

CHAPTER: 6

IMPLICATION OF INDO-MYANMAR RELATIONS FOR THE NORTH-EAST

The frontier of a country constitutes a flash point due to its geographical location and it remains dwindle at the climax of good or bad relations between the two neighbouring countries. Following that dichotomy, the Northeast being dwells at the fault line experienced the taste of Indo-Myanmar relations. For most of the years the Northeast encountered more regressive experience due to step-motherly treatment of New Delhi and large existence of insurgency within. The auxiliary to that was restriction of border unlike the European Union or any other close neighbour does because of unknown reason. Most of the engagements between India and Myanmar, in the past, are dealt largely through the maritime route thus the northeast is cornered in cob web from all forms of interaction and integration. This preferential treatment led to pandemic crises such as unemployment, poverty, ethnic conflict and insurgencies across the region. In spite that no strong measure is undertaken by the New Delhi and in fallout the northeast started reeling at the mercy of invisible threats. This alienation suffered the Northeast and also hamstrings India to have constructive and cooperative engagement with Myanmar. Thus in early 1990s India underwent a paradigm shift in its foreign policy, particularly on re-energizing both bilateral and multilateral engagement with Myanmar. Since then the northeast issue have come to a center of discussion and slowly initiative for infrastructural development embarks though it is far less than expectation of the region. Piously it can describe that this reform brought transformation in the northeast and it is a result of bonhomie between India and Myanmar. The chapter thus briefly highlights the northeast, socio-economic condition in the past, geophysical importance, and the implication of Indo-Myanmar relations for the India's northeast.

6.1. A Brief Sketch of Northeast India

The Northeast India comprises of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, and it is commonly known as the 'seven sisters'⁸⁶⁵ but with the addition of Sikkim into the fold it is now called as 'eight sisters'. The region constitutes roughly of around 7.98 percent of the country's total geographical area and 3.79 percent of the total population of the country.⁸⁶⁶ When the Indian sub-continent was not divided, during the colonial period, the Northeast was an independent territorial area dominated by a mosaic of different ethnic groups. There are more than 200

⁸⁶⁵ Walter Fernandes, Gita Bharali & Vemedo Kezo (2008). The UN indigenous decade in Northeast India. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre, p. 1.

⁸⁶⁶ Roy, Burman B.K. (1970). Demographic and Socio-economic Profiles of the Hill Areas of North East India. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General of India – Eastern Social Research Centre, p. 54.

ethnic groups and an equal number of dialects make it a hugely diverse region.⁸⁶⁷ These ethnic groups have their own distinct social identity but lives in an interdependent society,⁸⁶⁸ and this unity in diversity survives the Northeast a home of multicultural with multidimensional nature and imbibed a true democratic spirit. This land of ‘red river and the blue bill’⁸⁶⁹ was once a time a gateway to connect the world because it especially lies at the crossroad of South, Southeast and Far East Asia. The Silk route passes through Ledo, a small town in upper Assam, and connected to the Yunnan Province of Southern China via Myanmar on one direction and the Indian sub-continent via Bangladesh on other side and led far to the Middle East.⁸⁷⁰ When the British imperial power left India, the Northeast was forcibly integrated within the Indian suzerainty and the demarcation of boundary was made in such a way that the Northeast was cornered into isolation. The Northeast is links to the mainland India with thin chicken neck of just 21 kilometers width through a thread line of Siliguri Corridor. On other side, unlike any other regions it has a long international boundary of approximately 4500 kilometers, which is about 98 per cent of its entire border area, with China in the north, Myanmar in east, Bangladesh in south-west and Bhutan to north-west.⁸⁷¹ Thus the strategic location of the Northeast became a ‘security zone’ and sanctuary of insurgencies.

India’s northeast region is among the most cultural-linguistically rich and diverse regions of all Asia. This is due as much to its position at the cultural-geographical crossroads and, connection with the economic powerhouse regions i.e., East and Southeast Asia, marked the geo-strategic importance of the Northeast. Realizing this fact the Government of India, in recent past, made policies to venture the socio-economic relations with the frontier neighbors, particularly Myanmar while exploiting the natural resources of the northeast. India’s strategy, in aftermath of the cold war, is subserviently to economically integrate northeast with the Southeast Asian countries in prototype of the

⁸⁶⁷ Walter Fernandes ed. (2010). Search for peace with justice: Issues around conflicts in Northeast India. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre.

⁸⁶⁸ Walter Fernandes, Gita Bharali & Vemedo Kezo (2008). Op.cit. p. 1.

⁸⁶⁹ Hem Barua (1954). The red river & the blue hill. Guwahati: Laywer’s Book Stall, p. 1

⁸⁷⁰ P. Stobdan (1993). China’s Forays into Burma-Implication for India. *Strategic Analysis*, XVI (1), p. 30.

⁸⁷¹ Samir Kumar Das (2008). BIMSTEC or the Big Leap Forward for India’s Northeast?. *World Focus*, XXIX (1), p. 17.

European Union rather than immuring them in boredom of disadvantage.⁸⁷² This embankment is to counteract the disadvantage of partition and enable her to liberate on all fronts. The then Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh, in this regard, says that;

“Southeast Asia and India have centuries old ties. People, ideas, trade, art and religion have a long crisscrossed and a timeless thread of civilizations runs through all our centuries and the Northeast people have much sacrifice in this relation.”⁸⁷³

The northeast of India is geographically situated in the eastern range of Himalayas and consists of formidable mountains, rivers and valleys and, this rich natural vegetation construe as the perennial sources for the people of northeast. In recent past, it is hemmed by the effects of modernization and this manifestation has not been harmonized thus the past traditional values and systems become conflict with the modern forces. For instance, two major fallouts was the replacement of traditional rural elite and self-governing system by the emerging economic class structure.⁸⁷⁴ As a result, the major area of concern by and large for the northeast population is the increasing feeling of alienation. Above that failure of New Delhi to recognize the peculiar historical, social and cultural factors of northeast, and more so the development segregation impinges the people. Moreover, the region is also imposed restriction from free movement concerning the security factor and this has created wide ranging suspicion among the people as in the name of security freedom of movement within is curtailed, but allowed large number of outsiders both legally and illegally into the region without check.⁸⁷⁵ Hence a widespread demand for political autonomy embarks as the indigenous population no longer concurs with the New Delhi policy and this demand spill over to widespread insurgent groups.

⁸⁷² V. Suryanarayan (1996). Looking ahead: India and Southeast Asia in the 1990s: New perspectives, new challenges. In Ghoshal, Baladas (ed.), *India and Southeast Asia: Challenges and opportunities*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 14.

⁸⁷³ Manmohan Singh (2009, October 24). *Prime Minister's Statement at the 7th India-ASEAN Summit*. New Delhi: Indian Press Information Bureau.

⁸⁷⁴ V. K. Nayar (1995). India's North East-An Overview. *U. S. I. Journal*, CXXV (522), p. 439.

⁸⁷⁵ Thongkholal Haokip (2015). *India's Look East Policy and the Northeast*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, p. XIV.

Moreover, there was an awareness campaign for modern education to break this alienation. The first priority to wrestle this pandemonium action requires honesty and sincerity of purpose backed by a pragmatic policy framework based on correct inputs recognizing the genuine of the divergent societies that inhabit the area.⁸⁷⁶ But the modern education has created insurmountable gap within the society further accompanied by corruption. In that context, the envisionment of northeast to defy the shady problems through positive resistance fails and docked in cob web. Jairam Ramesh (2005), Minister of Human Resource Development, has agreed that there are insurmountable problems in the northeast and he explicitly expounded that four paradigms were enunciated and experimented by the Government of India to resolves the northeast issues. The first inference he made was a cultural paradigm enforced in 1950s to preserve and enrich the mosaic of cultures through opening of museums, libraries or other means. The second was a ‘security paradigm’ imposed in 1960s after the Chinese invasion as the northeast was seen a strategically significant region not only in terms of geographical sense but in a larger geopolitical sense of India’s role in East Asia and Southeast Asia.⁸⁷⁷ Thus the ideas of making the northeast a strong fort have become a bulwark for India and henceforth it has enhance security presence in large numbers. Moving forward from the earlier two paradigms, a new mantra hits in 1970s is the political paradigm – the New Delhi realized the requirement of political representation from the northeast in Indian democratic process thus new states was created on ethnic basis by diving the state of Assam. The last mantra was ‘development paradigm’ that is to carry out massive welfare activities and infrastructure development in the region in order to open opportunity for the young generations.⁸⁷⁸ But the experiments unfortunately failed or unable to capture the hearts of all people and instead created a mixture of perception. It is largely view by the majority that good deeds expound by the subsequent Government of India is mere a sweet words rather than pragmatic action.

⁸⁷⁶ Namrata Goswami (2009). *Looking ‘East’ Through India’s North East: Identifying Policy ‘Challenges’ and outlining the ‘Responses’*. IDSA Occasional Paper No. 2. New Delhi: IDSA, p. 8.

⁸⁷⁷ Jairam Ramesh (2005). Northeast India in a New Asia. *Seminar*, No. 550, p. 17.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 19.

6.2. Development Scenario of Northeast India in the Past

In aftermath of independence India and Myanmar have had very cordial relations for over first one decade before it got sordid in 1962 with the Myanmar overthrown the parliamentary democracy by the military coup d'état. As many say the relationship between the two countries is not only at the political level but also deeply at personal level between the first two premiers. In such cordial environment, India could have initiated constructive engagement in the infrastructural development of the Northeast frontier as well as open seamless trans-border trade to strengthen both the northeast economy and bilateral relations with Myanmar. Unfortunately, the Indian leaders failed to harness the opportunity to integrate the northeast with the mainstream instead cornered at the periphery. The first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had rather applied a regressive policy of divide and rule, when he along with his counterpart U Nu demarcates an imaginary international border.⁸⁷⁹ In reaction to that when Jawaharlal Nehru and U Nu came to Kohima in March 1953 for the public meeting, the Naga public walked out from the town hall in protest against undermining the rights of indigenous people.⁸⁸⁰ From the very beginning, India shows no concern towards the northeast region and treated as buffer zone between India, Myanmar and China, and this treatment became worst after the 1962 Chinese incursion in Arunachal Pradesh, previously known as Northeast Frontier Area.⁸⁸¹

The Northeast is endowed with very rich flora and fauna, forest, water and huge natural resources – abundantly profuse over mountains, rivers and valleys – and this richness compounded on production of different type of herbals and medicinal plants, bamboos, cane and timbers etc. in the region.⁸⁸² Besides the region also produces tea more than half of the nation production and has the capacity to generate more if there is further capital investment. In addition to that, the people are hard-working and do extremely well in fields like handicrafts, florimatiques and, games and sport too. However, the region has been sideline from the rest in spectrum of development

⁸⁷⁹ Sanamani Yambem (1973). *Indo-Burmese relations upto the emergence of military rule in Burma*. Dissertation, M.Phil./SIS/JNU, New Delhi.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 93.

⁸⁸¹ Patricia Mukhim (2007). North East Scan: Redefining Development. *Dialogue*, 9 (1), p. 14.

⁸⁸² V.K. Nayar (1995). India's North East-An Overview. *U. S. I. Journal*, CXXV (522), p. 438.

paradigm and so every state face acute problem of under-development, unemployment and diachronic infrastructural problem. This is an archetypal case of high potential and low achievement.⁸⁸³ Underutilization of the resources, local skill and limited job market remained a prime factor to inconceivable persistence of the problems. In such circumstance the people experience moral trauma and feels alienated, this later resulted to the unprecedented rise of insurgencies. Despite that fact the Government of India continue no interest to neither initiated welfare activities nor engage to resolve the underpinning problems, instead the region is unabatedly held aside in darkness. This consequence have a recurrences threat on national security as the arms groups increased its number, massive rise of small arms trade and narcotic drugs smuggling along the route of golden triangle.⁸⁸⁴

Generally, the growth of development of any region depends upon accessibility of infrastructural facilities. In spite of enormous potentiality to exploit the resources the region cannot exhibit due to infrastructure deficits – road, rail, power, transport and telecommunications, education, health and medical care, sanitation, nutrition, and housing etc. – all these facilities are necessary for the inclusive growth but the region fails to attain these basic requirement owing to the continuance maltreatment. Therefore the apparatus of development was left miserable despite being gamut of resources available.⁸⁸⁵ Nonetheless the northeast in this way remains a deplorable condition on countless issues and as a result there embarks discussion on how and why the matter of development is eluded with the syndrome of weak governance. India has no doubt a record of consistent achievement of per capita growth and voluminous infrastructural development in other regions but an account of development in this part is far from consistency. Thus there raises an idiosyncratic view among the civil societies and criticized the centre for persistent imbalances treatment and further accused that New Delhi interest on the northeast is not prompted on constructive paradox but primarily to handicapped the ability from steering towards new direction. According to Prasain (2000)

⁸⁸³ Saswati Choudhury (2006). North-East India and the look east policy: A contextual analysis. *Dialogue*, 7 (3), p. 134.

⁸⁸⁴ Sunil Kumar Das (2005). The ethnic dimension. *Seminar*, No. 550: Gateway to the East, p. 67.

⁸⁸⁵ Anis Chowdhury & Iyanatul Islam (2007). *Handbook on the Northeast and Southeast Asian Economics*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, p. 73.

the region faces all round deficits but ultimate factors that confronts on daily basis are: basic needs deficit; infrastructural deficit; resource deficit and, most importantly, a deficit of understanding.⁸⁸⁶ On the basis of this discourse, the accommodation of northeast is far from reality and the implication for inclusive growth is more uncertain.

The Government of India is far less concern to the northeast in spite of being situated at the geo-strategic crossroad and it always underestimated the vulnerability of issues face by the people though the nation's security at this frontier was in risk after the 1962 Sino-India war and Indo-Pakistan war in 1971. Therefore, Retd. Gen. J.J. Singh, having been experienced on the geographical intercourse of the northeast expresses that the region should not be left apart as it stands at a significant position to maintain India's status quo.⁸⁸⁷ Notwithstanding the appraisal there was persistence of bedevilment in all spheres of administrative functioning and these state-of-affairs culminate not only in securing peace but affect as well on development apparatus. The paradigms pursued by the successive Governments of India, in the past, do not solve the problems but creates more problems than it actually solves. According to Dhanabir Laishram (2007) dealing with the problem of Northeast India describes that 'it is well understandable that the political and economic factors are responsible for the problem'.⁸⁸⁸ Thus it would be more appropriate to briefly discuss the political and economical problems to understand the situation of the Northeast in the past.

a. Political condition

The Northeast is politically not part of India until the British India had subjugated within its controlled in the nineteen century. Thus the people do not consider themselves as one and they feel their integration with Indian Union is another chain of neo-colonialism.⁸⁸⁹ To reflect this argument is seen when the British India was about to leave India – the Meiteis and tripuris princely state and the Nagas revolted against the merger with India. This mindset has been construed by an act of first Indian Prime Minister

⁸⁸⁶ G.P. Parasain (2000). Indo-Myanmar border trade and its Impact on industrialisation and infrastructural development in Manipur. In Gurudas Das & R.K. Purkayastha (Eds.), *Border Trade: North-East India and Neighbouring Countries*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, p. 162.

⁸⁸⁷ Gen. J.J. Singh (2008, July). Damage Control: Awareness. *The North East Frontier Magazine*, p. 22.

⁸⁸⁸ Dhanabir Laishram (2007). *North-East in Benthic Zone*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, p. 35.

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid, p.35.

Jawaharlal Nehru who suppressed the rights and territory of the indigenous ethnic groups of the region. But with compulsion when India was created it has put the Northeast under the special provision⁸⁹⁰ with an objective to appease the rising movement. Some of the ethnic groups have been followed with demand for separate sovereignty even before the Union of India was created and many have started after the independence with demand for greater autonomy.⁸⁹¹ Even regional parties have been formed instead of giving loyalty to the national parties and each state has not less than two regional parties. In almost all the states the Government of India realizing the problems of Northeast has granted special protection where no real estate can be acquired or sold to an outsider. Subsequently, the demand is raised by different people and parties for the re-evaluation of centre-state relations and granting of more powers to the states, the demand cannot be brushed aside by the centre in an indifferent way.⁸⁹² Notwithstanding the provisions of the constitution for safeguarding the identity of small ethnic groups, the people have apprehension of losing their identity. The stoic indifference of treatment centre to the legitimate aspirations of people has created this feeling. For instance, plebiscite of Nagas in 1952 is a pointer to this apprehension.⁸⁹³ There are feeling that even the constitution has been discriminatory against the small states, as they have no equal representation in the Council of States.⁸⁹⁴ It is mostly filled up with representatives of major states, which makes the voice of the states of this region so feeble. Dhanabir Laishram further states that 'Indian constitution is unitary one, but has a federal look and so it must be made really federal'.⁸⁹⁵ Though there are many politicians, policy-makers and scholars demand in favour of federal structure to resolve the ongoing situation of armed conflict in the Northeast, the political issue has been misconceived as law and order or at most internal security issue, whereas it bears the intrinsic essence of de-colonization and national liberation war euphemistically known as secessionism – the available evidence, the demand structure, the historical facts and the pattern of union governments' response to

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid, p.36.

⁸⁹¹ Bethany Lacina (2009). The Problem of Political Stability in Northeast India. *Asian Survey*, 49 (6), p. 998.

⁸⁹² Ibid, p.1012

⁸⁹³ P. N. Luthra (1974). Nagaland: From a District to a State. Shillong: Director of Information and Public Relations.

⁸⁹⁴ Dhanabir Laishram (2007). Op.cit. p. 37.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid, p.37

the issue make it amply clear that the decades-old political violence has been a consequence of unresolved political questions.⁸⁹⁶

It is evident that Manipur and Tripura has been annexed to the Indian fold after two years of independence; Assam became a part of British India not by her choice but by the choice of Myanmar who signed the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826; and the ethnic tribes who remained in the excluded hill areas fused themselves in the last five decades into the nationhood and claimed independence prior to the passage of Indian Independence Act of 1947 was signed; and British creation of India has been totally different entity from the original Indian nation, it is that British created India has been a deliberate political creation.⁸⁹⁷ The issue is, therefore, not succession but about fixing the region by crude force. In short, major insurgent groups in Northeast India are associated with political discourse of de-colonialization. The emergence of regional parties and insurgent groups indicates the underlying resentment of people against the Indian suzerainty and national integration. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the feeling of the people with human consideration and it will be erroneous to call the troubles as a mere law and order problem. As a consequence of inefficiency of political discourse the movement of insurgency grew with giving valid reasons. To counter them, the armed forces are bestows absolute power under the draconian act called Armed Forces Special Power's Act (AFSPA).⁸⁹⁸ Hence the paramilitary forces and police, under this act, terrorize the general masses by way of combing operation, raping and killing women, wanton arrest, illegal detention and killing while in custody or killing the innocents in indiscriminate firing etc. Many innocent people from this region suffered at the hands of state engineered terrorism – the state of Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur are few notable states that has badly suffered from the brunt action of this act.

⁸⁹⁶ Stanley A. Wolpert (2006). *Encyclopaedia of India*. Michigan: Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 106.

⁸⁹⁷ Dhanabir Laishram (2007). *North-East in Benthic Zone*. New Delhi: Akansha Publication, p. 139.

⁸⁹⁸ The AFSPA is the reincarnation of the British colonial Law 1942 which was promulgated on the wake of the World War II under which a responsible military officer not below the rank of a 'captain' can cause death or extra judicial murder. See at Dhanabir Laishram (2007). *Op.cit.* p. 39.

b. Economic Condition

The northeast is the most economically backward region in India⁸⁹⁹, and it is predominantly rural in character with domination by agriculture. A common form of agriculture is mono-cropping that occupies approximately 85 percent of the total cultivated area. Moreover, the techniques of farming too are either outdated or too traditional to have any decisive impact on productivity and production.⁹⁰⁰ Only few percent of the area was cultivated and consequently, only about 17.6 percent is under the High Yielding Programmes that is very low as compared to the national average.⁹⁰¹ The agriculture landscape of the Northeast, particularly in the hill sections were dominated by jhum cultivation and faced acute soil erosion and conservation problems. In the northeast the jhum or shifting cultivation was very much a part of the life and culture of the population and it is difficult to replace.⁹⁰² Spread of education on welfare programmes can slowly overcome the problem, but that implementation was not in a satisfactory level. Under the jhum cultivation the availability of cultivable land have become limited year after year and the level of technology (low) as well as the scale of inputs have remained the major constraints of agricultural development. Besides, population growth-higher than the rest of the country – has remained constantly high and phenomena has retarded the effort to enhance the economy of the region thus the area that was once of food surplus zone has now become a chronic food deficit area.⁹⁰³

The northeast's growth and development problems are altogether a different issue from the rest of the country. Some argues that northeast never face financial constraints earlier but with the attainment of India's freedom and emergence of many newly states, it dramatically become a difficult tasks to meet the rising aspirations of the population and requirements for infrastructural development. The reason whatsoever needed additional

⁸⁹⁹ Dipankar Sengupta (2004). North-East: Causes of Economic Backwardness and Plan for Growth. In Dipankar Sengupta & Sudhir Kumar Singh (Eds.), *Insurgency in North-East India: The Role of Bangladesh*. Delhi: Authorspress, p.115.

⁹⁰⁰ Dhananbir Laishram (2007). Op.cit. p. 41.

⁹⁰¹ Dipankar Sengupta (2004). Op.cit. p. 132.

⁹⁰² Samir Kumar Das (2007). Op.cit. p. 33.

⁹⁰³ Amiya Sharma (2005). Rescuing North Eastern Region from Economic Gloom: A Case for Relying upon Non-Economic Factors. In Gurudas Das, N. Bijoy Singh and C.J. Thomas (Eds.), *Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Status, Problems and Potentials*, (pp 175-189). New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.

resources as the existing resources become inadequate to deal with all areas of development. For instance, the infrastructural development projects including expenditure on farming, transport and communication, and other basic facilities has to be generated from the coffer of the states' earned but the substantial part was that their annual budgetary outlays on are much lower to modernize and strengthen the necessities.⁹⁰⁴ Thus it became complicated by the fact that the income-multiplier process was negligible if not totally absent in the region. Despite the huge resources availability, the state fails to provide markets as well as alternative medium to sale their production. As a result, there is insignificant participation of firms both public and private in the manufacturing sector to endorse the region's economy. Thus the region which has abundance of resources have yet displays the characteristic of growth stagnancy both in absolute and relative terms. There are number of factors associated to this phenomenon, and some of the few are: unfavorable location of markets to sales their items; inadequate transport and communication infrastructures; large-scale of immigration in the region; multi-ethnic, linguist and religious composition also added towards the complexities in the development process.⁹⁰⁵

India has a record of consistent achievement of growth and development but the condition in Northeast was much deplorable until the end of 1990, and thus embarks to critically examine as to why the frontier is facing development deficit, particularly in areas of economic growth, unemployment and infrastructural underdevelopment. For so long years the laxity to uplift the region is being accused to the New Delhi over the persistent discrimination.⁹⁰⁶ Hence a gross feeling of alienation grows among the masses and attacked the centre activism as primarily to handicapped the ability from steering towards new direction.⁹⁰⁷ In spite of being located at the crossroad with vast border linkages, the region faces all round deficits and this tactical game rose to secessionist movement but the Government of India renders no substantive course of action to mollify

⁹⁰⁴ Saswati Choudhury (2006). North-East India and the look east policy: A contextual analysis. *Dialogue*, 7 (3), p. 145.

⁹⁰⁵ Dhananbir Laishram (2007). Op.cit. pp. 60-65.

⁹⁰⁶ B.G. Verghese (2001). Unfinished business in the Northeast: Pointers toward reconstructing, reconciliation and resurgence. Seventh Kamal Kumari Memorial Lecture, http://www.freeindiamedia.com/economy/19_june_economy.html.

⁹⁰⁷ Khanna, Sushil (2005). Economic Opportunities or Continuing Stagnation. *Seminar*, No. 550, p. 23.

it. J.J. Singh describes that the region should not isolate behind as it stand a significant position to maintain India's status quo.⁹⁰⁸

Imperceptibly the global economic order with the end of cold war in 1990 and rise of new world order under the auspicious of liberalization, globalization and marketization. In this climax India foresees Southeast Asia as new center of trade and investment. Thus a long term relationship is redefined with the Southeast Asian countries particularly with Myanmar and has moved to re-establish a new wave of cooperation.⁹⁰⁹ In this backdrop the imperative of Northeast is observed with new vigor and optimism. Thus the Government of India sanctions a new autonomy for the North-East to economically integrate with the Eastern neighbour.⁹¹⁰ This embankment is to counteract the disadvantage of partition and enable her to liberate on all fronts. It is subserviently to build the frontier in prototype of European Union rather than immuring them in boredom of disadvantage. Since then India has become more leverage on the North-East and formulates policy to reshape the economies along the regeneration of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with East, Southeast and Asia-Pacific countries.⁹¹¹ Ever since, the Government of India has charted new route of development for the North-East frontier and this can be classified through three aspects – domestic accommodation, bilateralism and multilateral cooperation with the South, East Southeast Asian countries.

6.3. Geophysical Importance of Northeast India

The Northeast is one among the most cultural-linguistically rich and diverse regions in all of Asia. This is due as much to its position at the cultural crossroads of East, South, and Southeast Asia. The region is composed of different ethnic groups speaking different languages.⁹¹² This diversity survives the northeast a multicultural habitation and comprehensively imbibes a true democratic value. Topographically the North-East is traced in the eastern range of Himalayas and consists of formidable

⁹⁰⁸ Gen. J.J. Singh (2008, July). Damage Control: Awareness. *The North East Frontier Magazine*, p. 23.

⁹⁰⁹ Langpoklakpam Suraj Singh (2008). BIMSTEC Perspective in India-Myanmar Relations and Northeast India Factor. *World Focus*, XXIX (1), p. 22.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 22. Also see at Prabir De (2004). *Transport Cooperation in BIMSTEC Issues and Way Forward*. RIS Discussion Paper No. 75. New Delhi: RIS, p. 98.

⁹¹¹ Sudhir Devare (2006). *India and Southeast Asia: Towards Security Convergence*. Singapore: ISEAS Publications, p. 127.

⁹¹² Renaud Egreteau (2003). Op.cit. p.46.

mountains, rivers and valleys, and these subsequently made the perennial sources of livelihood for the people. In the meantime, the region is geo-physically located in the north eastern corner of the Indian Union and has long international frontiers on three sides with Myanmar in the east, China in the north, Bangladesh in the south-west, and Bhutan to the north-west.⁹¹³ The international border length is approximately 4825 kilometers i.e., about 98 per cent of its entire border area and lies at a strategically vulnerable geographical situation. Myanmar alone has roughly 1643 kilometers border with the region, and therefore is socio-culturally, economically and geographically hemmed by the Myanmar and other neighboring countries, but the Government of India fails to safeguard this predicament and thus the region suffers much due to peripheral location, geographical isolation, and landlocked being connected to the mainland with thin 'Siliguri Corridor' of an average width of 21 kilometers.⁹¹⁴ This negligence started since independence but the worst began when India has uncongenial relations with Myanmar in 1962 as India, base on her moral foreign policy, could not support the transition of Myanmar from the parliamentary democratic system to a rigid totalitarianism. Since the military coup d'état in Myanmar and unpredictable relations between India and Myanmar, the Northeast turns completely isolated and treated a step-motherly treatment.⁹¹⁵ Despite the isolation the northeast plays a significant role to safeguard the refugees of Myanmar who entered through land route, and sheltered were given in the present states of Manipur and Mizoram. The present state of Nagaland also sheltered hundreds of Myanmar Naga refugees who have come to escape from the clutches of Burmese National Army onslaught when the latter were chasing the Karen's insurgent group in the Indo-Myanmar border.⁹¹⁶

Generally, the India's northeast have stood physically and morally with the Myanmar who have come to India due to political unrest in Myanmar. This support was possible due to its geophysical connectivity with the upper Myanmar. The four

⁹¹³ Pradip Phanjoubam (2005). Border Trade with Myanmar: Problems and Prospects. In Gurudas Das, N. Bijoy Singh and C.J. Thomas (eds.) *Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Status, Problems and Potentials*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, p. 213.

⁹¹⁴ Anis Chowdhury & Iyanatul Islam (2007). *Handbook on the Northeast and Southeast Asian Economics*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, p. 5. Also see at Renauld Egreteau (2003). Op.cit. p. 44.

⁹¹⁵ Subir Bhaumik (2005). Guns, drugs and rebels. Seminar 550, Gateway to the East, p.40.

⁹¹⁶ Udai Bhanu Singh (2004). Perspective on Myanmar-India Relations. *Dialogue*, 5 (3), 112-123.

Indian states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram are directly linked with the Upper Burma (Myanmar) and it can play any role to strengthen the Indo-Myanmar relations.⁹¹⁷ Even in precedence to the above juncture, the India's northeast posed a laudable job when hundreds of thousands Indian diaspora flee coming to the Indian side escaping the treacherous act of Myanmar under the implementation of economic nationalization. They have come for their rescued through the northeast as the maritime routes are both difficult and expensive for the helpless population. The Northeast has extended an unceasing hospitality to protect and safeguard them from the brunt of the junta harsh law. Dating back historically, the northeast posed a strategic zone for the Burmese king, and they usually felt the northeast as an extended part of their kingdom but unfortunately the northeast frontier was freely handed over to the imperial power under the agreement of the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 without the consent of the indigenous people.⁹¹⁸ In the aftermath of the subjugation of the Northeast, the British India has constructed a silk road from the small railhead town of Ledo in Assam to the Southern province of China via Myanmar. During the colonial period, the northeast has been an important centre of transportation and commercialization in the sub-region.⁹¹⁹ This geophysical importance of northeast is maneuvered wisely by the British India to coffer their financial needs. Even militarily the British India has used this frontier as a point to counter the influences of other imperial power but after India's independence the frontier is kept in deep freeze intentionally to use a buffer to check the influence of China.⁹²⁰ The Indian leaders have perceived the region as reserve area to be kept protected from anyone. Hence the northeast is totally isolated both from the policy making and foreign policy literatures, and it become unknown to the outside world. Unlike the European countries or for that matter Southeast Asian country which used the border as a cornerstone for building strong relations, India and Myanmar fails to lift up this region to harness and enhance their cooperative engagement. In most of years, the two countries have used this fault line rather as sanctuary for insurgencies to check the

⁹¹⁷ Renauld Egreteau (2003). Op.cit. p. 45.

⁹¹⁸ Naorem Sanajaoba ed. (1988). *Minipur past and present: The heritage and ordeals of a civilization*, (Volume 1, History, Polity & Law). Delhi: Mittal Publications, pp. 26-27.

⁹¹⁹ H.N. Das (2004). India-China trade through the stilwell road. *Dialogue*, 6 (1), p. 58.

⁹²⁰ Ibid, 61.

rising advantage of each other. This geophysical important region, as for their negative manipulation, has in reaction also come up against both the national interest, creating a security dilemma to the states' status quo.

By 1990s, when India initiated a new foreign policy 'Look East' with view to strengthen cooperative engagement and relations with Southeast Asian Countries that realized the importance of Northeast.⁹²¹ Myanmar also reciprocated to the larger India's relations paradigm and has together set a socio-economic cooperation connecting through both maritime and continental route. Since then India and Myanmar opened up a means border trade centers, promote tourism, open seamless cross-border rights to the indigenous populations, cultural exchange and people to people contact has slowly expanded. The realization of geographical importance has also strengthened the bilateral relationship to a newer height, and reproduction of it is now plan to directly connect with different forms of transportation and connectivity between the two countries.⁹²² At this juxtapose, the Government of India has studied the imperative of North-East and placed now under the auspices of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, to best harness the region's resources as well as gateway toward connecting the Southeast Asia.⁹²³ Presently, the attitude of India on the North-East have considerably changed and, determined to politically integrate with the mainland India and socio-economically integrate with the Southeast Asia via Myanmar. Further it happened when New Delhi realize that relations with Naypyidaw are largely dependent upon the infrastructural development in the North-East.

6.4. India and Myanmar: The New Challenges in Cooperation

India and Myanmar has lately realized that to have cordial relations it is not possible without engagement and cooperation between the two countries, and this idea of transforming the relations came about in early 1990s when the world is drifted by the

⁹²¹ Thingnam Kishan (2009). *Look East Policy and India's North East: Polemics & Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publication, p. 155.

⁹²² K. Yhome (2009). *India-Myanmar relations (1998-2008): A decade of redefining bilateral ties*. New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, p.7.

⁹²³ Chandra Embuldeniya (2010). *Regional Integration in South & South East Asia*. Lecture on 27th March 2010 at Hyatt Regency, Kolkata: Indian Chamber of Commerce.

wave of liberalization, globalization and marketization.⁹²⁴ Slowly the leaders of both the sides began to initiate steps to augment the relations and the first logical proposal was to focus on socio-economic cooperation. Thereafter Indo-Myanmar relations entered a new phase in the history, and the cooperation is expanded to engage each other through both bilateral and multilateral engagement. The first initiative toward building cordial relations between the two countries was undoubtedly by India under the leadership of P.V. Narashimha Rao in as early as 1991 with a vision to initially embrace the India's relations four countries of Southeast Asian Countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, but it has encompasses in building socio-economic cooperations with all the ASEAN, China, Japan and the whole of Asia-Pacific countries.⁹²⁵ The primary initiative of India was to harness economic ties with those countries that have galloping on market competition.⁹²⁶ The Indian government realizes the need to have cordial relations with all Southeast Asian countries in order to strengthen socio-economic relations on one hand and venture markets in the sub-region for Indian production, and it is thus expanded immensely within the last few years.⁹²⁷ India also encountered the potential of Myanmar to enhance the national interest as it has the potentials both in natural resources and direct continental and maritime connectivity with India. To harness and wisely exploit the needs, India has extended its willingness to revive the relation with Myanmar and in reciprocity the Myanmar government also acknowledged upon the calls for building relationships.⁹²⁸

Ever since India and Myanmar has entered long term relationship, it has move to re-establish a new wave of cooperation. These relations have expanded to both bilateral

⁹²⁴ Swapan K. Bhattacharya (2009). India's engagement with the regional trading arrangements: The case of Japan-BIMSTEC Free Trade Arrangement (FTA). *World Focus*, XXX (1), p. 17.

⁹²⁵ Teofilo C. Daquila (2006). ASEAN: Economic Growth Prospect and Challenges. In Nagesh Kumar, Rahul Sen & Mukul Asher (Eds.), *India-ASEAN Economic Relations: Meeting the Challenges of Globalization*. New Delhi: Research and Information System for Developing Countries, pp. 41-68.

⁹²⁶ Lian H. Sakhong (2010). *The future of Indo-Burma Relations: A view from divided peoples*. Paper Presented at 9th International Conference on Burma Studies, (6-10 July, 2010). Marseilles: University de Provence.

⁹²⁷ U Aung Tun (2010). *Strengthening Border Trade between North East India and Myanmar: The way forward*. Speech at Seminar jointly organized by the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and Mandalay Region Commerce and Industry, in Mandalay on 16 September 2010.

⁹²⁸ Renaud Egreteau (2003). *Wooing the Generals: India's New Burma Policy*. Delhi: Authorspress, p. 150.

and multilateral engagement with a view to embrace mutual cooperation based on rich historical linkages that the two shares over civilizations.⁹²⁹ Under the cooperation India and Myanmar opened new dimensions such as cultural exchange, border trade, promotion of tourism, counter-terrorism, and open connectivity etc. The multilateral organizations such as BIMSTEC, Ganga-Mekong Cooperation and ASEAN have extended a platform to resolves the stagnant bilateral issues that has been stumbling the relations over the years.⁹³⁰ Correspondingly, it revitalizes India and Myanmar to confidently join hands toward dealing the common interest and this cordial relation between the two countries is judged by many international relations scholars as a great signpost to counter-check the preponderance of the Chinese as well as a step forward to maintain peace and security in the sub-region of South and Southeast Asia. Likewise, in the context of bilateralism India and Myanmar have reached a new height of relations with both agreed to continue for the socio-economic integration. Under this mission the border areas has been opened to liberate more trade and enhancement of people to people contact.⁹³¹ In this backdrop the imperative of North-East is observed with new vigor and optimism. Thus the Government of India sanctions a new autonomy for the Northeast to economically integrate with the eastern neighbour.⁹³² This embankment is to counteract the disadvantage of partition and enable her to liberate on all fronts. Some says it is subserviently to build the frontier in prototype of European Union rather than immuring them in boredom of disadvantage.⁹³³ Henceforth India has become more leverage on the Northeast and formulates policy to reshape the economies alongside the regeneration of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries.⁹³⁴

Without a doubt, India has geographical proximity both continental and maritime with Myanmar – the land route passes through the India's northeast and maritime

⁹²⁹ Ibid, p. 152.

⁹³⁰ Man Mohini Kaul (2006). Regional Groupings: An Overview of BIMSTEC and MGC. *South Asian Survey*, 13 (2), p. 313.

⁹³¹ Ibid, p. 313.

⁹³² Prabir De (2005). Op.cit. p. 98.

⁹³³ V. Suryanarayan (1996). Looking ahead: India and Southeast Asia in the 1990s: New perspectives, new challenges. In Ghoshal, Baladas (ed.), *India and Southeast Asia: Challenges and opportunities*, (pp 10-27). New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 14.

⁹³⁴ Subhir Devare (2006). Op.cit. p. 127.

linkages is through the course of Strait of Malacca. Unfortunately the connection through the land route was ruptured due to porous terrain and domination of insurgencies and it has been used the maritime route that is commonly used by the international community for trade. The trade under this route is approximately 40 percent of the world trade and is regarded as one of the busiest trade routes in the world. In the past, India was hardly a high foreign policy priority with the Southeast Asia or for that matter Myanmar until recently.⁹³⁵ Although India's relations with the Southeast Asia and Myanmar can be traced back to ancient times and no much country in the world has as much influence as India had to the region by way of religion, culture and civilization; the relationships are not profound enough of its engagement particularly between Myanmar and India.⁹³⁶ The strategic significance of India's northeast and Myanmar has caught attention of leading Indian strategic thinkers but relation has been kept in abeyance with a perception that linking the northeast to Southeast Asia via Myanmar is an expensive strategy in terms of financial, strategic and military aspects.

In contrary, India was keen to accept the approach of maneuvering the Nicobar Islands to enter the Southeast Asian countries including Myanmar. India has keen interest with Myanmar due to geographical proximity but the relationship remains only in words. It is only when India realized, though lately in early 1990s, the need to strategize India's foreign policy and thus India initiated a policy called 'Look East Policy' in 1991.⁹³⁷ This policy was a multi-faceted and multi-pronged approach to establish strategic links with many individual countries, evolve closer political links with Myanmar to develop a strong economic bond.⁹³⁸ The Look East Policy is in fact meant to showcase India's economic potential for investment and trade in the sub-region. In a way, this policy has started influencing India significantly and the interesting dimension is exhibition of greater sensitivity towards Myanmar. In the process to exhibit the growing power India

⁹³⁵ Naidu (2004). Op.cit. p. 336.

⁹³⁶ It is by now opened seamless border on either side. However the political leaders fails harness this opportunity.

⁹³⁷ Isabelle Saint Mezard (2003). The Look East Policy: An Economic Perspective. In Frederic Rare & Amitabh Matto (eds.), *Beyond the Rhetoric: The Economic of India's Look East Policy*, (Vol. 2). New Delhi: Manohar and Centre De Sciences Humaines.

⁹³⁸ Tridib Chakravarti (2009). India's Look East Policy: Time for Stock-Taking. *World Focus*, 30 (Nov.-Dec.), p. 465.

has strategically sub-divided into three pronged approach: the multilateral cooperation is larger approach that India pledge to engage Myanmar; bilateral cooperation is to directly engage with Myanmar and the third is domestic strategy, particularly to strengthen and develop the Indian border that is linking with Myanmar. The policy began with a lot of fanfare, but it was not a smooth sailing in the beginning. However the impacts of the policy with the passes of time have generated new transition in the northeast. The infrastructural development of the region have increased manifold though it is still below the much expectation of the people.

a. Domestic Initiative

In order to fulfill the primary objectives of the new foreign policy, the Government of India initiated an extensive mission to first develop the frontier of northeast under the domestic programmes. Since then, the Government of India has released both policies and programmes to immediately enforce with a target of time frame result. The northeast region thus started seeing the infrastructural development and the sincere contribution of Indian government, unlike the past decades, towards converting the region from peripheral isolation to a centre of integration. The Government of India first formed a Ministry of Development of North East Region in contour of the new foreign policy with its primary responsibility to deal on matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of development schemes and projects in the region.⁹³⁹ Its vision is to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development in the region so that it may enjoy growth parity with the rest of the country. Followed by the reformation of North Eastern Council constituted to directly deal and oversee the developmental projects in the region. This nodal agency for the socio-economic development is formed in 1971 but until 1990s it existed as a mere statutory body without functional activities due to differences between centre and states vis-à-vis within the states, but it was rejuvenated and thus slowly become an active organization.⁹⁴⁰ The Chief Ministers of all the eight states of the region are members of the council with its Secretariat in Shillong, Meghalaya. Nonetheless, alongside the above structural bodies

⁹³⁹ DONER (2008-09). Government of India, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. *Annual Report* 2008-09, New Delhi.

⁹⁴⁰ See at North Eastern Council official website (URL): [http://: www.nec.org](http://www.nec.org).

there are also organs that concentrate its vision to uplift the northeast and they are North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFI), North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC) and North East Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHHDC) with all the headquarters located in Guwahati.⁹⁴¹

On July 2, 2008, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh released the North Eastern Region Vision 2020, a document which identifies various challenges as well as the strategies required to bring about peace and prosperity in the northeast region by 2020. The core theme of vision 2020 is to nurture the Northeast with an urgent desire to

‘....march on the path of economic, social and cultural progress towards prosperity and well being, to participate in governance and determine the allocation of public resources and public services they receive’.⁹⁴²

The document indicates that there are essential vast development disparities between the northeast and the rest of India as well as between the population of hills and plains in the northeast itself. In order to correct these disparities, the document suggests a development strategy based on participatory method to utilize for optimal benefits of the local people. Subsequently, the document also emphasized to establish peace and prosperity so that the region can catch up with the rest of the country on structural transformation and poverty eradication as well as maximizing self governance through harnessing the available resources. The vision further highlights on strengthening infrastructure and creating a centre for trade and commerce in the region. In general, the vision 2020, in order to ensure, is a development strategy.⁹⁴³ The strategy focused on the inclusive growth of the region such as empowerment of people, creation of development opportunities, developing sectors with comparative advantage, capacity development of people and institutions, creating a hospitable investment climate, and investments in both

⁹⁴¹ Ibid, documents section.

⁹⁴² NEC-DONER Report (2008). North eastern region vision 2020. Guwahati: Ministry of DONER NEC, no.13, p.1.

⁹⁴³ Ibid, p. 24.

public and private sectors.⁹⁴⁴ In one of its chapters, the Vision 2020 also indicates the benefits of the Look East Policy for the Northeast and its excerpt is:

‘The Look East Policy should be an important factor in promoting economic ties of the Northeast states with its neighbours with a view to ending its economic isolation’.⁹⁴⁵

The document posits that since the people of the Northeast share cultural ties with the Southeast Asian countries and China, strengthening relations with them and India must be a key driver in India’s foreign policy posture.

Another initiative to enhance the northeast is through the scheme of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) launched on 25th December, 2000.⁹⁴⁶ It is in fact a centrally sponsored scheme mainly to provide road connectivity in the rural areas of the country. The envisioning of this scheme is to connect road on all habitations areas with a population of 500 persons or above in plain areas, 250 persons or above in hill states, and in the 78 selected areas especially in the tribal backward districts as identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs along with the desert Areas.⁹⁴⁷ The Government of India has also identified ‘rural roads’ as one of the six components of ‘Bharat Nirman’ with a goal to provide connectivity to all habitations with a population of 1,000 persons and above in plain areas and 500 persons and above in hilly or tribal areas with an all-weather road. Subsequently, it also envisage for the upgradation of selected rural roads to provide full farm to market connectivity. The rural roads construction is a state subject and the projects under PMGSY are executed by state/UT governments through the State Rural Roads Development Agency (SRRDA) for monitoring, financial management and coordination at the state level. The progress of works made since the 1990s until 2012 under PMGSY in the region is 884 with a length of 29,064 Km out of the sanctioned

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.24.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 271.

⁹⁴⁶ PMGSY Report (2012). Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in North Eastern Region. New Delhi: Government of India – Ministry of Rural Development, p. 24.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

37,373 Km road.⁹⁴⁸ The initiative under this new India's foreign policy has undoubtedly changed the image of the northeast.

b. Bilateral Initiative

Since the rapprochement of relations between India and Myanmar, the first initiative was to enhance bilateral cooperation. During this time the engagement especially on bilateral cooperation has widened the scope and touches upon all spectrums. One of the significant initiatives under the new relationship was that India and Myanmar no longer wanted to remain on an old fashion of engagement at a governmental level thus it has expanded to the people to people contact level through the retraction of the past social and cultural shared values.⁹⁴⁹ Many academicians have observed this as a new footing that would bind the relations stronger between the two countries. In the last two decades, it has taken numbers of socio-cultural initiatives to engage between the people of two sides. Firstly, the indigenous ethnic has been allowed free movement without permission to have social interaction and do barter trade, within a limit of fourteen kilometers on either side. Secondly, it also organized cultural events to promote cultural events in the region. Thirdly, the religious pilgrimage has also been allowed to travel either side without imposing strict rules and regulations.⁹⁵⁰ Apart from that India and Myanmar also coordinating each other on various areas relating to issues that would hamper the status quo from invisible threat.

The joint initiatives of infrastructural development projects are one key area that would definitely enhance the cooperative engagement and it will residually uplift the region. Critics argue that the steps taken by India and Myanmar are not friendly to the indigenous population of the Northeast but the counter-argument is that resumption of the relations under the new India's policy has created opportunity to the people to engage themselves within the region. The law and order problems directly lingering upon the people has also experienced with much relieve as compare to the past and this transition

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 26.

⁹⁴⁹ Deepa Karthykeyan (2009). Northeast India as a Gateway to South-east Asia. *Journal of International Studies and Analysis*, 3 (2), p. 6.

⁹⁵⁰ In accordance with the BIMSTEC declaration of first summit 2004. See at BIMSTEC (2004). BIMSTEC Summit Declaration. *World Focus*, 25 (9), pp. 23-24.

has made the people more confident to search their future. It is indeed a turning point for the people of northeast from a regionally imbalance treatment to entering a new hope of opportunity. The recent Indo-Myanmar bilateral relation has in fact pave way for an integration of the region both to the Indian sub-continent as well as to the Asian world.

c. Multilateral initiative

The Indo-Myanmar relations no longer confined within bilateralism but spread over to the multilateral engagement. This multi-pronged relationship has push and pull the two countries to deepen the relations because the issue that find difficult to resolve under bilateral engagement can easily be sorted out through the multilateral engagement. Soon India and Myanmar restarted engaging each other, it is seen now that the two countries would not break apart as easily as before due to the deep engagement on the common interest such as expansion of trade, investment, counter-insurgencies, controlling illegal narcotic drug smugglers etc that is commonly prevalence in the fault line of the two countries, and it also has further emboldened to maintained cordial relations vis-a-vis to ventures more socio-economic cooperation. Presently, India and Myanmar are jointly participating together in the organizations such as BIMSTEC, Ganga-Mekong Cooperation and ASEAN besides engagement on other organizations.⁹⁵¹ Under the cooperations the two countries have extensively help each other by allowing making available of the scare resources to one another. For example, Myanmar has agreed India to sales energy and agricultural productions. Similarly, India extended both private and public company to invest in Myanmar, and one striking thing was India's direct involvement in construction of road and rail routes in Myanmar under the auspicious of BIMSTEC.⁹⁵² In this ways the relations come to revive the relations with respect to each other sovereignty.

The outcome of this multilateral cooperation has also spill over to India's northeast because many infrastructural and other development projects initiatives between the two countries has to passes over the northeast if not set up in the northeast itself – once a landlocked region would be benefitted much from this cooperation and it is

⁹⁵¹ Man Mohini Kaul (2006). Op.cit. p. 318.

⁹⁵² K. Yhome (2008). Op.cit. p. 9.

expected more to reap from it. For example, the Asian Highway, railways, Kaladan Multi-Modal project for Sea routes are about to get connected the northeast besides other initiatives. Thus, the implication of regional organizations be it BIMSTEC or Ganga-Mekong Cooperation has touches on the northeast and this knot would harness the region to become a centre of trade and commerce in contemporary time. Nonetheless, the northeast being a socially and culturally rich region, the opening door to Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries would harvest a new gateway of socio-cultural confluence.

6.5. Look East Policy and the Northeast

The development of India's newest foreign policy called 'Look East Policy' has become dynamic on course of development in North-East.⁹⁵³ Although it was framed to deal at multilateral level towards construction of relations with the Southeast Asian countries, its ramification has impacted on the spectrum of development in North-East Region. Primarily the initiative of India is to harness economic ties with the ASEAN as it has diametrically galloping on market competition with the changing world economic order in 1990s but later the relationship is further focus on the individual countries of the Southeast Asia to strengthened the relations in various fields such as social, diplomatic and military.⁹⁵⁴ Hence in order to accommodate free connectivity with that region, India charted a plan to directly connect through the regionally imbalance region of India's northeast as it lies at the geographical crossroad of India with the South, East and Southeast Asian countries.

In order to realize this dream India needs infrastructural development in the hinterland of northeast despite hesitance in resolving the pathetic condition of development deficit camouflage since the independence.⁹⁵⁵ As a step forward, the Government of India, therefore, expounded new strategy to politically integrate the Northeast with mainland India and socio-economically integrate with the Southeast Asian

⁹⁵³ S. Viswam (1997). India's look east policy. *World Focus*, 18 (6), p. 4.

⁹⁵⁴ Teofilo C. Daquila (2006). ASEAN: Economic Growth Prospect and Challenges. In Nagesh Kumar, Rahul Sen & Mukul Asher (Eds.), *India-ASEAN Economic Relations: Meeting the Challenges of Globalization*. (pp. 41-68). New Delhi: Research and Information System for Developing Countries.

⁹⁵⁵ Sanjib Baruah (2005). The Problem. *Seminar*, No. 550: Gateway to the East, pp 12-16.

countries. This dynamic step is formed to harness socio-economic relations with the ASEAN vis-à-vis development in North-East India.⁹⁵⁶ The policy is not to downplay the interest of people but accommodate the whole populace within the integral part of India by letting an opportunity to everyone. During the early phase of independence India did not maintained close contact to the eastern neighbour except from 1947 to 1961 in spite of long socio-cultural historical affinity. In fact India remained focused with the Western and Middle East countries as it offers the requirement of India's need. The ultimate reason of galvanizing such situation is, firstly, due to the entire mindset of Indian decision-makers in choosing the western philosophy. Secondly, India was with the then USSR on long military agreement, and thirdly, India had to import most of the goods such as petroleum products or crude oil and natural gas from the Middle East. On contrary, the Eastern neighbours did not provide substantive economic and military need of India nor give threats to the national security. Hence India isolated the eastern world from its foreign policy.

With the end of Cold War, there is a wave of integration among the nation-state across the globe and India is no exception to withhold this phenomenon of new global economy order. This acceptance has spill over India to accommodate the eastern neighbour through the rapprochement on shared value.⁹⁵⁷ Many of the experts on India's foreign policy and international relations scholars describe that the change of India foreign policy is due to internal and external factors. The two dimensions over which the LEP is framed are: firstly, the changing world political scenario and new international economic order; secondly the domestic issue and shift of moral to more realistic foreign policy.⁹⁵⁸ To substantiate the former dimension, it can further declassify the factors into this manner; firstly the collapse of erstwhile Soviet Union from position of hegemonic power house led to the creation of bipolar to unipolar world. This embarked a changing political and economic scenario across the globe – the Middle East where India has long

⁹⁵⁶ Samir Kumar Das (2005). *Looking East via the Northeast: The Ethnic Dimension*. Kolkata: Calcutta Research Group. Also see at Egretreau (2003). Op.cit. p. 174.

⁹⁵⁷ G.V.C. Naidu (2004). Op.cit. p. See also at S. Gaur (2003, October 8). ASEAN-India Ties Entering a New Phase. *Business Times*, Singapore.

⁹⁵⁸ Thonkholal Haokip (2010). India's Look East Prospects and Challenge for Northeast India. Lecture delivered on 27 March, 2010 at Northeast India Council of Social Science, Shillong.

depended on petroleum products or crude oil and natural gas has tumbled due to remapping of world political and economic order. The European Union has become more inclusive within the member states and to emulate the model India has charted a Look East Policy with primary objective to have interaction with the Southeast Asian countries. On other hand, the emergence of Southeast Asian countries under the banner of ASEAN emerged as an alternative economic power house and China sudden rise on political, economic and military power awakened India to reframe the foreign policy with more assertive in its values as the geo-physical situation has become threatening to a nation's status quo.

In the meantime, the cause to the formation of LEP has also internal dimension, and few of the factors that notably highlight are the result of: regional imbalance of the North-East in development, Government of India rapprochement with military junta of Myanmar in 1988, in order to response on Thailand's Look West policy, initiative to fulfill the agreement of Mizo Accord, 1986 to open border trade with the international neighbours border with Mizoram, unfriendly cooperation of the SAARC, and India's Navy initiatives to re-establish cooperation with the Southeast Asian counterpart.⁹⁵⁹ The India's Look East has structure into three pronged way to enhance the infrastructural development of Northeast – there first priority was to develop the Northeast through the multilateral cooperation followed with the bilateral relationship of India and Myanmar to bilateral border trade, cultural exchange, tourism, and other forms of people to people contact, and finally the last one is outlining domestic framework to enhance development of the Northeast.⁹⁶⁰ To know the inept of enhancing the northeast domestically some of the structure are pillars to develop the India's northeast.

The India's look east policy has undoubtedly brought dramatic policy change for the northeast. It not only facelift infrastructural development and economic growth of the region but it has opened a gateway for the northeast to connect with the Southeast Asia

⁹⁵⁹ P.M. Kamath (2006). Challenges to India's Foreign Policy in the New Era: for a Holistic Approach. In Annapurna Nautiyal (Ed.), *Challenges to India's Foreign Policy in the New Era*, (pp 35-45). New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

⁹⁶⁰ Srikanth Kondapalli (2009). *India's Northeast and Southeast Asia: Chinese interests and strategies*. IPCS Issue Brief, No. 106. New Delhi: IPCS.

and the rest. This policy has recently reframed from the old idiom to new one called ‘Act East Policy’ in 2014 by the NDA government under the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a view to act quickly on the policies and projects initiated for the region.⁹⁶¹ Under this policy, the pace of work is initiated to swiftly carry out and completed within a stipulated time frame so that the Northeast scenario would fast change in development paradox, in fact at the same pace of accentuating the Indo-Myanmar relations. The critics argue that the look east or act east is a mere phantom imagination to hoodwink or woo the people of the northeast. Similarly the northeast, as highlights by Pro-Vice Chancellor of Assam University Debasish Chakraborty (2013), is a gateway linking the Indian sub-continent with Southeast Asia up to Far East but it has nothing to gain materially as expected but would simply poses as a gateway like Rome for the European in the eighteen century.⁹⁶² This argument has merit to certain degree if one’s introspect the last six decades and the first decade of the policy, but it is mesmerizing to observe the policy through optimism and the present trend of development initiatives taken by the Government of India. Recently, many infrastructural development projects have been functionalize and more are about to complete within few years from now and if these initiatives are completed there is much to laughter on the economic growth in the region vis-à-vis opportunity within would concert and amalgamate with the rest. Thus the Act East Policy is a masonry wall to transform the northeast in near future.

6.6. Indo-Myanmar Relations: Implication for Northeast India

Since the rapprochement of Indo-Myanmar relations in the nineties, the model of cooperation has also altered from the earlier structure. The new cooperative engagement has directly open the continental route to harness the relations because both India and Myanmar realize the need to engage through this frontier would strengthen not only their security concerns but it would develop the long underdeveloped areas on both sides. This approach is in view of India’s long term vision to uplift the Northeast from alienation by

⁹⁶¹ Prashanth Parameswaran (2014, November 17). Modi Unveils India’s ‘Act East Policy’ to ASEAN in Myanmar. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/modi-unveils-indias-act-east-policy-to-asean-in-myanmar/>

⁹⁶² Debasish Chakraborty (2013) is the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Assam University. He shared to me while holding interview to me for my Senior Research Fellowship in the department.

the successive governments in the past.⁹⁶³ Once the bilateral relations resumed in 1993 after decades of murky relationship India and Myanmar has signed many agreements to open the border. In 1994 the border trade has opened for the first time between Moreh (India) and Tamu (Myanmar) so that it can slowly and steadily generate a source on building trust between each other.⁹⁶⁴ When the structural frameworks is initiated and tabled by the Government of India under both domestic and international cooperation, toward uplifting the Northeast region, there was huge appraisal from various quarters on how it can demonstrate for the development.⁹⁶⁵ This forward step to restore the long neglected region and making it as centre of merely not interlinking with Myanmar but infrastructural development in the region is massively a torpedo plan. Eventually the numerous projects framed, under the aegis of LEP, have a long and short term. A remarkable initiative among all is a policy that established appropriate mechanism for implementation of infrastructure and capital investment.⁹⁶⁶ Presently few areas that virtually promote the North-East Region are: border trade centre; tourism; road and rail linkages; control of drug and small arms smuggling etc. Since then the frontier have progressively enhanced its socio-economic apparatus as opportunity expanded on both national and international euphoria.⁹⁶⁷ Many argue that the enhancement of infrastructural development is ultimately to pull-down the secessionist movement which had been staggering India's relations with the South, Southeast and East Asian countries. Despite the criticism the Government of India has staggered pandemic change the apathetic condition of the region and more fold lies to convert from words to deeds in days ahead. Some of the few areas that transform the North-East are comprehensively explain below:

⁹⁶³ Amita Batra (2009). *India's Northeast and Southeast Asia: Strengthening an Integrated Economic Space*. IPCS Issue Brief, No. 107, New Delhi: IPCS.

⁹⁶⁴ M.P. Bezbaruah (2007). Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: The Stakes for North East India. *Dialogue*, 9 (1): pp 68-88.

⁹⁶⁵ Renaud Egreteau (2003). Op.cit. p. 102.

⁹⁶⁶ Saswati Choudhury (2006). North-East India and the look east policy: A contextual analysis. *Dialogue*, 7 (3): 134-156.

⁹⁶⁷ Wasbir Hussian (2009). *India's Northeast: The Super-Highway to Southeast Asia?*. IPCS Issue Brief No. 104. New Delhi: IPCS.

A. Social Initiatives

a. Control of Invisible Threat: HIV/AIDS and Narcotic Drugs Trade

The illegal narcotic drugs trade and disease like HIV/AIDS are one way or other interconnected to each other in context of India's northeast. In the eighties, this trade has entered in the region from the Golden Triangles due to its geophysical location.⁹⁶⁸ Within a few years the Northeast has become a centre of black market that generates billion of dollars for the smugglers. It has a great ramification not only on peace and security of the region but deeply affect on the development apparatus. The proliferation of this trade regretfully jeopardizes the lives of young innocent people and pushed forward the region to a situation of security dilemma.⁹⁶⁹ All the narcotics drugs entered the Northeast through the silk route which lies within the parameter of Golden Triangle. This business embarks to the rise of ill social elements such as insurgencies and spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS. It was fast emerging as the region lies at the transit point of narcotics trafficking, however, there is no mechanism to control the increasing menace.⁹⁷⁰ The drug users shared the same syringe to inject into their body and through that HIV/AIDS is spread like a fire in an enchanted forest. All the Myanmar border states of Northeast viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram have high rate of drug users and carriers of HIV/AIDS; it is commonly through the sharing of drugs among the youths. Increasing rate of HIV/AIDS has rung the alarm bell to repulsively deal it but in the past neither government nor civil society was aware to tackle the disease thus it slowly become an invisible threat to the northeast.⁹⁷¹ Udai Bhanu Singh in the article 'Challenges to border management in Indo-Myanmar Relations' states that "the AIDS figures for Northeast India are serious enough to merit attention of policy planners."⁹⁷² The smuggling of narcotic drugs have come from different route in Southeast Asia until it

⁹⁶⁸ Gopen Moses (2007). Drug Use, HIV/AIDS and Human Trafficking in the North-East. *Dialogue*, 9 (1), pp. 145-160.

⁹⁶⁹ Subir Bhaumik (2005). Op.cit. p. 78.

⁹⁷⁰ Retd. Gen. J.J. Singh (2008). Op.cit. p. 23. Also see at Tarapot, Phanjoubam (1997). *Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in North Eastern India*. New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House.

⁹⁷¹ Sehgal, S. (2014) Unfolding of HIV epidemic and spectrum of AIDS in North India. *World Journal of AIDS*, 4, 52-61. Retrieved November 2, 2014 from URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/wja.2014.41007>

⁹⁷² In July 2005, Manipur had the highest number of AIDS cases are 2866; Nagaland to 736; Assam to 225; Meghalaya to 8; Mizoram 106; Sikkim 8; Tripura 5 and Arunachal Pradesh 0. See at Udai Bhanu Singh (2006). *Challenges to border management in Indo-Myanmar Relations*. *World Focus*, 27 (8), p. 33.

reached the northeast. Myanmar also one of the famous place for opium cultivation and from there it easily entered without check as the border are porous and smuggler used this terrain as a safe haven. The state machinery such as polices, armies, bureaucrats, and politicians are not complies by the laws to prevent the multiplication of the business⁹⁷³ and so an alternative means to control the proliferation need to be initiated at the earliest. To a positive note the Government of India since partaking bilateral talk with the Myanmarese government embarks to control the smuggling into the Northeast on one hand, and directly dealt with the concern involving groups, particularly to insurgent groups with vision to resolve this problem. On the other hand, India also engages in bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the Southeast Asian countries not to breed insurgency, kingpin of narcotic drug smuggling, in each other territory.⁹⁷⁴ It is optimistically expecting that the smuggling is halted soon and the spread of disease like HIV/AIDS is slowly mitigated from further dispersal in the region.

b. Promotion of Cultural Exchange and People-to-People Contact

Priority for promotion of cultural exchange⁹⁷⁵ and people-to-people contacts is another initiative taken by the Government of India toward strengthening cooperation with Myanmar as it can fortify understanding between the two states. This confidence building measures is thus endorsed for it favored cordial relations simply not through state but also through the interaction of people from either side of the border.⁹⁷⁶ Undoubtedly this step would significantly accommodative to the Northeast toward resolving misunderstandings due to differences in language and culture. In recent past, the cultural wing of the Ministry of Social and Cultural Welfare of India has been organizing regular cultural activities to showcase the rich culture and heritage of the

⁹⁷³ Binalakshmi Nepram (2002). *South Asia's Fractured Frontier: Armed Conflict, Narcotics and Small Arms Proliferation in India's North East*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

⁹⁷⁴ Walter Fernandes (2010). *Op.cit.* p. 132. Also see at Pakem, B. (1997). *Insurgency in North-East India*. New Delhi: Om Sons Publications.

⁹⁷⁵ From the time immemorial, India and Myanmar has been very strong cultural heritage, and this heiritage is reviving in the recent times to reintegrate the people living across the border. see at Kapila Vatsyayan (2006). *The cultural heritage of India*, Vol. VII, The Arts. Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

⁹⁷⁶ Manmohan Singh (2004). *Op.cit.* p. 22.

people.⁹⁷⁷ Besides, the Myanmarese cultural troupes are invited to perform at different places in a yearly basis to breach the gap of people-to-people relations. In this way, India's northeast and Myanmarese people are sharing a platform through culture and social interaction. Other cultural events held in the past include carnatic music nite, dance performances from Myanmar and India's northeast in connection with the ASEAN-India Car Rally in 2014.⁹⁷⁸ Subsequently, night of India and Myanmar's dance was organized at National Theatre in collaboration with students of the Art and Culture University of Yangon. The people-to-people contact relations also imbibe the young educated section to venture job opportunity outside the region. This mechanism has intensified a new wave of retracting the historical relationship of the region with Southeast Asian countries.⁹⁷⁹ In recent past, India and Myanmar moved an extra mile to make successful of this relation has lessened the restriction of free movement and cross-border for those indigenous people whose settlement is within the fourteen kilometers.⁹⁸⁰ Nonetheless it has also open free movement for the pilgrimage from either side of the border. The Buddhist and Manipuris were enjoying the unfetter policy at utmost contentment. Since 1998, India and Myanmar have taken serious note of this interaction to strengthen the relations. The leaders of both the countries clearly knows that until the northeast is transformed or integrated in the fold of the relationship, harnessing stronger relations would not be possible as dependence of interaction through maritime route fails to wisely exploit the core boon of relationship.⁹⁸¹ Realizing this potential the border is opened in many areas – the opening of border is merely not a trade strategy but more profoundly a form of social and cultural integration. Some of the few steps undertaken by India on mission for promotion of people-to-people contacts in past few years are the Eminent Persons Lecture Series, Youth Exchange Programmes, car rally and Media Exchange Programmes etc. Consequently, the Government of India also encourage the people of

⁹⁷⁷ Shankari Sundaraman (2007). India-ASEAN Relations: Search for opportunities in a shifting Regional Scenario. *World Focus*, XXVIII (11&12), 425-430.

⁹⁷⁸ K. Yhome (2009). *India-Myanmar relations (1998-2008): A decade of redefining bilateral ties*. New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation.

⁹⁷⁹ Jairam Ramesh (2005). Op.cit. p. 19.

⁹⁸⁰ Janaka Wijayasiri (2003). Cooperation in Tourism among the BIMSTEC Countries: Prospects and Constraints. *BIIS Journal*, 24 (4), pp. 483-510.

⁹⁸¹ H.B. Sarkar (1985). *Cultural Relations between India and Southeast Asian Countries*. Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Motilal Banarsidass.

northeast to have local knowledge of a foreign culture as it would endure assimilation of each other culture as it is a bridge of social integration between the two countries. Within a year or two, the border would be flagged with bus and flight connectivity between the India's northeast and Myanmar.⁹⁸² At the same time, the rail and sea route connection is not far away and once all these initiatives is expanded the social and cultural interaction would grow and the people of northeast have a big share to benefit from the relationship.

c. Initiative to Establish Peace and Security

When India and Myanmar started building relationship, the two countries has committed to fight the insurgency that is spreading across the borderland. In the past this insurgent groups create total derail of peace and harmony – the Myanmar could not control the territory that is sheltered by the insurgent groups due to many problems. Similarly the Government of India also unable to suppressed the northeast insurgent groups. As a result the frontier on both sides has been kept as a 'high security zone', and keep away from all sources of interaction, in fact, isolated the total Northeast from all forms of development.⁹⁸³ But, it remained futile to keep so long as the insurgency are simply growing stronger and threatening the nation's sovereignty, particularly in India. In the meantime, India policy to build relations with Myanmar and Southeast Asian countries grew stronger in the early 1990s, yet insurgency continue to disturb all the strategy of India's integrating the Northeast with the Southeast Asia.⁹⁸⁴ Many policy-makers finally came to a conclusion towards signing ceasefire agreement with the insurgent groups in order to move ahead the policies of the 'look east' and build closer tie with Myanmar, as it is the only ASEAN country that has continental connection with India. Thus the Government of India initiated two model of dealing with the insurgent groups; firstly to negotiate with those groups and resolves the issue in peaceful manner and the other is to directly counter their existence with brute forces if they are reluctant

⁹⁸² Sarmistha Mukherjee (2015, July 1). Sub-regional road connectivity pacts: From 'looking East' to linking East. Indian Express, New Delhi. See more at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/sub-regional-road-connectivity-pacts-from-looking-east-to-linking-east/#sthash.bygtqmtz.dpuf>

⁹⁸³ B.G. Verghese (1997). India's North East Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, and Development. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 98.

⁹⁸⁴ B.B. Sharma (2010, May 29). Myanmar's impact on NE insurgency. ADNI News. Also see the same article at Hueiyen Lanpao, editorial page, May 29, 2010.

on the peace process.⁹⁸⁵ Since then the Government of India had signed a peace agreement with different insurgent groups. Some of the groups that have come under negotiation are ULFA, NSCN-IM, NSCN-R, NSCN-KK, Dima Hasao (Jewel) and KNF etc. The non-accordist groups like UNLF, NSCN-K, ULFA (Paresh Baruah) were thwarted as last resort. In 2015 after they jointly attacked the Indian army at Chandel district in Manipur near the Indo-Myanmar border. In retaliation Indian army in collaboration with Myanmar soldiers have jointly counter-attacked and thwarted their camps under the flagship of Hot Pursuit.⁹⁸⁶ Thereafter, there is dramatic change in regards of peace and security in the region. Although the insurgent groups still prevalence in the Northeast they remain silence. In other words, the violence and other disturbance have shrieked down manifold. This is in fact a new avenue to the return of peace and security in the northeast.

d. Education and Skill Development

The Indo-Myanmar relationships have extended another significant development for the northeast and it is in the field of education and skill development. This extension is, undoubtedly, to educate the youth in order to secure job through the professionalism.⁹⁸⁷ In the past, the education status of the whole northeast except Mizoram was below national average and many students who are dropped out from the school usually joined insurgent groups or become drug users. As a result the Northeast faced unstipulated and detrimental down-gradation in economy and other areas of human development index. The central and states governments fails to initiate programme to control the negative trend of students dropped out vis-à-vis mechanism to manage the dropped out students from joining other side of life.⁹⁸⁸ Thus the youths with the involvement in insurgencies have in turned become a threat to the national security. In eighties and early nineties the menace of this inclination are common and the wave

⁹⁸⁵ Archana Upadhyay (2009). *India's fragile borderlands: The dynamics of terrorism in North East India*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co.

⁹⁸⁶ Esha Roy (2015, June 5). Manipur ambush: 18 army men killed, 11 injured. *The Indian express, New Delhi*. Also see at “*Days after Manipur Ambush, Army Hits Militants across the Myanmar Border in Joint Operation with Air Force*” (2015, June 9). *Ndtv.com*

⁹⁸⁷ Indian Chamber of Commerce (2013). *India's North-East Diversifying Growth Opportunities*. New Delhi: ICC, p. 11.

⁹⁸⁸ N. Bhupendro Singh (October 2006). *Globalization and North East India: Challenges and Opportunities*, p.1. Retrieved from http://www.nits.ac.in/departments/humanities/new_hum/social_scanner/3.doc

undoubtedly spread across almost all the states of the Northeast. Similarly, Myanmar also faces an equal consequence of militancy on their side that is bordering to Indian territory. There was a paradigm shift with the enforcement of Look East Policy on one side and resumption of Indo-Myanmar relations. Under the new policy India has initiated mechanism to control the deviation of students on wrong side by granting scholarship and other schemes related to issue of youth development.⁹⁸⁹ The other factor is limited educational institutions and vocational training for those who prefer to pursue career in professional line. Thus the Government of India initiated a programme to expand educational institutions and skill development institutions in the region. The outcome of this programme has turned affirmative to some degree among the youths, and hence by late 1990s the Government of India in consonant with states has constructed many institutions both in terms of professional and skill development. In recent past, the institutions like National Institute of Technology (NIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Vocational institutions and other professional institution have come up across the northeast. Many youths have slowly take advantage and venture toward a new career leaving aside the old nature. On other side, when Indo-Myanmar relations grew to next height the New Delhi launch a new means to engage the youths in the development of the region itself. Subsequently, India also organized a student's exchange programme and other scholarships are easily made available so that students get the opportunity to explore the opportunity in their career. To enhance the Indo-Myanmar relations the youths are also advised to learn foreign culture and language so that it can imbibe and create opportunity to potential candidates.

B. Economic Initiatives

a. Infrastructural Development and Connectivity Linkages

To have smooth relations with Myanmar, as per the agreement, India has to develop infrastructure and better connectivity linkages in the Northeast region. Until there is smooth connectivity and infrastructure in northeast the Indo-Myanmar commitment to build relations through continental route cannot materialize into action.

⁹⁸⁹ Government of India Scholarships for International Students (2012, August). Retrieved from http://www.archive.india.gov.in/overseas/study_india/studyinindia.php?id=10

Thus the Indian government re-energizes its policy and carried forward the infrastructure development in the region especially on transport and communication system. This relentless effort of India in bringing an infrastructural development in the North-East has multi-pronged vision and the primary one is to build cooperative engagement with the Southeast Asia via Northeast and Myanmar.⁹⁹⁰ As part of the initiatives to improve connectivity between North-East India and Southeast Asia, the construction of rail link is underway, and this effort is to have a link from Jiribam (Manipur) to Hanoi (Vietnam) passing through Myanmar.⁹⁹¹ Alongside the above project, infrastructural construction on road, waterway, Industrial Training Centre and Tele-Communications is gradually taking shape across the Northeast especially in the border area with an aim to have viable connectivity with Myanmar and Southeast Asia. If all these mega projects are accomplished, the North-East region will be benefitted not only in infrastructural development but as well in social development. The Government of India is also on news to reopen the Stilwell road stretching from Ledo in Assam to connect the South China province of Yunnan via Myitkyina in Myanmar.⁹⁹² Several measures have been undertaken under the aegis of the ‘Look East’ policy to uplift the Northeast India. First amongst these measures has been a proposal to build the ‘Asian Highway’ and ‘Asian Railway Link’ through the northeast. The proposed geographical niche for the Asian Highway is the Imphal (India) – Tamu (Myanmar) road going on to Kalemryo railway onto Mandalay in Myanmar. Four lane Asian highways is also sought between New Delhi-Singapore linked Kaula Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Phnom Phek, Bangkok, Vientiane, Yangon, Dhaka and Kolkata. In many parts, the road construction has been completed and it is soon to start bus service between Imphal and Mandalay in 2016. Moreh is seen as a key center to India’s connecting with Myanmar, thus necessities infrastructural development projects is undergoing now. According to Ibobi Singh, Moreh is the most strategic international trading point in the region. Within the Northeast the highway leading to Southeast is undergoing at a very fast pace, in most part it is

⁹⁹⁰ Patricia Mukhim (2007). North East Scan: Redefining Development. *Dialogue*, 9 (1), p. 19. Also see at Gulshan Sachdeva (2011). Preparing the north eastern economy for the ASEAN linkage. In Madhu Rajput (Ed.), *Understanding North East India: Cultural Diversities, Insurgency and Identities*. New Delhi: Manak Publications, pp. 275-297.

⁹⁹¹ Chandra Embuldeniya (2010). Op.cit. p. 7.

⁹⁹² ICC-PWC Report (2013). Op.cit. p. 13.

already completed. Similarly the rail link from Luming (Assam) to Tupul (Manipur) is completed major works and it is undertaking at a very fast pace. As part of the infrastructural development, the Government of India has expanded both rail and road links to many new places. For example, the Kamakhya (Assam) to Nagarlagon (Arunachal Pradesh) and Guwahati to Gaolpara rail links is now running. These projects are part of the India's dream to enhance development in the region. So the Indo-Myanmar has imbibed northeast a new lease of crossroad and this has generated sudden but fast development.

b. Promotion of Tourism

The Northeast is a place of rich heritage and has a potential for the tourism. There are also many landscapes across the region that looks very unique and different in its nature. With exotic flora and fauna its physical serenity is splendid as there are numerous unimagined woods, waterfalls, lakes, peaks, grooves, variety of fruits, wild life, pilgrimages, historical sites, handicrafts etc. that gift a perfect spot for tourism.⁹⁹³ On top of that the physical location at the crossroads of East, South, and Southeast Asia makes the region more attractive. Above that the unity in diversity among the mosaic of ethnic groups, religions and languages altogether endure an impression for a tourist destiny.⁹⁹⁴ In the past, despite the rich endeavor the Government of India restraint the inflow of tourism under the provision of Protected Areas Permit Act 1958.⁹⁹⁵ This provision was partially relieved for foreign tourists in the year 1995 but the declaration of tourism zone is sanctioned lately in 2010. Henceforth, the Government of India to develop and promote tourism initiated different programmes such as infrastructure projects like Indian National Army Memorial Complex at Moirang, rural tourism, international travel fairs and exhibitions, marketing development scheme, hospitality to foreign media and travel trade personnel etc.⁹⁹⁶ The number of tourists thus began to flock in Northeast have considerably gone up after then although an Inner Line Permit (ILP) and Restricted Areas Permit (RAP) is compulsory for both domestic and foreign

⁹⁹³ Retd. Gen. J.J. Singh (2008). Op.cit. p. 23.

⁹⁹⁴ M.P. Bezbaruah (2005). Prospect of Tourism. *Seminar*, No. 550: Gateway to the East, pp 32-35.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 33.

⁹⁹⁶ Ministry of Tourism (2011). Annual Report 2010-2011, Government of India.

tourists respectively.⁹⁹⁷ In 1996 the strength of tourists from domestic are 795277 and foreigners are merely 8011, but in the year 2005, a total of 35, 18,670 domestic tourists visited the North-East, 44, 57, 280 in 2006, 47, 26, 220 in 2007, in 2008 was 52, 11, 740, and in 2009 was 5,704,250. Similarly the region received foreign tourists of 3,687 in 2005, in 2006 was 3,857, in 2007 was 4,306, in 2008 was 4,756, and in 2009 the number further rose to 4,766.⁹⁹⁸ The percentage of tourist, both domestic and foreign, has increased in every state of Northeast in the last two financial years – minimum 36 to 41 percent increased in domestic tourists and minimum 19 percent increased in foreign tourists.⁹⁹⁹ The other reason of flocking tourist is because of the festivals. Every state organized a state festival to promote tourism and this has attracted many across the globe. For example, the state of Nagaland has Hornbill festival, Manipur has Orange and Pineapple festivals, Assam has Rongali Bihu, Mizoram has Kut festival etc. and these festivals too attract domestic and foreign tourists.¹⁰⁰⁰ Although Myanmar is still marginal in terms of tourist now but the Indo-Myanmar relations have sowed the seed to favour tourism in the Northeast. The potentials of rising tourism from Myanmar and Southeast Asian countries is high in days ahead because once the Asian highway, flight and rail route connectivity including sea route is fully materialize it is much expected that the tourism in northeast would be mostly from them.

c. Promotion of Border Trade Centers

The volume of economy of the Northeast is changing since the border trade is operationalized in mid 1990s. In order to ameliorate the trade and commerce some significant initiatives is laid in the border area to develop physical infrastructure for yearning more profit – border road, integrated check posts and border trade centers are constructed with an objective to garner profit.¹⁰⁰¹ Notably the blueprint of 2008 presented an infrastructural development primarily to promote trade and investment on either side

⁹⁹⁷ Ministry of Tourism (2010), Annual Report of Tourism 2009-2010. Government of India.

⁹⁹⁸ ICC-PWC Report (2013, January). India's North-East – Diversifying Growth Opportunities. Guwahati, p. 9.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ministry of Tourism (2013), Annual Report of Tourism 2012-2013. Government of India.

¹⁰⁰¹ Lallura Sailo (2005). Border trade: A note on the Mizoram-Myanmar sector. In Gurudas Das, N. Bijoy Singh & C.J. Thomas (Eds.), *Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Status, Problems and Potentials*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, p. 261.

of the border. Presently there are two regular Border Trade Centers (BTC) opened in Myanmar's border – BTC Moreh in 1994 and BTC Zokhawthar in 2005 – and the items that India export under the FTA are coal, fertilizer, tea, finished wood products, electronic goods, cement, steel and iron products, medicines and processed foods.¹⁰⁰² The volume of trade, as per record of Land Customs Station, Moreh till the end of March 2004 was approximately Rs. 204.26 crores, and in succeeding years it has improve little higher despite hurdle of infrastructure deficiency and limited trade items.¹⁰⁰³ This had a quantum jump during the year 2012-13 touching USD 36.2 million. In July 2010, Senior General Than Shwe, came to India and during the visit, recommitted to further strengthen the border trade between the two countries besides other multi-dimensional relationship that encompasses areas of cooperation in security, economic, social and development matters. To further enhance the relations Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh visited to Myanmar in May 2012 and signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in order to meet agreements that have been signed in the last meeting by both the countries on border trade.¹⁰⁰⁴ In a followed up meeting, the Ministry of Home Affairs has also agreed in principle to allow more border trade centers between India and Myanmar and subsequently the first meeting of the Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Committee was held in Moreh (Manipur) on November 8, 2012.¹⁰⁰⁵ The meeting reviewed the current status of border trade and discussed border trade points along with the proposed expansion of items under border trade. Recently, the Government of India declared to open more BTCs from Indian side through the state of Arunachal Pradesh, East Ukhrul of Manipur and Nagaland.¹⁰⁰⁶ Despite all those initiatives the Government of India further needs to frame a policy that can extensively open the border in a wider range. Until now, the items of import and export are limited to few agreed items but it needs to enhance with wider production to freely trade so that India's amalgamation with Myanmar and Southeast

¹⁰⁰² Lunminthang Haokip (2005). Moreh-Tamu: A Tale of Two Towns. In Gurudas Das, N. Bijoy Singh & C.J. Thomas (Eds.), *Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Status, Problems and Potentials*. (pp 260-267). New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.

¹⁰⁰³ Konsam Ibo Singh (2005). Op.cit. p. 92.

¹⁰⁰⁴ BBC Asia (2012, May 28). India PM Manmohan Singh in historic Burma visit. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18225010>.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Pushpita Das (2014). Status of India's Border Trade Strategic and Economic Significance. IDSA Occasional Paper No. 37, New Delhi: IDSA, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰⁶ K. Yhome (2009). Op.cit. p. 32.

Asia would reinforce as well as the Northeast can effortlessly yield benefit from this relations.¹⁰⁰⁷

6.7. India's Northeast and Myanmar: Prospect for Trade Cooperation

India's Northeast and Myanmar has a good potential of trade due to its geographical proximity, and it is relatively seen a positive trend since the resumption of Indo-Myanmar relations, particularly after when a border trade centre is set up in different points of the border. This improvement gives new dynamism because it can harness not only the economic engagement between the two countries but brought about a paradigm shift in Indo-Myanmar relations. Knowing this inert opportunity, India and Myanmar signed again new agreement in 2013 to set up more border trade centers to generate more income as well as booster people-to-people contact. Similarly, it has also initiated to enhance the items of production to transect in the border trade besides other mechanism to promulgate the expansion of trade between the two countries. In the last two decades, the leaders of both countries recognize the potentiality of generating more revenue out of this trade and thus exerting to the implementation of BIMSTEC-Free Trade Agreement.¹⁰⁰⁸ Once it comes into effect it will strengthen the prices of products and there would be transparent and conceivable improvement in trade because it will check and balance the negative trade through clandestine informal trade.

‘The India's northeast, being located at the hub of this trade, would definitely benefitted from the Indo-Myanmar trade, particularly border trade. But the pertinent issue is to what extent the change will boost trade in locally produced goods and services for India's Northeast with Myanmar as the two shares broadly similar economic structures in which agriculture still dominates and

¹⁰⁰⁷ Rahul Bhattacharyya (2005). Trade settlement issues and introduction of letter of credit for promotion of Indo-Myanmar border trade. In Gurudas Das, N. Bijoy Singh & C.J. Thomas (Eds.), *Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Status, Problems and Potentials*, (pp 228-245). New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.

¹⁰⁰⁸ S.B. Singh & S.N. Goswami (2000). Potentiality of Border Trade between India and Myanmar. In Das, Gurudas and R.K. Purkayastha (eds.), *Border Trade: North-East India and Neighbouring Countries*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, pp 181-192.

manufacturing activities contribute a rather small component of total production.’¹⁰⁰⁹

Nonetheless, the Northeast can generate better revenue through these markets despite similarity of production and identical market pattern because the preference of the customers depends upon the fine prints of the production. On other hand, the northeast have atleast find markets to sale their production though the resources base and production compositions are competitive rather than complementary, but competition of market is a natural process everywhere and so it does not limits the scope for trade between them. To excel in trade the Northeast needs to produce quality production¹⁰¹⁰ and it would capture the markets on their side.

Without a doubt, the Northeast is largely dependence on the agriculture and it is still commanding a larger share in domestic product, yet encountered deficiency in production. Thus the region, until today, is depending on supplies from other part of India for its almost entire requirement. The rice and pulses are staple food items for the populations of the Northeast but the rice production from the region alone is insufficient thus required supply from other parts of the country.¹⁰¹¹ The supplies usually come from the north-western Indian states like Punjab and Haryana, and the distance of transportation comparatively far with involvement of larger transport cost as well as unpredictable transportation. On other hand, Myanmar is traditionally surplus producers and exporter of these two products, and India has been one of the largest importers of the said products in the past.¹⁰¹² Once the trade is legalized the Northeast can easily access and, it would reduce the price as well as protected from unpredictable circumstance. There is no apparent reason why Myanmar should not be able to supply these commodities to the neighbouring northeast India. In this way, the northeast can provide markets for other agricultural products of Myanmar too. The import of agricultural

¹⁰⁰⁹ Swaran Singh (1998). Myanmar: The ‘Strategic Hub’ of the 21st Century Asia. *U.S.I. Journal*, CXXVIII (532), p. 249.

¹⁰¹⁰ Sushil Khanna (2005). Economic opportunities or continuing stagnation. *Seminar*, No. 550, p. 25.

¹⁰¹¹ Sunil Kumar (2005). Export Potential and Promotion of Trade between India’s North East and Neighbouring Countries. In Gurudas Das, N. Bijoy Singh & C.J. Thomas (Eds.), *Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Status, Problems and Potentials*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, p. 130.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid*, p. 147.

products from Myanmar on a regular basis can have beneficial effect on farm production in both Myanmar and India's northeast.¹⁰¹³ Without a doubt, this expansion would provide an incentive for farmers in Myanmar to adopt better technology and expand production. Receiving supply of staple food items, farmers in the Northeast can concentrate on production of high value horticultural and other commercial crops for which the region possesses suitable agro-climatic conditions.¹⁰¹⁴

Apart from agricultural products, Myanmar is also known for rich mineral deposits of various types. The granites, marble, jade and ruby are largely produced in Myanmar this production if come to the northeast markets it would serve the interest of both the sides. As of now the northeast is largely depended from the western states of India. With per capita income level rising rapidly in India demand for such precious stones can be made through the northeast. On other hand, with the Indian economy growing rapidly the demand for energy is also increased manifold and required to maintain balance production and consumer price. In that context, gas supply from Myanmar can be of great advantage for India because it can be used for thermal power generation and other industrial uses in the northeast.¹⁰¹⁵ The northeast depends heavily on hydropower for its electricity requirements though it has huge untapped potential, proposed construction of dams for utilizing such potential has run into controversies and moreover, the supply from existing hydropower projects becomes insufficient and unreliable in dry winter months, so the supply of gas based thermal stations from Myanmar can be useful to stabilize the power supply situation in the region.

On other side, the northeast has also potential to exports productions to Myanmar. Since the Indo-Myanmar relations broke down in 1962, Myanmar has turned towards China and the Sino-Myanmar relations grew unprecedentedly in all sphere more specifically on economic cooperation. As a result, the Chinese have captured the markets in Myanmar¹⁰¹⁶ and this infiltration of Chinese manufactured products in Myanmar. This infiltration does not end within the four walls of Myanmar but spill over to the nearby

¹⁰¹³ Ibid, p. 147.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid, p. 149.

¹⁰¹⁵ Marie Lall (2008). Op.cit. p. 23.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid, p. 124.

countries and more so in the India's northeast. At this juxtapose, India needs to initiate a strong policy to defence the entry of Chinese products as well as explore the market in Myanmar for the Indian products but unfortunately the New Delhi is yet to aggressively do it. Earlier the pattern of exports from India's northeast to Myanmar was through informal border trade on local products and it has slowly employed, in aftermath of nineties, through formal border trade on limited items of production.¹⁰¹⁷ The India's northeast has potential to play a sphere of advantage over other competitors in catering to Myanmar's requirements but the overall industrial backwardness failed the region to perform its obligation. In spite of that it can plays a pivotal role in some areas once border trade in these items is liberalized, the Indian manufacturers can explore and exploit markets in Myanmar more extensively in the same way the Chinese have established its production. The Indian manufacturers can set up productions based in the Northeast to cater the markets in within and beyond. To maneuver India has also steadily started by giving attractive package of fiscal and other concessions to the newly industrial establishments in the region under the Northeast Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy 2007.¹⁰¹⁸ In this process of industrialization, the region will receive a boost.

Generally, there are mistrust among the population of the Northeast that border trade or from the Indo-Myanmar relations there is no much to gain the indigenous population as production produce by them are similar with those of Myanmarese as well as the marketable products are of low category items that earns no much profit.¹⁰¹⁹ For instance, the locally produces are Mosquito net, bags, shawls, ngari, fermented bamboo-shoot, soyabean etc., and it has no much value to gain profit from the border trade. Undoubtedly it is true that generally the fourth world's population including the northeast products is no way compatible with the advance production. It is also fact that, as a result, the fourth world has always been cornered and treated alike to the third world by the first

¹⁰¹⁷ Gurudas Das & C.J. Thomas (2005). Economy of Myanmar: Trends and Structures. In Gurudas Das, N. Bijoy Singh & C.J. Thomas (eds.), *Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Status, Problems and Potentials*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, pp. 12-19.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ministry of Industry and Commerce (2007, March 29). North Eastern Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy Announced – Kamal Nath Says Landmark 10-Year Policy Will Speed Up Industrialisation And Development of North Eastern Region. New Delhi. Retrieved from http://commerce.nic.in/pressrelease/pressrelease_detail.asp?id=1985

¹⁰¹⁹ M. P. Bezbaruah (2007). Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: The Stakes for North East India. *Dialogue*, 9 (1), p. 2.

and second world in nineteen and twentieth century. However, it is not necessary to be dismayed on lack of compatible productions; the Northeast has very strong potential in trade of services and once the free flow of movement started, the northeast would generate huge revenue from it. The people of northeast are very rich sense of service in areas such as healthcare, hospitality, tourism, transport, communication and other related services. Over the last few years facilities for advanced medical treatment have come up in the region and these facilities are equally availed by people from the neighbouring states like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Consequently, softening of the border and allowing freer movement across the border would also invite these facilities for residents of Myanmar.

6.8. Demystifying the Northeast's Quest

The Indo-Myanmar cordial relation that comes about in 1990s has somehow brought a new podium to solve the problems of the northeast and set a new dilemma prompted a critical question of the future. The matter is relatively difficult to draw a conclusion now but observing the dynamism of Indo-Myanmar relations in the last two decades vis-à-vis the condition of northeast is definitely speaks volumes. Since the independence of India from the imperial power, the northeast has been isolated into a landlocked and made one of the most imbalance regions in terms of economic development and human development index.¹⁰²⁰ The isolation became more imminent after the Chinese invasion as well as the military coup d'état in Myanmar in the year 1962.¹⁰²¹ Since then the India's northeast has become a most fragile and strategic point in context of India military dominance but the successive government of India does not seriously paid attention to uplift the region instead imposed a draconian law AFSPA in the whole region. This repulsion led to more insurgent groups and civil discontentment in the Northeast and attitude against the New Delhi became predominant.¹⁰²²

¹⁰²⁰ Gulshan Sachdeva (2011). Preparing the north eastern economy for the ASEAN linkage. In Madhu Rajput (Ed.), *Understanding North East India: Cultural Diversities, Insurgency and Identities*. New Delhi: Manak Publications, p. 276.

¹⁰²¹ Rajiv Kumar Bhatia (2011). Myanmar-India Relations: The way forward. *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 6 (3): 315-326

¹⁰²² Karin Dean (2005). Territorialities Yet Unaccounted. *Seminar*, No. 550: Gateway to the East, pp 50-54. Also see at Hazarika, Niru (2011). Assimilation and Alienation of North East Indian States in Historical

On other hand, there was a growing feeling of alienation across the section of society, yet the Government of India shows no concern to resolves the paranoid of the people. From the infrastructural development to basic amenities, the Northeast is truncated in all affairs. There were no good roads, hospitals, education institutes or other necessary facilities. In other words, the northeast was treated in a step-motherly way – the only improvement encountered was more military enforcement and human rights violations.¹⁰²³ Some policy-makers describes that the isolation of northeast was a result of posing no threat from the Myanmar. The northeast after the Chinese invasion experienced incremental growth of paramilitary force, and now it is axiom that isolation of India's northeast is a result of no threat pose from Myanmar in the border? It may not be appropriate to agreed upon the arguments, but presumably that perspective is right. On other hand, there are evident that the Chinese extended support to the northeast issue through providing arms and ammunition to insurgent groups. Reviewing the arguments it is likely that the Government of India was merely taking advantage to remain suppress the northeast as much they can in order to psychologically weaken the northeast populace so that no challenge against the hindu rashtra cannot be tolerated. The action of Indira Gandhi to the Mizos in 1980s can be rightly proved to that context. Furthermore, the paradox of Jairam Ramesh (2008) clearly reflected an intentional misunderstanding on the issue of northeast.¹⁰²⁴ The northeast problems relinquishing into a law and order problems or cultural problem is tactic of how India had intentionally misunderstood the genuine issue of the northeast India. It is rather not a support to the northeast issue but to bring ambivalent perspective on how the Government of India has totally isolated the northeast in a tight cube. Moreover, India diplomatic relations until early 1990s was more toward the west and finds no interest towards the east, particularly India's foreign policy and literatures are very limited toward Myanmar. This lopsided policy is likely another reason for the isolation of the Northeast too. But there was dramatic transition of the

Perspective and Contemporary Situation. In Rajput, Madhu (ed.), *Understanding North East India: Cultural Diversities, Insurgency and Identities*. New Delhi: Manak Publications, pp. 3-29.

¹⁰²³ Gulshan Sachdeva (2011). Preparing the North Eastern Economy for the ASEAN Linkage. In Madhu Rajput (Ed.), *Understanding North East India: Cultural Diversities, Insurgency and Identities*. New Delhi: Manak Publications, pp. 275-297.

¹⁰²⁴ Jairam Ramesh (2005). Op.cit. p. 20.

world political order in early 1990s and it suddenly shaken the geopolitics and diplomacy of India. Thence India began looking eastward, particularly with the Southeast Asia.

When India began a paradigm shift in its foreign policy, it began to see the imperative of the Northeast and Myanmar. Since then the utmost task of the Government of India was to maintain good relations with Myanmar and to move forward it is impulsive to pay attention on the Northeast.¹⁰²⁵ Thus India capitulate necessary infrastructural development and other welfare activities in the Northeast. Thereafter, the development apparatus in Northeast has increased and opportunity is slowly lumping, it is now no longer remains in periphery but pose a centre of integration between South and Southeast Asia. Without a doubt, the Indo-Myanmar relation brings reform in the northeast especially on development paradigm, yet the initiative cannot fully materialize in the last two decades due to the prevalence of insurgent groups and other ill social elements. It's a known fact that insurgent and development projects cannot go parallel in the same direction. The Government of India, therefore, is dealing all the outstanding problems in order to resolves the northeast from purview of security to install a place a commercial hub in days ahead. From an observation of a realistic approach, the India-Myanmar relations that beget in the early 1990s sow seeds of the northeast toward new direction of progressive development.¹⁰²⁶ In this way, northeast have become demystifying through the India and Myanmar relations. The development of northeast, by that mentioned alone, does not end journey of isolation but it still needs more progressive and strong initiative of the Government of India to build the northeast in a mainstream through political integration with India and socio-economic integration with the southeast Asian world.

¹⁰²⁵ V. Suryanarayan (1996). Looking ahead: India and Southeast Asia in the 1990s: New perspectives, new challenges. In Ghoshal, Baladas (ed.), *India and Southeast Asia: Challenges and opportunities*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 14.

¹⁰²⁶ Kavi Chongkittavorn (1997). The Evolution of 'Constructive Engagement. In Ralph Bachoe and Debbie Stothard (Eds.), *From Consensus to Controversy: ASEAN's relationship with Burma's SLORC*. Bangkok: Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEANBURMA), p. 21.