

Government of India
Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region

LOK SABHA

Unstarred Question No. 6172

To be answered on

Wednesday, April 1, 2026/Chaitra 11, 1948 (Saka)

QUESTION

Connectivity and Development in the North East Region

6172. Smt. Pratima Mondal:

Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to State:

- (a) the details of the strategy exists to integrate connectivity projects with local industrial clusters, agriculture value chains and youth employment beyond announcing highways and rail links;
- (b) the tangible economic gains in terms of trade volumes, border infrastructure, export growth have accrued to the North East Region under the Act East Policy; and
- (c) the manner in which the Government ensure that border infrastructure development strengthens local communities rather than exacerbating displacement or ecological stress?

ANSWER

The Minister of State of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region

[Dr. Sukanta Majumdar]

(a) to (c): With the objective to further strengthen ties with countries of the Southeast Asian region, India's Act East Policy seeks to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and developing strategic relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The 'Act East Policy' recognizes connectivity, in its broadest sense, as the key for growth and prosperity of the region that includes physical, digital, economic, and people-to-people movement. Further as a Whole of Government approach under the 10% Gross Budgetary Support Mechanism since 2014-15 to 2024-25, a cumulative expenditure of Rs. 6.11 lakh crore has been made against the cumulative allocation of Rs. 6.02 lakh crore (RE) for development in the NER. Further, under the various schemes of the Union several infrastructure projects have been completed under the following sectors:

- (i) Road Connectivity:

The length of National Highways (NH) in NER has increased from 10,905 km in 2014 to 16,207 km as on 31.03.2025. Also in the last 10 years, under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), 46,296 Km Rural Roads has been constructed in NER with an expenditure of ₹47,279 crore.

(ii) Railway Connectivity:

The budget allocation for railway sector during the last five years has increased significantly in the North Eastern Region, from Rs. 2122 crore/year (2009-14) period to currently Rs. 10,440 crore in FY 2025-26. The following ongoing Railway Projects directly augment India's growing infrastructure connectivity under Act East Policy:- Bhairabi-Sairang New Line (51 Km), Agartala-Sabroom New Line (112 Km), Agartala-Akhaura New Line (5 Km), Jiribam-Imphal New Line (111 Km), Murkongselek-Pasighat New Line (27 Km).

(iii) Telecom Connectivity:

As of December, 2025, 6355 Gram Panchayats have been made service ready for providing high speed internet services in North Eastern Region. Till Dec-2025, 3718 mobile towers have been commissioned in NER covering 5366 villages/locations under various Government funded mobile projects.

(iv) Air Connectivity:

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) launched the Regional Connectivity Scheme (UDAN) on 21st October, 2016. UDAN is a market-driven initiative where the development of regional air connectivity routes is determined by market forces. Airlines assess the demand and supply needs for specific routes and lead the process under the scheme. The following airports and heliports have been identified for development and operation of RCS flights in the NE states under the UDAN scheme: Pasighat, Tezu, Hollongi, Jorhat, Lilabari, Rupsi, Tezpur, Dimapur, Shillong and Pakyong. Under the aforesaid scheme 90 routes have been operationalized.

(v) Power:

A number of Hydro Electric Projects with a total installed capacity of 5796 MW have been taken up in NER. The major projects include Subansiri Lower (2000MW), Dibang Multi-Purpose project (2880 MW), Teesta Stage VI (500 MW) etc. Under the NER Power System Improvement Project for six States (Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Nagaland) for strengthening of the Intra-State Transmission and Distribution Systems (33kV

and above) at an estimated cost of ₹6700 crore. The comprehensive scheme for Strengthening of Transmission and Distribution System in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim at an estimated cost of ₹9129.32 crore has been sanctioned.

(vi) Inland Waterways:

The number of National Waterways in the NER has increased from 1 to 20 and ₹1,040 cr have been spent on various Waterways Projects in NER. This ensures better connectivity leads to more jobs, business growth, and long-term development of the region.

The evaluation report of various schemes of MDoNER mentions about the tangible economic gains in terms of trade volumes, border infrastructure, and export growth under the Act East Policy, includes developing border trade points and logistics hubs to enhance the region's integration with national and international markets, which directly supports the Act East Policy's objectives. Furthermore, investments in road connectivity, power transmission, and digital infrastructure under the schemes of MDoNER are crucial for catalyzing the economic integration of remote regions into national and regional value chains. These infrastructural and institutional developments are creating the necessary conditions for economic gains to materialize.

The ecological sensitivity and sustainability concerns are considered while sanctioning projects in the hilly challenging terrain of North East Region. The government ensures that border infrastructure development strengthens local communities rather than exacerbating displacement or ecological stress, through a Sustainability Lens, ensuring that projects balance economic development with ecological integrity. This is evident in sectors like Environment & Sustainability, which includes renewable energy, watershed management, and afforestation. The Focused Development Component (FDC) under the schemes of NEC specifically supports climate-resilient infrastructure and eco-restoration projects, indicating a priority on mitigating ecological stress. The overarching principles of participatory governance, sustainability, and inclusive growth are the primary means to ensure that infrastructure development serves to empower local communities and protect the region's unique ecological and cultural heritage.
