

## AIR Spotlight: Government Initiatives for the North-Eastern Region

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on Government Initiatives for the socioeconomic development of the North-Eastern Region.

### Participants:

1. K.V Prasad - Political Analyst
2. Rajesh Lekh - AIR Correspondent

**Context** - Shri Narendra Modi addressed the public in Shillong on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the North East Council (NEC) and said that the NDA government has shown the red card to many obstacles that came in the way of development for the north-east region. Describing the eight states of the region as 'Asht Lakshmi' (eight forms of the goddess of wealth), Shri Modi said that the government should work on eight foundation pillars for the development of the North-East. The eight foundation pillars are peace, power, tourism, 5G connectivity, culture, natural farming, sports and potential.

### About North East Council

- The North Eastern Council (NEC) is under the administrative purview of the Ministry of Development of the North-Eastern Region (MDoNER).
- The North Eastern Council was constituted in 1971 by an act of Parliament. However, it was formally inaugurated on November 7, 1972.
- Originally consisting of the seven states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, Sikkim was included as the eighth member state through the NEC (Amendment) Act, 2002 (68 of 2002).
- NEC has made significant contributions to the socio-economic development of the North Eastern region, as an advisory body and as a planning body.
- NEC has created valuable capital and social infrastructure, especially in critical gap areas across Education, Health, Sports, Water Resources, Agriculture, Tourism, Industries, etc. in all the states of the region. This has greatly benefitted the North Eastern Region and built immense goodwill for the Council among the local population.

Know more about the [North Eastern Council](#) in the linked article.

**“Act for North-East and Act first for North East” Policy**

North-East India is the gateway to South-East Asia. It is India's land bridge to Myanmar. The region's development and accessibility have always remained weak due to geographical, and political reasons and under-developed transport links with the rest of the country. However, the schemes and policies initiated by the GoI have led to significant development in the socio-economic arena of the northeast region.

- GoI has gone beyond the conversion of the “Look East Policy” to the “Act East Policy”. Now, the policy is “Act for Northeast and Act First for Northeast”.
  - India’s [Act East Policy](#) was launched in 2014 which succeeded the Look East Policy launched in 1991.
- In the last 8 years, the number of airports in the region has grown to 16 from 9 and the number of flights has increased from about 900 (before 2014) to around 1900.
- The length of national highways has increased by 50% since 2014 in the region.
- Many northeastern states have come to the Railway map for the first time and efforts are being done to expand the waterways also - the Development of National Waterway-2 (River Brahmaputra, length: 891 km) Sadia to Bangladesh Border and National Waterway-16 (River Barak, length: 121 km).
- In collaboration with the [NITI Aayog](#), the 'NITI Forum for North East' constituted for accelerated, inclusive and sustainable development in the North East Region, has identified 5 focus sectors, viz. Tea, Tourism, Bamboo, Dairy and Pisciculture.
- The Government has been providing special emphasis to the development and promotion of tourism in the North Eastern States. Under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism, sixteen projects with themes of Heritage, Wildlife, Spiritual, Tribal, Eco-adventure, etc. have been sanctioned.
- Work is underway on projects like [India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway](#) and the Agartala-Akhaura rail project.
- The government is also working on improving digital connectivity in the Northeast by increasing the optical fibre network. 5G will help further the development of the startup ecosystem, and service sector among others in the region. The government is committed to making the Northeast not only a centre of economic growth but also of cultural growth.
- For the promotion of Hindi, NEC has taken up the initiative to support State Universities and Government Colleges in the North Eastern states for setting up and strengthening Hindi sections in libraries on their own campuses. Twenty-one Hindi libraries were inaugurated by the Prime Minister virtually.



Image Source - Maps of India

### Scheme PM-DevINE

- PM-DevINE was announced in the Union Budget 2022 - 23 to address developmental gaps in the North Eastern Region.
- PM-DevINE is a centrally sponsored scheme with 100% central funding.
- The scheme will have an outlay of Rs. 6,600 cr for the remaining four years of the 15th Finance Commission from 2022-23 to 2025-26.
- The objectives of PM-DevINE are to:
  - Fund infrastructure convergently, in the spirit of PM Gati Shakti.
  - Support social development projects based on felt needs of the NER.

- Enable livelihood activities for youth and women and fill the development gaps in various sectors.

**Know more about [PM-DevINE](#) in the linked article.**

#### **Peace Initiatives -**

- The GoI has worked to create an atmosphere of lasting peace across the region.
    - Bodo Accord in January 2020
    - Bru-Reang Agreement in January 2020
    - NLFT-Tripura Agreement in August 2019
    - Karbi Anglong Agreement Sept 2021
    - Assam-Meghalaya Inter-State Boundary Agreement in March 2022.
  - The Government has rolled back AFSPA ([Armed Forces Special Powers Act](#)) from a large part of the North East including the whole of Tripura and Meghalaya. It remains in force in only 3 districts of Arunachal Pradesh, 60 percent of Assam is free of AFSPA.
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