

Discussion

Pradip Phanjoubham presented issues of northeast India through colonial history and the current situation. He argued that in his book on the 'Northeast Question' there are several chapters on the historical context of the emergence of what is known as Northeast India today where he has responded to Neville Maxwell's claim that Arunachal Pradesh should be in China. He went on to argue that the interest on Northeast is either for commerce or military activities, with no focus on the local people. 1826 was an important year for Northeast India as the year when the British defeated the Burmese. In the three Burmese wars the British annexed the whole of Burma. Assam was now kept as a buffer zone after the military threat was eliminated. The interest resurfaced after tea was discovered in Assam. Civil militia was raised to provide cost-effective security to British investments. In 1970 this became the Assam Rifles. The incentive to perform well was that good performance would be rewarded with transfer to the military. The Gorkha military regiment found their nursery in the militia regime of the region. The first 5 battalions of Assam Rifles were Gorkha regiments. Today there are 43 battalions of Assam Rifles. Development in the Northeast is very much tied to security. A charter of NEC stated that any development in Northeast needs to be approved by the military.

Ashok Mitra had written that when Burma was separated, no one protested, even during the height of the national movement. If on the other hand the northeast was separated it would have created a different situation. Curzon in 1907 gave a speech about the ideas of border. The ideas of border are very European. Curzon stated that in 1907 that the buffers around the colonies were due to the other European state's proximity. The empire's interest had a conflict with that of British India. Bhutan was a major bone of contention and in 1865 a treaty was signed which is similar to the *posha* system which were earlier practiced by the Ahoms, wherein the Bhutias were allowed to tax the Dooars.