SUGGESTIONS

Strategic measures are to be taken for the utilisation of diverse resources of Assam with the support of the Centre to meet increasing challenges in livelihood of rural and urban areas.

- Indebtedness is a major problem in rural Assam. Agricultural credit and other rural credit support have to be given specially among the more vulnerable groups like marginal farmers, agricultural labour and casual labour so that they can retain their livelihood capitals. The benefit of the credit has to categorically be given so that they can cope up shocks and stresses.

- The income earning portfolios are to be expanded in both areas. Development of horticulture, food processing units, handlooms and textile sector can promote income earning opportunities. Cooperation of crop cultivation and animal farming like fishery, livestock, poultry, silk worm breeding etc based on the area must be encouraged to develop. Area specific opportunities are to be taken up with the cooperation of Government, private agencies and local residents.

- To make the new opportunities successful proper training and skill formation programme should be conducted by the Government. Credit arrangement must also be facilitated simultaneously with the training programme. Vocational training must be encouraged specially in urban areas and suitable arrangement for employing these trainees must be the priority of the Government.

- The huge energy of the rural youth is to be trapped by understanding the potentiality of the area and involving them in the selected sectors. To stop the outflow of youths into urban areas it is essential to undertake a detail study on the strength and weakness of livelihood capitals of the area and accordingly make a strategic plan to utilise the resources at optimum level. There is enough scope for the development of nonfarm employment as in rural marketing facility and storage arrangement is poor, transport and communication system is backward, mechanisation process is yet to take off.

- In the recent years the significance of market is gradually increasing. Livelihood activities have to be tuned up according to the market movements. Thus the market information must be easily available to guide the utilisation of the
capitals. Easy access to the information on prices etc from markets can help farmers get to sell their produce in urban markets, with better prices. Information on forecasting the market movement can also promote the livelihood and prepare for any unfavourable circumstances.

- The most important among all the measure is to restore confidence of the people by maintaining peace and stable environment which is essential for development of all spheres. To overcome this problem special and focussed attention of the Centre is urgently required. Targeted programme can lead to short term growth but for sustainable growth the overall productivity of economy has to be increased which needs a suitable environment.

- The quality of data needs to be improved. Improved data base is essential as the developmental proposals are mostly constructed on the basis of secondary information. Underreporting and definitional limitation affects the quality of data and creates gap between facts and figures which ultimately misleads in representing the actual status of people. Improvement of the statistical system is essential for analysis of the situation. Instead of distributing the limited resources thinly in entire area quality data helps to focus the people which needs special programme

- For the success of above measures the prerequisite requirement is infrastructural development and strong local organisation. Power supply, good road and transport system are the basic requirement to make other measures successful. Local organisations must be encouraged to form and work in diverse areas. A Monitoring Committee can be formed to keep an eye on the activities and problems faced by the self help group or local organisations. Most of the benefits provided by the Government schemes reach less to the deserving persons. Failure of schemes of providing free diesel, shallow tubewell, subsidised credit benefit etc implies that it became essential to have an effective monitoring mechanism with the schemes.

- Changes in the dietary pattern are also leading to increasing chronic sickness which can be tackled by making people aware about the balanced diet. Increasing trend of fat intake in urban can raise the risk of stroke, heart attack and can also make children obese. Educational institution should play responsive
role in developing awareness about the intake of healthy diet. Non Governmental Organisation and other voluntary agencies must be encouraged to come forward to take initiatives in these matters.

- Assam has rich base of water resource which need to be utilised. From last few years drought like situation has increased the significance of efficient watershed management. For effective management long term measures in the form of storage reservoir in the upper catchments areas of the river basins has become very essential. River bank erosion makes the poor rural households landless. Government must be able to provide riverbank protection or give coping mechanisms to live where immediate protection cannot be given. Modern improved methods for efficient rainwater harvesting can be adopted on the areas based on specific environment and needs. Satellite based remote sensed data offers effective and quick information which can be collected for rainwater harvesting. This can prove to be only feasible solution in the present scenario.

- An integrated approach that focuses on the provision of affordable food to the urban poor along with the development of employment opportunities, improved access to permanent shelter, quality drinking water and cheaper medical care for impoverished sections of the urban population is vital for sustainable urban livelihood. Effort should be initiated to absorb the potential labour force and provide required security for income, life and work.

Thus in short an integrated participatory process, with central, state, and local government agencies sharing the responsibilities with local residents and their representatives is required for long term need based development programme.