

INDIA'S NORTHEAST AS A ENGINE OF **GROWTH**

Published On: 14-09-2025

Why in news: On 13th September 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a landmark visit to Mizoram and also emphasied that the India's North eastregion would be growth engine.

Introduction

On 13th September 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a landmark visit to Mizoram, inaugurating the Bairabi-Sangria railway line. Alongside this, he laid foundation stones for infrastructure works exceeding ?9,000 crore, spanning roads, gas bottling, schools and bypasses.

This visit marks a strategic push to enhance **connectivity**, **integration**, **and development** in the Northeast under India's broader geopolitical and economic priorities notably the Act East Policy, boosting trade with Southeast Asia, and strengthening internal infrastructure to reduce regional disparities.

Significance of North-East for India

1. Geostrategic Importance

lShares over **5,300 km of international borders** with five countries: China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal.

lActs as India's **gateway to Southeast Asia** under the *Act East Policy*.

lExample: The recently inaugurated **Bairabi–Sairang railway line** (2025) in Mizoram enhances connectivity to Myanmar and Bangladesh corridors.

1. National Security & Stability

lRegion is sensitive due to **cross-border insurgency**, **migration**, **and drug trafficking**.

1Strengthening infrastructure ensures better border management and internal stability.

lExample: Ongoing efforts to modernize border fencing along the **India–Myanmar border** and integrate surveillance technology.

1. Economic Growth & Connectivity

lRich in natural resources (oil, gas, coal, bamboo).

IImproved transport and logistics will integrate NE into national and global supply chains.

lExample: Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project links Mizoram to Myanmar's Sittwe port, enhancing Indo-ASEAN trade.

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Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: 044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp: 09710729833

1. Cultural Diversity & Soft Power

lHome to 200+ ethnic groups, diverse languages, and festivals.

lPromotes India's image of unity in diversity and enriches tourism.

lExample: Hornbill Festival in Nagaland attracts global tourists and boosts local economy.

1. Biodiversity & Ecological Significance

lOne of the world's biodiversity hotspots (Eastern Himalayas & Indo-Burma region).

lExample: **Kaziranga National Park** (**Assam**) — UNESCO World Heritage Site, crucial for rhino conservation.

6Integration of Border Communities

IInfrastructure development reduces isolation and alienation.

lExample: New airports in Itanagar (2023) and Tez(2024) improve accessibility.

7Agriculture & Agro-based Industries

lKnown for **organic farming** and horticulture (pineapple, orange, spices).

lExample: Sikkim – India's first organic state; Tripura's pineapple exports to Dubai (2024).

8Strategic Connectivity Projects

lIndia-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (2023) supplies petroleum to NE.

lRail link projects like Agartala–Akhaura (with Bangladesh) reduce dependence on Siliguri Corridor.

Challenges associated with India's North east

1Geographical Isolation & Connectivity Gaps

- Heavily dependent on the **Siliguri Corridor** (**Chicken's Neck**) for access to the mainland.
- Limited road, rail, and digital infrastructure hampers integration.
- Example: Despite the inauguration of the Bairabi-Sairang railway line (2025) in Mizoram, large parts of Arunachal and Nagaland still lack rail connectivity.

2Insurgency & Internal Security Issues

- Long history of insurgent groups demanding autonomy or secession.
- Although militancy has reduced, sporadic violence continues.
- Example: Manipur ethnic conflict (2023–24) left over 200 dead and displaced thousands, highlighting fragile peace.

3Ethnic Tensions & Identity Politics

- Region has 200+ ethnic groups, often leading to clashes over land, resources, and political representation.
- Example: Ongoing tensions between Meitei and Kuki tribes in Manipur.

4Illegal Migration & Demographic Pressures

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- Porous borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar fuel **illegal migration**, impacting demography and politics.
- Example: **Assam NRC issue** and protests over CAA implementation.

5Border Disputes

• Frequent inter-state disputes among NE states.

6Example: **Assam–Mizoram border clashes** (2021, 2024 intermittent skirmishes) resulted in casualties and curfews.

7Drug Trafficking & Organized Crime

- Proximity to the Golden Triangle (Myanmar–Laos–Thailand) makes the region a hub for narcotics.
- Example: In 2024, Assam Police seized heroin worth ?40 crore from Manipur-bound traffickers.

8Economic Backwardness

- Low industrial base, poor private investment, and inadequate markets.
- Example: NE contributes less than 3% to India's GDP, despite being 8% of land area.

9Natural Disasters & Climate Vulnerability

- Prone to floods, landslides, and earthquakes.
- Example: Assam floods (2024) displaced over 5 lakh people, damaging crops and infrastructure.

Way Forward for India's North-East Region

oStrengthening Connectivity

oComplete railway, highway, and digital infrastructure projects under Act East Policy.

oExample: Accelerate **Agartala–Akhaura rail link** with Bangladesh to reduce dependence on the Siliguri Corridor.

oPeacebuilding & Conflict Resolution

oContinue dialogue with insurgent groups through peace accords.

oPromote **community reconciliation mechanisms** to address ethnic tensions.

oExample: Implementation of **Bodo Peace Accord** (2020) brought relative stability in Assam's BTAD region.

oBorder Management & Migration Control

oUse **smart fencing, surveillance drones, and better patrolling** along porous borders with Bangladesh & Myanmar.

oBalance humanitarian concerns with demographic stability in CAA-NRC implementation.

oBoosting Regional Economy

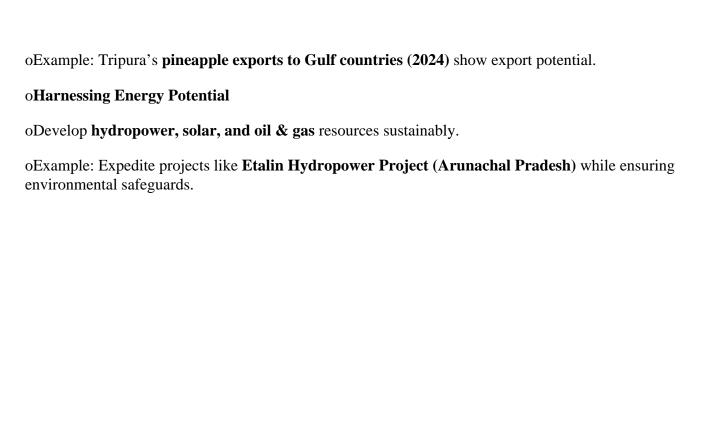
oPromote agro-processing, handicrafts, tourism, and IT-based services.

oEncourage private investment via North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS 2017).

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