

**Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region
North Eastern Council Secretariat, Shillong
Date: 9th March, 2026**

PRESS NOTE FOR MEGHALAYA, FEBRUARY, 2026

**ASHTALAKSHMI DARSHAN YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMME
INAUGURATED AT IIM-SHILLONG**

The 9th Batch of the Ashtalakshmi Darshan – Youth Exchange Programme was inaugurated on 2nd February, 2026 at the Indian Institute of Management Shillong, marking the beginning of a 14-day programme (1–14 February, 2026) aimed at fostering cultural exchange and experiential learning about the North Eastern Region.



The programme was inaugurated by Sri Stander Kumar Bhalla, Secretary, NEC who highlighted the vision of *Viksit Bharat* and the objectives of the Ashtalakshmi Darshan initiative. He also spoke about the Government of India's focused efforts towards the holistic development of the North East and emphasised the valuable lessons the rest of the country can learn from the region's rich culture, community values, and resilience.

IIM-Shillong is the host institution for this programme cycle. The participating cohort includes 20 students each from Delhi and Odisha, accompanied by two faculty mentors from each location.

During the inaugural session, Sanjeev Ningombam presented an overview of the programme, highlighting the objective of experiencing the North East “in letter and spirit” through immersive engagement. Naliniprava Tripathy emphasised the region’s natural beauty, cultural diversity, and emerging opportunities, while underscoring the institute’s role in nurturing inclusive leadership and national integration.

Supported by the North Eastern Council under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, the programme promotes cultural understanding, youth engagement, and stronger connections between the North East and the rest of India through academic sessions, cultural interactions, and exposure visits.

NEC RELEASES ₹67.41 CRORE ACROSS NORTH EASTERN REGION IN FEBRUARY, 2026

The **North Eastern Council (NEC)** released a total amount of **₹67,41,09,587/-** (Rupees Sixty-Seven Crore Forty-One Lakhs Nine Thousand Five Hundred and Eighty Seven only) during February, 2026 to support developmental initiatives across all Northeastern States as well as regional and other implementing agencies.

The fund releases reflect NEC’s continued commitment to strengthening development in the region through targeted investments in infrastructure development, livelihood generation, agricultural innovation, education, tourism promotion, research, and cultural initiatives. The assistance forms part of NEC’s sustained efforts to accelerate inclusive and balanced regional development while improving connectivity, economic opportunities, and social infrastructure across the Northeast.

FUND RELEASES FOR MEGHALAYA

Among the states benefiting from above fund releases, Meghalaya has received support for various ongoing important development projects aimed at strengthening connectivity and promoting cultural heritage in the state. One of the key initiatives includes the construction of an RCC bridge over River Lunar to connect Khaddum to Brichyrnot Village in East Jaintia Hills, which will enhance rural connectivity and improve access for local communities, including the Hmar community.

In addition, NEC is supporting the development of a Cultural Complex of Seng Khasi Ri Raid Laban at Lum Shat Sngi, Kenches Trace, Shillong, which is expected to serve as an important centre for preserving and promoting the indigenous cultural heritage and traditions of the region.

These initiatives are expected to strengthen infrastructure, promote cultural preservation, and enhance socio-economic opportunities for local communities. Through such interventions, NEC continues to play a vital role in fostering sustainable development, regional connectivity, and cultural promotion across the North Eastern Region.

₹30.07 CRORE RELEASED TO REGIONAL AND OTHER AGENCIES

In addition to state-specific allocations, NEC also released **₹30,07,14,985/-** (Rupees Thirty-Crore Seven Lakhs Fourteen Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty-Five only) to regional institutions and other implementing agencies across the North Eastern Region during the month.

Major project interventions include initiatives in sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurship development including AI-Based farming, infrastructure creation, setting up of sports facilities, tourism promotion, promotion of research and innovations, and livelihood enhancement.

These initiatives are being implemented through leading institutions including IIT-Guwahati, IIM-Shillong, Northeast Space Application Centre (NESAC), North East Handicraft and Handloom Development Corporation (NEHHDC), North East Region Community Resource Management Society (NERCORMS) and other regional universities and specialized organizations.

Support for Cultural, Academic and Capacity Building Initiatives

Apart from project-based funding, NEC also supported several **non-project activities and sponsored cultural & academic programmes** during the month aimed at strengthening knowledge exchange, cultural preservation, tourism promotion, and youth engagement in the region.

Key initiatives included support for international and regional conferences, skill development programmes, tourism workshops, cultural festivals, craft fairs, and youth cultural exchange programmes. Notable events held during the month included the International Conference on Knowledge Organization in Academic Libraries (I-KOAL-2026), Regional International Conference on Natural Language Processing (RegICON), Manipur State Level Kiwi Fruit Festival, and various cultural and craft festivals across the region.

Through these initiatives, NEC continues to promote regional collaboration, knowledge sharing, innovation, and preservation of the rich cultural heritage of the North Eastern Region, while contributing to sustainable and inclusive development.

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