

Resources of the State

Natural resources are generally defined as all those things given by nature on, above and under the surface of the earth. In this broad sense natural resources include land, water, forests, fisheries and animals, mineral ores and sources of energy like coal, petroleum, gas and uranium, etc. There is no direct link between the availability of natural resources and the level of economic development. There are many countries which are rich in natural resources but still they are underdeveloped.

In fact, for the economic development of a country, optimum exploitation of natural resources is more important than their availability. Nevertheless, importance of natural resources cannot be undermined. Natural resources of a country influence not only economic growth but also its economic structure.

Assam, known as the land of blue hills and red river, is a darling of nature. She has lavished upon her abundant natural bounties unseen elsewhere in the country. The state is blessed with rich mineral, water, forest, agricultural and human resources of great potential and value, offering immense possibilities of becoming one of the frontline states of India. The scope of industrialization, agricultural prosperity and all round economic development are indeed great, if the state's natural resources are fully tapped and utilized. The total deposit of various natural resources indicates that Assam is quite rich in this respect. The natural resources of Assam can be categorized as follows:

1. Mineral resources
2. Forest resources
3. Water resources

Mineral Resources:

Assam is richly endowed with mineral resources. Minerals are the pre-requisite to industrial progress as they provide the raw-materials to heavy industries, engineering, chemical and other industries. Assam being a leading state of the north eastern region of India is well endowed with some of the important mineral resources. But mineral resources of the state have not yet been completely assessed. Petroleum, natural gas, coal, and limestone are the principal mineral resources of the state.

Coal: The coal known as 'black diamond' is an important mineral resource of Assam. It provides fuel to Assam's industrial sector as well as important source of households fuel. Some important coal fields in Assam are located at Makum, Margherita, Mandeng, Ledo, Tikak, Lekhapani,

Nazira, Jaipur, Lankadaman etc. It is estimated that the total coal reserves of Assam is 295.2 million tonnes (January 1994, GSI assessment).

Crude Oil: Crude is the most important mineral product of Assam. Oil was first discovered at Digboi as early as 1889. The Digboi oil refinery, established in 1901, is the oldest refinery of Asia. Total production of Petroleum crude in Assam accounts for nearly one fourth of country's total petroleum output. Total reserve of crude oil at Sivasagar and Dibrugarh District of Assam are found in Naharkatia, Moran, Hugrigan, Rudrasagar, Galeky, Lakwa, Nazira, Teok etc. Assam produce 5023 thousand metric tonnes crude oil in 2011-12. The first oil refinery in Assam was established at Digboi. Three other refineries were established at Nunmati (Guwahati), Bongaigaon and Numaligarh. These refineries not only produce petroleum but also important by-products such as, diesel, kerosene, lubricants, tar, etc.

Natural Gas: Assam is endowed with natural gas. In Assam is estimated 23000 million cubic metres reserve of natural gas. Undivided Dibrugarh district is reservoir of natural gas of Assam. It is estimated range between 3.5 to 8 million sq. meter gas coming out from oil field everyday (Oil India Survey). The main uses of natural in Assam are Namrup Fertiliser Plants and Namrup Gas Thermal Power Project. Moreover, recently steps have been taken to start a Gas Cracker Project in Lepetkota near Dibrugarh for suitable utilization of huge amount of natural gas in the state.

Lime Stone: Limestone is another important mineral product of Assam. It is used for the production of Cement. Limestone with reserves of about 500 million tonnes is available in various grades. Limestone mines in Assam are available at Garampani and Koilajan in the district of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. Bokajan Cement Factory of Assam is using the Koilajan mine.

China Clay: The China clay available in the Karbi-Anglong district is a vital input for the ceramics industry and has already spawned a few small plants. Deposits of decorative stone like granite estimated to be more than a billion cubic meters are available in various shades and colours, which have a huge market potential locally and abroad.