

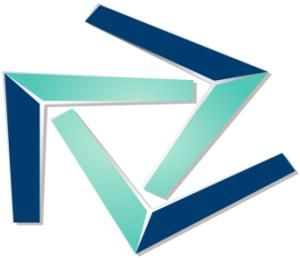
### Foreign Policy imperative

India's 'look east policy' which was formulated in 1991 on the heels of India's economic liberalization, was a foreign economic policy initiative towards South East Asia. The Northeast which is geographically situated between mainland India and Southeast Asia is supposed to have had immense developmental benefits as a result of this initiative and hence, have synergy effects on reducing poverty in the region; as well as on insurgency and armed conflict. The region's diverse natural resources, rich bio-diversity and enormous hydro-electricity potential, among others, could also help to overcome the widespread feeling of backwardness among the inhabitants of the Northeast. But there is also increasing argument made that the impact of increased introduction of market imperatives in the traditional society of the region would have irreversible impact on the people's culture and life and it would also lead to increased settlement of mainland people to the northeast. Thereby it is of high importance, that the announced opening will take place in a regulated frame and through cooperation with the local people, otherwise it could aggravate the tensions between the center and the region.

The government has also faced criticism in the way in which it has been looking at the Northeast as an issue of territorial security rather than development per say. The fear of a growing Chinese influence, as well as, increasing cross-border terrorism (Myanmar, Bangladesh) in the region are some of the factors cited as reasons for limiting India in its attempt to open the region.

### ACT EAST POLICY -

India's Act East Policy focusses 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 mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. India has upgraded its relations to strategic partnership with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, Singapore and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and forged close ties with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Further, apart from ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS), India has also been actively engaged in regional fora such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Indian Ocean Rim



Association (IORA). Act East Policy has placed emphasis on India-ASEAN cooperation in our domestic agenda on infrastructure, manufacturing, trade, skills, urban renewal, smart cities,

Make in India and other initiatives. Connectivity projects, cooperation in space, S&T and people-to-people exchanges could become a springboard for regional integration and prosperity.

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 enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region including Arunanchal Pradesh with other countries in our neighbourhood. The North East of India has been a priority in our Act East Policy (AEP). AEP provides an interface between North East India including the state of Arunachal Pradesh and the ASEAN region. Various plans at bilateral and regional levels include steady efforts to develop and strengthen connectivity of Northeast with the ASEAN region through trade, culture, people-to-people contacts and physical infrastructure (road, airport, telecommunication, power, etc.). Some of the major projects include Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, Rhi-Tiddim Road Project, Border Haats, etc.

Why act east policy –

1. Rise of China and its ever increasing clouts in the India's neighbourhood
2. the failure of SAARC to actualise the South Asian Economic Union. South Asia trades much more with the rest of the world than within the region
3. The ASEAN region, along with India, together comprises combined population of 1.85 billion people, which is one fourth of the global population. Their combined GDP has been estimated to be over US\$3.8 trillion. Investment from ASEAN to India has been over US\$70 billion in the last seventeen years, accounting for more than 17 percent of India's total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).