

PRESS RELEASE



NITI Aayog and North Eastern Council (NEC)
hosted a "Stakeholder Consultation on Hill City Regions Planning Initiative
for Sustainable Urban Development in the Indian Himalayan Region"

Shillong, July 13, 2026: The NEC, under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, organised a Stakeholder Consultation on the Hill City Regions Planning Initiative (HCRPI) on 13th July, 2026 at the Auditorium of the NEC Secretariat, Shillong. The consultation marks a significant milestone towards developing a comprehensive, climate-resilient and terrain-sensitive planning framework for sustainable urban development across the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR).



The Indian Himalayan Region is experiencing rapid urbanisation amidst fragile ecosystems, difficult terrain, increasing climate risks and unique socio-cultural landscapes.

Conventional urban planning approaches, primarily designed for the plains, often fall short in addressing the complexities of hill settlements. Recognising these challenges, NITI Aayog launched the Hill City Regions Planning Initiative (HCRPI) and constituted an Executive Committee on Urban Development in the Indian Himalayan Region in collaboration with the North Eastern Council, bringing together domain experts, practitioners and policymakers to formulate an integrated planning framework for hill city regions.

The proposed framework seeks to provide practical guidance on regional planning, ecological carrying capacity assessment, climate resilience, sustainable infrastructure, economic development, governance, financing mechanisms and implementation strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of hill regions.

The Stakeholder Consultation has been convened to obtain valuable inputs from States and Union Territories of the Indian Himalayan Region for the preparation of the framework. The discussions focused on the opportunities and challenges of hill urbanisation, identification of priority interventions, selection of potential pilot regions and formulation of a shared roadmap for sustainable, resilient and economically vibrant hill city regions.

The programme commenced with a Welcome Address by Ms. Anna Roy, Programme Director (Managing Urbanization), NITI Aayog, followed by a Special Address by Shri Satinder Kumar Bhalla, Secretary, North Eastern Council.

The technical sessions featured presentations by eminent experts covering key aspects of sustainable hill city planning. Ms. Anna Roy provided the context and objectives of the initiative, while Shri Jagan Shah, Urban Expert, presented national and international best practices in hill city planning. Shri Tikender Singh, Former Deputy Mayor, also deliberated on governance, policy, spatial planning and the political economy of the Himalayas. Prof. Arup Sarma, IIT, Guwahati, presented on carrying capacity assessment for hill cities, and Shri Snehit Prakash, BORDA Asia, discussed urban service delivery and infrastructure gaps in the Indian Himalayan Region.

After the technical sessions, representatives from participating States, Union Territories, Central Ministries, academic institutions and expert organisations provided their feedback and recommendations for strengthening the proposed planning framework followed by an interactive discussions and question-and-answer sessions to encourage knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement post-lunch.

The consultation is expected to generate valuable policy recommendations and foster greater collaboration among governments, experts and institutions for promoting environmentally sustainable, climate-resilient and economically inclusive urban development across the Indian Himalayan Region. The programme concluded with a "Way Forward" session outlining the next steps for finalising the Hill City Regions Planning Framework and identifying future collaborative actions for its implementation.

The North Eastern Council remains committed to supporting innovative and sustainable development initiatives that promote balanced regional growth while preserving the fragile ecology, rich biodiversity and unique cultural heritage of the North Eastern Region and the wider Indian Himalayan Region.