

Ashtalakshmi Darshan – Youth Exchange Programme

Background and Rationale

The North Eastern Region (NER) of India is a richly diverse geographical and cultural area, home to over 200 ethnic communities and more than 200 languages. Despite its immense cultural wealth, students from other parts of India often miss out on exposure to this region due to geographical constraints and limited connectivity. The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) has initiated the *Ashtalakshmi Darshan Youth Exchange Programme* to bridge this gap and foster national unity through cultural and educational immersion.

Objective

To provide 1,280 students (aged 15–29) from 28 non-NER States/UTs with the opportunity to engage with the culture, geography, and development journey of the North Eastern states through a structured 14-day exposure programme. The initiative focuses on promoting people-to-people bonding, understanding borderland dynamics, and enhancing awareness about the diversity and potential of the region.

Participants and Rotation

- **Total Students:** 1280 (over 2 years)
- **Phase 1 Target:** 640 students from non-NER States/UTs
- **Batch Size:** 20 students per batch
- **Batches:** 32 in the first phase
- **Duration:** 14 days (including a 9-day certificate course)
- **Pairing Model:** Each NER state is paired with 3–4 States/UTs from non-NER India, aligning their universities and academic institutions. This ensures equitable representation and cross-regional exposure.

Programme Structure

14-Day Schedule:

- **Days 1, 6–8, 13–14:** Local travel, exposure visits to heritage, ecological, spiritual, educational, and industrial sites.
- **Days 2–5, 9–11:** Academic sessions as part of a 9-day Certificate Course hosted by NER universities.
- **Day 12:** Project submission
- **Day 13 (FN):** Special lecture
- **Day 13 (AN):** Certificate distribution
- **Day 14:** Departure

9-Day Certificate Course Module

Each state will offer tailored academic content focusing on:

- Geography and biodiversity
- Ethnic diversity, culture, and festivals
- Developmental initiatives and sustainable practices
- Administrative structures (e.g., Sixth Schedule Areas)
- Economy, tourism, industry, and environmental challenges

Selection of Universities and Students

- **Non-NER Universities:** Selected in coordination with State Governments and Coordination & GBS wing of MDoNER.
- **NER Host Universities:** Responsible for hosting and designing course content in Coordination with Coordination & GBS wing of MDoNER.
- **Student Selection Criteria:**
 - a. Preferably 2nd or 3rd year undergraduate students.
 - b. Demonstrated interest in social, cultural, or developmental issues.
 - c. Basic fitness for travel and exposure activities.

Selection of Universities and Students: Based on deliberations done during the meeting between VCs of the Universities/Institutions of NER and the Secretary. MDoNER, a tentative state-wise list of Universities/Institutions has been prepared for phase-I programme.

Tentative State wise programme schedule				
Arunachal Pradesh				
Name of the Institute	Batch size	Preferred month	1 ST Year	2 nd Year
Rajiv Gandhi University	80 (1 batch)	Feb 26 - March 26	80	80
Assam				
IIT Guwahati	40 (1 batch)	15 Dec - 28 Dec	40	40
Assam University	20 (1 batch)	Sept 25 - March 26	20	20
Tezpur University	20 (1 batch)	Sept 25 - April 26	20	20
Manipur				
Manipur University	20 (1 batch)	Sept/Oct 25 & Jan 26	20	20
NIT Manipur	40 (1 batch)	Dec 25 - March 26	40	40
IIIT Senapati Manipur	20 (1 batch)	Oct 25 & April 26	20	20
Meghalaya				
IIM Shillong	40 (2 batch)	July 25 - March 26	80	80
Mizoram				
Mizoram University	40 (2 batch)	Nov 25 & Feb/March 26	80	80
Nagaland				
Nagaland University	20 (2 batch)	Nov 25 & Feb 26	40	40
NIT Nagaland	20 (2 batch)	Aug/Sept 25 & Dec 25	40	40
Sikkim*				
Sikkim University	20 (2 batch)	Sept 25 - March 26	40	40
Tripura				
NIT, Agartala	20 (2 batch)	Aug 25 - Sept 25	40	40
Tripura University	20 (2 batch)	Sept 25 - March 26	40	40
Sub total			640	640
Total no. of students (for two years)			1280	

*In Sikkim, University/Institution yet to be identify by the State Government for 40 students.

Tentative mapping of non NER University/Institution with NER Universities/Institution:

S.No	NE States and Academic Institutions	Name of Visiting States and Academic Institutions			
		Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
1	Arunachal Pradesh (Rajiv Gandhi University)	Andhra Pradesh (School of Planning and Architecture)	Karnataka (Indian Institute of Science, Bangaluru)	Telangana (Central University of Hyderabad)	UT of Jammu and Kashmir (Jammu University)
2	Assam (IIT Guwahati)	Bihar (Nalanda University)	Kerala (Central University of Kerala)	Uttarakhand (IIT Roorkee)	UT of Ladakh (University of Ladakh)
3	Manipur (Manipur University)	Chhattisgarh (Hidayatullah National Law University)	Madhya Pradesh (Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management)	Uttar Pradesh (Banaras Hindu University)	UT of Lakshadweep (Pondicherry University Lakshadweep Campus)
4	Meghalaya (North Eastern Hill University)	Goa (IIT Goa)	Maharashtra (IIT Bombay)	West Bengal (IIT Kharagpur)	UT of Puducherry (Pondicherry University)
5	Mizoram (Mizoram University)	Gujarat (National Institute Design)	Odisha (NIFT, Bhubaneshwar)	UT of Andaman and Nicobar (Jawahar Lal Nehru Government College)	Andhra Pradesh (Andhra University)
6	Nagaland (Nagaland University)	Haryana (Central University of Haryana)	Punjab (Central University of Punjab)	UT of Chandigarh (Panjab University)	Bihar (IIT Patna)
7	Sikkim (Namgyal Institute of Tibetology/Sikkim University)	Himachal Pradesh (Central University of Himachal Pradesh)	Rajasthan (Central University of Rajasthan)	UT of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Government Engineering College Daman)	Chhattisgarh (Guru Ghasi Das University)
8	Tripura (Tripura University)	Jharkhand (Central University of Jharkhand)	Tamil Nadu (Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul)	NCT of Delhi (University of Delhi)	Goa (Goa University)

Tentative list of Selected Universities/Institutions			
S No.	Name of the State/UT	Name of the University/Institution	Total no. of Students
1	Andhra Pradesh	School of Planning and Architecture	20
		Andhra University	20
2	Bihar	Nalanda University	20
		IIT Patna	20
3	Chhattisgarh	Hidayatullah National Law University	20
		Guru Ghasi Das University	20
4	Goa	IIT Goa	20
		Goa University	20
5	Gujarat	National Institute Design	20
6	Haryana	Central University of Haryana	20
7	Himachal Pradesh	Central University of Himachal Pradesh	20
8	Jharkhand	Central University of Jharkhand	20
9	Karnataka	Indian Institute of Science, Bangaluru	20
10	Kerala	Central University of Kerala)	20
11	Madhya Pradesh	Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management	20
12	Maharashtra	IIT Bombay	20
13	Odisha	NIFT, Bhubaneshwar	20
14	Punjab	Central University of Punjab)	20
15	Rajasthan	Central University of Rajasthan	20
16	Tamil Nadu	Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul	20
17	Telangana	Central University of Hyderabad	20
18	Uttarakhand	IIT Roorkee	20
19	Uttar Pradesh	Banaras Hindu University	20
20	West Bengal	IIT Kharagpur	20
21	UT of Andaman and Nicobar	Jawahar Lal Nehru Government College	20
22	UT of Chandigarh	Panjab University	20
23	UT of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	Government Engineering College Daman	20
24	NCT of Delhi	University of Delhi	20
25	UT of Jammu and Kashmir	Jammu University	20
26	UT of Ladakh	University of Ladakh	20
27	UT of Lakshwadeep	Pondicherry University Lakshwadeep Campus	20
28	UT of Puducherry	Pondicherry University	20
Sub total			640
Total no. of students (for 2 years)			1280