

Two-day 12th North East Business Summit inaugurated in New Delhi

North East holds key to future of India, says DoNER Minister Dr Jitendra Singh

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The Two-day “12th North-East Business Summit” was inaugurated here today. The summit aims to explore the scope for business opportunities in the North-Eastern region of India. Focus areas are Infrastructure and Connectivity with Public Private Partnerships, Skill Development, Financial Inclusion, Services Sector Development- Particularly in Tourism, Hospitality & Food Processing. The Summit is being organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), with Manipur being the state partner for the event.

Speaking on the inauguration of the summit, 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 said that North Eastern states have lot of potential which is still unexplored. He said that we need to explore this unexplored potential for the development of the region and the development of the country as a whole. If one region of the country is underdeveloped, the country cannot be developed, he added. He said that the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi accords high priority to the peripheral states. The Minister said that the potential of the developed states such as Gujarat and Maharashtra has been achieved to the maximum and now exploring the unexplored potential of the North Eastern states will contribute to the making of ‘New India’ which Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi keeps inspiring us. He said that about 70% of the population of India is under the age of 40 years, this unexplored region will meet the aspirations of these youth, when other regions have saturated.

The Minister said that about 40% of the fruit production in North East (NE) goes waste due to lack of further processing, so it can be an area of potential for the industrialists. He said the Union Government has taken various initiatives for ensuring ‘ease of doing business’ in the North Eastern region. The emphasis has been on addressing the connectivity issue, he added. He said that train services are being provided to the states hitherto untouched by the rail map of India. He further informed that the construction of the Agartala to Bangladesh rail track will be funded by the DoNER Ministry for the portion of the track on the Indian side. He also mentioned of 19 unexplored waterways and projects like Bhupen Hazarika Bridge. He suggested that bamboo - the thriving business sector should be taken out of the purview of the forest sector and that every district should have a post office passport Kendra for facilitating doing business in the region.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that the Prime Minister’s “Startup India, Standup India” is a programme which includes incentives like, tax holiday in the early phase and an exit period of three months. Added to this, the Ministry of DoNER is offering an additional benefit of providing the initial Venture Capital Fund to any youngster who decides to set up an entrepreneurship in the North-Eastern region. Dr Jitendra Singh said that a day will come when NE will become the favourite destination for all start-ups in India.

Appealing the business community, he said that they should explore the unutilised potential of North East. He said that this region has much more to offer to the business community. The tourism, specially the concept of ‘Home Tourism’ has also picked up in the North east region, he said. This has been possible due to the efforts of the Ministry of Development of North East Region (DoNER), the Minister added. He said that the DoNER Ministry has been exploring the idea of introducing a helicopter based Dispensary/OPD service in such far flung and remote areas, where no doctor or medical facility was available and the patient, in need, also did not have any access to any medical care. The first such experiment will be done in Imphal and Shillong, he added. He said that this concept can be emulated by the other states which are having the similar topography. He also informed the North East Industrial Promotion Policy is also in pipeline. The North Eastern Council (NEC) is also being reoriented by the Government, Dr Singh added.

The Governor of Mizoram, Lt. Gen. Nirbhay Sharma said that vision and clarity on issues related to North East are very important for momentum to move ahead. He said that for the future development of the region, a clear vision and action plan with certain timelines is needed. He said that the NE festivals being held in various parts of the country help introducing North East India to the rest of India and vice-versa. He further said that NE as a link need to be strengthened. He said that NE states are exchanging ideas with the neighbouring countries, which is important for NE states and vice-versa. The Government alone cannot do the whole task, the need of the hour is for private players to come in and participate., he added. He emphasised on the connectivity in the NE region, with digital connectivity and air connectivity being the main forms of connectivity. He also said that Mizoram is bio-diversity rich state, which needs to be explored. He further said that new economic policy is the state has tried to address various issues such as land rules, which were proving to be hindrance to the industrialists. He suggested that a North East Forum should be created where all the stakeholders can meet and annual action plan can be created which can be followed up afterwards.

The Minister of Department of Textiles, Commerce & Industries, Government of Manipur, Shri T. H. Biswajit, said that Manipur will become the gateway to South East Asia. The state will have a good opportunity for investment in various sectors, he added. He also said that rail connectivity to Imphal will be complete by the year 2019. He also said that Manipur has potential for handicrafts and textile industry.

The Secretary, DoNER, Shri Naveen Verma said that the topics being discussed in this summit are of importance for the NE region. He said that Government of India has taken various initiatives for the development of NE region. These include North East Council's support toward the development of the tourism sector in the region, rural livelihood development through North East Rural Livelihood Programme and SAMPADA etc. He said that 'North Eastern Tourism Development Council' aims to develop regional circuits for tourism in North East and with the neighbouring countries. He also spoke on the potential of organic cultivation, medical tourism, cross-border regional value chain, infrastructure development etc. The NE is the paradise unexplored, Shri Verma added.

The Secretary (East), Smt Preeti Saran, said that NE region plays an important role in the Look East policy of the Government. A strong and stable NE can act as a bridge between rest of India and our neighbouring countries. She gave a detailed idea about the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of External Affairs toward integrating NER for boosting sub-regional trade and connectivity. She also mentioned that the MEA is undertaking the India-ASEAN Connectivity and Business Summits where North East and connectivity to the region will play an important role.

Speaking on the occasion, the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, Dr R Chidambaram, said that Ministry of DoNER is in touch for scientific and technological intervention for North East region. He said that scientific intervention is required in NE region in farm and non-farm sector. The gaps should be identified to see where the technology can be utilised, he added. He said that this is our responsibility to take the development of this region forward.

Shri P K Bezboruah, Co-Chair, ICC North-East Regional Committee & Chairman, Tea Board felt although the region has high agricultural produce, lack of agricultural marketing needs to be addressed. He also suggested that development must go hand in hand with ecological sustainability.

The two-day conference will include technical sessions on development of infrastructure and connectivity in North East: Focus on Regional Air Connectivity, IWT, Roads & Highways, Skill development in NE & Financing the services sector, Development of Food Processing Industry in NE with focus on Natural Organic and Super Foods from NE and Promotion of Tourism & Hospitality Sector in NE.

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