



ATAL INNOVATION MISSION

REGIONAL



NORTH EAST CHAPTER

ABHYUDAYA

Empowering Incubators to Fuel the North East Growth Story



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Building Together, Growing Together

Regional AIM SUMVAAD – Northeast Chapter was made possible through the collective dedication of stakeholders committed to strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship across the region.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Startup Council members, distinguished speakers, policymakers, incubation partners, industry leaders, ecosystem enablers, startups, academic institutions, and participants whose guidance and insights enriched every engagement throughout the conclave.

We gratefully acknowledge the continued support of Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, along with our partner incubators – AIC-AAU, AIC-SMUTBI, and AIC-NIPER for bringing together diverse voices to foster meaningful dialogue and ecosystem building.

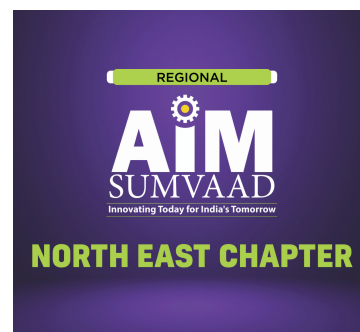
As the Northeast Chapter concludes, we look forward to sustaining these conversations, nurturing long-term partnerships, and advancing a more connected, inclusive, and innovation-driven Northeast India.



This report was developed under the guidance of Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), **authored by AIC-SELCO Foundation.**

Review and Guidance by the following members of AIM:

- Pramit Dash, Program Director, AIM
- Prateek Deshmukh, Program Director, AIM
- Nazia Islam, Innovation Lead, AIM
- Deepakshi Jindal, Young Professional, AIM



Message

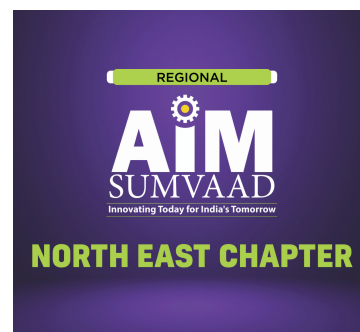
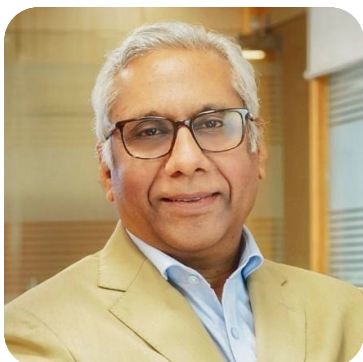
The Regional AIM SUMVAAD – Northeast Chapter 2026 stands as a significant milestone in strengthening the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem across the Northeastern region. It was deeply encouraging to witness policymakers, incubators, academic institutions, industry leaders, investors and ecosystem enablers from all eight states come together with a shared commitment to unlocking the region's potential.

The Northeast is no longer a region merely being discussed for development; it is emerging as a frontrunner in India's growth journey. As the Hon'ble Prime Minister has described, the eight Northeastern states are "Ashtalakshmi" – each possessing its own unique identity, strengths and potential, much like the eight forms of Goddess Lakshmi symbolising different dimensions of prosperity. This is reflected in sustained, structured attention at the highest levels of national planning, including NITI Aayog's recent dialogue with the Chief Ministers of all eight states – a clear shift from the Government's earlier "Act East" approach to what the Prime Minister now calls "Act Fast."

The Northeast holds nearly two-thirds of India's bamboo resources, often called "green gold," alongside some of India's richest biodiversity, traditional knowledge systems, handicrafts and handloom and, as India's principal land gateway to Southeast Asia, direct access to markets from Delhi and Mumbai to Dhaka, Bangkok and Hanoi. Very few regions anywhere combine natural wealth, cultural diversity and geographic advantage so distinctly.

Sound policy and connectivity create the environment for growth, but real transformation happens in incubators, classrooms and laboratories which is precisely what this SUMVAAD set out to catalyse. I am confident that the collaborations forged through this dialogue will continue to strengthen the region's innovation ecosystem, so that a promising idea from Kohima or Sikkim finds the same opportunity to succeed as one from Bengaluru or Delhi.

Dr Joram Aniya,
Member, NITI Aayog



Message

Meaningful innovation is built on collaboration. The Regional AIM SUMVAAD - Northeast Chapter 2026 reflected this belief, bringing together policymakers, state governments, incubators, academia, industry and investors in Guwahati under the theme "Abhyudaya - Empowering Incubators to Fuel the North East Growth Story."

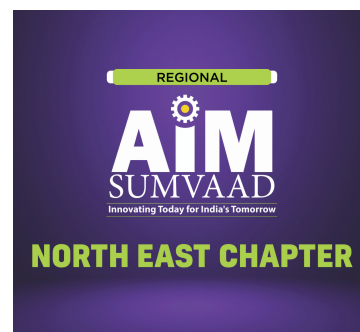
The Northeast is home to extraordinary biodiversity, rich cultural heritage, abundant bamboo and bio-resources, and a rapidly growing entrepreneurial spirit. As India's gateway to Southeast Asia, the region is uniquely positioned to emerge as a hub for cross-border innovation and enterprise, and to shape the country's next wave of innovation-led growth.

The conclave's discussions, from mobilising ecosystem stakeholders to unlocking capital and strengthening incubation support, reaffirmed that this growth will be built on collaboration between governments, institutions, industry and innovators working as one connected network.

At Atal Innovation Mission, we remain committed to nurturing this ecosystem to deliver on the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047. This includes enabling young entrepreneurs from the Northeast to build solutions for India and the world. When innovation is rooted in local strengths and powered by Sabka Prayas, the Northeast will not only participate in India's growth story - it will help lead it.

Shri Deepak Bagla,

Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog



Message

The Regional AIM SUMVAAD – Northeast Chapter 2026 was organized with a shared vision of strengthening the innovation ecosystem across India's Northeastern states through collaboration, dialogue and collective action. The conclave brought together State Governments, startup missions, incubators, academia, industry, investors and ecosystem partners to explore opportunities unique to the region and identify pathways for deeper institutional partnerships.

The Northeast possesses immense potential, driven by its rich biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, entrepreneurial talent and strategic location. The discussions during SUMVAAD reinforced the importance of stronger collaboration among incubators, greater convergence between government and ecosystem stakeholders, and focused efforts to unlock opportunities in sectors such as bio-resources, tourism, agriculture, handloom and grassroots innovation. Together, these conversations reaffirmed that sustainable innovation ecosystems are built through partnerships, shared learning and collective commitment.

I hope this publication captures the key insights from the conclave and serves as a catalyst for continued collaboration, enabling the Northeast to emerge as a vibrant and globally competitive innovation ecosystem.

Prateek Deshmukh,

Program Director, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog

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SECTION 1 – CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM SUMVAAD

AIM SUMVAAD is a regional engagement platform of the Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, built for dialogue, knowledge exchange and ecosystem building among the institutions that support startups and innovators in the country. It brings together state governments, startup missions, incubators, industry, academia, investors and mentors in the format of roundtables and panel discussions rather than one-directional presentations, on the position that innovation ecosystems grow through shared working conversation rather than in silos.

The platform is designed to recognise the institutions behind the startups, not only the startups themselves: much as a strong school produces many good students, a strong incubator within a strong ecosystem also produces many good startups.

AIM SUMVAAD is run as a series of regional events. Four editions have already convened across South, North, Central and Eastern India; the fifth, this North Eastern edition, extends the initiative to the eight Northeastern states, and these regional editions will together inform a forthcoming national conclave for incubators.



1.2 The Northeastern AIM SUMVAAD

The Northeastern edition carries AIM SUMVAAD into the eight states - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura - as one contiguous innovation region bordering five countries, home to approximately 46 million people.

Set against this positioning, the Northeast's entrepreneurial economy is not a smaller version of India's mainstream startup landscape but a distinct one, built on regional endowments with few parallels elsewhere in India: a majority share of the country's bamboo resources, among its richest biodiversity, and a depth of traditional knowledge across handloom, horticulture, organic produce and natural health products that is not yet fully converted into formal enterprise - alongside emerging capacity in deep-tech, manufacturing, AI and grassroots innovation.



1.3 The Conclave at a Glance

Field	Detail
Date	Jul 14, 2026
Venue	Guwahati, Assam
Theme	“Abhyudaya — Building an Ecosystem for Grassroots and Frontier Innovations”
States represented	8 of 8 Northeastern states
Sessions	11, comprising a welcome and chief guest address, one roundtable, four panels, and four state-scheme sessions
Format	State roundtable, sector-focused panels, and dedicated state-scheme sessions on bamboo and bio-resource commercialization, eco-tourism, and handloom, grassroots livelihoods; and a demonstration and launch of the Solutions Portal, showcasing innovations from the Northeast region.
Participants	Approximately 113, including representatives of ten media organizations

1.4 About this Report, and How to Read It

This report gives readers a consolidated record of the Northeastern AIM SUMVAAD, covering what was discussed and presented, for future reference in building the ecosystem.

- **Section 2** sets out the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem of the eight Northeastern states from a macro perspective, taking the analysis deeper than a single day’s agenda allowed.
- **Section 3** presents the day’s sessions and key highlights discussed in the order they were actually delivered, opening with the full agenda.
- **Section 4** draws together the findings that recurred across sessions and states into a shared agenda for everyone with a stake in the region’s innovation economy and closes with what comes next.
- **Annexure A** contains state-wise comparative insights for various entrepreneurship ecosystem key performance indicators (KPIs) like startups, incubators, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) registered companies and **Annexure B** has the list of all the participants who attended the conclave

SECTION 2 — THE NORTHEASTERN ENTREPRENEURSHIP LANDSCAPE

Regional Overview

Northeast India comprises eight states across 262,179 km², home to approximately 46 million people, and forms one contiguous geography at India's eastern frontier. The eight states together share international border with countries Myanmar to the east, Bangladesh to the southwest, Nepal to the west, and Bhutan to the northwest. The region shares more land frontiers with foreign nations than any other part of India, sitting at the crossroads of South and Southeast Asia.

These eight states do not share one entrepreneurial story — each is shaped by its own terrain, its own policy instruments and its own stage of development. Every founder, every incubator and every state programme here builds first against that terrain, and terrain begins with few unavoidable constraints.

The region's road and rail connectivity converges on Assam as its primary gateway. Only 28.5% of roads of this region are paved, against 63.4% nationally. Only 53% of national highways have more than two lanes, against 77.9% nationally. The effect is real: spices take 10–15 days to move from Guwahati to Delhi. Agri-exports stay under 1% of regional output, lost not to poor production but to storage and transit that can't keep up. Every founder and every institution here builds a business against this terrain first.

These are not factors that policy interventions alone will resolve. They are the baseline against which every enterprise and every institution in the Northeast measures its progress. The region's entrepreneurial story starts here, with terrain.

Overview of Northeastern Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The formal startup economy is young and unevenly distributed: approximately 3,198 startups recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and 47 recognized incubators span the eight states, against a national base of more than 2.26 lakh startups and 1520+ incubators.

8 States	~46M People	3,198 DPIIT-Recognised Startups	47 Incubators
262,179 km² Combined Area	5 Atal Incubation Centres (AIC) & Atal Community Innovation Centres (ACICs)	622 Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL)	2948 Patents Filed, 2014–26

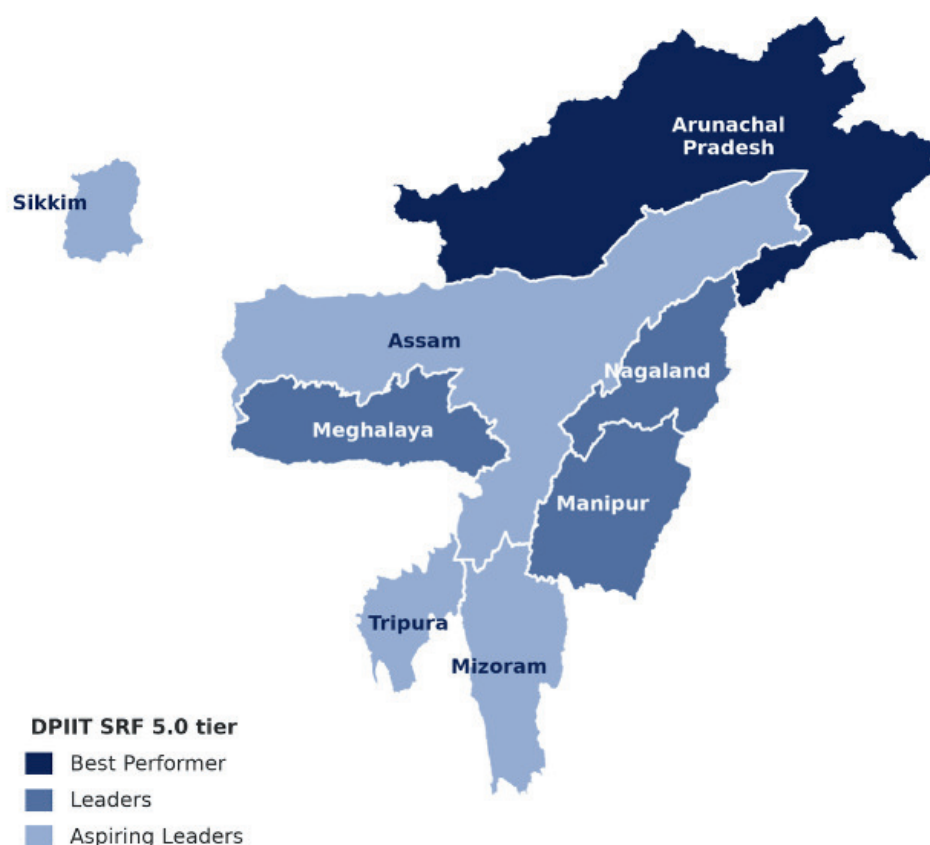
Sources: DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Startup India recognition data). Population and Area: Census of India. AIC, ATL: Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog. Patents: Intellectual Property India (IP India) Dashboard.

State	Startups	Incubators	MSMEs (lakh)	Nodal Agency	Priority Sector
Assam	2,264	24	12.14	Department of Innovation, Incubation & Startup (2025); Assam Startup (NEST)	Food processing, organic supply chain, bio-resources
Arunachal Pradesh	101	1	0.23	Department of Finance, Planning & Investment	Agri-tech, climate-tech, eco-tourism
Manipur	284	1	1.8	Planning Department, Govt. of Manipur	Handloom-textiles, handicrafts, digital commerce
Meghalaya	103	3	1.12	Department of Planning & Finance	Value-added horticulture, eco-tourism, grassroots enterprise
Nagaland	125	4	0.91	Department of Industries & Commerce, Government of Nagaland	Horticulture, handloom-handicrafts, eco-tourism
Mizoram	77	5	0.35	Entrepreneurship Development Centre, Planning & Programme Implementation Department, Government of Mizoram	Agro-forestry, micro-enterprise, horticulture
Tripura	224	2	2.11	Directorate of Information Technology, Government of Tripura	Rubber, bamboo, agri-tech
Sikkim	20	7	0.26	Department of Commerce & Industries	Organic farming, eco-tourism, wellness & herbal products

Source: Startup India, National Sample Survey (NSS) 2015

Below is the state wise DPIIT States' Startup Ecosystem Ranking Framework

(SRF 5.0, announced January 2026)



Source: DPIIT States' Startup Ecosystem Ranking Framework 5.0, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Overall Insights

Below elaborated four indicators ie startups, incubators, active companies, and MSMEs, are not the only lens through which an entrepreneurship ecosystem can be read. Measures of venture funding raised, employment generated, export revenues, social enterprise density or R&D investment would each add texture. But taken together, these four offer a consistent and data-grounded picture of where the Northeast stands, and that picture is more layered than any single number suggests. State wise metrics comparative breakdown graphs are attached in the Annexure A of the report.

1.Registered Startups (DPIIT): The Northeast's 3,198 DPIIT-recognised startups represent 1.4 percent of India's 2.29 lakh, against a 3.2 percent population share. In density terms, the region averages roughly 70 startups per million people, against a national figure of 162.2. Within the region, the spread is wide. Manipur leads on a per-capita basis at 87.3 per million, aided by the Manipur Credit Guarantee Scheme; Sikkim and Meghalaya sit at the other end at 29–31 per million. While Assam dominates in absolute count, 71% of the regional total,

but ranks third among the eight states on density.

The startup density gap is real, but Manipur's position — leading the region despite having just one incubator — suggests that targeted financial instruments can move the needle faster than physical infrastructure alone. The gap to the national average is a policy distance as much as a development one.

2. Incubators: Here the picture shifts a bit, with 47 incubators out of India's 1,538, the Northeast holds 3.1 percent of national incubator capacity — almost exactly matching its 3.2 percent population share, at 1.02 incubators per million against the national 1.07. The internal distribution is still quite diverse, whereas Sikkim, with seven incubators for a population under 700,000, records a density of 10.07. Mizoram follows at nearly four times. Manipur, the startup density leader, has just one incubator, the lowest per-capita incubator coverage in the region.

The pattern suggests that in several of these states institutions were built ahead of the pipeline they were meant to serve, consistent with the region's own recurring observation that a strong incubator, like a strong school, produces the outcomes that follow it rather than the other way round. Incubator density here is better read as a leading indicator of intent than a lagging measure of scale.

3. Active MCA-Registered Companies: The Northeast's 14,898 active companies represent 1.0 percent of India's 14.81 lakh, at a density of roughly 324 per million against a national figure of 1,029.

The gap here is the widest of any metric, and Sikkim explains much of it in one number: the state has just one active company on the MCA register. This is the most direct statistical expression of the Article 371F constitutional constraint — the Companies Act simply does not apply, and virtually all Sikkim-based enterprises that seek incorporation do so in another state. Manipur, by contrast, leads the region on this measure at 421 companies per million, fractionally above even Assam.

4. MSMEs: This is the indicator where the Northeast comes closest to national parity. The region's 18.92 lakh MSMEs represent 3.0 percent of India's 633.88 lakh — within a rounding error of its 3.2 percent population share — at a density of 41,130 per million against the national 44,019.

Two states exceed the national average outright: Manipur at 58,200 per million and Tripura at 50,600 per million. Arunachal Pradesh sits at the other end, at 14,645 per million, reflecting both its difficult terrain and the smallest total MSME base in the region. The MSME figure is the strongest evidence that entrepreneurial activity in the Northeast is not lagging — it is simply operating largely outside the formal channels that other metrics measure.

Across all four measures, the direction of the story is consistent: the Northeast's formal counts are lower than population share would suggest, but the gap varies sharply by metric — from near-parity on MSMEs and incubators, to roughly one-third of national density on active companies. The metrics that depend most on formal registration processes show the largest gaps, which is itself the finding. The region is not short on enterprise or institutional infrastructure; it is short on the formalisation pathway that connects the two.

A 2023 study in the Dera Natung Government College Research Journal found that entrepreneurship education in the region still focuses mostly on theory, with little practical training in how to formalise and grow a business.

Ms Nava Baro, one of the founders of the Northeast Angels Network and its CEO, points to a related problem on the funding side: investors from outside the region usually put their money into metro and Tier 1 cities. This leaves Northeast founders with fewer local paths to formal capital, even when their business case is strong.

This points to a real opportunity for the region: converting activity into results that get counted, such as patents filed, businesses formally registered, and ventures ready for outside investment. It is not the same story everywhere. Some states genuinely need to grow their raw number of enterprises, and that is worth saying plainly. But across all eight states, the fix is not to chase the national average the same way everyone else does. It calls for measuring progress differently and responding differently.

SECTION 3 — EVENT PROCEEDINGS

Agenda

The day's sessions, in the order they were actually delivered.

#	Session	Speaker(s)
1	Context Setting	AIM team
2	Welcome Address	Mr Prateek Deshmukh, Program Director, AIM Mr Sumit Gakhar, Head (Finance), AIM
3	Chief Guest Address	Dr Joram Aniya, Member, NITI Aayog
4	Panel — Best Practices in Incubation and Startup Support in Northeast India	Moderator: Ms Rachita Misra, CEO & Director, AIC-SELCO Foundation Panelists: Mr Moirangthem Seth (SNL Energy Solutions), Mr Roshan Farhan (MyriadAI & GoBillion), Col Prabir Sengupta (Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Guwahati), Mr Prateek Deshmukh (AIM)
5	Roundtable — Mobilizing the Innovation Ecosystem Stakeholders in the Region	Moderator: Ms Nazia Islam, Innovation Lead, AIM With delegates from all eight state startup councils, the Department of Science and Technology, DST (Mr Shardul Rao) and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council, BIRAC (Ms Taranjeet Kaur)

6	Panel — Unlocking Capital and Corporate Partnerships for Northeast Startups and Incubators	Moderator: Dr Tej Chingtham, CEO, AIC-SMU-TBI Panelists: Mr Ashish Agarwal (HDFC Bank), Mr Pranta Pratim Singha (Numaligarh Refinery), Mr Siddhartha P Lahkar (North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd, NEDFi), Mr Kautilya Basumatary (TATA TRUSTS)
7	State Schemes Focus — Tech-Driven Sustainable & Eco-Tourism Innovation	Ms Minha Riyaz Khan, Project Lead, PRIME Rural, PRIME Meghalaya
8	State Schemes Focus — Grassroot Livelihoods & Modern Handloom Clusters	Dr Sriparna Bhuyan Baruah, Director, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Royal Global University
9	State Scheme Focus — Commercializing Bio-Resources and Bamboo Value Chains	Dr Tilak Chandra Bhuyan, Senior Scientist & Consultant, North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC)
10	Panel — Building Ecosystem for Enterprises and Local Development	Moderator: Ms Rachita Misra, CEO & Director, AIC-SELCO Foundation Panelists: Mr Fazle Illahi (ERES), Mr Seyielezo Putsure (EduCentre, Nagaland)
11	Vote of Thanks	Mr Prateek Deshmukh, Program Director (AIM)

Source: conclave record and session briefing.

1. Context Setting

The day opened with a short framing address describing AIM Sumvaad as a mobilisation platform bringing NITI Aayog to the same table as state governments, startup missions, incubators, industry and academia, followed by a short film marking AIM's national milestone of 100 incubators, over 5,000 startups supported, and more than 40,000 jobs created nationally through its network.



2. Welcome Address

Prateek Deshmukh, Program Director, Atal Innovation Mission, opened the substantive programme, situating the day within AIM's tenth year and within Sumvaad's national sequence of regional dialogues. He set out the day's three objectives: to hear from every state council on its own ecosystem, to understand what the region's incubators have learned, and to bring government, industry, investors and mentors into a single working conversation.

"Even if we say Northeast, but even within Northeast, there are multiple micro-ecosystems that are existing. So we want to better understand from the states what exactly they are doing in this sector."

— Mr Prateek Deshmukh,
Program Director, AIM, NITI Aayog



Sumit Gakhar, Head (Finance), Atal Innovation Mission, followed with the formal welcome address, setting out AIM's national architecture and introducing the AIM Frontier Program as the Mission's mechanism for building pathways tailored to the Northeast, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and aspirational districts.



3. Chief Guest Address

Dr Joram Aniya, Member, NITI Aayog, delivered the chief guest address in Hindi. Her remarks framed the Northeast through the Prime Minister's description of the eight states as "Ashtalakshmi," cited investment figures for the region under schemes of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), and situated India's wider innovation trajectory against her central position: that policy and connectivity create favourable conditions for growth but do not themselves build enterprises, and that Viksit Bharat 2047 will be realised only with the Northeast at its centre. Her remarks are excerpted below.

“नीतियां और बेहतर संपर्क सुविधाएं विकास के लिए केवल अनुकूल परिस्थितियां बनाती हैं। वे स्वयं कारोबार का निर्माण नहीं करतीं। वास्तविक बदलाव इनक्यूबेटर्स, क्लासरूम और फील्ड में होता है।”

— Dr Joram Aniya,
Member, NITI Aayog

“Policies and better connectivity only create the conditions favourable to growth. They do not themselves build enterprises. Real change happens in incubators, in classrooms, and in the field.”

— English translation

The English is a translation of the Hindi original, not the Chief Guest's own words.



4. Panel — Best Practices in Incubation and Startup Support in Northeast India

The session was moderated by Ms Rachita Misra (CEO & Director, AIC-SELCO Foundation), and featured a diverse panel representing entrepreneurs, academia and policymakers: Mr Moirangthem Seth (Founder & MD, SNL Energy Solutions, Manipur), Mr Roshan Farhan (Founder & CEO, MyriadAI and GoBillion), Col Prabir Sengupta (Group CEO, IIT Guwahati) and Mr Prateek Deshmukh (Program Director, AIM).

Key Highlights

- **Social and Local Impact as Drivers:** Moirangthem Seth shared how his social enterprise in Manipur was born from solving the community's irregular power supply. He emphasized that Northeast entrepreneurship is often intertwined with social challenges, such as his work at solar-powering quarantine centers during COVID-19. He noted that while the region is landlocked, its proximity to Southeast Asian countries offers significant future scope.
- **Shifting to a Global and Venture-Scale Mindset:** Roshan Farhan, argued that incubators must move beyond simply counting startups and grants to benchmarking how many venture-scale companies they produce. He urged entrepreneurs to "think global from day zero" rather than focusing solely on local markets.
- **Addressing the "Mindset" and Infrastructure Gaps:** Col. Prabir Sengupta highlighted a historical disconnect between the Northeastern states and a lack of essential infrastructure, such as testing and certification labs. He emphasized that the region needs to overcome a mindset focused on government jobs by fostering leadership and discipline.
- **Tailoring Policy to Regional Context:** Prateek Deshmukh acknowledged that traditional innovation templates often fail in the Northeast due to unique regional factors, such as seasonal closures or internet connectivity issues. To address this, AIM is launching the **Frontier Program** to customize incubation and tinkering lab models based on the specific needs of the region.



Takeaway:

- **Strengthen Institutional Support:** Success requires a strong layer of institutional support, moving away from isolated efforts toward combined regional strengths.
- **Leverage Peer and Alumni Networks:** Panelists agreed that **peer learning** and alumni networks (such as from Incubation cohort) are often more valuable than classroom learning for founders.
- **Define Regional USP (Unique Selling Proposition) or KRAs (Key Result Areas):** Each state should identify and lead in a specific domain, such as music for Meghalaya or eco-tourism for Arunachal Pradesh to create a "magnetic field" for investment and talent.
- **Adopt New KPIs:** Success in the Northeast should not be compared directly to Bangalore or Hyderabad; instead, the region should use technology and digital revolution to bridge the gap at its own pace

The panel addressed the entrepreneurial mindset still taking root across much of the region, the physical and cultural distance between the 8 Northeastern states, and the value of stronger manufacturing, testing and certification infrastructure. Panelists outlined practical direction: benchmarking incubators on venture-scale outcomes rather than startups onboarded, pairing faculty and students to build ventures around solved research problems, and – drawing on AIM's own Jammu & Kashmir experience – adapting outreach to local calendars and conditions rather than applying a single national design everywhere.



5. Roundtable — Mobilizing the Innovation Ecosystem Stakeholders in the Region

Moderated by Ms Nazia Islam (Innovation Lead, AIM), the roundtable aimed to move beyond independent state growth toward a **regionally connected innovation network**. With over **3,000 recognized startups** in the Northeast (71% of which are in Assam), the interactive discussion from Govt. Nodal representatives and NGO representatives from all the 8 states focused on how proven models in high-performing states can be adapted across the region to overcome shared bottlenecks in connectivity, capital, and mentorship.



Highlights from each state's representatives

- **Financial Infrastructure for Idea stage startups (Arunachal Pradesh):** Mr Manish Mall (Arunachal Pradesh Innovation & Investment park) attributed the state's "Best Performer" ranking to its high-scale financial grants. The state recently increased seed money for ideation-stage startups from 5 lakhs to 10 lakhs and offers scale-up grants of up to 25 lakhs, creating a robust incentive structure for remote and rural founders.
- **Dedicated Department Model (Assam):** A major structural shift occurred in 2025 with the establishment of a full-fledged Department of Innovation, Incubation, and Startup (DIIS). Kankan Jyoti Kharghoria (DIIS) explained that previously, the startup mission was an "add-on project" under the Industries Department. Moving to a dedicated department allows for 100% focus and dedicated budgeting, ensuring that plans are implemented without being sidelined by other departmental priorities.
- **Resilience and Credit Guarantees (Manipur):** Despite disruptive periods, Manipur maintains the region's second-largest startup base. Dr R K Tombisana Singh (Start Up Manipur) noted that all loans granted by banks to startups are 100% covered under the Manipur Credit Guarantee Scheme, significantly de-risking investment in the state.
- **The "Doorstep Incubation" Breakthrough (Meghalaya):** Minha Riyaz Khan (PRIME) detailed the PRIME Rural model, India's first "doorstep incubation" initiative. Instead of requiring rural founders to travel to urban hubs, fellows reside in villages for 12–18 months to provide holistic support. A notable success is the 'Somoi app', a local delivery platform funded by the Meghalaya state Government (PRIME) to empower local retailers and vegetable vendors, effectively becoming the "Blinkit of the Northeast".
- **Strategic Partnerships and Localized Mentorship (Mizoram):** Mr Rinzuala (Mizoram Startup Mission) detailed how the state leverages external partnerships with premier institutions like the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta (for the 'Mizoram Kailawn'- idea competition) and IIM Bangalore to achieve results quickly despite limited local bandwidth. A critical component of this strategy is the use of "anchor mentors" – local experts from Mizoram who "digest" and translate advice from outside consultants into the specific regional context to ensure it remains practical for local founders.
- **Women-Centric Funding (Nagaland):** Lezo Putsure (Educentre) shared that Nagaland is drafting a new policy where 70% of the funding under Startup Nagaland will be dedicated to women. Additionally, the state is launching "Naturally Nagaland," a portal where 70% of the featured products and services will be from women entrepreneurs.

- **Monetizing Niche Assets (Sikkim):** Dr Tej Chingtham (AIC-SMU-TBI) suggested that the state must move beyond "organic branding" toward actual monetization, such as extracting high-value curcumin from Lakhandong turmeric to generate real economic returns.
- **Sector-Agnostic Shift (Tripura):** Mr Manvendra (Startup Tripura) highlighted that the state recently transitioned from a sector-specific policy (focused only on information technology and IT-enabled services, IT/ITES) to a sector-agnostic policy to support broader local innovation. The State Innovation Mission serves as a convergence entity to bring together independent departments—such as the Rural Livelihood Mission and the Industries Department—under one nodal agency. The New Generation Innovation Network (NGIN) connects technical institutions with researchers and is currently onboarding general higher education institutions and Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) to build a continuous talent pipeline.

Takeaway:

- **Leverage Central Support Systems:** DST highlighted the Prayas program, which now offers grants of up to 40 lakhs for prototype development, while BIRAC announced new "Edge Centers" to nurture biotechnology entrepreneurship specifically in the Northeast.
- **Bridge the "Trust Deficit":** Floor speakers urged the government to extend the same level of trust and investment to private institutions as they do to IITs and IIMs to broaden the reach of incubation support.
- **Adopt the BioE3 Framework:** Assam's establishment of the country's first BioE3 cell (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment) serves as a template for other states to align regional bio-resources with national climate-resilient agriculture goals

The day's principal session, moderated by Ms Nazia Islam (Innovation Lead, AIM), convened delegates from all eight state startup councils alongside the Department of Science and Technology (Mr Shardul Rao) and BIRAC (Ms Taranjeet Kaur). Each state addressed a question tailored to its own position — Assam's concentration of the region's startup base, Arunachal Pradesh's Best Performer ranking, Meghalaya's doorstep incubation model, and Sikkim's representation through its incubator community among them. This session is the principal source for Annexure A's state profiles and Section 4's findings.



6.Panel — Unlocking Capital and Corporate Partnerships for Northeast Startups and Incubators

Moderated by Dr Tej Chingtham (CEO, AIC-SMU-TBI, Sikkim), with panelists Mr Ashish Agarwal (HDFC Bank), Mr Pranta Pratim Singha (Numaligarh Refinery Limited), Mr Siddhartha P Lahkar (NEDFi) and Mr Kautilya Basumatary (Tata Trusts).

The panel examined how capital can be better matched to the region — institutional investors' preference for metro geographies on one side, and a founder preference for grant funding over equity on the other — and identified company formation, documentation and proof of concept as the practical gaps most often standing between a promising startup and investment readiness.



Key Highlights:

- **Bridging the Solution-Problem Gap (Philanthropy Perspective):** Mr Kautilya Basumatary (General Manager, Tata Trusts / Centre for Microfinance and Livelihood, CML) noted a significant "innovation deficiency" in the development sector. He argued that startups often fail to reach the right consumer base because of a gap between their solution and the community's actual needs. He emphasized that the community itself is the biggest market, and startups should focus on integrating AI and technology into grassroots sectors like health, water, and livelihoods to create accessible solutions.
- **Criteria for Corporate Investment (The NRL Model):** Mr Pranta Pratim Singha (Head, Corporate Planning & Strategy, NRL) shared that out of 1,500+ applications, NRL Ideation has supported over 70 startups. He clarified that they look for two primary things: a high level of breakthrough innovation or market traction (revenue and repeat customers). He advised founders that once they receive a grant, they must remain "lean and mean" to survive until the next unpredictable capital round.
- **Global Competitiveness and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Compliance (Banking Perspective):** Mr Ashish Agarwal (Senior Vice President & Head, HDFC Bank) highlighted that HDFC's Parivartan program provides equity-free grants but warned that the pool of capital is finite and highly competitive. He noted that since Y Combinator has already invested in a Guwahati-based startup, the region can no longer claim it is not competitive. For incubators, he emphasized that compliance is paramount—utilization certificates and "Statement of Purpose" alignment are critical for maintaining funding eligibility.
- **Institutional Readiness and the "Equity Mindset" (Venture Capital Perspective):** Mr Siddhartha P Lahkar (Manager, NEDFi) identified a reluctance among Northeast founders to let go of equity, which often stalls growth. He explained that having an institution on the "cap table" increases a company's long-term valuation and credibility. He urged incubators to help startups achieve financial and secretarial discipline, as many homegrown startups lack the proper documentation (patents, intellectual property, or company formation) required for institutional investment.

Takeaway:

- **Prioritize "Investment Readiness":** Incubators must act as the first line of defense by helping startups move from raw ideas to a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) with proper financial books and documentation.
- **Specialized Funding Segments:** Founders should apply to the right categories; for example, applying for a sustainability grant with a deep-tech pitch often leads to rejection.
- **Financial Sensitization:** There is an urgent need for grassroots-level education on the difference between debt and equity to help founders make timely decisions that don't cause them to miss market opportunities.
- **Leverage Multi-Sectoral Grants:** Startups working with government departments on community issues (e.g., potable water in Mizoram) should look beyond "startup grants" and explore separate community project pipelines within organizations like HDFC or Tata Trusts



7. State Schemes Focus — Tech-Driven Sustainable & Eco-Tourism Innovation

Ms Minha Riyaz Khan, Project Lead, PRIME Rural, PRIME Meghalaya, outlined a conservation-first approach to tourism built on payment-for-ecosystem-services, dual-use homestay infrastructure timed to the 2027 Meghalaya National Games, and a technology layer — booking platforms, footfall analytics, a multilingual helpline — designed to manage visitor volume rather than simply grow it. She connected this to entrepreneurship: craft villages rebuilt as experiential-tourism sites, an AI-powered lake-cleaning initiative, and a local delivery platform now reaching rural vendors.

Key Highlights:

- **Conservation as a Financial Incentive:** Meghalaya has moved beyond traditional infrastructure-heavy tourism to a conservation-first approach. A key tool in this is the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) system, where the government pays contractors or landowners (approximately 8,000 per hectare) to preserve forests rather than clearing them for development. This incentivizes both the community and individual entrepreneurs to maintain the state's 76% forest cover.
- **Dual-Asset Infrastructure (CM Homestay Scheme):** To address the lack of high-standard infrastructure, the government launched a dual-asset homestay scheme. These homestays are designed to house athletes for the 2027 Meghalaya National Games before being handed over to the community to run as niche, high-standard tourist accommodations. This model ensures that state-funded architecture meets international standards while remaining under community management.
- **Data-Driven "Carrying Capacity" Management:** Meghalaya uses the e-invite system and the M-TIME platform to collect travel analytics. By measuring the carrying capacity of popular sites—such as Ward's Lake—the government can use data to plan investment and infrastructure revamps based on actual tourist flow, preventing environmental degradation.



- **Experiential Tourism and Artisan Workspaces:** The state is transforming traditional craft villages into experiential tourism hubs. For example, the Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged Larnai pottery site is being developed into a comprehensive destination with workshops, stays, and restaurants, allowing tourists to experience the craft firsthand. Similarly, traditional instrument-making workshops are being reimagined as museums and schools, providing entrepreneurs with workspaces while creating a new market through tourism.
- **Technological Integration for Sustainability:** Technology is applied directly to environmental preservation, such as the government funding startups that have developed AI-powered boats to clean lakes. The state also provides a multilingual helpline to assist diverse domestic and international tourists in accessing services.

Takeaway:

- **Community-Led, Not Charity-Based:** The approach treats the community as modern entrepreneurs who take revenue home while preserving landscapes they have managed for centuries.
- **Zero-Interest Support:** Through agencies like LIVCOM, the government provides zero-interest loans and grants to facilitate community-proposed tourism projects.
- **Interdepartmental Synergy:** Success is attributed to the "Meghalaya Model," where community, ecology, and technology come together through departments—such as tourism, bamboo missions, and innovation—working in tandem.
- **Rooted Growth:** The overarching vision is to move the state forward technologically without forgetting its environmental and cultural roots

8. State Schemes Focus — Grassroot Livelihoods & Modern Handloom Clusters

Dr Sriparna Bhuyan Baruah, Director, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Royal Global University, observed that handloom — one of the region's largest employers of women — has not yet developed the kind of dedicated startup pathway seen in sectors such as agri-tech or biotechnology. Her central proposal was to convert existing, already-funded cluster infrastructure into dedicated handloom incubators, organised around research, design and continuous product development, linked through a hub-and-spoke model to a central technology and innovation research hub.

Key Highlights:

- **The "Startup Gap" in Handloom:** Despite the high global demand for sustainable and circular economy products, there is a lack of startups in the handloom sector compared to agriculture or biotechnology. The sector is often associated only with traditional sales (e.g., sarees and Mekhela Chadors) rather than technological intervention or scalable enterprise models.
- **Input and Supply Chain Bottlenecks:** A primary challenge lies at the input stage, specifically the inconsistent quality of available yarn and a lack of full-time artisans. Currently, 90% of weavers are women who work part-time; Dr Sriparna emphasized the need for process interventions to convert these part-time weavers into a full-time, professionalized workforce.
- **Fragmented Clusters and Investment Gaps:** While the government has invested heavily in village clusters, these have historically been led by NGOs and societies rather than entrepreneurs. This has led to a lack of quality adherence and an inability to cater to global markets, leaving founders trapped between multiple layers of middlemen.
- **Waste-to-Wealth and Bio-Resource Innovation:** There is immense potential to convert the region's bio-resources—such as water hyacinth, bamboo, and banana fiber into yarn. Dr. Sriparna argued that research into these natural fibers is essential for the Northeast to claim its place in the global niche market for sustainable furnishing and apparel.



Takeaway:

- **Establish a Dedicated Handloom Technology Incubator:** The region needs a specialized center focused on continuous prototyping, design research, and product development based on market trends to help single entrepreneurs bypass middlemen.
- **Repurpose Existing Infrastructure:** Instead of building new facilities, the government should convert existing Common Facility Centers (CFCs) and clusters into production hubs and localized incubators where investment in infrastructure has already been made.
- **Adopt a "Hub and Spoke" Model:** A high-level Technology Research Center should act as the "hub," while small towns and village clusters serve as the "spokes" for production and grassroots innovation.
- **Standardization of Natural Dyes:** To meet export standards, startups should focus on standardizing natural dyes through technology, ensuring consistent quality that the global market demands.
- **Leverage Multi-Level Schemes:** Founders and policymakers should better utilize existing Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of DoNER schemes such as raw material banks and technology upgradation funds but view them through an "innovation lens" rather than just a livelihood lens.



9. State Scheme Focus — Commercializing Bio-Resources and Bamboo Value Chains

Dr Tilak Chandra Bhuyan, Senior Scientist & Consultant, North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC), presented the region's bamboo value chain from cultivation through engineered bamboo products, noting sixteen existing production clusters with seventeen more planned, and a newly developed bamboo shoot wine, produced for the first time roughly a month before the conclave. He identified the development of bamboo-processing machinery suited to the region's own bamboo species as a priority area, and highlighted Assam's public-procurement policy for bamboo products as a model with potential for wider adoption.



Key Highlights:

- **The Northeast as a Biodiversity Powerhouse:** India holds approximately 15 million acres of bamboo, with 36% of the total forest area located in the Northeast. Of the 152 bamboo species found in India, 96 are reported from this region alone. Dr Tilak emphasized that this diversity is the foundation for a value chain that spans cultivation, scientific treatment, and high-end value addition.
- **Shift to Engineered Bamboo:** There is a significant global shift in demand from traditional handicrafts to engineered bamboo products, such as tiles, boards, and molded furniture, particularly in European markets. To support this, NECBDC is establishing major clusters for engineered products in Nagaland and Assam.
- **R&D and Product Diversification:**
 - **Bamboo Shoot Wine:** In collaboration with the College of Food Processing (CAU), NECBDC has developed India's first bamboo shoot wine, which is currently undergoing research before being offered to entrepreneurs for commercialization.
 - **Natural Enzyme-Based Fibers:** Unlike the viscose-based bamboo products from China and Japan, NECBDC is working with iZera (Calcutta) to develop purely enzyme-based, natural fiber blending.
 - **Cane Commercialization:** NECBDC is also pioneering the commercial cultivation of cane, introducing important species from the Andaman Islands into experimental plantations in Mizoram, Tripura, and Assam.
- **Bypassing the Middleman through E-commerce:** Artisans currently face a massive price gap; for example, a lamp sold for ₹2,700 on e-commerce platforms often only nets the artisan ₹600–₹700. To solve this, NECBDC has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Flipkart and Amazon to sell ten specific high-demand products directly from 15 newly created marketing clusters, ensuring fair pricing for local creators.

Takeaway:

- **Develop Indigenous Machinery:** A critical bottleneck is that current machines are imported from China/Taiwan and designed for "Moso" bamboo, which is softer than Northeast varieties. These machines often fail within six months. Dr. Tilak urged IITs, the Central Manufacturing Technology Institute (CMTI), Bangalore and innovators to focus on developing indigenous cutters and press machines suited for the region's denser bamboo.
- **Mandate Public Procurement:** Following the Government of Assam's model of a 5% compulsory bamboo product usage in Public Works Department (PWD) projects, other state governments should mandate the use of bamboo in offices and public infrastructure to create a stable local market.
- **Community-Based Plantations:** To ensure a sustainable raw material supply, the focus should remain on private and community land plantations rather than just forest land, as demonstrated by the 811 hectares currently managed by NECBDC.
- **Promote "Lean" Engineered Units:** Startups should look into "single-layer tile" making and molded furniture, which use advanced technology to create durable alternatives to traditional wood.

9 NECBDC ACHIEVEMENTS – TRANSFORMING BAMBOO

From Livelihood Activity to Infrastructure

1 Mandate: Delivered Measurable Outcomes

Category	Outcomes
CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT	16 handicraft clusters across 8 NE States 2 new engineered bamboo clusters in Assam & Nagaland 7,383 artisans mobilised 250+ villages covered
CAPACITY BUILDING	16,354 artisans trained across multiple domains 8 Bamboo Curricula developed - Master Trainers, officials & foreign participants trained
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT	17 CFCs established for shared production 15 Bamboo Handicraft CFCs & 2 Integrated Industrial CFCs under setup 36 Bamboo Treatment Plants, 1 Technology Park, Tissue Culture Unit & more
MARKET LINKAGES	- Participation in 16 trade fairs/exhibitions - MoU with Amazon, Flipkart for e-commerce - MoU with All Time Plastics for engineered bamboo market partnership
LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT	- Income increased from ₹38,122 to ₹85,660 (~2.25 times) (2019-2023) 58.6% beneficiaries shifted to bamboo as primary occupation ~49% women participation
PLANTATION	811 ha bamboo plantations across NER 1,000 ha FSC certified plantations sanctioned 60 ha cane plantation; 2 new species introduced from Andaman
TECHNOLOGY & PRODUCT INNOVATION	12+ machines & tools developed 10+ bamboo & cane products developed - Collaboration with UCA for packaging & product standardization

2.25x INCOME INCREASE
 7,383+ ARTISANS BENEFITED
 17 CFCs ESTABLISHED

Building a Sustainable, Inclusive and Prosperous Future

10. Panel — Building Ecosystem for Enterprises and Local Development

The day's closing panel, moderated again by Ms Rachita Misra, with panelists Mr Fazle Illahi (Founder & CEO, ERES) and Mr Seyielezo Putsure (Founder & Director, EduCentre, Nagaland).

Both panelists spoke from direct operating experience: Mr Putsure outlined the recent build-out of Nagaland's professional services base, from having no resident chartered accountant until a few years ago to now having one in-state, and addressed how risk appetite is shaped by a founder's family circumstances as much as by individual outlook. Mr Illahi highlighted the importance of testing technology against local conditions before deployment, and of building trust with communities through existing local institutions. Closing the panel, Ms Misra noted that Northeast entrepreneurs often build significant parts of their own supporting ecosystem, including training their own technicians in states with no technical institute.



Key Highlights:

- Context-Specific Hardware Innovation:** Fazle Illahi shared a critical example of technology failure when a state livelihood mission imported poultry equipment from central India. While the technology worked elsewhere, it failed in the Northeast's hilly terrain because it was not designed to function below 4 degrees Celsius. He argued that while local innovators often have the right solutions for these specific conditions, they lack the support to scale from a micro-level to a commercial prototype.
- Social Capital and Community Trust:** Operating across four states (Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh), ERES relies on community ownership rather than centralized service models. In Meghalaya, for instance, Fazle highlighted that local churches are the most trusted institutions; by connecting through them, enterprises can reach the "last mile". He emphasized training local technicians as "champions" to ensure hardware is maintained in remote areas where a technician from a city like Guwahati cannot easily reach.
- The "Privilege Gap" in Risk Appetite:** Lezo Putsure observed that risk appetite in the region is often tied to financial privilege. Founders from government-connected families can afford to fail, whereas a loss for a rural entrepreneur can end a family's entire aspiration. He called for more patient capital and private players to step in where government grants may not reach, citing his own experience of growing a \$50,000 "trust-based" investment into a multi-crore business.
- The Compliance and Knowledge Barrier:** Both panelists identified a significant "gap in business acumen" regarding compliance. Lezo noted that young founders are often pressured to register as Private Limited companies to qualify for central grants, only to find themselves stuck with high maintenance costs and no grant money. Furthermore, essential support roles like Company Secretaries (CS) and Chartered Accountants (CA) are still scarce in states like Nagaland, forcing entrepreneurs to travel to cities like Guwahati or Shillong for basic compliance.

- **Equitable Banking Treatment:** Fazle pointed out that banks still view Northeast enterprises through a different lens. He noted that even with similar revenues, a business in the Northeast often faces higher interest rates for overdraft (OD) facilities compared to a peer in Bangalore. He urged "think tanks" to work with banks to treat evolving regional ecosystems at par with national counterparts.

Takeaway:

- **Invest in Soft Skills Infrastructure:** Beyond physical infrastructure (hardware), the region requires investment in Soft Skills Infrastructure specifically training in mentorship, compliance, and regulations for MSMEs and startups.
- **Simplify Knowledge Transfers:** Governments and ministries need to look at policies from an "inner point of view," ensuring that knowledge about grants and eligibility is effectively downloaded to local enterprises who may not be highly active on social media.
- **Facilitate Risk Guarantees:** For capital-intensive hardware that communities cannot own outright, financial partners should utilize risk guarantee facilitators to bridge the trust gap between lenders and local entrepreneurs.
- **Pivot to Indigenous Innovation:** Instead of always trying to "send things out," the region should focus on experiential and indigenous innovation—such as high-value beekeeping or traditional farming knowledge—to draw global markets to the Northeast.
- **Foster Decentralized Manufacturing:** To make technology innovation work for the region, there must be a move toward decentralized manufacturing and business models that prioritize maintenance and local serviceability

11. Vote of Thanks

Mr Prateek Deshmukh closed the day, noting it as one of the most well-represented editions of AIM Sumvaad to date, with all eight states present through their startup councils or incubators. He thanked Ms Rachita Misra, Dr Bindu Byreddi, Mr Partha Borthakur and Dr Tej Chingtham for their role in moderating the day, alongside his own AIM team, Ms Nazia Islam and Ms Deepakshi Jindal for organizing the event smoothly. He confirmed that the day's proceedings would be compiled into this report, and named the forthcoming National Incubator Conclave in Delhi as the region's next point of engagement with AIM.



SECTION 4 — FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Northeastern AIM SUMVAAD brought together state governments, incubators, founders, investors and central agencies in a single room for one day. What emerged across sessions was a set of recurring observations that point toward a shared conclusion: the Northeast requires a distinct approach to entrepreneurship support, one calibrated to its own realities rather than adapted from a national template built around more mature ecosystems.

This section draws those findings together and sets out what they imply for each stakeholder like the states building the ecosystem, the central agencies resourcing it, the incubators and investors operating within it, and AIM as the convenor.

What the Region Surfaced

One Region, Eight Starting Points

The most consistent observation of the day was that the Northeast is not one ecosystem but eight, at genuinely different stages of development. The Centre's own DPIIT ranking places the eight states across three tiers — yet within a single tier the spread is extreme. Four states share the Aspiring Leaders category; inside it sits a state with over 2,200 recognised startups and one with around twenty. What reads from centre as one regional number is, on the ground, eight distinct problems of scale, stage and institutional capacity.

This variation is not incidental. It is the defining feature of the region, and it is what makes a uniform national instrument — applied identically across all eight states — a poor fit for most of them. Support that meets Assam where it is will not meet Arunachal Pradesh where it is.

States Are Already Borrowing From Each Other

Within a single afternoon, three states committed on record to adopting a specific practice from a named peer — for example, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland each expressed intent to adopt Meghalaya's PRIME Rural doorstep-incubation model, Mizoram identified Assam's agarwood-processing capability as a practice worth replicating. This is the clearest evidence of what a regional platform and convening like the Northeastern AIM SUMVAAD can produce that a bilateral program cannot. The mechanism does not always need to be invented from scratch.

Imported Technology has to be Adapted before it Works

One finding recurred with enough consistency to be treated as a regional characteristic rather than an isolated observation. A livelihood enterprise described imported equipment failing across the region once conditions fell outside the specification it was built for. The region's bamboo-development council, Dr Tilak Chandra Bhuyan, Senior Scientist and Consultant, NECBDC, explained that machinery sourced abroad is designed for a softer species and wears out faster against the Northeast's own bamboo, and argued that the region needs to develop and adapt its own processing machinery rather than depend on imports. A state mission described routing all outside expertise through local anchor mentors who translate it into local context before it reaches an entrepreneur.

For any programme that transfers a technology or a template into the region, local adaptation is not a refinement to be added later. It is a design condition that must be built in from the start.

Entrepreneurship is still a Fallback, not a First Choice

Across several sessions, founders and incubator heads returned to a constraint that no financing scheme addresses directly. In much of the region, entrepreneurship is still treated as a fallback rather than a first choice — a secure government job or migration to a larger city remains the default aspiration for many young people. A founder from Nagaland added an important structural dimension: risk appetite tracks a founder's family circumstances as much as their individual outlook, and for a family without a financial cushion, the failure of a first venture can foreclose every subsequent attempt.

The lever here is not primarily financial. Awareness-building and visible local success stories — entrepreneurs from the same communities, operating in familiar sectors — make entrepreneurship legible as a credible path in ways that a grant alone cannot.

Capital and Readiness are Missing each other

The conclave produced an unusually candid exchange on capital, because those who deploy it and those who seek it described the same gap from opposite sides. Investors on the capital panel were specific: what most often stops a promising venture is not the absence of funding but the absence of basic structure — company formation, documentation, proof of concept. From founders came the mirror image: a widespread default to grant funding even where equity is available, often from limited familiarity with how equity and debt differ in practice. A hardware and services enterprise operating across four states added a related data point from the lending side: despite comparable revenue, it has seen Northeast businesses charged higher interest rates on working-capital facilities than peers in more established hubs — a gap in practice that investment-readiness support alone will not close.

The implication is shared rather than one-sided. Investment-readiness support and basic equity literacy, delivered at the incubator level, move both sides of this relationship at once — and unlike new capital, cost very little to provide.

The Entrepreneur is still building the Ecosystem

In several states, the entrepreneur is still building the supporting ecosystem rather than operating within one. Nagaland's incubator leadership described a state that only recently gained its first practicing chartered accountant and still sources company-secretary services from Guwahati. Founders routinely train their own technicians and construct parts of the supporting infrastructure that a more developed ecosystem would absorb on their behalf.

The Gap in How Progress is Measured

The Northeast starts from a different institutional baseline than India's established innovation hubs, and measuring it against those hubs on identical indicators will consistently show it lagging, not because the region is not moving, but because the starting point is different. A state incubator head made the technical version of the same argument, walking the room through startup density per capita versus absolute counts and showing that on a per-million basis the region's smaller states compare considerably more favorably than absolute totals suggest.

What comes next

The region's next formal point of engagement with AIM is the National Incubator Conclave in Delhi. The Northeast arrives at that table with as much to contribute as to ask for.

The day surfaced several models worth carrying to that table: a doorstep-incubation model already being adopted across state lines, the country's first state BioE3 cell, the region's most concrete startup loan-guarantee instrument, and the Solutions Portal – a digital marketplace showcasing and scaling innovations and products emerging from grassroots driven entrepreneurs. During the conclave, selected innovators and entrepreneurs from Northeast region were spotlighted on the virtual screen, demonstrating how the platform can help build wider visibility for their work and encourage more enterprises from Northeast to come onboard.

The NE AIM Sumvaad demonstrated that a regional platform, when it brings the right people into the same room, produces something that bilateral programmes cannot: peer learning across states, shared commitments on record, and a collective voice that carries more weight than any single state carries alone.

Carrying these models and reflections forward is a key purpose of this report.



ATAL INCUBATION CENTRE
SELCO FOUNDATION

in collaboration with



SOLUTIONS PORTAL

is inviting Technology Solutions Providers from the Northeast India

FROM THE NORTHEAST TO THE NATION: SCALING SMART TECHNOLOGY

Gateway to showcase and market your efficient technology.

- ❖ Showcase your clean energy and sustainable livelihood solutions.
- ❖ Connect directly with users, field partners, and ecosystem enablers.
- ❖ Scale your impact from regional roots to a pan-India market.

Feature your innovation on the Solutions Portal. Scan to register



The Opportunity:

The North Eastern Region presents some of the most demanding innovation environments in the country. Your technologies tackle rugged terrains, unique microclimates, and distinct cultural practices. A solution that can thrive and solve a livelihood problem in the Northeast has the resilience to transform communities across the entire nation.

What is Solutions Portal?

Solutions Portal, an initiative by SELCO Foundation, is a digital marketplace that connects rural and urban underserved communities to a curated database of climate-smart and energy-efficient technologies from the local technology providers and innovators.

Your Technology should serve for:

- ❖ Agriculture
- ❖ Microenterprises

- ❖ Animal Husbandry
- ❖ Craft & Textiles



SONY
BRAVIA 2#
S25M2
NEW
Google TV
X1
SONY PICTURES CORE
Dolby

MEDIA SNIPPETS

The Northeastern AIM SUMVAAD was covered by wire services, television, print, and digital media. Representatives of about ten media organizations were present throughout the day.



NITI Aayog

Atal Innovation Mission Spearheads India's Frontier Innovation Push at Regional AIM SUMVAAD-North East Chapter 2026

Posted On: 15 JUL 2026 12:36PM by PIB Delhi

**Scan to QR Code to read the
Press Information Bureau (PIB) Release**



Press Trust of India
@PTI_News

VIDEO | Guwahati: Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, Government of India, organised a Regional SUMVAAD, a regional conclave to strengthen the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem across the North Eastern States.

Dr. Joram Aniya, Member, NITI Aayog, says, "The SUMVAAD programme which is organised here, by Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), to discuss about Viksit Bharat 2047 mission. All the people connected to Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) from North-East have participated in this."

(Full video available on PTI Videos - ptivideos.com)

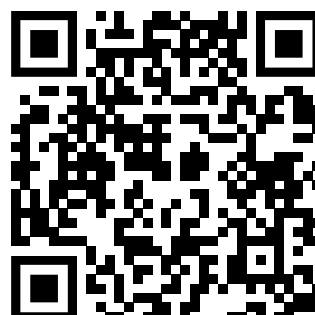


**Scan the QR Code to view the
Press Trust of India (PTI) Coverage**



NITI Aayog's Regional SUMVAAD brings governments, startups, investors under one roof

**Scan the QR Code to view the
Television News Coverage**



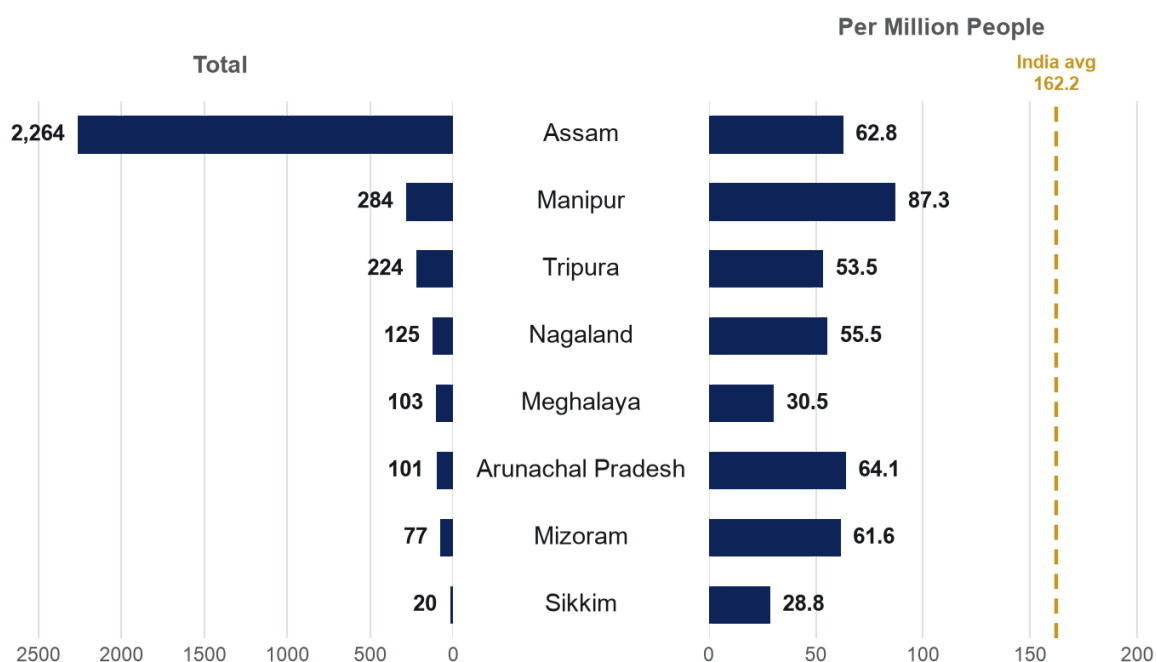
ANNEXURES



Annexure A:

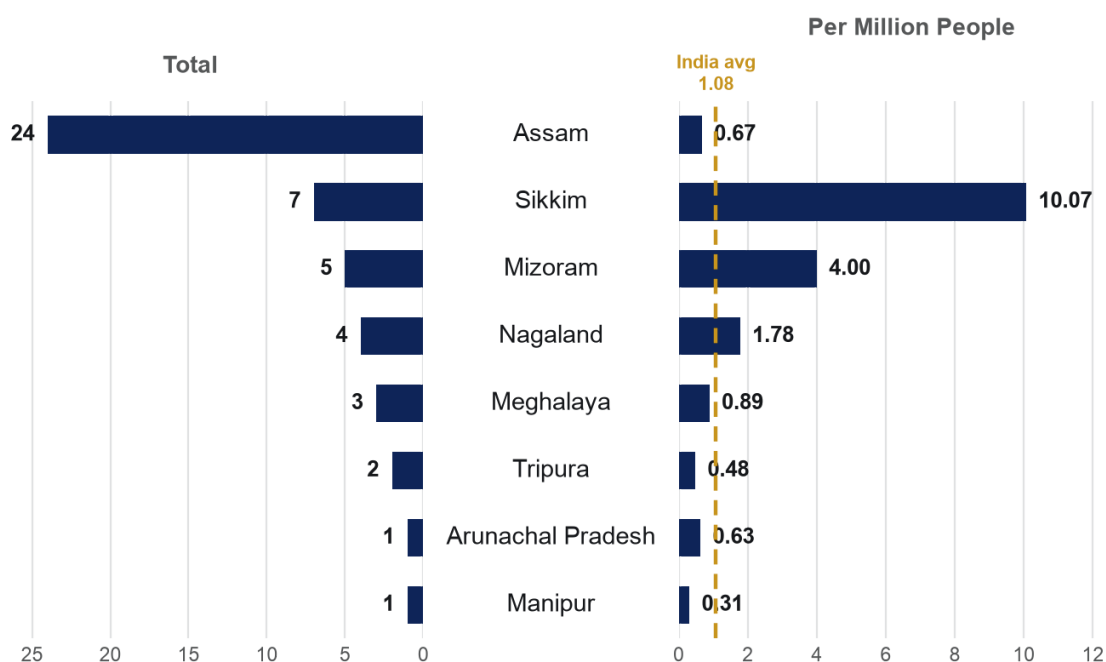
State-by-State Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Metrics breakdown

1. DPIIT registered Startups:



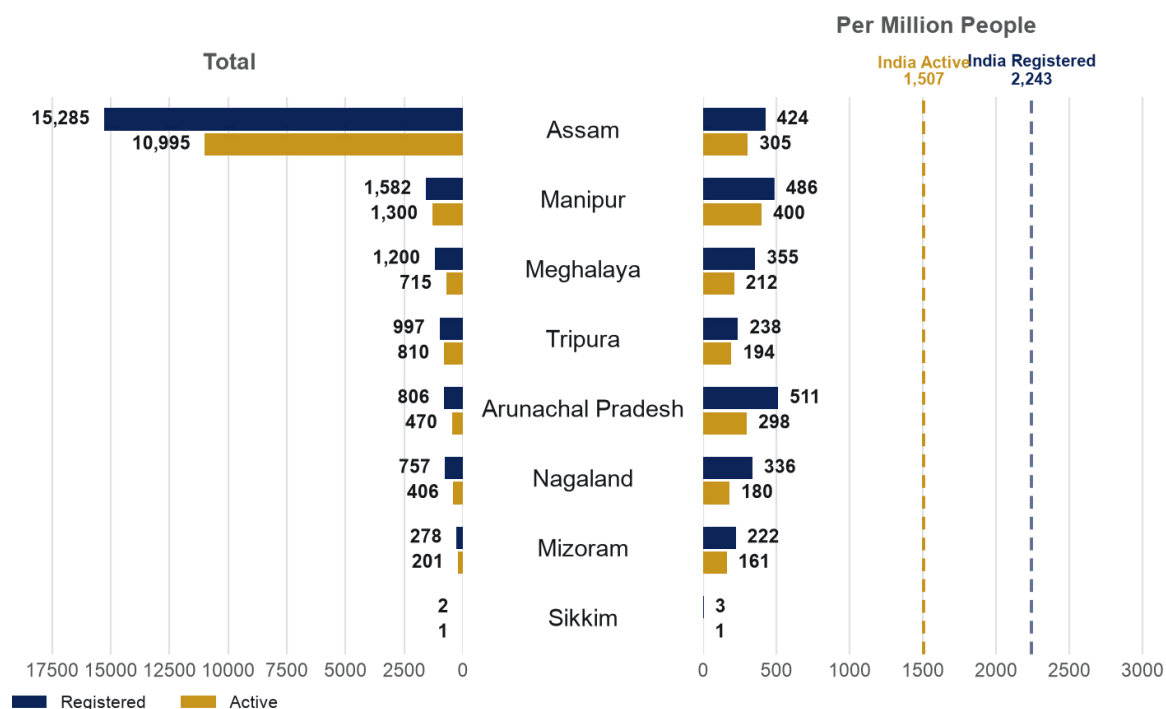
Source: Startup India Platform and Population data Compiled from Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) Aadhaar Saturation data and the 2011 Census (2024 estimate)

2. Incubators:



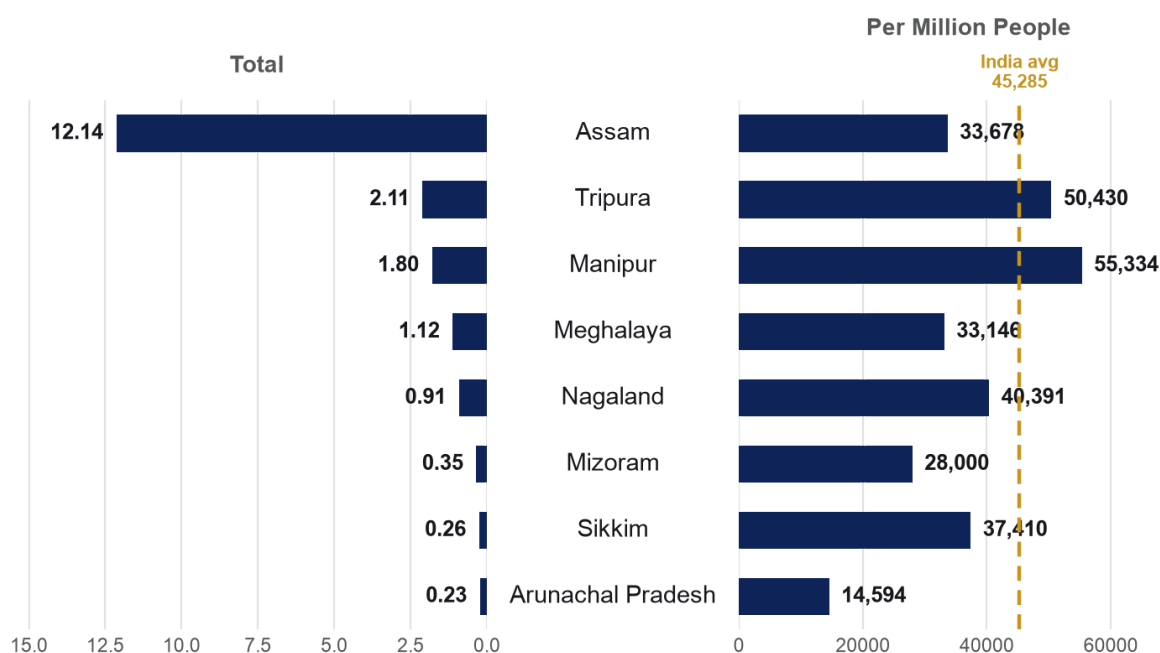
Source: Startup India Platform and Population data Compiled from UIDAI Aadhaar Saturation data and the 2011 Census (2024 estimate)

3. Active MCA-Registered Companies:



Sources: Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA); India total 31.4 lakh registered, 21.1 lakh active companies. Population: UIDAI Aadhaar Saturation data and the 2011 Census (2024 estimate).

4. MSME Enterprises:



Source: National Sample Survey (NSS) 73rd Round, and Population data Compiled from UIDAI Aadhaar Saturation data and the 2011 Census (2024 estimate).

Annexure B:

Participants List

Attendance has been reconstructed from the event's own registration records, cross-checked against session participation.

Approximately 113 participants are evidenced as present, including representatives of about ten media organisations. This is an informed floor rather than an audited count: attendees who neither registered nor spoke are not captured.

All Participants (114)

Name	Category	Organisation
Dr Joram Aniya	Speaker / Session Lead	Member, NITI Aayog
Sumit Gakhar	Speaker / Session Lead	Head (Finance), AIM
Prateek Deshmukh	Speaker / Session Lead	Program Director, AIM
Nazia Islam	Speaker / Session Lead	Innovation Lead, AIM
Deepakshi Jindal	Speaker / Session Lead	Young Professional, AIM
Shardul Rao	Speaker / Session Lead	DST
Taranjeet Kaur	Speaker / Session Lead	BIRAC
Kankan Jyoti Kharghoria	Speaker / Session Lead	Assam Innovation & Startup Foundation
Amlan Bhuyan	Speaker / Session Lead	DIT, Tripura
Manabendra Sen	Speaker / Session Lead	DIT, Tripura
Rinzuala	Speaker / Session Lead	Mizoram Startup Mission
Ruth Chuauthangpuui	Speaker / Session Lead	Mizoram Startup Mission
Dr R.K Tombisana Singh	Speaker / Session Lead	Government of Manipur
Heisnam Bhumeshwor Singh	Speaker / Session Lead	Govt. of Manipur / Startup Manipur
Manish Mall	Speaker / Session Lead	Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh
Pooja Thakur	Speaker / Session Lead	Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh / APIIP
Dr Tilak Chandra Bhuyan	Speaker / Session Lead	NECBDC

Minha Riyaz Khan	Speaker / Session Lead	PRIME Meghalaya, MBMA
Rachita Misra	Speaker / Session Lead	AIC-Selco Foundation
Col Prabir Sengupta	Speaker / Session Lead	IIT Guwahati
Roshan Farhan	Speaker / Session Lead	MyriadAI / GoBillion
Moirangthem Seth	Speaker / Session Lead	SNL Energy Solutions
Dr Sriparna Bhuyan Baruah	Speaker / Session Lead	Royal Global University
Dr Tej Chingtham	Speaker / Session Lead	AIC-SMU-TBI
Ashish Agarwal	Speaker / Session Lead	HDFC Bank
Pranta Pratim Singha	Speaker / Session Lead	Numaligarh Refinery Limited
Siddhartha P Lahkar	Speaker / Session Lead	NEDFi
Kautilya Basumatary	Speaker / Session Lead	Tata Trusts / CML
Fazle Illahi	Speaker / Session Lead	ERES
Seyielezo “Lezo” Putsure	Speaker / Session Lead	EduCentre
Rasika Kawooze	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	SPM, SELCO Foundation
Dr Bethsheba Basaiawmoit	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Incubation Manager, BioNEST NIPER Guwahati
Dr Indrani Baruah	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Technical Officer, BioNEST NIPER Guwahati
Laishram Jimmy	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Assistant Professor, AIC Manipur Technical University
Ramananda Nongmeikapam	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Director, AIC-MTU, AIC Manipur Technical University
Alay Barah	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Executive Director, ICCO
Chitraban Sarma	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Incubation Specialist, ICCO

Partha Borthakur	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	COO, NeateHub
Prajwalita Neog	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Business Executive, Foundation of AIC-AAU Incubator / NEATEHUB
Dr Danish Tamuly	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Asst Professor (Soil Science), Foundation of AIC-AAU Incubator
Neikule Doulo	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Executive Director, ACIC Entrepreneurs Associates
Dr Biswadeep Das	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Incubation Manager, AIC NIPER Guwahati
Dr Swapnil Sinha	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	CEO, IIT Guwahati TIDF-BioNEST
Dr Bula Choudhury	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Senior Scientist, Guwahati Biotech Park
Dr Jayanta Deka	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Associate Professor, Pragjyotish College, Guwahati
Dr Amar Jyoti Dutta	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Assistant Professor, Pragjyotish College, Guwahati
Dr Bendangienla Aier	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Manager, IIMSFIE, IIM Shillong Foundation
Dr Sanjeev Kumar Ningombam	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	IIM Shillong Foundation
Dr Tania Paul Das	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Innovation Activity Coordinator, Assam Royal Global University IIC
Sampad Shil	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Scientific Officer, Nutricia Healthcare / NIPER-G
Dr Abhijit Boruah	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Asst Professor & Coordinator, CTII, Dibrugarh University
Kabita BorChetia	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Networking & Partnership Dev. Manager, The Hub Jorhat, Bosco Institute
Aditi Mohta	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Analyst, Social Alpha
Siddharth Bhuyan	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Program Manager, Social Alpha
Dr Bindu Byreddi	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	CEO, AIC NIPER-Guwahati

Dr Radhakrishna	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Registrar & Board of Director, AIC NIPER-G
Dr Sanjay K. Banerjee	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Board of Director, AIC NIPER-G
Urmi Buragohain	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	CEO, IIT Guwahati Technology Incubation Centre
Sanket Umap	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Program Outreach Associate, IIT Guwahati TIC
Fahrina Akhtara	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Manager, Incubation & Outreach, BioNEST-IASST
Chongnei Moi	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Program Manager, SELCO Foundation
Usma Chakma	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Project Manager, SELCO Foundation
Dr Debajit Kalita	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Managing Director, Khetiyok-Poohar Essence Pvt Ltd
Nabanita Hazarika	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Community Outreach Manager, Khetiyok-Poohar Essence Pvt Ltd
Lohit Prasad	Incubator, Academic & Ecosystem Partner	Sales Manager, AIC NIPER Guwahati
Dr. Geetima Das Krishna	Additional Registration	Social Alpha
Vikram Patil	Additional Registration	Social Alpha
Lalithkumar B.S.	Additional Registration	IIT Guwahati
Vishnu Nandan Kusumanchi	Additional Registration	IIT Guwahati
Abinash Kumar	Additional Registration	—
Ramita Basu	Additional Registration	AIC NIPER
Aditya Agarwal	Additional Registration	LearnHill, IIT-G RP
Monika Gupta	Additional Registration	LearnHill, IIT-G RP
Sujala Barua	Additional Registration	RB Foundation

Nirmali Kalita	Additional Registration	RB Foundation
Shahjahan Hussain	Additional Registration	NEHHDC
Monalisha Hussain	Additional Registration	NEATEHUB, AAU-Jorhat
Pritish Kr. Bora	Additional Registration	NEATEHUB, AAU-Jorhat
Akash Das	Additional Registration	Numaligarh Refinery Limited
Joydeep Bhusan	Additional Registration	VHAT, Tripura
Atul Ch. Ualal	Additional Registration	Manav Kalyan
R. Kyndeit	Additional Registration	SMM-NF
Romeo Koch	Additional Registration	SeSTA
Bishwajeet Barooah	Additional Registration	LearnHill Technologies
Ashadhep	Additional Registration	ASHA
Dwijini	Additional Registration	ASHA
P. Majinder	Additional Registration	—
Siddhartha Sankar Das	Additional Registration	AIC NIPER
Dr Amit Alexandar	Additional Registration	NIPER Guwahati
Dr Saikat Sarkar	Additional Registration	AIC NIPER
Anup Sarma	Additional Registration	Directorate of Horticulture & Food Processing
Abhishek Ghosh	Additional Registration	HDFC Bank

Nirmali Kalita	Additional Registration	RB Foundation
N. Dutta	Additional Registration	Govt. of Assam
Nabajit Talukdar	Additional Registration	Niyamiya Barta
Johnti Pogbogam	Additional Registration	SANJOG
Deepjyoti Sarma	Additional Registration	SANJOG
Abdul Jalil Ahmed	Additional Registration	JMECT
Anowar Hussain	Additional Registration	JMECT
Hasan Ali	Additional Registration	JMECT
Arunangshu Deb	Additional Registration	S.V.S
Ripsita Phukan	Additional Registration	SeSTA
Ratan Kumar	Additional Registration	Encamp
Syed Rizwan Yasin	Additional Registration	AIAXOM
Hopkhomang H.	Additional Registration	—
Mukesh Medhi	Media	East Mojo
Noripon	Media	East Mojo
Bhabesh Medhi	Media	DD News
Balen Das	Media	Pratidin Time
Surajit Saikia	Media	PTI

Mokibul Islam	Media	Prag News
Hasjo	Media	Axom Loing 24
Sabita Sarma	Media	News18
Mizanoor Rahman	Media	IANS
Bishwajit Sutradhar	Media	Pratham Khabar

Source: Event registration records.

REGIONAL



NORTH EAST CHAPTER

