

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

## India's Act East Policy: the North-East States of India with 3 C's Formula

Ashok Brahma

Asst. Professor, Dept. of Political Science, U.N. Academy, Kokrajhar, India

**ABSTRACT:** Under the “Act East Policy” the government is relying on the 3 C's, that is, Culture, Connectivity and Commerce to develop better relations with ASEAN nations through the North Eastern region of India. The India's 'Act East Policy' which focuses on the extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region. The objective of Act East Policy 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 connectivity to the states of North Eastern region is vital. The Act East Policy recognises the importance of the North East of India as the gateway of the East countries and it is an extended corridor for growth, progress and prosperity of India, thus the development of the North Eastern region is a priority in the policy. The progress of the North Eastern India is at heart of the Act East Policy. The greater connectivity and economic integration of India's North East with its Eastern neighbours is to be considering a key focus area for growth and development of the region. The North East India is poised to benefit from India's growing relations with South East Asia as the process of globalization through crossborder market access that can uplift people from poverty, economic backwardness and bring in prosperity and inculcate entrepreneurial freedoms and skill. North Eastern region provides a unique platform in terms of growth opportunities it offers by inter-locking the region with the neighbouring countries in the South and South East Asia.

**KEYWORDS:** Look East Policy, Act East Policy, ASEAN, North-East India

### I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

India has a long history of collaboration with several countries and is considered a leader of the developing world. India's relations with the world have evolved since British Raj (rule), when the British Empire monopolized external and defence relations. Its international influence varied over the years after Independence. Indian prestige and moral authority were high in the 1950s and facilitated the acquisition of developmental assistance from both East and West. [1] India, even Jawaharlal Nehru remained his audience the hosted of an unprecedented gathering in New Delhi the Asian Relations Conference, was the natural centre and focal point of the many forces at work in Asia. The argument was both geographic and cultural: India was “the meeting point of Western and Northern and Eastern and Southeast Asia”, and “streams of culture” had both flowed to India and from India to the rest of Asia, influencing “vast numbers of people”. [2] In the archives of its history, India has had extensive cultural, economic and political ties with the South East Asian Nations. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) afforded a greater degree of interaction between India and many countries which it had neglected in the immediate years after its independence. India supported the anti-colonial movement in South East Asia – the covering of the Asian Relation Conference in March 1947, a Special Conference in January 1949, chairmanship of the international control commission on India-China in 1954 and the sponsoring of the Bandung Conference (Indonesia) in April 1955– all these reflected India's deep involvement in the freedom struggle being waged by the countries of the region.[3] India's engagement with South East Asia stems from India's search for security and prosperity and from India's quest for a largest role in Asia.

The end of the cold war marked a turning point in India's relations with counties of South East Asia and led to new orientations in the foreign policies of India. India started moving towards South East Asia to build strong economic, strategic and political ties with these countries. With the launching of India's economic liberalization programme in 1991, ASEAN came to be identified as being pivotal to India's policy in the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN also decided

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

to expand its membership to include all countries which are geographically part of South East Asia. Southeast Asian Countries, by leaving all inhabitations of the past came closer to India to develop warm friendly relations with it. [4] If the India's Act East Policy is successfully implemented North Eastern state would be juncture point between Indian hinterlands (neighbourhoods) and East. Asian countries so the North Eastern region would be primary beneficiary of it.[5] With India continuing to build closer ties with South East and East Asian countries the New Delhi's "Act East Policy" has realized the strategic importance of the North Eastern region. The so called Act East Policy passing through North East region has now become the centre of geo-economics and geo-politics, positioning North East at the heart of policy whose three key features are connectivity, culture and commerce. The progress of the North East region will be able to lead vast section of the population towards prosperity.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Sanghamitra Kalita (2018)**, Look East Policy is pivotal in India's effort towards globalisation and economic reform agenda, which was launched in 1991. It is an important foreign policy initiative with respect to South East Asian countries and under the regime of Narendra Modi which came power in 2014, the policy received immense priority. Terming it act East, India was able to sense the change in the locus of the world economic power from the west to the east as necessitated by the evolving geo-politics and trends in the Asia-Pacific. In context on India's growing and evolving relations with South East Asia, it is but inevitable that its North Eastern region would be the fulcrum of the overall Look East Policy given its geographic proximity and socio-cultural and historic ties with the South East Asia region.

**Javid Ahmad Mir (2017)**, The look East Policy has emerged as an important foreign policy initiative of India in the post-Cold War period. It was launched in 1991 by the then Rao government with the aim of developing political contacts, increasing economic integration and foreign security cooperation with countries of South East Asia. The policy marked a shift in India's perspective of the world, where the strategic and economic importance of South East Asia to India's national interest is being recognised.

**Rajiv Sikri (2009)**, A combination of economic, Strategic, and domestic consideration has led India to pay greater attention to its eastern neighbours since the 1990s. India's steadily growing ties with East and South Asian countries have become an increasingly important element of India's foreign policy. India is working with these countries bilaterally as well as through regional frameworks like the EAS, ASEM, and ASEAN, and sub-regional organisations like BIMSTEC and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation. The main driver remains economic, and India has many ongoing and planned FTAs with the countries of this region of late, defence and security ties to have grown. However, India's relations with China remain tense and troubled, with persisting differences over the border, Tibet, and China's patronage of India's South Asian neighbours, particularly Pakistan. Asia's major player will have to overcome internal rivalries and consciously evolve a cooperative paradigm for Asia security and cooperation to enable Asia to play a leading global role.

**Sanjay Pulipaka, Antara Ghosal Singh & Saranya Sircar (2017)**, India is extremely engaged across the Indo-Pacific from Russia to Japan, ASEAN to Australia. It is a member of both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and EAS. The objective of India's re-branded Act East Policy is not merely enhanced economic engagement and connectivity frameworks with countries of the Indo-Pacific. Rather, the core objective of this policy is to consolidate India's role in a multi-polar Asia. India's Act East Policy is being aligned with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. Japan is India's leading partner in building industrial corridors, high-speed railway and rail freight corridors, urban metro rail, as well as connectivity initiatives in India's North East.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- [1]. To study of Evolution and objectives of the Look East Policy (LEP) and Act East Policy (AEP).
- [2]. To understand the importance of region of the North East India for LEP and AEP.
- [3]. To focus the relations of India-ASEAN nations through the North Eastern states of India.
- [4]. To enquire into the plans and policies of the government of India's Act East Policy and their execution in bringing about the socio-economic, political-cultural and development in the North Eastern states of India.

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

## IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of the study of “India’s Act East Policy: North-East States of India with 3C’s formula”, an analytical study follows the descriptive method. In this study data have been collected by using secondary sources. Secondary data and information have been collected from different published books, journals, internet sources, published research papers and articles, newspapers, etc.

## V. LOOK EAST POLICY TO ACT EAST POLICY

The “Look East Policy” of India was initiated by the former Prime Minister Pamulaparti Venkata Narasimha Rao (1991-1996) and has continued to enjoy energetic support from the successive administrations of Inder Kumar Gujral (1997-1998), Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004), Man Mohan Singh (2004-2014) and Narendra Modi (2014- ), each of whom represents a different political party in India. [6] The main focus of this policy was to shift the country’s trading focus from the west and neighbours to the booming South East Asian countries. It aims to cultivate economic and strategic relations with the South East Asian nations in order to secure India’s position as a regional power. This Look East Policy is economic integration with the East and South East Asia. [7] In recent years India’s relationship with South East Asia has flourished. Importantly, the Look East Policy envisages three pronged approach towards the countries of the South East Asia-

- *Firstly*, it is to renew political contacts and understanding with ASEAN members States.
- *Secondly*, to achieve enhanced economic interactions including investment and trade, science and technology, tourism, etc. with Southeast Asian countries, and
- *Thirdly*, to strengthened the defence and strategic links with these countries to achieve better understanding.

The Look East Policy is also a means of reducing India’s internal development disparity. The North Eastern region lags behind in economic development and this gap has widened since independence because of various reasons. The sense of neglect has resulted in various forms of unrest in the region. With the launch of the policy India sees the region not as cul-de-sac (dead end / blind alley) but as a gateway to the East, thereby attempting to link the North Eastern region with South East Asia through a network of pipelines, road, and rail and air connectivity. This is expected to initiate economic development and help the eight North Eastern States to develop infrastructure, communication, trade, investment, logistic, agro-business and other commercial activities.[8] Knowing full well the potential, the North Eastern States strongly support the Look East Policy is believed to be the new mantra for development of the North Eastern region. India’s Look East Policy represents its efforts to cultivate extensive economic and strategic relations with the nations of South East Asia in order to bolster its standing as a regional power and counterweight to the strategic influence of the People’s Republic of China. One of its areas of concern is facilitating development in land-locked North East India by cooperation with South East Asian countries. This Look East Policy is economic integration with the East and South East Asia.

In between, in July 2011, the then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited India and advocated for India to play stronger role in the Asia-Pacific. She coined the term ‘Act East’ instead of just ‘Looking East’. [9] Look East Policy got a momentum in the same direction under the Modi government as External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj confirmed in 2014 that New Delhi is now willing to “Act East”. [10] Under the “Act East Policy”, India not only expected to bolster its economic engagements with the region; it yearned to emerge as a potential security balancer as well. [11] In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirms to the world leaders, including the then US President Barack Obama, that his government accorded high priority to turn India’s erstwhile “Look East Policy” into an “Act East Policy”. [12] Modi remarked in his address to the East Asia Summit in the Myanmar’s capital Nay Pyi Taw that, “Since entering office six months ago, my government has moved with a great sense of priority and speed to turn our ‘Look East Policy’ into ‘Act East Policy’.” [13] Prime Minister Modi’s tour of Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Mongolia, Japan, Myanmar, Vietnam, South Korea, Singapore, as well as Japanese Prime Minister’s visit to India has brought the Government’s Act East Policy into focus, with Modi stressing on the need to have closer relations with the East and South East Asian nations. It aims at the effective implementation of the ‘Look East Policy’ by developing better relations with the South East Asian nations through bilateral talks, trade and economic ties.

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

The “Act East Policy” focus is economic and security integration and focused area increased to South East Asia plus East Asian countries. The main objectives of “Act East Policy” are to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at regional, bilateral and multilateral levels; to increase the interaction of North Eastern Indian states with other neighbouring countries: to find out the alternative of the traditional business partners like – more focus on the Pacific countries in addition to the South East Asian countries; to curb the increasing impact of China in the ASEAN region. [14]

For India the centrality of ASEAN and South East Asia is essential for peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. Its engagement with the 10 nation bloc is at the core of New Delhi’s strategic perspective for the region and it’s “Act East Policy”. ASEAN and India are the natural partners that share geographical, historical and civilizational ties. India places ASEAN at the heart of its ‘Act East Policy’ and centre of the dream of an Asian country. India was making efforts on all fronts to enhance physical and digital connectivity with ASEAN. The “Act East Policy” has placed emphasis on India-ASEAN cooperation in India’s domestic agenda on infrastructure, manufacturing, trade skill, urban renewal, smart cities, Make in India and other initiatives. India’s connectivity and economic integration with South East Asia and the far East initiatives to secure the ‘Act East Policy’ with particular focus on Indian States in the North East, as well as concerns of increasing Chinese influence in the region. The ‘Act East Policy’ is now going beyond the immediate neighbours to Indo-Pacific, has now become a significant foreign policy initiatives. According to analysts, India’s consistent reach is pertinent in the backdrop of China’s outreach across the globe. As reinventing foreign policy to gain the strategic advantage, India’s Act East Policy is very important and the strategic content in India’s ‘Act East Policy’ can be easily ascertained from ASEAN members.

## VI. INDIA’S ACT EAST POLICY AND 3 C’s FORMULA FOR NORTH EASTERN REGION OF INDIA

The Northeast is the home to 3.8 percent of the national population, occupies about 8 percent of India’s total geographical area and is strategically important with over 5,300 km [15] of international borders has 95 percent of its boundaries surrounded by – China, Nepal, and Bhutan in the North, Bangladesh in the South-West and Myanmar in the East. In the past history, the mighty Himalayas in the North always kept India physically aloof from China. In the North East, treacherous terrain, militia and ethnic tensions made impossible to cross over and conned with China via Myanmar. [16] The North East India, a narrow chicken’s neck corridor connects it with the rest of India, and infrastructure connectivity with the mainland as well as the bordering countries needs upgradation for which large investment are needed.

In the recent past year’s India’s growing and evolving relations with South East Asia, it has become imperative that North Eastern region of India would be the pivot of the overall “Look East Policy” given its geographic proximity and socio-cultural and historic ties with the South East Asian region. The main aspects of Look East Policy and North Eastern region have emerged over the year are as follows:

- [1] Connectivity and Physical Infrastructure that help in facilitating trade
- [2] Trade and investment protocols
- [3] Shortfalls in operationalisation of existing assets and facilities
- [4] Soft aspects of bilateral and multilateral relationships such as in tourism and enhanced people to people interaction through sports, culture, academic and medical research, etc. [17]

On July, 2008, Manmohan Singh the Prime Minister of India released the “North Eastern Region Vision 2020”, a document which identified various challenges as well as the strategies required to bring about peace and prosperity in the North Eastern region by 2020. The vision 2020 is based on the development strategy–

- [1] Empowerment of people;
- [2] Creation of development opportunities;
- [3] Developing sectors with comparative advantage;
- [4] Capacity development of the people and institutions;
- [5] Creating a hospitable investment climate;
- [6] Significant investment in both public and private sectors; [18]

India’s “Act East Policy” trajectory towards North East region is shifted. The Act East Policy along with several initiatives launched by New Delhi for rapid economic development of the country ‘Make in India’, ‘Skill India’,

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

'Digital India', promoting energy security, creating infrastructure, and building smart cities can be considered as a strategic plan to generate greater flexibility and political space to contend with the increasing confidence in the region.[19] Prime Minister Narendra Modi has categorically said that the North East would be at the centre of the Act East Policy, whose three key features are connectivity, culture and commerce.[20] The India's Act East Policy is relying on the 3 C's, that is, Culture, Connectivity and Commerce to develop better relations with ASEAN nations. Sushma Swaraj said that these are important markers in our engagement with Southeast Asia, in enhancing our strategic ties with ASEAN across 3 Cs. These 3Cs are Commerce, Connectivity and Culture. [21] The objective of Act East Policy 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 connectivity to the states of North Eastern Region. The Act East Policy recognizes the importance of the North East of India as the gateway of the East countries and it is an extended corridor for growth, progress and prosperity of India thus the development of the North Eastern region is a priority in the policy. The Act East Policy along with several initiatives launched by New Delhi for rapid economic development of the country 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Digital India', promoting energy security, creating infrastructure, and building smart cities can be considered as a strategic plan to generate greater flexibility and political space to contend with the increasing confidence in the region. In addition, the Act East Policy serves for the purposes of strong trade and business ties with the South East Asian countries and development opportunities to the North East States of India.

The year 2017 marks twenty-five years of dialogue partnership, fifteen years of summit-level relations, and five years of strategic partnership between India and ASEAN. India is widely considered to play a major role in the region and is one of the key stakeholders in the emerging security dynamics of the South and East Asia. As a result Look East Policy or Act East Policy it has been able to mark itself as a nation of economic, diplomatic and strategic consequence in the region.[22] Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the 15<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit on 14 November, 2017 at Manila, Philippines. The significant initiatives announced during the Summit were as –

- [1] Enhance our strategic partnership by designating security and economic cooperation in maritime domain as a focus area,
- [2] Offer of joint exercises and fleet views of ASEAN countries and India,
- [3] Offer of coordinated patrols to address traditional and non-traditional maritime threats and undertake exercise to effectively coordinate our response to natural disasters,
- [4] Offer of Stepping up our economic cooperation in shares maritime domain by enhancing maritime connectivity and by working towards a Protocol on Blue Economy,
- [5] organise a Start up Festival in India to encourage digital commerce among ASEAN-India youth,
- [6] Organise an ASEAN-India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) on them, 'Ancient Route, New Journey: Diaspora in the Dynamic ASEAN-India Partnership",
- [7] Host a Business Summit and an ASEAN-India Business Council event in January 2018,
- [8] Host ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit in India and
- [9] Host the first working group meeting on Civil Aviation at New Delhi. [23]

## VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF 3C'S FORMULA OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

It is understood that the objective of Act East Policy 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 connectivity to the states of North Eastern Region. The Act East Policy recognizes the importance of the North East of India as the gateway of the East countries and it is an extended corridor for growth, progress and prosperity of India thus the development of the North Eastern region is a priority in the policy. The North East would be at the centre of the Act East Policy, whose three key features are connectivity, culture and commerce. The India's Act East Policy is relying on the 3 C's, that is, Culture, Connectivity and Commerce to develop better relations with ASEAN nations through North East. These are important markers in our engagement with South East Asia, in enhancing our strategic ties with ASEAN across 3 Cs. These 3Cs are Commerce, Connectivity and Culture which are discussed below:

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

## VII.A. CULTURE

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj remarked: “We are in South Asia and they are in South East Asia. So we cannot become part of their region geographically. But we have common cultural link that is not just mere connection, but a living link. Buddhism and Ramayana connect us with the region. Indonesia, which in the biggest Muslim nation in terms of population, has the most famous Ramayana.”[24] There is an immense shared cultural and traditional heritage especially between North East and South East Asia that need to be explored in order to strengthen the linkage between the two geographical regions.[25] Festivals are a great source of happiness and a celebration of belonging to a community. The South East Asian countries have so much in common with the North Eastern part of India. [26] Asian countries and North Eastern region of India bond over the similarities they share with one another in terms of culture and heritage. The festival of Rongali Bihu in Assam, Sanken in Arunachal Pradesh, Pi Mai in Lao PDR, Songkran in Thailand are threaded together by being rooted in same culture and traditional practices. This sameness creates feeling of oneness with one another and is vector for forging strong ties between the two regions. [27] By cultural connection, India will nourish the growing relationship with ASEAN. Buddhist and Hindu links could be deepening of flowing bonds between peoples. Common ties of Buddhism and culture, a shared history of colonialisation etc. are used in the Act East Policy rhetoric to build a sense of togetherness. The most positive aspect by which India can project its power abroad is through the projection of its softpower, it is already India massively successful in projecting Yoga abroad. [28] India is home to Buddhism. Many of the countries of ASEAN are heavily influenced by Buddhism. By educating the people of the region about our common cultural heritage we can unify and help form close economic collaboration between North East India and South East Asian nations. North East India houses many important Buddhist sites and important monasteries. The path of the Buddha can be traced from Arunachal Pradesh to Myanmar and beyond. India could then utilize the Buddhist heritage circuits, so that there is an increase in the Asian pilgrims annually. In this regard, the festival can be organized that celebrate North East tribes, music, dance, food, art, local culture and religious philosophies, languages, etc. Corresponding, the foreign entities can show how they can contribute positively to the life of the people in the North East States. Through the cultural collaborations it has to be used as an ice-breaker to create the foundation for big-ticket investment.

## VII.B. CONNECTIVITY

Strengthening Connectivity, including land, air and sea connectivity, with ASEAN is one of the objectives of India and ASEAN member states. Regular exchanges take place between ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and India on Connectivity. [29] The North Eastern region has been a priority in the government’s “Act East Policy” which envisages itself as an interface between India’s North Eastern and the ASEAN region. The progress of the North Eastern India is at heart of the Act East Policy.[30] The Act East Policy requires increased people to people contact, trade ties and other relations with countries and India’s East, particularly Association of South East Asian Nations. The greater connectivity and economic integration of India’s North East with its Eastern neighbours is to be considering a key focus area for growth and development of the region.[31] The Act East Policy benefits the North Eastern people living in Border States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Assam because they are divided by the international boundaries. All the necessary infrastructures should be placed at border towns for citizens to avail all the travel facilities. The Indian visitors should be allowed to visit all the ASEAN countries without many restrictions.[32] It is aimed at ensuring the overall development of North Eastern states in terms of people to people contact, border trade through border haats, cultural ties, infrastructure projects, for example, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project, Rhi-Tiddin road project, Morch-Silchar-Siliguri regional network, etc.[33] BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) have signed a pact of movement of goods and vehicle among them. Initiating like building transport, highways, waterways encouraging airways are been taken to enhance connectivity between East countries and North East part of our country part. Budhi Gandaki Dam – Nepal, Myitsone Dam – Myanmar are a part of increasing connectivity with ASEAN nations. [34] Major road construction and connecting with state capitals of the region with railways and airport should be given to priority. The proposed road will connect Kolkata of India to Kunming of China and it will pass through the different cities of Bangladesh and Bhutan.

## International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

The UDAN-RCS (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik-Regional Connectivity Scheme), “Let the common citizen of the country fly” [35] is scheme of government of India on regional air connectivity to link Guwahati with all the ASEAN countries. The centre was working of enhancing connectivity between the North East and South East Asia and if link the North East with South East Asia by air, water and rail connectivity, the North East will grow at an “unimaginable pace”. [36] Professor Jagdish Mukhi Governor of Assam said the centre was working on an “ambitious plan” to boost the economic growth of the resource-rich North East. Among the steps being considered was the linking of the region through land, air and water with the “vibrant economies” of the South East Asia, in sync with India’s Act East Policy. The centre is considering linking Guwahati with all major South East Asian nations by flight services as part of plan to improve connectivity to the North East and boost the region’s trade prospects.[37] It is recently ‘Drukair’ to introduce that the passengers flight service from Guwahati to will now be able to fly direct and non-stop to Singapore. Drukair, Royal Bhutan Air line, launch its inaugural flight for its new route from Guwahati to Singapore and vice versa on September 1 and the scheduled regular commercial flights will begin from September 29, 2018. This new route would offer traveller from Assam and the North East non-stop flights to Singapore and back. The launch of new route by the airlines is as per the existing Air Service Agreement signed between New Delhi and Thimphu and the inaugural event would be held coinciding with 50 years of diplomatic relation between India and Bhutan.

People-to-people connectivity is high on India-ASEAN agenda. Several projects on people to people connectivity are held annually to increase interaction between India and ASEAN community. Projects which have been carried out on this front are–

- [ 1]. ASEAN-India Network on Think Tanks: ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks Roundtable, established since 2009-10, held its 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia on 6-7 January, 2018. The meeting was composed of 5 sessions of topics, apart from inaugural sessions addressed by EAM Sushma Swaraj of India, Foreign Minister of Indonesia and Secretary General of ASEAN:- Session I: Maritime security and cooperation, Session II: Services, trade and investment, Session III: Cultural heritage, Session IV: Educational Cooperation, Session V: Way Forward: AEC 2025 and India, the meeting made far reaching recommendations for future follow-up.
- [2]. Exchange of Parliamentarians: Indian Parliamentary delegations have been regularly attending the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) since 2010.
- [3]. ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme: Forty media personal visit AMS and India annually under ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme.
- [4]. Students Exchange Programme: A students Exchange Programme has also been institutionalized under which 250 ASEAN Students visit India annually from ASEAN member States.
- [5]. ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Lecture Series: AIEPLS is an annually event where Eminent Persons from ASEAN Countries and deliver lectures on topic of relevance and similarly Eminent persons from India visit the ASEAN members States to deliver the lectures.
- [6]. Special Course for ASEAN Diplomats: Annually 30 ASEAN Diplomats including 3 Officials from the ASEAN Secretariat are provided special training at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in New Delhi. [38]

Some recent decisions to enhance connectivity of the North East include a 4,000 km long ring road connecting the states; expediting railway projects connecting all states capitals by 2020, and extending to new destinations; border last-mile rail connectivity with Myanmar and restoring rail connectivity with Bangladesh. Twenty port townships are to be developed along the Brahmaputra and Barak river systems to enhance intra-regional connectivity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also proposed the augmentation of air connectivity to and from the region, which will help business ties with the ASEAN. At least 50 economic integration and development nodes are developed across the region, in tandem with transport corridors to boost manufacturing. Connectivity is also being upgraded in the border areas for strategic purposes, with highways and development plans approved for Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur, including a four-lane highway between Dimapur and Kohima.

India-ASEAN cooperation in Tourism Sector is conducted through ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers meeting. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ATM+India meeting in 2012 signed a MoU on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation thereby making India the first Dialogue Partner to sign a MoU on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation with ASEAN. It is envisaged to serve as the key instrument for more action-oriented cooperation, encouraging both parties to cooperate in facilitating travel and tourist visits and further strengthen the close tourism partnership. [39] Development of tourism along North East region

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

directly leads to development of tourism opportunities along North East and also positively compliments the Buddhist Circuit development under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism.

India is now devoting more resources and assigning greater priority to building connectivity in its immediate neighbourhood, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has said on 28 August, 2018, amidst sash-rich China pushing its 'Belt and Road Initiative' in the region. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Indian Ocean Conference in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi, she said that in an interdependent world characterized by enhanced economic and trade linkage, the importance of sustainable use of the ocean resources cannot be overstated. Elaborating India's approach, it focuses on developing hinterland linkages and regional connectivity. Indian Government's 'Sagarmala' project, initiatives have taken include building new ports and modernizing old ones, developing inland waterways and hinterland development are all aimed at a robust maritime logistic infrastructure.[40] Carrying focus beyond Indian borders, India is today devoting more resources and assigning greater priority to building connectivity, contacts and cooperation in the country's immediate neighbourhood. The recent agreement with Indonesia to develop port infrastructure in 'Sabong' is yet another step in this direction. India is also putting renewed emphasis in the 'Act East Policy' and the new 'Think West Policy' towards West Asia and Gulf region. The Act East Policy is at heart of India eastward orientation and ties in with our borders approach to the Indo-Pacific.

On 30 August, 2018, in the inaugural address session of the 4<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit, 2018 in Kathmandu (Nepal) the Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "I believe that there is a big opportunity for connectivity – trade connectivity, economic connectivity, transport connectivity, digital connectivity, and people-to-people connectivity." It is making a strong pitch for enhanced regional connectivity. With an eye on boosting connectivity among the BIMSTEC nations, Kathmandu Declaration 2018 agreed that the Master Plan on Transport Connectivity would serve as a strategic document that guides actions and promotes synergy among various connectivity frameworks, such as the ASEAN master plan on Connectivity 2025. [41] It is important that India's North East region will have a vital role to enhance connectivity with the BIMSTEC States. India is already to host BIMSTEC start-up conclave to enhance communication and connectivity among the entrepreneurs on the member nations. Interestingly, North East India was with flavor of the season in Kathmandu, with Prime Minister presenting gifts from the North East to the heads of States. On the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit PM presented the BIMSTEC leaders gifts from India's North Eastern States. Made from golden muga silk, eri silk and cotton, the gifts comprised stoles and shawls depicting traditional motifs from North Eastern States and Kantha embroidery of West Bengal. The underscore the development potential of our North East region through enhance connectivity and trade and commerce in BIMSTEC region, including cultural and civilization ties.

## VII.C. COMMERCE

India is increasing its trade relations with the members of ASEAN countries and is also in the process of negotiating Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with rest of East Asia and Oceanic countries. [42] In the recent year government of India is doing its best to counter the China's string of pearls policy. BCIM-EC (Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar – Economic Corridor) is also a part of Act East Policy which will increase tourism in North East States of Indian as well as India will have access to North East Asian countries. [43] India's Act East Policy is to combat China's factors due to its growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region (South China Sea) through the policy of OBOR (One Belt One Road). So it becomes important for India to engage Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore in maritime trade. The strategic location of Indonesia remains a key player in the South East Asian states being the largest archipelago state with vast coastline, islands and total area including Exclusive Economic Zones and most importantly its proximity to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Malacca Strait, India has interest in joining MSP (Malacca Strait Patrol) a four nation arrangement between Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand for exchange of intelligence and coordinated air and sea patrols through Malacca Straits.[44] India's Act Eat Policy increased naval cooperation with members of ASEAN countries. India regularly participates in various armed forces exercise in the region such as India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) exercise of Indonesia, Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) of Singapore, etc.

Financing of India-ASEAN Project under Plan of Action (POA), India-ASEAN functional cooperation is financed under the funds–



# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

- [1]. ASEAN-India Fund: India announced a contribution of USD 50 million to ASEAN-India Fund at the 14<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit in 2016, to support implementation of the ASEAN-India Plan of Action 2016-20.
- [2]. ASEAN-India Science & Technology Fund: Set up in 2007 with an initial corpus of US\$ 1 million, this fund was increased to US\$ 5 million in the 13<sup>th</sup> Summit in 2015.
- [3]. ASEAN-India Green Fund: This fund was also established in 2017 with US\$ 5 million for funding pilot projects to promote adaptation and mitigation technologies in the field of climate change.
- [4]. ASEAN-India Project Development Fund: A Rs. 500 crores Special Purpose Vehicle, later designated as project Development Fund, was announced at the 12<sup>th</sup> India-ASEAN Summit at Nay Pee Taw, Myanmar in 2014 to develop manufacturing hubs in CLMV countries.[45]

India invites ASEAN members to participate in the International Solar Alliance. A committee “ASEAN INDIA TRADE NEGOTIATION” has been formulated to look into the ASEAN-India Trade in Good Agreement. This committee is formulated with aim to make stronger with ASEAN with ASEAN members.[46] “Act East Policy requires increased people to people contact, trade ties and other relations with countries on India’s East, particularly ASEAN countries”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the Assam-Global Investor Summit’18 in Guwahati. The prosperity of people living in North East is the key to India’s growth story gathering speed. Whether it’s the ASEAN countries, Bangladesh, Bhutan or Nepal, we are act in one way or another, dominantly agrarian economies – so the unity of our farmers these regions can propel us to new heights – he added. [47] Will gain immensely, in the 2018 budget about Rs. 1,300 crores allocated for the restructuring of the “National Bamboo Mission” the people of the North East, especially its farmers. It also praised Assam for being ranked first among the North Eastern states in the ‘Ease of Doing Business’ report.

The ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement signed in August 2009 has paved the way for the creation of one of the largest FTAs. The ASEAN-India Trade-in-Service and Investment Agreement have also come into force in July 2015. With the signing of these Agreements, the ASEAN-India FTA is now complete. ASEAN-India trade for 2016-2017 rebounded USD 70 billion after a period of stagnant growth due to global slowdown of trade. Cumulative FDI inflows into India from ASEAN in between April 2000 to December 2016 are US\$ 54.97 billion. The major sources of FDI from ASEAN countries are Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. Cumulative FDI outflows from India to ASEAN countries, from April 2007 to march 2015 was about US\$ 38.67 billion with Singapore being at the top of the list, followed by Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar.[48] India and ASEAN have very good bilateral trade of US 71.6 billion in 2016-17. The share of bilateral trade with ASEAN is almost 10 percent of India’s total trade. ASEAN is a very strong economic bloc which has combine population of 644 million, combined GDP of \$ 2.7 trillion and Per Capita Income \$ 4,200. The combination of India and ASEAN, they have \$5 trillion economy, the third largest in the world after the China and USA. [49] The following diagram will indicate the growth opportunity of India with the 10 ASEAN counties of their total export and import system (all figures in \$ million):

Country	Total Export		Total Import	
	2016-2017	2017-18(Apr-Oct)	2016-2017	2017-18(Apr-Oct)
<b>Brunei</b>	42.88	29.88	627.85	286.56
<b>Cambodia</b>	105.06	64.15	36.10	29.68
<b>Indonesia</b>	3488.12	1982.48	13,427.99	9,402.25
<b>Laos</b>	25.72	11.24	207.38	125.27
<b>Malaysia</b>	5,244.86	2,788.34	8,933.59	5,211.17
<b>Myanmar</b>	1,107.89	511.19	1,067.25	540.28
<b>Philippines</b>	1,482.52	900.85	494.62	465.15
<b>Singapore</b>	9,564.48	5,623.90	7,086.57	4,038.78
<b>Thailand</b>	3,133.44	1978.47	5,415.40	3,916.55
<b>Vietnam</b>	6,786.56	4,236.23	3,320.56	2,573.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,961</b>	<b>18,126.72</b>	<b>40,617.31</b>	<b>26,588.92</b>
<b>India’s Total</b>	<b>275,851.71</b>	<b>166,469.58</b>	<b>384,355.55</b>	<b>257,527.60</b>
<b>Percent Share</b>	<b>11.22</b>	<b>10.88</b>	<b>10.56</b>	<b>10.32</b>

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

Source: Internet source

The above table shows that the India's export and import with all the 10 ASEAN countries. During 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 India's export highest share was seen with Singapore, but India's import share in the 2016-2017 was robust with Indonesia of the ASEAN member. Interestingly, India is creating good economic relation in the recent year; it is increasing import capacity with Indonesia in the year 2017-2018 (Apr-Oct).

In order to harness the benefit of the Act East Policy, India has upgraded its relations to strategic partnership with Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and forged close ties with all the countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Jamshyd N Godrej Co-Chairman, addressing the 11th of the 'India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue 2018 (ISSD)' (Singapore) public forum organized by the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) said that India's Act East Policy has drawn investments from Japan, South Korea and China, the East Asian industrial power houses. The Act East Policy promotes economic cooperation, cultural ties and develops strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. The policy focuses on the seven North Eastern states of India and provides enhanced connectivity to these states, including Arunachal Pradesh, with other countries in the neighbourhood. "We are seeing a lot of investments coming from this region (into India)", he added, referring to Japan, South Korea and China. India is looking towards the region from a trade perspective and as a source of capital. India is certainly poised for rapid growth in every sector especially in infrastructure building. Underline the importance of Singapore as financial and trade destination for Indian businesses. [50] Singapore's Ambassador at large, Tommy Koh stressed on the importance of India's partnership with the ASEAN. ASEAN and India are important economic partner, prospects for the combined India-ASEAN markets, with about 2 billion people, are very bright. For intensified cooperation between India and ASEAN the two partner underperforming. The bilateral trade has grown up very substantially from a low of USD 2.9 billion in 1993 to USD 59 billion currently. Comparatively, the bilateral trade between ASEAN and China is 10 times bigger. India accounts for 2.6 percent of ASEAN external trade when china accounts for 15 percent.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The India's 'Act East Policy' which focuses on the extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region. The Policy which was originally conceived as an economic initiative, has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions including establishment of institutional mechanism for dialogue and cooperation. The country worked with the vision that India's growth story will pick up speedier only when the North East region developed at the same pace in a balance manner. The progress of the North East region will be able to lead vast section of population towards prosperity. The India's Act East Policy is a step ahead of Look East Policy of India and for the North Eastern Region. If, it's implemented as per the planning of the government then the objectives of the Act East Policy will give desired results for the North East States of India and the whole of the Country. It can be witnessed in the persistent delays in the completion of two key infrastructure projects: the India (Moreh) - Myanmar (Bagan) - Thailand (Mae Sot) Trilateral Highway, with the goal of eventually extending to Cambodia and Vietnam and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit project, connecting the port of Kolkata and Sittwe which in the long run can impact the development efforts in the North East region. There is a need to fast track all the development projects in the region. India recently highlights that the Trilateral Highway Project likely to be completed by 2019, the two crucial projects connecting North East with the neighbouring South East Asia. Interestingly, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Commerce and industry, in its recent report, appreciated the work under taken Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for smooth road connectivity, particularly with Myanmar, but added that much needs to be done in this direction since physical infrastructure, including road, rail, and air connectivity, is a serious problem in the North East States. The Committee also recommended early completion of the projects as roads are the real facilitator to transport, connectivity and trade. Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland are important states for connectivity with the North East. Transformational policies and supportive governments in these states could enable the government at the centre to roll out development schemes and infrastructure projects quickly, as has been the case with Assam. It might help to develop a collective focus on inter-state boundary disputes and other ethnic conflicts within the North East States, and also a common approach towards enhancing connectivity and trade facilitation with ASEAN.

# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(A High Impact Factor, Monthly, Peer Reviewed Journal)

Visit: [www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Vol. 7, Issue 9, September 2018

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ganguly, Sumit. 'India's Foreign Policy Retrospect and Prospect', Published in India by: Oxford University Press, Printed in India by: Repro Knowledge Cast Limited, Thane, pp.107- 123. 2018.
- [2] Dutt, V.P., 'India's Foreign Policy in a Changing World'. Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. Printed in India, pp. 237-238. (2016).
- [3] Kalita, Sanghamitra. 'India's act east policy and north-east: Prospects and Challenges', International Journal of Advanced Research and Development. Vol.3, Issue1, pp. 268-270. 2018
- [4] Laxmikanth, M., 'Indian Polity' Published by: McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited, p. 70.4. (2016).
- [5] Paul, Kripesh Chandra., Paul, Nita & Konwer, Shubhrajee, 'Contemporary World Politics', Published by: Smt. Jolly Guha, Arun Prakashan, Guwahati, pp. 68-69, (2011).
- [6] Mir, Javid Ahmad. 'India's Look East Policy: Its Evolution, Objective and Approach', International Journal for Social Studies, Volume 3, Issue 4, pp. 8-18, March (2017)
- [7] Khashimwo, Pamreiher., 'India's Act East Policy and the Northeast Region: Role of Connectivity Boost, Skill Development, and Capacity Building in Northeast Region', The Morung Express. 17 May (2018).
- [8] Singh, Lairenjam Niranjana., 'Geo-Politics & Role of Skill Development in India's Act East Policy', (Article is carried in the July-August 2017 issue of India Foundation Journal). (2017).
- [9] Devare, Amb. Sudhir T. (Editor). 'India's Look East-Act East Policy: A Bridge to the Asian Neighbourhood', International Conference: Symbiosis Institute of International Studies. pp. 1-66. (2014)
- [10] Goswami, Namrata. 'Act East Policy: Northeast India as a Strategic Catalyst', CLAWS Journal, Institute Defence Studies and Analyse, New Delhi. pp. 70-83. (2015)
- [11] Khanna, V.C. 'Review: Look East to Act East Policy: Implications for India's Northeast', China Report 53,1 (2017), SAGE Publication. pp. 61-64. (2017)
- [12] Sajjanhar, Ashok. 'Taking Stock of India's Act East Policy', ORF Observer Research Foundation: Issue, Volume-142, pp. 1-6. (2016).
- [13] Haokip, Thongkholal. 'India's Look East Policy and Northeast India', Thesis submitted for the Degree of Philosophy to North-Eastern Hill University, department of Political Science, pp. 1-10. (2010).
- [14] Nath & Kumar. 'India's Look/Act East Policy and the Northeast region: A critical Perspective', Space and Culture, India. pp. 7-20. (2017).
- [15] Bajpae, Chietigj. 'Dephasing India's Look East/Act East Policy', Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs. 39(2):348-378. (2017).
- [16] Horam, Mungreishang. 'Northeast India's engagement with Myanmar and its impact on India's Act East Policy'. International Research Journal of Social Sciences. Volume6 (12), pp. 16-19 December (2017)
- [17] Sundaram, A. 'Look East Policy', International Journal of Advancements in Research & Technology, Volume 2, Issue 5, pp. 169-185, May (2013).
- [18] Surjitkumar, N. 'India's Act East Policy: Problems and Prospects for North-East India', Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, Two Days National Seminar, 12-13 February (2016).
- [19] Dubey, Rajeev. 'Northeast India in India's Look East Policy: Constraints and Opportunities', Social Research Foundation. pp. 120-128. 2(2) July-December (2014).
- [20] Pulipaka, Sanjay., Singh, Antara Ghosal & Sircar, Saranya.(Editors) 'India and Connecting Framework', Delhi Policy Group: Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power. pp. 1-72. (2017).
- [21] Das, Gurudas. & Thomas C. Joshua. ' Look East to Act East Policy', Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi. pp. 238- 248
- [22] Sikri, Rajiv. 'India's Look East Policy', Journal: Asia-Pacific Review, Volume 16, Issue 1, pp. 131-145. (2009)
- [23] [www.theassamtribune.com](http://www.theassamtribune.com)
- [24] [www.timesofindia.com](http://www.timesofindia.com)