

**ICFAI INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR**

**25<sup>th</sup> -26<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2017**

**LOOK EAST AND ACT EAST POLICY:  
A CRITICAL REVIEW OF EVIDENCES FOR  
N.E.INDIA**

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# Look East Policy (LEP): Why a separate foreign policy for India?

- A separate foreign policy for India was needed due to the economic recession, BOP crisis in 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union also leaves an economic vacuum for India.

- The main objective of Look East Policy (LEP) was to foster economic integration with South East Asia. India saw the rapid economic development of its neighbouring countries and also saw that India was lagging behind.

# Sub Regional Corporations

- India initiated the sub-regional grouping with a view to strengthen and reinforce the Look East policy.

BIMSTEC

- Later on, the geographical focus of India was shifted to South East Asia primarily due to the success of these economies, specifically the Asian Tigers.

# Act East Policy (AEP):

- AEP was not just a rebranding of the LEP but it carried a significant message with it that India is willing to play a more active and strategic role, exemplified by enhanced defence diplomacy in Asia and Southeast Asia.

# North East India

- Even though Look East Policy had been part of India's Foreign Policy since early 1990s, a North East perspective emerged at the official level only in October, 2007.

# Review of Evidences for N.E India

- The participation of the north eastern state governments or institutions in the Look East policy is nearly non-existent.
- Surprisingly, in the policy documents, there is barely any mention of the tourism sector, which has a huge potential for the development of the Northeast.

- The psychological disconnect of the policymakers with the region can also be seen when the village of Mawlynnong in Meghalaya, Asia's cleanest village, is absent from the much promoted Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- There has been an emphasis on developing the infrastructure of the region by widening the roads, extending railway networks etc. Such activities have serious implications on the use and extraction of resources from the region and leads to occasional changes in the composition of the labour market and mobility.

- The non-reconciliation of issues involving identities and citizenships.
- The unavailability of skilled labour for infrastructural activities in the region poses a further problem.

- The NE region was exposed to a massive scale of international trade during the 19th century but its impact if any, on the economy was very negligible. This is a sad lesson from the past history of the region.

- **The crucial problems of development faced by the region are the lack of intra-regional as well as intra-state connectivity infrastructure.**
- **The crux of the problem of development is therefore not the lack of integration with the booming East and the Southeast Asian markets but lack of development of the region.**

# Best Policy Responses:

- The first important step is to build up the population skill base.
- The state authorities need to break down the parallel governments run by insurgency groups
- Given the nature of the terrain, the intra-state roads need to be maintained on a monthly basis.
- Restricted Area Permit (RAP) must be revoked on a permanent basis.

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- Assessment of the goods to be traded should be made, especially those that are required across the border like locally made textiles and woven tribal items.
- There is an urgent requirement to increase well trained and effective border policing.

# Concluding Remark

- Mere facilitation of trade through the region with the neighbouring countries will have only marginal impact on the economy unless the government '**Act Northeast**' before '**Act East**'.

THANK YOU