

# Reimagining India-ASEAN relations: What does it mean for Northeast India?

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## *Abstract*

*India has shown a special interest towards ASEAN under the overall context of its Act East policy. This relationship is expected to be significant in the development of northeast part of India. It is in this context, an assessment of Northeast India's perspectives assumes significant, although the actual engagement and role of this area of India are still negligible. We must also not expect a great result in a short period of time as there are multiple impediments facing this area. But, the purpose of this engagement is not unachievable at all. Moreover, some people argue that this policy is unrealistic in Northeast India.*

**Keywords-** Look East Policy, Northeast, Connectivity, ASEAN, Act East, Trade, Investment

## INTRODUCTION

Under the overall context of the Act East policy, India is intensifying its economic, political and cultural co-operation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian nations.<sup>143</sup> This policy, which was originally conceived as economic co-operation in trade and investment, has also gained strategic and cultural dimensions through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.<sup>144</sup> The India-ASEAN relations deserve special attention in the context of the Act East policy.

It is in this context the northeast region of India (hereafter, Northeast India) assumes significant a place due to its geographical location. The policy has given special concerns towards Northeast India. It has been

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<sup>143</sup> India-ASEAN connectivity can be game changer for northeast: Sushma, *Business Standard*, February 18, 2016

<sup>144</sup> Efforts on to boost NE's connectivity with ASEAN, *Nagaland Page*, February 3, 2017.

often projected that Northeast India will become a major gateway for trade and other activities with ASEAN. Northeast India is “the physical and cultural bridge” between India, Southeast Asia, and East Asia (C. Joshua Thomas, 2017, 117). Its development also rests on the bordering countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, China, Nepal, and Bhutan. Successive governments in India have undertaken several measures with the aim of intensifying India-ASEAN relations. As a result, there are mixed responses, ranging from enthusiastic anticipation to anxiety, towards creating business and investment opportunities in Northeast India. However, it comes with manifold challenges. At the outset, India's relations with ASEAN and East Asia could be considered as the foundation of the Act East policy. The policy provides an interface between Northeast India and ASEAN region. Northeast India has been a priority in the policy framework (Government of India 2017). Apart from ASEAN<sup>145</sup>, India has taken different bilateral steps with some members of ASEAN such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and others. The country has been participating in other forums such as the Asia-Europe Meeting, the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum, etc. An Indian Mission to ASEAN was set up in Jakarta “as a result of the expansion of India's relations” with the ASEAN and “to upgrade the relationship into a strategic partnership.”<sup>146</sup> This relationship is well reflected in the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity which was signed in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, in 2004. The vision document identified several priority areas of cooperation: political and security, economic<sup>147</sup>, socio-cultural<sup>148</sup>, connectivity and project-based financial assistance.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> ASEAN is constituted by Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam.

<sup>146</sup> For more information, please see The Indian Mission to ASEAN, Jakarta.

<sup>147</sup> ASEAN is India's fourth largest trading partner. The trade with ASEAN has increased to US\$ 70 billion in 2016-17. India's export to ASEAN has increased to US\$ 30 billion in 2016-17 from US\$ 25 billion in 2015-16.

<sup>148</sup> This aims to boost people-to-people interaction with ASEAN, such as inviting ASEAN students to India for the exchange programme, training course for ASEAN diplomats, exchange of parliamentarians, etc.

<sup>149</sup> Such as the ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund, ASEAN-India S&T Development Fund, ASEAN-India Green Fund, ASEAN-India Projects. See, Government of India, *The Ministry of External Affairs*, Dec. 2017.

Political and security cooperation focuses on regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern, including opposing the threat of weapons of mass destruction, promoting disarmament, strengthening regional security dialogue and cooperation, developing joint training programmes and using regional organisations for technical assistance to effectively fight terrorism and other transnational crimes such as money laundering, drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, arms smuggling, cyber-crimes, international economic crime and sea piracy.

Economic cooperation comprises trade and investment in transport, infrastructure and energy, including expediting timely completion of India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway and its extension to Laos and Cambodia, encouraging private sector participation in highway projects and port and coastal shipping projects in India and in the development of roads and railways. It also aims to strengthen ASEAN-India air connectivity, promotion of trade and investment interest in gas-related projects, electricity sector, sustainable and optimal utilization of renewable energy, coal, and new hydrocarbon projects, and cooperation in energy policy and planning, energy efficiency and conservation. Other areas include cooperation in science and technology with emphasis on Information and Communication Technology, exchange programmes among government officials in the areas of rural development and poverty eradication, human resource development initiatives including fellowships for ASEAN students, closer collaborations between universities, regular meetings of policymakers and think tanks and institute fellowships for promoting studies on ASEAN-India relations. Further, economic cooperation includes developing joint programmes in capacity building aimed at strengthening the capacities of SMEs on both sides.

Social and cultural cooperation include cooperation and regional commitment on poverty alleviation efforts, dialogue between government officials and civil societies in the field of rural development, women empowerment, protection of children against exploitation, gender equality, old age care, tourism (including eco-tourism, adventure tourism, sports tourism, religious tourism), greater awareness and appreciation of each other's traditional and contemporary cultures through regular exchange and linkage programmes, media, entertainment and sports.

## **WHAT DOES IT MEANT FOR NORTHEAST INDIA?**

The strategic partnership under the Act East policy strategy has offered opportunities for India in general and Northeast India in particular. The following reasons explain how Northeast India is important in the context

of Act East policy. The border region is remote and underdeveloped and in which its inhabitants are ethnically distinct people who share common cultural affinities. They are ethnically distinct from the rest of the people in India and Myanmar. Northeast India has been uniquely disadvantaged by the partition of India into India and Pakistan. It affected communication infrastructures at the village, town to the regional levels leading to an extreme isolation of the region. Hence, the region became a landlocked place as the transport and communication via East Pakistan to Calcutta was totally snapped away. For instance, the Bengal Assam railway track from Guwahati to Dhaka had stopped since 1965. The partition affected economic relations between Assam and British Bengal apart from the displacement of a large number of people.

Despite increasing emphasis towards ASEAN under the Act East policy framework, the growth and development of the region are slower than rest of the country. Now there is a widening gap in per capita income between the national average and the region. The region is probably the country's richest in terms of natural resources yet it is poor and lags behind. In most of India's rapidly growing states, the agriculture sector is in relative decline with the growth of manufacturing and tertiary sectors. But, there is little evidence of economic diversification in this part of the country, and the standard development indicators such as road link, banking, access to health care and power consumption are below the national average. The region generates less than 8 percent of its 63,257 MW of hydropower generating potential, and its per capita consumption of 110 KW is almost the fourth of the national average (411 KWH).<sup>150</sup> Likewise, the density of bank branches is much lower as compared the rest of the country. Further, although the human development indicators are favourable, the region has not been able to harness on this strength. While literacy rate is high, the skill development is low. Likewise, unemployment is alarming. If the literacy is high, there is concern about the quality of education. The literacy rate has not translated into higher employability or productivity. It is vastly influenced by the lack of skills.

The region is continuously highlighting its potentials to Southeast and East Asian markets. So, the pertinent questions are: what should be done to

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<sup>150</sup> Annual per capita consumption of electricity in the region during 2010-2011 was: Arunachal Pradesh (582.08 Kwh), Assam (222.86 Kwh), Manipur (242.30 Kwh), Meghalaya (654.08 Kwh), Mizoram (461.69 Kwh), Nagaland (264.81 Kwh), Sikkim (880.11 Kwh) and Tripura (221.80 Kwh) and while that of all India was 812 Kwh (Government of India, *Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region*, 2015, Shillong: NEC, 2015).

achieve the goals of the policy? What are the specific needs and priorities? There are no easy answers. Both central and state governments have initiated several measures which can be broadly divided into initiatives taken by the central government such as connectivity and other infrastructure development, bilateral policies such as border trade; (b) initiatives of the states such as the Sangai festival, Hornbill festival, Pangsu-Pass festival, Assam International Trade and Industrial Fair, development of new border town etc.; (c) bilateral initiatives including visit by officials, medical services, business delegations and academic and policy studies. Some of the measures are listed below:

**Table 1: Measures undertaken**

Sl. No.	Connectivity	Trade	Tourism and cultural	Misc
1	Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, Rih Tedim Project in Myanmar, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar), Connectivity to Bhutan and Bangladesh,	Opening of border (border markets)	Sangai Festival (Manipur), Hornbill Festival (Nagaland), Pangsu-Pass festival (Arunachal Pradesh) and other cultural activities	Seminars and research studies
2	Development of NH 153 (Stillwell Road)	Opening of land customs stations for clearance of goods imported or exported by land	Assam International Trade and Industrial Fair	Official visit and Business delegations
3	Connectivity of Northeast India with rest of the country	Construction of Integrated Check Post	Manipur Polo International	Sports

4	Expansion of airport facilities	Development of new town near Moreh		
5	Construction of railway lines	Act East Business Show	Proposed bus service between Moreh and Mandalay, Dhaka-Agartala bus service, India-ASEAN Car Rally	Medical services

Note: The list is indicative only.

Regular programmes including bilateral visits, festivals, and seminars are taken place, which has led the state governments to take up some steps. Such initiatives must be promoted. Manipur has claimed to have its own Act East Policy, while Assam has set up its Act East Policy Affairs Department. Manipur has been demanding visa on arrival for foreign nationals, the citizens of Myanmar in particular, in order to enhance medical tourism. According to its Chief Minister “Due to increased medical tourism traffic from Myanmar and other countries in the region, we have begun chalking out plans to transform the state into a healthcare and medical tourism hub of the region, covering northeast India and neighboring Myanmar”.<sup>151</sup> About 300 patients from Sagaing Division visit hospitals in Manipur every year as it is convenient for them to come to Imphal. They were one who cannot afford to go to Thailand or Singapore. Medical professionals from Sagaing Division have been trained at Shija Hospital under its Overseas Training Programme. Teams from Shija Hospital had visited Myanmar to extend its healthcare services as part of its mission to strengthen the relationship between the two nations and also develop medical tourism in Manipur. After these trips, the number of patients had increased. A Myanmar delegation had also visited the hospital in 2013.<sup>152</sup> In 2014, Guwahati based GNRC Hospitals signed an agreement

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<sup>151</sup> Huma Siddiqui, Manipur looks to reap benefits of Centre’s push, sets up own Act East Policy to materialise dream, *Financial Express*, September 15, 2017.

<sup>152</sup> This has been stopped by the Assam Rifles since 2014. The Assam Rifles alleged wounded insurgents were brought from Myanmar for treatment. This author had visited Moreh recently and was able to meet personnel of the Assam Rifles, Manipur Police, civil administration and civil society groups.

with Singapore General Hospital. This is expected to benefit the people in availing world-class healthcare facilities without going out of the region.

States have been organizing annual festivals with the aim of showcasing tradition and culture to the visitors from different countries, and more importantly for enhancing trade potential of the area. (Nani Bath, 2017, 101). Every year Manipur celebrates the Sangai Festival from 21st to 30th November. It is named after Sangai, the brow-antlered deer found only in Manipur. The festival started in 2010 (Government of Manipur, 2017). Similarly, in Nagaland, the Hornbill Festival is celebrated from 1-10 December. The festival is named after Hornbill, one of the most important bird species.

The 4th edition of North East Connectivity Summit which was held in Kohima in 2017, was attended by representatives from India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Russia. The focus of the summit was connectivity and development of an economic corridor connecting with Southeast Asia, people-to-people connectivity, shared biodiversity and infrastructure requirements in terms of roads, railways, inland waterways, airports, and market linkages. The theme of the summit was Act East from Nagaland and one of the focus sectors was tourism.<sup>153</sup>

Another area is social and cultural co-operation. The cultural similarities including traditions, religious practices and food habits between the northeast region of India and Southeast Asia are another advantage. This should be reinforced by regular cultural exchange programmes and enhancing people to people contact.<sup>154</sup> Pilgrimage tourism is an area which needs to be promoted in Sikkim (Teiborlang T. Kharsyntiew 2017, 24-43).

**Table 2: Tourism in North-eastern states**

State	2001		2005		2010		2012	
	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign
Arunachal	6349	323	3005	289	227857	3395	317243	5135

<sup>153</sup> Kohima forum stresses connecting Northeast India with Myanmar, Bangladesh, *Mizjima*, September 24, 2017.

<sup>154</sup> Northeast Can be Fulcrum of India-ASEAN Ties: Arunachal Dy CM, *Northeast Today*, August 8, 2017.

Assam	1010 651	6171	246765 2	10782	405092 4	15157	451140 7	17543
Manipur	7652 7	183	94299	316	114062	389	134541	749
Meghalaya	1786 97	2390	375901	3099	652756	4177	680254	5313
Mizoram	2877 1	152	44715	273	57292	731	64249	744
Nagaland	9948*	920*	17470	883	21094	1132	35915	2489
Sikkim	2033 06	31028	251744	16523	700011	20757	558538	26489
Tripura	1512	1512	216330	2677	342273	5212	361786	7840

\* Figures are estimated

Source: India Tourism Statistics (different years)

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh during the 25th-anniversary celebration conference of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership at Vientiane in Laos PDR in 2017 said that the North East offers unlimited tourism opportunities, rare flora, and fauna, natural scenic beauty, performing arts, cuisine, and handicrafts.<sup>155</sup> Muga silk of Assam is reportedly popular in Japan. Designers in Japan are increasingly using Muga silk in stitching kimonos and other traditional dresses, Demand for Muga, which has got GI Registration in 2007, is high in the international market since Assam is the sole producer of this rarest of rare fine silks.<sup>156</sup>

One of the main impediments is connectivity. Connectivity has been the focus of linking Northeast India with Southeast Asia. Sushma Swaraj, India's Foreign Minister, has rightly opined that enhancing connectivity between India and Southeast Asia can be a game changer for the region. "For India's Northeastern region, it can be a game changer. India has been working with ASEAN to enhance physical connectivity via our northeast as well as our eastern seaboard," she said.<sup>157</sup> In this context, the Kaladan

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<sup>155</sup> Manipur CM addresses ASEAN conference, *Assam Tribune*, August 10 2017

<sup>156</sup> Muga silk fast gaining popularity in Japan, *Business Line*, June 2, 2011.

<sup>157</sup> It was stated during her address at the Delhi Dialogue in February 2017.



Multi-Modal Transport project, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, and Rih Tedim Project in Myanmar is expected to improve connectivity between India and Southeast Asia.

**Table 3: Road length in relation to area and population as on 31st March 2011**

States	Total road length (in kms)	Area (sq. km)	Road length (in kms)		Total length of National Highways (in kms)	National highways (in kms)	
			Per 100 sq. km in area	Per one lakh of population		Per 100 sq. km of area	Per one lakh of population
Arunachal Pradesh	21,655	83,743	25.75	1558.98	1,992	2.38	144.08
Assam	241,789	78,438	308.26	775.73	2,836	3.62	9.10
Manipur	19,133	22,327	85.70	702.98	959	4.30	35.23
Meghalaya	11,984	22,429	53.43	404.32	810	3.61	27.33
Mizoram	9,810	21,081	46.53	899.13	927	4.40	84.97
Nagaland	34,146	16,579	205.98	1724.02	494	2.98	24.94
Sikkim	4,630	7,096	65.25	761.92	62	0.87	10.20

Tripura	33,77 2	10,48 6	322.0 7	919.96	400	3.81	10.90
All India	4,690, 342	3,287, 240	142.6 8	387.57	70,934	2.61	5.86

Source: Government of India, Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region, 2015, Shillong: North Eastern Council, 2015, p. 352

In April 2017, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed an agreement with the central government to provide 67,170 million Japanese Yen (approximately Rs 4,000 crore) for Phase I of the North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project. Official Development Assistance Loan (ODA) is provided at a concessional 1.4% interest rate for project activities and 0.01% interest rate for consulting services and offers a 30-year period of repayment (including 10 years of the grace period). The assistance is for improving connectivity in the region by constructing national highways and bridges. Under the project, modern slope protection technologies will be used to address the problem of landslides. Under Phase I of the project, improvement of NH-54 and NH-51 in Mizoram and Meghalaya will be the focus. NH-54 is located in central Mizoram and the stretch of the targeted section of NH-54 is from Aizawl to Tuipang in Mizoram stretching to 350km. The improvement of NH-54 would enhance the connectivity of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Corridor.<sup>158</sup> Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal said that India-Japan partnership holds the key to economic development in the region and the success of the Act East policy.<sup>159</sup> In December 2017, India and Japan have set up the Act East Forum. According to an official statement, it will “provide a platform for India-Japan collaboration under the rubric of India's Act East Policy and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy ... The Forum will identify specific projects for economic modernization of India's Northeast region including those pertaining to connectivity, developmental infrastructure, industrial linkages as well as people-to-people contacts through tourism, culture and sports-related activities.” Development of infrastructure in the North-eastern region would help India open out much more to Myanmar, Bangladesh and beyond.

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<sup>158</sup> Naresh Mitra, Rs 4000 crore aid from Japan for better road connectivity in North East, Times of India, April 7, 2017.

<sup>159</sup> Naresh Mitra, Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal seeks Japan cooperation to ensure success of Act East Policy, Times of India, March 30, 2017

Moreover, cross-border economic engagement is limited due to less population and bad connectivity. The border region between India and Myanmar is one of the most remote, underdeveloped and marginalized borders of the world. This region continues to remain largely unaffected by development taking place in their respective countries. It is also poorly understood by the outside world. The people of the borderland share close ethnic affinity, economic and cultural ties. Along with this border, the presence of the state is also minimal, and hence the local residents move freely across the border. At the same time, their respective countries also try to enforce border control laws. However, the cross-border movement is mainly shaped by the relationship at the federal level between India and Myanmar, and not by the relationship between the people who live along both sides of the border. Of late, several ethnic associations as well the Churches have been playing a different kind of role, thereby facilitating a consciousness of one's ethnic identity. In fact, we also cannot ignore Bangladesh.

## **WHAT NEXT?**

There are serious impediments ranging from inadequate road connectivity, unfavorable security environment, shortage of skilled manpower, lack of awareness of the policy and inability to communicate the available opportunities of the region. State governments of the region lack clear vision and unable to provide concrete plans and measures for actualizing the policy. They have not been able to reach out to Southeast Asia and other neighboring countries, and showcase their strengths in order to attract more investment in the region.

It is equally important to identify the common needs and priorities of the region. At the same time, it is also necessary to identify the needs and priorities of each state of the northeastern region. When undertaking the policy strategy it is also important that the government focuses on border area development, not just building superhighways. India needs to invest in social sectors apart from building roads in Myanmar.

The impact of Act East policy has been negligible in Northeast India. The states of the region could not attract potential investors. As a result, in spite of sharing a common border with Myanmar, the region has not benefitted from the policy. In fact, the policy has bypassed the region. During my fieldwork, I noticed trust deficit between the general public and state agencies and also between different agencies. I noticed that the general public did not trust them for their alleged involvement in corrupt

activities.<sup>160</sup> The villagers had resorted to various forms of agitation including prohibiting vehicular movement in protest against the prohibition imposed on their movement by the security forces. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded on the narrow hilly road every day.<sup>161</sup> But, there are also reasons for putting up security gates on this crucial road since the border is porous. It is necessary to resolve border dispute as soon as possible in order to avoid delay in the construction of border fencing due to minor disputes and lack of fund.<sup>162</sup> This is easily doable if the two governments are serious. Apart from these, the state governments are not actively involved. They are unclear of where to begin, what to do, there is no vision, and are marked by lack of seriousness. Likewise, the role of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region is unclear and plays no significant role. It is also not clear of the difference between this ministry and the North Eastern Council. Indeed, the Northeast region of India has been misused by many stakeholders.

Physical connectivity is essential for a greater economic engagement with Southeast Asia. It is highly inadequate within the region and with Southeast Asia. Infrastructure projects are taking at an abysmal slow pace. The condition of crucial roads including the one between Dimapur-Imphal-Moreh has remained the same for years. This author has the privilege of traveling on this road at least twice a year.

There is lack of information about the potential opportunities of Northeast India in Southeast Asia. People of Northeast India have a very limited knowledge of either Act East policy or ASEAN because they are not well informed. The policy or ASEAN do not have a direct impact on their lives. Likewise, ASEAN has a limited knowledge of Northeast India.

Another concern is the conflict between the local and national interests. The local people argue that the policy is national-centric while they prefer a regional-centric approach. They noted that the policy-makers in Delhi are never bothered to understand the ground realities and see development from national perspective ignoring local interests. To them, there is lack of

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<sup>160</sup> Khelen Thokchom, "Review eases frisking process," *The Telegraph*, 10 February 2015.

<sup>161</sup> See, "Indefinite bandh against alleged AR highhandedness affects busy Imphal-Moreh highway traffic," *The Imphal Free Press*, 31 January 2015.

<sup>162</sup> The author conducted fieldwork at Moreh in March 2015.

clarity.<sup>163</sup> For example, the demand for the reopening of Stillwell Road has not been taken into consideration by the government due to security concerns but the locals believe that its reopening does not pose any threat to national security (C. Joshua Thomas 2017, 116-123). Some people think that the Act East policy has been imposed on Northeast India.

The state governments of the region are not actively involved in devising ways and means to take the benefit of the policy. They are unclear of where to begin, what to do and seem to have lack of seriousness. They have not been able to reach out to Southeast Asia and other neighboring countries to showcase their opportunities in order to attract investments. If so, the policy will remain as one-sided approach with Delhi leading from the front, a lot more needs to be done in this region. Another concern is the conflict between the local and the national interests. and the region becomes merely a receiving end. The major apprehension in the region is that different projects under the policy would lead to a large scale immigration, exploitation of natural resources, trafficking, and militarization.

## **IDENTIFYING THE PRIORITY AREAS**

There is a need for significant co-operation in the development of human resource. There is a need for legalization of flourishing informal cross-border barter trade at Moreh and Namphalong. The current barter trade is an outdated model. The connectivity priorities must have two elements: one that deals with intra-regional connectivity and another that deals with state-specific needs. It is equally important to identify the common needs and priorities of the region. At the same time, it is also necessary to identify the needs and priorities of each state.

On the potential side of the region, first, tourism is an area which can be accorded priority due to topography, pleasant climate and natural flora and fauna. Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal, and Meghalaya have been able to attract tourists from within India and outside. Secondly, there is a need to assess the export potential of each state to their immediate neighbors. Apart from the export of coal and limestone from Meghalaya and tea from Assam, other export potential is the orange, citrus fruit, bamboo, ginger and tamarind from Meghalaya to Bangladesh. Agricultural produces, medicines, cycle parts are the major items from Tripura to Bangladesh. Apart from the chilly, ginger, handloom and handicraft items, flower and pineapple,

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<sup>163</sup> This was mentioned to the author by a research in New Delhi. Similar views are being mentioned by several people who are familiar with issues of Northeast India.

the state of Manipur has got the large potential for human capital and health services for Myanmar and its neighboring nations. Poor Myanmarese patients used to come to Imphal since there was an informal understanding between the governments of Myanmar, India, and Manipur. Those who cannot afford to go to Mandalay and other cities of Myanmar avail medical treatment in Imphal and nearby towns of India. One of the key demands of the people of Manipur is to begin the bus service between Imphal and Mandalay. This must be taken seriously by the government. This will also benefit the people of both India and Myanmar.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are both strategic and economic interests in the Act East policy in which ASEAN is expected to play an important role. Both strategic and economic interests are inseparable. The border region of India and border region of Myanmar along with Bangladesh have to play an important role. We need to identify their requirements. But, we shouldn't expect a great result in a short period for Northeast India as there are numerous lingering issues.

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