



2017 a watershed year for Northeast: Dr Jitendra Singh

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The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh has said 2017 has been a watershed year for the North-Eastern Region (NER), for it not only witnessed some of the landmark developmental initiatives, but will also go down in the history as a year when the Union Government took some such decisions which had been pending for decades together.

Briefing the media after releasing the North Eastern Council (NEC) wall - Calendar and table - Calendar for the year 2018, Dr Jitendra Singh said the 90-year-old "Indian Forest Act of 1927", which was a legacy of the British Raj, was amended through a decision of the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, as a result of which "Bamboo", which was defined as a "Tree" under the Indian Forest Act of 1927, was changed, thereby doing away with the requirement of obtaining a permit for felling of bamboo for economic use. This, he said, is going to be a game-changer for generations to come, by opening new avenues of job generation and entrepreneurship by allowing bamboo cultivation and bamboo use by non-farmers on non-forest land.

Another historic decision, which is the first of its kind in independent India, relates to 100% funding by Central Government for projects in the NER, which were earlier being undertaken on the basis of Centre-State sharing in the ratio of 90:10, he added.

It was again in 2017, Dr Jitendra Singh said, that Shri Narendra Modi undertook a trip to Mizoram, the first visit to the State by a Prime Minister in the last over 20 years. During this visit, the Prime Minister dedicated to the nation a 60 Mega-watt Hydro-Power Project, thus making Mizoram a power-surplus State of India.

In 2017 itself, Dr Jitendra Singh recalled, the North-Eastern Region set an example for the rest of India by being the first to introduce "Venture Capital Fund" from the Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) for young Start-ups and entrepreneurs who choose to invest in the region. The first lot of the cheques for young Start-ups with Venture Fund from Ministry of DoNER was handed over by the Prime Minister himself.

Among the other "firsts" introduced in the North-East during this year, Dr Jitendra Singh mentioned India's first-ever experiment to have a helicopter-based "Air Dispensary" to carry out OPD health services in remote and inaccessible parts of the region. Similarly, the work on new rail link to Bangladesh also began with the rail track being laid from Agartala and being funded up to Akhaura by the Ministry of DoNER.

For the convenience of Northeast students studying in other parts of the country, construction of an exclusive hostel in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus at New Delhi began on July 24, 2017, while a piece of land measuring 5341.75 sq. meters (1.32 acre) was obtained from Delhi Development Authority at the prime location of Dwarka, New Delhi for the purpose of constructing a Northeast International Cultural and Information Centre.

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