investment Forums in the FY 2024-25. The objective of the project was to accelerate Assam's economic growth by enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) through market linkages with Mekong countries, integrating them into regional and global value chains. While the proposal was conceptually accepted in good faith due to its potential benefits, the project remains in the deliberation phase due to the following key considerations:

1. Intergovernmental Nature of Mekong Institute (MI):

Since 2009, under a Royal Decree signed by the King of Thailand, Mekong Institute (MI) has functioned as an intergovernmental 4 | P a g e
AEPA-11/1/2024-AEPA-Act East Policy Affairs Department I/958534/2025
organization (IGO) represented by all six Greater Mekong Sub region (GMS)
countries, viz., Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
Given that China is also a partner country in this organization, a background
check on MI and the proposed project was necessary to ensure alignment with
India's foreign policy considerations and regional interests. The project
required a detailed background check to assess its strategic, economic, and
diplomatic implications. Given its intergovernmental nature and the
involvement of multiple stakeholders, including foreign entities, a
comprehensive feasibility study was required before proceeding with
implementation.

2. Ensuring Strategic Alignment and Long-Term Viability:

The project's aim of integrating Assam's MSMEs with ASEAN and global value chains aligns with the Act East Policy, but it also necessitates careful policy alignment with India's trade, security, and diplomatic interests. Further consultations were needed to evaluate the sustainability, funding mechanisms, and governance structure of the project. The proposal remains under active deliberation, pending further clarity on its feasibility, strategic alignment, and regulatory compliance. Ongoing discussions with relevant stakeholders will determine the next course of action to ensure that the project is mutually beneficial, strategically sound, and aligned with the broader objectives of India's Act East Policy. Thus, while the project holds great promise for economic integration and MSME development, the deliberate and cautious approach is necessary to safeguard Assam's and India's long-term strategic interests.

ii. Proposed Foreign Visits in FY 2024-25:

The Department had proposed multiple foreign visits to neighboring countries, such as Bhutan and Bangladesh, during the Financial Year 2024-25 to strengthen regional cooperation under the India-ASEAN Friendship and Neighborhood First Policy. These visits were planned with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and FICCI & AIDC as industry partners to enhance diplomatic, trade, and investment engagements. However, due to unforeseen geopolitical and diplomatic constraints, the proposed visits could not be executed as planned. The primary reasons for the delay are as follows:

1. Visit to Bangladesh: The country witnessed political instability and internal turmoil, making it inconducive for high-level diplomatic engagements and business delegations. Given the uncertain political landscape, conducting bilateral discussions and investment-related negotiations was not feasible.

2. Visit to Bhutan: Bhutan's National Elections were held, leading to a transition in government and policy priorities. Additionally, the King of Bhutan's visit to India and Assam necessitated diplomatic adjustments, leading to the postponement of the proposed visit.

However, the Department remains committed to revisiting and rescheduling these foreign visits in the upcoming financial year, subject to political stability and mutual availability of stakeholders.

iii. Indo-Bhutan Stakeholders' Meet 2024: The Department had proposed organizing the Indo-Bhutan Stakeholders' Meet 2024 in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to strengthen bilateral cooperation across various sectors, including business relations, rail connectivity, cross-border trade infrastructure, economic cooperation, tourism, education, skill development, environmental conservation, and people-to-people connections. While the event was conceptually well-received, its execution remains in the deliberation phase due to several critical developments that required diplomatic and logistical realignment. The key reasons for the delay are :

1. Bhutan's National Elections: Bhutan underwent a national election cycle, leading to a government transition and policy shifts. Given the sensitivity of diplomatic engagements during such transitions, the meet had to be strategically postponed to align with the priorities of the new administration.

2. Bhutan King's Visit to India & Assam: The King of Bhutan's visit to India, including Assam, was a significant diplomatic event. High-level engagements took precedence over other bilateral initiatives, leading to a deferment of the proposed meet.

3. Convening of Advantage Assam 2.0: The Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit was a major international investment event, demanding extensive coordination and resource allocation. The priority focus on this summit naturally led to the rescheduling of other proposed events.

4. Act East Session under Advantage Assam 2.0: The Act East Session, held as part of Advantage Assam 2.0, saw participation from Heads of 62 Foreign Missions, including a Minister and delegation from the Royal Government of Bhutan. Their active engagement in this session demonstrated Bhutan's and the global community's keen interest in Assam's Act East initiatives. Given this high-level participation, the objectives of the proposed Indo-Bhutan Stakeholders' Meet were partially addressed within the larger framework of Advantage Assam 2.0. The Department remains committed to revisiting and rescheduling the IndoBhutan Stakeholders' Meet at a mutually convenient time in consultation with the Royal Government of Bhutan and MEA.

4. A Brief note in respect of Grant No. 11:

Act East Policy Affairs Department had received an amount of Rs. 217.83 lakhs under EE during the Financial Year 2024-25. All the activities of the Act East Policy Affairs Department has been conducted under the Head of Account "3451-00-090- -201- Business Delegation AEPA " and "3451-00-090-AEPA-202-Global Business Meeting". This Department had proposed for an amount of Rs. 80.00 lakhs under H/A - 201- Business Delegation and for an amount of Rs. 80.00 lakhs under H/A-202-Global Business Meeting. Now, for the Financial Year 2025-26 this Department has proposed for an amount of Rs. 225.83 lakhs.

**OBSERVATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
ACT EAST POLICY, 2025-2026
GRANT NO. -11**

1. The Committee recommends to formation of task force for mapping out the Geographical, Cultural and Economic advantages of Assam in the context of South-East Asian countries.
2. The Committee recommends to expansion of high way networks, border roads, inland waterways linking South Asian countries and also recommends to modernize of air ports and heliports to boost regional and international air connectivity and also strengthening rail links with Mynmar and Bangladesh to facilitate cross border trade.
3. The Committee recommends to development of Trans Asian Trade Hub with Guwahati as the regional gateway.
4. After observation, the Committee strongly recommends to expedite the construction works of proposed Disangmukh-Tekeliphuta Bridge over river Brahmaputra by providing sufficient Centre-State Government fund to develop Dhakukhana-Matmora-Itanagar-Kohima as a special Economic Zone.
5. The Committee recommends to develop Buddhist heritage tourism circuits connecting North East India with Mynmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
6. The Committee recommends for language training programs for South Asian languages.
7. The Committee recommends to promote skill development in aviation, tourism, IT for ASEAN job markets.
8. The Committee recommends to integrate check posts (ICPs) at border point for faster customs clearance and seamless trade.
9. The Committee recommends to strengthening tea, handicrafts, agro processing and handloom industries for global markets.

10. The Committee recommends to host Annual North East ASEAN cultural festivals to foster cultural diplomacy.
11. The Committee recommends to direct International flight connections from Guwahati and other regional air ports.
12. The Committee recommends for tourism adventure and river cruises on the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers.
13. The Committee recommends to establish Northeast ASEAN research and innovation centers in collaboration with International Universities.
14. The Committee recommends to promote skill development in aviation, logistic, IT and agriculture to cater to ASEAN job markets.
15. The Committee recommends to encourage joint Scientific Research in Biodiversity, Medicine and Climate Resilience.

THE COMMITTEE HOWEVER, RECOMMENDS THAT THE BUDGETARY ALLOCATION PROVIDED UNDER GRANT NO-11 FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR, 2025-2026 BE VOTED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ACT EAST POLICY BY THE AUGUST HOUSE.
