

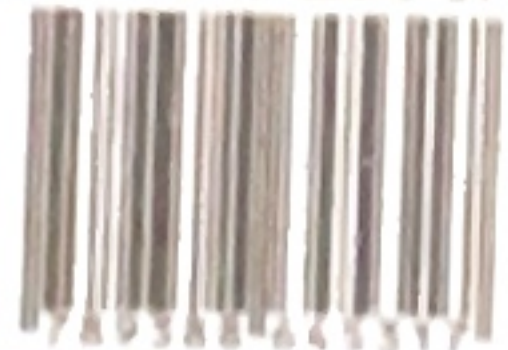
India's search for space in the South Asian region turned into a new action oriented policy as the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, articulated a new vision of India with reference to the Look East Policy (LEP) and renamed it as the Act East Policy (AEP) at the twelfth Asean-India summit and the ninth East Asia Summit, held in Nay Pyi Taw of Myanmar in November 2014.

The Objective of the AEP is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of the Northeastern Region with other countries in our neighbourhood.

This book, which comprises a dozen scholarly articles by fifteen contributors drawn from a vast pool of researchers, academicians, bureaucrats, journalists and professionals, is a modest attempt at dissecting the AEP in its myriad layers to situate India's Northeast in the scheme of things.

The volume provides an insight to the problems and prospect of the AEP Initiative with regard to Southeast Asia and India's Northeast. Challenges and opportunities of integrating both the regions have formed the agenda of discourse in the present compilation. Views from different stakeholder of the society in a single volume constitute the utility of this book. It is expected that this book will fill the void that has so far been left uncared in the field of research pertaining to transition from the LEP to AEP and the implementation and implication of the latter from the vantage point of India's Northeast.

ISBN 978-93-88645-31-7



ACT EAST POLICY

Implementation and Implications
for India's North East

ACT EAST POLICY



Editors

Joydeep Biswas

Dr. Nihar Ranjan Kalita

Assam College Teachers' Association

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

The views expressed in this book are those of authors and not necessary that of the organization. The publisher is not responsible for the views of the authors and authenticity of the data, in any way whatsoever.

ISBN : 978-93-88645-31-7

Copyright

Assam College Teachers' Association

Book Cover Design

Hari Brat Saikia

Publisher

Sri Himangshu Maral, General Secretary

Assam College Teachers' Association

and

Panchajanya Books

Bamunimaidam, Guwahati- 21

Year of Publication

June, 2019

Price : Rs. 250/-

Printed at:

Shri Ganesh Printers

Sankardev Market, Noonmati, Guwahati-20

Phone : 9707010889

CONTENTS

Abbreviations / vii

Table / x

Preface / xi

1	SUBIR BHAUMIK
<hr/>	
1	China's Belt and Road Initiative: A South Asian Perspective and Case for Harmony with India's Act East Policy
2	SAZZD ALAM
<hr/>	
21	Act East Policy : Implementation and Implications for North East India
3	CIHNNITA BARUAH
<hr/>	
48	RAJAT RAWAT Act East Policy: Factoring in conflict and accommodation in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD)
4	SUBHAS BHATTACHARJEE
<hr/>	
67	Act East policy and Agro-horticulture in North East
5	JACINTA LALRINCHHUNGI
<hr/>	
81	KASTURI GOSWAMI Act East Policy and Its Implications on Retailing: Survey Report on Customers Preference for Imported Products in Kawnpui Mizoram
6	PARVIN SULTANA
<hr/>	
92	From Look East Policy to Act East Policy: Problems and Prospects

From Look East Policy to Act East Policy: Problems and Prospects

Parvin Sultana

India's eagerness to engage with Southeast Asia is not new. It goes way back to the 12th century. The post independence leaders of India especially Jawaharlal Nehru focussed on East Asia as an important part of India's policy of Asian resurgence. Nehru called the Asian Relations Conference as early as 1947 to infuse a closer relationship with the East. In Packer's (1947) words, the conference provided a space for cultural and intellectual revival and socio-economic progress of the region.

The genesis of the Look East Policy can hence be traced back to the 1950s but it drew the attention of the Indian state when India found itself at the verge of economic crisis in the post 1980 period. The policy was in fact vocalized in 1992 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Having lost the Soviet economic and political support on which India relied, the Indian government became instrumental in embarking on a programme of free market at home and new markets and economic partners abroad.

The Look East Policy of India which was initiated in 1991 earmarked a deeper economic and strategic engagement with India's eastern neighbours. In this policy which was initiated in the days of P.V Narasimha Rao, a larger role for India's North Eastern region was earmarked. India historically was aloof from South East Asian politics. But this pointed to a move closer to

Southeast Asia. While decolonisation did not bring a crucial change in the international division of labour, Brettonwoods' Institutions like International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank through their Structural Adjustment Lending (1986) and Structural Adjustment Plan (1980) institutionalised the disadvantageous position of the erstwhile colonies. The erstwhile colonies hence tried to question this North-South divide by forming South-South Alliances. BRICS, IBSA etc are example of such initiatives.

Why South East Asia?

The East Asian growth model and the prosperity of the Tiger and Dragon economies did emulate India for opening up its economy. In fact, East Asia consisting of Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand were considered as potential investment sources where new markets could be tapped. India moved towards Southeast Asia and ASEAN for trade because SAARC was not very successful in development of the region. SAARC was also aimed at economic upliftment of the subcontinent. But as it did not give any space to bilateral issues to be raised, caught in geo-politics, geo-economics suffered. India was also seen as having an unnecessary big brotherly attitude.

The Look East Policy was a culmination of this shift. This shift in India's policy was expected to boost the development of a region which is lagging behind in terms of development. This policy initiative should be historically contextualised. Post cold war with the collapse of former USSR and India's adoption of a liberalised economy in 1991 paved way for a more robust capitalist economy. Containment of China which already was a strong trading partner of ASEAN also encouraged India to initiate something in tune of Look East policy. This also marked a move in India's foreign policy from being completely Pakistan-centric within the security paradigm and sub-continental in character. India aimed to emulate the ASEAN Tigers' model of development. Post Gulf War India also had to look for alternative sources of energy. The Look East