

Look East Policy

India's Look East Policy is an effort to cultivate extensive economic and strategic relations with the nations of South East Asia. To stand as a regional power and counterweight the influence of People's Republic of China, It started in 1991, developed and executed during the government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1991-1996) and pursued by the successive governments of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004) and Manmohan Singh (2004-2014)

The main aim of this policy is developing political contacts, increasing economic integration with the countries of South East Asia.

India took a fresh look at this foreign policy just after the financial

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crisis of 1971. India's Look East Policy identifies North East India as the gateway to the East and is one of the major initiative undertaken by the government of India. The Look East Policy initiated in 1991 is the product of post cold war global conditions. The main objectives of this policy are to develop close, economic as well as strategic relations with the countries of this region and to avail better opportunities of markets, capital and technology for the rapid and sustained economic growth of the country.

This policy has been implemented in two phases.

① The first phase covers the period from 1991 - 2003.

During this period the policy mainly focussed on the development of trade and investment link with the members of ASEAN

(2) The second phase of this policy covers the period from 2003. The content has been set broadly and it focuses both on ASEAN and non-ASEAN countries of East Asia. Besides economic relations it mainly focuses on deepening the strategic relations in this region.

The main objectives of India's Look East Policy are -

(1) Regional Integration: - India realized that its East Asian neighbours achieved rapid economic growth and that it was lagging behind. So it wanted to expand ties with the high performing economies. India made a three tier approach.

a) To renew political contacts with the ASEAN member nations. (That is to increase trade, investments, science, technology and

Jourism)

1) To make strong defence links so as to strengthen political understanding.

2) Reform and liberalization: - Though the Look East policy is a by product of India's Economic reform and liberalization in 1991, the policy seeks further reforms to liberalize trade and investment for deeper economic integration with East and South East Asian countries. India signed an agreement in the Bali Summit in 2003 to create Free trade and Investment area with ASEAN by 2016.

3) Rapid Economic growth: - After liberalization Look East policy provided a development alternative. It was a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the global economy.

only after the Look East Policy of 1991 that India started giving East and South East Asian Region due importance in the Foreign policy planning. When Indian economy started growing at a higher rate after 1991, India turned its focus for Sustained Rapid growth.

4) Development of the North Eastern Region:

The Look East Policy is also a means of reducing India's internal development disparity.

The North East lag behind in economic development, it was neglected for which there was unrest. With the Look East policy the

North East became a gateway to the East.

This initiated development and help the

North Eastern States to develop their

infrastructure, communication, trade and investment. It is indeed a new approach

to development of the North East.

Conclusion: The Look East Policy is changing to Act-East Policy. Mutual trade, more export items, cultural exchanges are on their way. The Act-East Policy was launched at the East Asia Summit in Myanmar in November 2014. The focus of the Act-East Policy is economic and security integration and focussed area increased to South East Asia plus East Asia.

— 2 —