

## Press Release

### Bridges of Unity: ‘Ashtalakshmi Darshan’ Youth Exchange Programme Commences at IIT Guwahati

The Mini Auditorium at IIT Guwahati hosted the inaugural ceremony of the *Ashtalakshmi Darshan* – Youth Exchange Programme, a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) aimed at strengthening national integration and cultural understanding between the Northeastern and non-Northeastern states.

IIT Guwahati, hosting the second batch of the programme, welcomed 40 student delegates and four faculty guides from Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The participants will explore the eight Northeastern states—collectively known as *Ashtalakshmi*—to experience their rich ethnic, cultural, and ecological diversity.



The programme was inaugurated by Dr. Rajkumar P. Thummer, Nodal Officer, IIT Guwahati, who encouraged students to go beyond textbooks and experience the region firsthand. Shri Niraj Kumar, Joint Secretary, MDoNER, the Chief Guest, described the Northeast as the *frontier of India's economic growth*, highlighting its potential in trade, resources, connectivity, and its spiritual significance as a confluence of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi traditions. He urged students to engage deeply with the local people, culture, and music.

Prof. Devendra Jalihal, Director, IIT Guwahati, emphasized the Northeast's deep historical and cultural roots reflected in ancient literature and reiterated its integral role in India's identity, wishing the participants a meaningful and enriching journey.

The 15-day programme includes academic sessions, field visits to historical and industrial sites, and cultural interactions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the region's heritage and contemporary potential.

The inaugural session concluded with a get-together, followed by an orientation session addressed by Mr. Bamin Tarang, Director (HRD&E), North Eastern Council, who outlined the significance of the programme and encouraged participants to act as future brand ambassadors of the Northeast. He highlighted the region's largely unexplored diversity and advised students to maintain discipline, follow prescribed guidelines, and uphold the dignity of their respective states throughout the programme.

