At the time of achieving independence, India inherited from the British an economy severely afflicted by regional disparities. The British looked at the problem of regional disparities in the country as a natural manifestation of varying resource endowments of different regions and their geographical location. However, the social scientists and the policy makers of independent India viewed the problem of regional imbalances differently. According to them inter-regional disparities could be reduced substantially through appropriate government policies. The concern for growing regional disparities was reflected in the Five Year Plan documents. An objective running through the Five-year plans has been the reduction of regional disparities.

The concept of measuring regional disparities has undergone qualitative changes during the post independence period. Originally, per capita income was believed to be the most satisfactory measure of regional disparities. Although per capita income can be used as the sole indicator of measuring disparities at inter-state level, it cannot be taken to measure intra-state disparities due to non-availability of requisite data at district, sub-division or block level. Moreover, per capita income may not faithfully reflect the per capita consumption levels. A part of the income earned within the jurisdiction of a state might not be available for consumption within the state, but may get transferred to other states by way of dividend and other remittances. Conversely, income originating within a state might be supplemented by remittances of income from other states. Thus per capita consumption is regarded as a better indicator of measuring regional disparities than per capita income. However, although per capita consumption can be used to measure inter-state disparities, it cannot be used to measure inter-district disparities due to non-availability of such data at district level.
Of late, the researchers have opted for a large number of indicators covering a wide variety of economic activities for measuring regional disparities. Availability of physical infrastructural facilities (like roads, railways, power, banks, hospitals and dispensaries etc.) helping the growth of the three productive sectors - primary, secondary and tertiary and basic minimum services like primary education, primary health care, drinking water, sanitation etc. also came to be used as the basis for measuring regional disparities.

Our present study which relates to the analysis of inter-district development disparities in Assam is carried out on the basis of twenty five select indicators out of which seven indicators relate to Agriculture, four indicators relate to Industry and fourteen indicators relate to Basic Infrastructure and Services (BIS). We have analysed inter-district development disparities in the state of Assam on the basis of three composite indices namely - (a) Equal Weightage Index Method, or Indexing Method, (b) Deprivation Method and (c) Principal Component Method.

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