



सत्यमेव जयते

राष्ट्रीय अनुसूचित जनजाति आयोग National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

(भारत के संविधान के अनुच्छेद 338क के अंतर्गत एक संवैधानिक निकाय)
(A constitutional body under Article 338A of the Constitution of India)

Detailed Report: North Eastern Council (NEC) Presentation before the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) Date:25th April 2025

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) is a constitutional body set up under Article 338A of the Constitution of India to investigate and monitor all matters relating to protection, welfare and socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes in the country. As per constitutional provisions, the Union and every State Govt. shall consult the Commission on all major policy decisions affecting Scheduled Tribes. The Commission is required to present to the Hon'ble President of India reports upon working of those safeguards and all such reports are to be laid before each House of Parliament along with Memorandum explaining the Action Taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations relating to the Union and the reasons for non- acceptance, if any, of any of such recommendations.

In pursuance of the above constitutional mandate, Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes(NCST) chaired the meeting with the Secretary, North Eastern Council (NEC) and senior officers on 25.04.2025 to review implementation of various developmental schemes/programmes for the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes of the Northeast region.

The North Eastern Council (NEC) made a comprehensive presentation before the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), highlighting its mandate, institutional structure, and key initiatives. The presentation focused on regional planning efforts, infrastructure development, and targeted welfare schemes in the North Eastern Region. Special emphasis was placed on the implementation of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) components and the inclusion of Scheduled Tribes in development outcomes. It also covered financial allocations, project achievements, and future priorities.

निरुपम चाकमा /Nirupam Chakma
सदस्य/Member
राष्ट्रीय अनुसूचित जनजाति आयोग
National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
भारत सरकार/ Government of India
नई दिल्ली/New Delhi



Figure 1: Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble NCST Member, Reviews NEC Initiatives with Senior Officers at NEC Headquarters, Shillong

1. The North Eastern Council (NEC) was established in 1972 as a statutory body under the NEC Act, 1971, passed by the Indian Parliament. Initially serving as an advisory body, the NEC's mandate was significantly redefined by the NEC (Amendment) Act, 2002, which designated the NEC as the *Regional Planning Body* for the North Eastern Region (NER). The primary objective of the NEC is to facilitate coordinated and accelerated socio-economic development in the eight states of the North East.


2. Composition and Structure of NEC

The NEC has a well-structured institutional composition designed to ensure both central oversight and state-level participation. The Council includes:

- **Chairman:** Union Minister of Home Affairs (ex-officio, Gazette notification dated 7th July 2018)
- **Vice-Chairman:** Union Minister of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) (ex-officio, Gazette notification dated 24th August 2021)
- **Members:**
 - Governors and Chief Ministers of the eight NE states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura)
 - Minister of State for DoNER (ex-officio)
 - Two full-time members nominated by the President of India and stationed in Shillong
 - Secretary, DoNER (ex-officio)

The **NEC Secretariat**, located in Shillong, is staffed with:

- Secretary
- Planning Adviser
- Financial Adviser
- Security Adviser
- Other technical and administrative personnel sanctioned by the Government of India.


 निरुपम चाकमा / Nirupam Chakma
 सदस्य / Member
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 भारत सरकार / Government of India
 नई दिल्ली / New Delhi

3. Functions of the NEC

As the regional planning body for NER, the NEC has a broad range of functions, including:

- Formulation of regional plans focusing on projects that benefit two or more states.
- Reviewing implementation of these projects and schemes.
- Recommending measures for improved coordination among state governments.
- Advising state and central governments on necessary surveys, investigations, and interventions.
- Recommending actions related to maintenance of public order and security.
- Exercising powers delegated by the Central Government for development planning and execution.

4. Evolution of NEC's Role

Initially, the NEC operated solely as an *advisory body*. Post-2002, it assumed the role of a *regional planning authority* following the amendment of the NEC Act. This transition marked a significant shift, empowering NEC to plan, coordinate, and implement development strategies across state boundaries in the NER.

5. Staffing and Reservation Status (as of 31.03.2025)

The NEC has implemented the Government of India's reservation policies for Scheduled Tribes (STs). Highlights include:

- Amendments to the **Recruitment Rules (RRs)** for the posts of Assistant Engineer (Civil) and Stenographer Grade-II are in progress based on recommendations from the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Ministry of DoNER.
- **One roster point** is reserved for STs in the post of Senior Technical Assistant (STA), though it is not currently due as per the reservation cycle.

6. Schemes Implemented by NEC

The NEC implements a number of schemes aimed at infrastructure and socio-economic development in the NER. A key initiative is:

North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme – Roads (NESIDS-Roads)

- **Scope:** Roads excluding National Highways and PMGSY roads. Only projects involving construction/improvement are considered; repair and maintenance alone are not eligible.
- **Minimum Project Size:** ₹20 crore.
- **Cumulative Achievements (2016-17 to 2024-25):**
 - Total sanctioned projects: 108
 - Total road length: 1659.51 km
 - Total sanctioned amount: ₹5,228.08 crore
 - Completed projects: 30 (482.36 km) worth ₹1,377.32 crore
 - Ongoing projects: 77 (1177.15 km) worth ₹3,850.76 crore

Further details on the selection basis for roads can be found at the Ministry of DoNER's official website.

7. Allocation and Utilization of Funds

A detailed financial summary (FYs 2021-22 to 2024-25) was presented. A separate focus was placed on fund allocation under the **Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP)** component of NEC schemes.

8. Welfare of Tribals under NEC Schemes

The NEC ensures that tribal communities are central beneficiaries of its schemes, particularly through the TSP and Focused Development Component (FDC). Key highlights include:




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- **TSP Performance (Last 3 Years):**
 - Total expenditure under TSP: 34.18% (exceeds the mandatory minimum of 27.1%)
 - Beneficiary states: Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim—states with predominant tribal populations.
 -
- **Focused Development Component (FDC):**
 - 30% of NEC's total budget is earmarked for the development of deprived areas, marginalized groups, and emerging priority sectors.
 - Projects sanctioned under this component from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25 primarily benefited tribal populations in the region.

The North Eastern Council(NEC) plays a critical role in the development of the North Eastern Region by facilitating cooperative planning, implementing regionally significant infrastructure projects, and prioritizing the welfare of Scheduled Tribes. Through its restructured mandate, inclusive policies, and data-driven project selection, NEC has evolved into a key institution for integrated regional development. Continued investment in tribal welfare, infrastructure, and institutional strengthening is vital for sustaining the momentum of growth and equity in the North East.



Figure 2: Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), with the Secretary, North Eastern Council (NEC), and other senior officials at the NEC premises during the group photograph following the meeting.


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 सदस्य / Member
 राष्ट्रीय अनुसूचित जनजाति आयोग
 National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
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 नई दिल्ली / New Delhi

Recommendations by the Commission:-

1. Design a "Culturally-Integrated Alternative Livelihood Model" to Transition from Jhum Cultivation

The NEC may develop a region-specific model that transitions tribal communities from ecologically unsustainable Jhum cultivation to climate-resilient livelihoods without undermining cultural traditions.

- Recognize the ritual and food security value of Jhum in tribal society—e.g., offerings to deities—and allow limited ceremonial Jhum.
- Introduce integrated livelihood zones with agroforestry, horticulture, sericulture, bamboo-based economies, and processing of non-timber forest produce (NTFPs).
- Pilot this framework in the areas where shifting cultivation (jhum) is rampantly practiced, such as Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Mizoram. Implement it as a replicable model with clear baselines, timelines, and performance indicators.

2. Establish a "Mobile and Residential Tribal Education Access Plan" to Reduce Dropout from Migratory Families

NEC may partner with State Education Departments and Tribal Welfare Boards to launch an adaptive education model for tribal children affected by Jhum-related seasonal migration.

- Set up mobile learning units, seasonal residential schools, and hostels with nutritional support near cultivation areas of the tribals.
- Incorporate community educators to bridge the gap between formal schooling and tribal life.

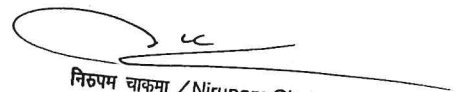
3. Launch a Region-Wide "Tribal Skill and Enterprise Mission" with Sectoral Focus and Mentorship

NEC may frame a targeted skill development roadmap that prepares tribal youth for diverse livelihood pathways beyond government service.

- Establish skill hubs in tribal clusters offering motor driving, tailoring, carpentry, repair of EVs/solar systems, digital literacy, and AI applications.
- Include entrepreneurship and financial literacy modules.
- Set up tribal business incubators linked with SHGs and cooperatives for sectors like textiles, eco-tourism, bamboo craft, organic farming, and digital marketing.

4. Create a "Green Tribal Livelihood and Conservation Incentive Program" to Address Environmental Degradation

To tackle ecological degradation from rapid Jhum cycles, NEC should roll out an incentive-linked scheme promoting green jobs and community-led resource management.

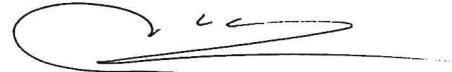

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- Support tribals to become Forest and Soil Guardians through afforestation, watershed work, and sustainable forest use.
- Offer performance-based incentives through carbon credit linkages and climate adaptation funds.
- Villages may be incentivized for reducing Jhum burden while protecting biodiversity through satellite-based monitoring.

5. Develop a "Tribal Governance and Implementation Framework" under NEC for Inter-agency Coordination :

For effective rollout, NEC may build a structured framework for tribal development governance with real-time feedback loops and local participation.

- Form a "NEC Tribal Implementation Task Force" involving State departments, ADCs, community leaders, and domain experts.
- Enable the use of a North East Tribal Dashboard to track outcomes on education, health, skills, and Jhum transition.
- Mandate regular consultations with tribal councils and autonomous district bodies (e.g., TTAADC, ADC's in Mizoram) to ensure cultural alignment and grassroots ownership.



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