



# BRIDGE BETWEEN THE EASTERN COAST OF INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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## ABSTRACT

In order to remain competitive in the industrial and service sectors, it is essential to have a well-developed and consistently functioning infrastructure. The reduced costs and increased reliability of an improved connection are two great benefits. This is very important for industrial transportation since it affects productivity, efficiency, and the reliability of supplies. Insufficient international connections might stifle the enormous opportunities generated by Asia's dynamic economic centres. Both the benefits and drawbacks of a direct physical link between ASEAN and India are discussed in this article. Several helpful recommendations are offered for enhancing their current closeness to one another. The study concludes that the region's inefficiencies, such as incomplete transportation routes, a lack of interoperability, and infrastructure gaps, must be solved before a single Asian market can be built. India has shown a significant amount of interest in ASEAN as part of its Act East policy. This link is expected to have a significant effect on the growth of India's far northeast. It is vital to analyse the region's perspectives in this context, despite the fact that Northeast India's actual presence and effect are still very small. Considering the magnitude of the challenges we face, we also shouldn't expect rapid, groundbreaking breakthroughs. Although challenging, the outcome of this partnership is not unachievable. More importantly, many argue that this strategy would fail miserably in the North East of India.

**Keywords:** Effective, Connectivity, cost, reliability, production, infrastructure

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, Asia's rising economic power has shifted the global balance away from Western nations and toward Asia. The rise of Asia as a political and economic powerhouse was predicted by a number of influential studies, and it has come to pass. With a wide range of large, medium, and small governments all contributing to fast economic development and attracting substantial international investment, Southeast Asia has emerged as a key economic powerhouse in Asia. However, this process of economic expansion has not been confined to their borders and has instead influenced the adjacent South Asia region. At the same time, South Asia was monitoring its own development and beginning to grasp the region's immense potential.

The essay begins with a quick overview of the state of regionalism in South Asia and Southeast Asia today. The next section analyses the ease with which one may travel between South and Southeast Asia and India. As the essay progresses, it highlights India's role in fostering connection activities between the two regions, before concluding with the challenges that India must confront in order to become a thriving bridgehead.

Since antiquity, South Asia and Southeast Asia have maintained strong ties, with well-established commerce and transport routes linking the two regions. The development of transnational networks facilitated the dissemination and discussion of new knowledge across academic fields. The religious concepts and practises were also transmitted across the region through the commerce routes that carried spices, silks, and tea.

There's little doubt that both land and maritime routes have been used throughout the years, although with various degrees of success. Nonetheless, the arrival of European colonisation and the passage of time diminished cross-border relationships. Because of these shifts, cross-border and regional relations between South Asia and Southeast Asia weakened.

Changes in the twentieth century had a profound effect on societies throughout the globe. World War Two had far-reaching effects on society, and it became deeply divided. Following World War II, the Cold War drew clear divisions between the two postwar superpower blocs, which effectively partitioned Southeast Asia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Since then, Brunei Darussalam (1980) and Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam (1990) have joined the organisation, bringing the total number of members to ten. As the countries of Southeast Asia looked for ways to work together to solve their mutual issues, a sense of regionalism began to take root throughout the area. The years after the end of colonial control were formative for the young countries in South Asia as well. They stopped worrying so much about their own problems and started focusing on measures to strengthen their country and work together with one another. Regional cooperation and regionalism were not high priorities for many nations when they first obtained independence. Perhaps a distinct rejection of the idea of a shared platform in South Asia has arisen as a result of regional shifts caused by the perception of an internal threat, which is not as common elsewhere. After the partition of India and the collapse of Pakistan, physical ties between the two regions were broken. Bangladesh's proposal for a regional conference in South Asia resulted in the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in 1985. (SAARC). As a whole, Southeast Asian countries are beginning to realise that regional efforts are the most effective means of achieving their development goals; yet, SAARC has only produced limited outcomes to far. Infrastructure is not being built up to its full capacity, and regional trade is far lower than expected.

Because of its increasing economic importance, Asia has to strengthen its relationships to its neighbours and the rest of the world. More and more people are communicating with one another all around Asia, not only in separate nations. The phrase "economic corridor" is often used to characterise this trend. Economic corridors promote commerce within and across regions by linking economic nodes or hubs, which are concentrations of economic resources and actors. Economic corridors are seen as a "spark for regional integration" and a "engine for inclusive development" since they include previously excluded communities into the expanding process. They provide "spatial focus" for regional cooperation activities by prioritising regional initiatives and offering access to global industrial chains. To increase the amount of money that can be made and the amount of business that can be done in one area is the main objective of economic corridor planning.

The main goal of this kind of economy is to promote industrial development in a region with unrealized potential. Economic corridors need, but are not guaranteed by, the construction of strategic and integrated infrastructure inside certain regions and the subsequent linking of these sectors to surrounding ones. Transportation networks that connect the locations along such corridors facilitate the connection and connecting of infrastructure development to vital sectors like commerce, investments, and other economic agencies. This is an ideal result, but it's important to weigh the benefits against the risks of social dislocation and social strife while making decisions about whether or not to build such corridors. Due to the fact that regional connection programmes often cross international boundaries and target underserved areas, these concerns must be addressed. Moreover, it is important to think about the extensive environmental harm caused by the expansion of industry.

K. Yhome's research delves into the history and future prospects of the BCIM-EC, an initiative involving the economies of Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar. Yhome contends that the success of the BCIM-EC has given rise to new challenges and concerns. He says that it is unclear at this time whether regionalism or sub-regionalism, "economy driven" or "people-centric," centralization or decentralisation, will form the basis of the BCIM initiative. The geo-strategic obstacles that impede the BCIM project's realisation are dissected, and several strategies for overcoming them are discussed. Based on these findings, the report concludes with suggestions for areas where the sub-regional forum should work together in the future.

## A Fractured Saga

Worldwide, the two are inseparable components of the global trading system. As a result of the unfavourable political climate that has persisted in South Asia since the Partition, efforts to strengthen the region's land and

rail links have stalled. Although the UN ECAFE/ ESCAP presented its Trans-Asian Highway and Railway concept to member nations decades ago, progress has been excruciatingly sluggish, especially within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) area. In 2014, after years of difficult and often fruitless consultations and negotiations, senior officials within the SAARC framework finally managed to cobble together a consensus draught regional Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA). However, the result did not pass political muster for some, and attempts to get an all-SAARC endorsement of the SAARC MVA at the Kathmandu Summit in November 2014 were blocked by Pakistan. To overcome this setback and realise their economic development goals, which required increased physical connectivity across borders in order to boost trade, the eastern subregion of SAARC, consisting of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN), decided to try to secure a framework agreement at the regional level. The four nations' senior officials met in January 2015 to finalise a draught MVA for the BBIN sub-region (much along the lines of the draught SAARC MVA that had been discarded at the summit) and proclaimed that additional countries in the SAARC area (or beyond) might join as and when they were ready. In a ministerial meeting held in Thimphu, Bhutan on 15 June 2015, ministers from the four countries signed the BBIN MVA. Before the year was through, SOPs had been tried and tested, and in November, test runs of passenger and freight trucks got underway. It allows the four countries to move forward with implementing land transport facilitation measures among themselves, exchanging traffic rights and greatly easing the rites of passage at border crossings of passenger and cargo vehicles, which in turn promotes increased contact between the people of the four countries and increased trade and economic exchanges.

Because of its foundation in mutual gain, the signed framework agreement is fundamentally bilateral. In accordance with the rules of the agreement, any country that has signed on must allow the entry of all automobiles from the other nations that have also signed on. Each nation has its own set of immigration rules that travellers and goods must follow, as well as its own set of fees and levies. However, this is a very important development for the region as a whole, since trade, travel, and tourism between the four countries will be greatly facilitated. The BBIN MVA will be into effect after ratification by the legislatures of the countries that have signed it.

### **WHY IS ASEAN-INDIA CONNECTIVITY SO IMPORTANT?**

Trade is facilitated, relationships are strengthened, and economies are integrated thanks to increased connectivity. We envision a prosperous international market where countries freely exchange goods, services, and ideas with one another. Everyone stands to gain from more openness or globalisation, but doing so requires well-considered policy frameworks. Better connectivity is crucial for the region's economic growth, long-term development, and, most importantly, poverty alleviation. In order to remain competitive in the industrial and service sectors, it is essential to have a well-developed and consistently functioning infrastructure. The reduced costs and increased reliability of an improved connection are two great benefits. This is very important for industrial transportation since it affects productivity, efficiency, and the reliability of supplies. One obvious external aspect that has a big impact on a region's economic potential is its distance from other major economic centres. Insufficient international connections might stifle the enormous opportunities generated by Asia's dynamic economic centres. This might be a useful framework for analysing the economic and diplomatic ties between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

East Asia Summit (EAS) countries came together in 2010 to work toward "smart," "sustainable," and "inclusive" development. <sup>3</sup> In 2010, during the 17th ASEAN Summit, the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, which lays out strategies to strengthen the region's physical, institutional, and "people-to-people" ties. It's a model for the future of Asia's regional cooperation. If Asia is going to realise its aim of creating an unified market, it needs a logistics and transportation system that is efficient, flexible, and well-coordinated. Due to administrative or technical obstacles, Asia is now fragmented, making internal travel difficult and expensive. Track gauge, power, and signalling systems are only some of the aspects of rail transportation that might vary from country to country. In different Asian countries, drivers may encounter a wide range of variations in highway lane widths, lighting standards, and overall road quality. While the ports of certain countries are fully mechanised and modernised, those of others are archaic relics that are still in need of significant modernization and improvement. Some Asian airports have runways suitable for bigger planes, but many of the region's airports lack even the most essential parts of aviation infrastructure. Creating a single Asian market requires fixing the ageing infrastructure and repairing the transportation bottlenecks that have held Asian firms back from competing globally. The fast



growth of India's economy has had far-reaching impacts on Asia's overall economic situation. Raw resources for the Asian market come mostly from India. India often turns to Asia for supplies of raw resources and intermediate goods. India and Asia's economies benefit greatly from the net export values, and as a consequence, growth is solid. Asia's capacity to safeguard its supply of vital resources and goods requires more attention.

It is expected that free trade agreements would greatly contribute to the explosive development of India's commercial sector in the next years. One important part of India's growing links to its eastern neighbours is the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Increases in production, local consumption, and cross-border trade will need matching increases in domestic and international infrastructure. The consequences for India's trade and economic growth if it is unable to satisfy this need are clear. That's why it's crucial to learn more about the challenges of infrastructure's hardware and software components and to offer enough support for them. The East Asia Summit (EAS)<sup>5</sup> requested a Comprehensive Asia Development Plan (CADP) from the Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) in 2009. This was done to encourage more economic cooperation between East Asian countries. The CADP provides I a grand spatial design for infrastructure development in East Asia that is consistent conceptual framework based on new waves of international trade theory such as the fragmentation theory and new economic geography, (ii) simulation analyses on the impacts of logistic enhancement to the region, using the Geographical Simulation Model (ERIA/IDE-GSM), and (iii) a list of potential infrastructure projects that are consistent with the aforementioned b.

Enhanced communication lines between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be very beneficial. For instance, improved communication between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) might breathe new life into the region's manufacturing infrastructure. Increasing trade and investment via the industrial network would lead to closer ties between countries in East Asia. Preserving the regional manufacturing network calls for better trade efficiency and lower trade costs. Increasing competitiveness in regional manufacturing networks is being driven by falling trade costs. If ASEAN and India were able to better communicate with one another over the long term, it would unlock hitherto untapped economic possibilities in the region.

### **Additional Augmenting Corridors**

India, Bangladesh, and even Bhutan are all attempting to improve their national waterways so that they may better complement their national roadways in a way that is in keeping with the geography of the area. It would be simple to transform national waterways like the Eastern Himalayan Rivers, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra into sub-regional or regional waterways everywhere there is possibility for connectivity between national waterways. In that case, the waterways of the Ganges Basin may act as a conduit linking Nepal, India, and Bangladesh, while those of the Lower Brahmaputra Basin could link Bhutan, Assam, and Meghalaya (India).

Bangladesh and India have formalised their marine transport industry by signing a straight Maritime Shipping Agreement and a Coastal Shipping Agreement. These might be extended to include the BIMSTEC countries, such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand, adding a new dimension to the preexisting transport corridors between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Air travel within South Asia and between South Asia and Southeast Asia is significantly underdeveloped. The only SAARC-recognized international airports in the eastern sub-region are the ones in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet in Bangladesh, and Kolkata and Guwahati in West Bengal and Northeast India, respectively. Bangladesh has offered to construct either Saidpur or Ishwardi as prospective entrance sites into Bhutan and Nepal. Airline companies in the area should investigate the "hub and spoke" approach further. There is a considerable impediment to growth caused by the narrow and very conservative perspective held by airlines that there is not enough passenger flow to sustain new connections.

### **Energy corridor**

Having an abundant source of available energy is crucial to making development. The "engine" of the state won't go very far without fuel. Despite chronic energy shortages throughout all sectors of the South Asian economy, several countries continue to depend heavily on thermal power supplied from coal and hydrocarbons. Despite Northeast India's ability to produce between 70,000 and 100,000 MW of hydro power (in addition to a substantial capacity for producing thermal power), Nepal's almost equal potential, and Bhutan's production capacity of 27,000 MW, none of these countries has done so. Unless Bangladesh agrees to provide itself as a

conduit, as it has recently promised, in return for electricity for itself, the latent hydropower in the Northeast remains essentially prisoner to lack of incentives for investment. Power evacuation from the Northeast to Muzaffarnagar through Bangladesh and a petroleum product pipeline from the Numaligarh refinery to Parbatipur are both on the table as of right now.

Currently, Bangladesh is working to link its eastern, western, and northern areas to the Indian energy grid, which might open up several new paths of cooperation. Besides sharing a power grid, Bhutan and India also have connections to the grids of Nepal and India. Possible future work is triangulating these three grids into a subregional grid. Eventually, a subregional grid of mutually beneficial interdependence may form, which might provide long-term energy security for the subregion and beyond, as well as fuel for the growth and development engines. Since there are still untapped pools of power in Myanmar, the energy corridors may theoretically link the two places dynamically, helping each other fuel their economies even more. Energy corridors between South Asia and Southeast Asia would be given fresh significance if the mid-nineties-cancelled proposal to construct a gas pipeline connecting Myanmar, Bangladesh, and India were revived. The biggest roadblock to making this notion a reality is getting political leaders to see how working together is in everyone's best interests, on every level, from the local to the global.

### **IT corridor**

In a world where information technology holds the power of collecting new knowledge and research, but where bandwidth constraint may be a true obstacle to soaring national goals, the concept of an IT corridor for sharing bandwidth has now come of age. Bangladesh has more available bandwidth than it knows what to do with thanks to its sea cable link from Singapore. Since Agartala serves as a conduit for information technology (IT) traffic between Tripura and Cox's Bazaar through Akhaura, some of this money is being transferred to the Northeastern region of India. It's possible that today, thanks to this deal, the two locations may serve as an IT corridor. This sector is predicted to have a constant rate of expansion going forward.

### **South and Southeast Asia Regional Economic Cooperation**

Ancient trade routes between South Asia and Southeast Asia have been in use for millennia. The development of transnational networks facilitated the dissemination and discussion of new knowledge across academic fields. The religious concepts and practises were also transmitted across the region through the commerce routes that carried spices, silks, and tea. Both land and maritime routes were used, but each had its advantages and disadvantages throughout the years. Cross-border ties were formerly robust but have since frayed in the face of increasing European colonisation. As new alliances were created, cross-border and regional ties weakened, and interdependence between South Asia and Southeast Asia decreased. Changes in the twentieth century had a profound effect on societies throughout the globe. After WWII, the world's population was deeply split. Following World War II, the Cold War drew clear divisions between the two postwar superpower blocs, which effectively partitioned Southeast Asia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. It has since expanded to encompass ten nations, with Brunei Darussalam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam joining in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. As the countries of Southeast Asia looked for ways to work together to solve their mutual issues, a sense of regionalism began to take root throughout the area. The newly established governments of South Asia also benefited from the post-colonial period. They were forced to prioritise the difficulties of nation-building and bilateral collaboration. Regional cooperation and regionalism were not high priorities for many nations when they first obtained independence. Perhaps a distinct rejection of the idea of a shared platform in South Asia has arisen as a result of regional shifts caused by the perception of an internal threat, which is not as common elsewhere. The physical links between India and Pakistan were lost once the subcontinent was split in two. In 1985, at Bangladesh's suggestion, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established as a regional forum for the area. As a whole, Southeast Asian countries are beginning to realise that regional efforts are the most effective means of achieving their development goals; yet, SAARC has only produced limited outcomes to far. Intraregional trade has been much lower than expected due to inadequate investment in infrastructure and a lack of intraregional connectivity.

Political tensions in the area impede the SAARC shared platform from being fully optimised for regional economic growth and development. Due to political inability to break the impasse, the economies will continue to operate independently. The absence of international connection services led to insufficient cooperation within the area. South Asia, however, has not been spared the momentum, and in recent years, improvements have been made in constructing cross-border overland infrastructure in response to the increase in economic cooperation projects being done by regions all over the globe. However, many sub-regional connection projects remain in the planning stages despite the fact that bilateral agreements have been obtained. The significant Motor Vehicles Agreement between the sub-regional group BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal) has not yet reached the pilot level of implementation (MVA). However, the creation of a unified market for goods and services in Southeast Asia via the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has increased the region's allure. The combined value of all AEC markets is \$2.6 trillion, making the bloc the world's third largest economy.

## **INDIA THE BRIDGE BETWEEN SOUTH ASIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Geographically, India is a great starting point for exploring South Asia. This is the only state in the region to share a boundary with every other state. Positioned as it is between South Asia and Southeast Asia, it connects economies in places like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Nepal and Bhutan, both of which are landlocked, may travel to the east through India. Over the years, a number of sub-regional initiatives have been established to improve communication between the two regions. Connecting the Bay of Bengal Project for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) with ASEAN+1 and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) project, India plays a key role in regional economic development. India isn't the only country in Asia that's been working to strengthen relations to the rest of the continent. The claim that "service sector and eventually agricultural sector will be covered by trade integration through ASEAN + India FTA and bilateral FTAs such as IndiaSingapore, India-Malaysia, and Pakistan-Malaysia" seems plausible. The free movement of goods, services, labour, information, and money between ASEAN and South Asia is essential to the development of a unified Asian market. <sup>3</sup> The strengthening of commercial and connectivity linkages between South and Southeast Asia seems to be a logical and progressive move toward growth and prosperity. Trade and communication between regions benefit from land boundaries, sea lanes, and air routes.

### **Land Connectivity through India's Northeast**

The region's boundaries have remained unchanged because people see them as a constraint rather than a potential catalyst for change. For this reason, it was concluded that "these economies need to eliminate border barriers to reap the full benefit of integration," since the economies had progressed to a position where this would be advantageous. According to World Bank data, reducing the cost of doing business in South Asia is essential if the region is to achieve its potential as a global commerce powerhouse. The time and money spent on transportation is a major issue. In recent years, bilateral cross-border agreements have been signed, but there has been little international development in this area. Sub-regional connectivity has only recently become a topic of discussion. India's Look East policy was initially introduced in the 1990s, but its popularity has only lately grown, perhaps as a result of former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's advice for India "not only to look East, but to engage East and act East." India's recent focus eastward has been the impetus for many of the country's infrastructure growth initiatives. The MVA will streamline the process of moving persons and goods across land borders between the nations that have signed on to it. This agreement will reduce transportation costs, increase regional business, and strengthen international ties. This agreement will serve as a catalyst for the simultaneous exploration of multimodal transportation and transit infrastructure occurring at a variety of sub-regional levels. The establishment of Chittagong port in Bangladesh would boost connectivity and simplify commercial flows between India and Bangladesh. India's position means that the country's sole land connection to Myanmar and Southeast Asia is via the Northeast. Therefore, the South-Southeast land border connection issue is inextricably linked to the Northeastern Indian states that share borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Asian Development Bank's many active projects and the Asian Highway will connect many regional connectivity efforts. The existing status of physical link between South Asia and Southeast Asia, however, requires further investigation.



## From Bilateral to Multilateral Connectivity

India's relations with its two eastern neighbours have strengthened as a result of political shifts in both countries, opening the door for deeper sub-regional connections. The three countries of India, Myanmar, and Thailand are now in talks to see whether they can come to a similar accord. The Moreh-Mae Sot Highway, which covers 1,360 kilometres and links Northeast India and Southeast Asia, will pass through Mandalay. The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project would build a network of economic highways and special economic zones from the port of Kolkata to the landlocked state of Mizoram in Myanmar; this route might potentially link directly to that network.

None of the three sub-regional initiatives have resulted in a discernible improvement in the road network between India and Southeast Asia (BCIM, BIMSTEC, and SAARC). With the goal of fostering economic cooperation in the sub-region stretching from southwest China to eastern India, Myanmar, India's Northeast, and Bangladesh, the BCIM forum was founded. After more than a decade of work, the K-2-K (Kolkata to Kunming) corridor's main thoroughfare is almost complete. Only a very little stretch of road between Kalewa and Monywa in India's Northeast needs repair, and even that isn't long enough to span the whole length of the road. This route has political and security problems in addition to the logistical ones since it passes through an area plagued by an insurgency. 8 The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project has been proposed as a means by which India might include Mizoram into the overall structure. A route linking Mizoram and Myanmar's port of Sittwe through the Kaladan River is proposed, giving landlocked northeastern states access to the sea. The Rhi-Tiddim (80.178 kilometre) and Rhi-Falam (151.5 kilometre) roads connecting Mizoram with the neighbouring Chin state of Myanmar and on to Mandalay have also been proposed as prospective routes to improve bilateral business. The mountainous two-lane road between Aizawl and Zokhawthar is in better condition than it formerly was, but commercial activity along this route is almost nonexistent. Although the Zokhawthar Land Customs Station is currently operational, the weighbridge can only be used for head loads, which creates a concern. However, if the route between Aizawl and Agartala is improved and transit trade is formed through Bangladesh, it will become the shortest land route between Myanmar and Kolkata. Establishing a link between Sittwe Port in Myanmar and Silchar is important to the success of the Kaladan Multimodal Project. The principal road from Manipur to Myanmar, the Moreh-Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo Road, is now available to vehicles. Even Nevertheless, maintenance issues on the route continue to impede travel, which, combined with security concerns, has led to a considerable decrease in speed. The Avankhu land custom post in Nagaland's Phek district, which would serve as a border commerce point with Myanmar, has not been established.

For this reason, India has decided to repair 57 kilometres of the historic WWII Stilwell route from Lekhapani in Assam to Pangsau Pass on the IndoMyanmar borders, even though the roads on the Myanmar side would also need to be reconstructed to make this particular road network operational. Nirmala Sitharaman, India's Minister of Commerce, has said that the country's updated Act East Policy is in accordance with the country's present focus on the economy. Clear obstacles to full execution of any serious notion include the still-present geography and security issues. Infrastructure development to support international trade takes a long time and is complicated by the undulating terrain. Maintenance problems may cause transportation delays and revenue losses, and they are more challenging to fix when extreme weather is present. Even in places having the requisite infrastructure, such as business centres, underuse is common due to unrealistic rules and internal pressures. Northeastern producers now only make a little contribution to the entire export basket headed for Southeast Asia. Restricted goods allowed over the border do not reflect market demand. Once this region is completely integrated into the cross-border system, it will enjoy the advantages of greater trade and transportation and become a centre for international business and transportation.

## CONCLUSION

The strategic and economic advantages of Act East suggest that ASEAN will play a pivotal role in the plan. Economics and strategy are interdependent. Bangladesh, the border region with India, and the border region with Myanmar all need to make substantial contributions. First, we must identify with them in order to provide for them. However, due to the persistence of several challenges, we should not expect major improvement in Northeast India very soon. As both India and China accelerate their economic growth, the geopolitical balance

in Asia is changing. Winner will be the one who is the most adaptable and creative, seizing any opportunity that comes their way. China has a better chance of becoming more advanced than India does since it is bigger. The tremendous sense of national pride in Myanmar, however, will not allow this behemoth to treat the country as a protectorate. The combination of Chinese imperialism and Myanmar's strong sense of national pride may be what ultimately prevents Chinese hegemony over Myanmar's economy. Rather of dealing with a single, dominant monopoly, India would benefit from a diverse group of nations investing in Myanmar. India's LEP should eventually expand to include not just East Asian countries like North and South Korea, but also the rising economies of Southeast Asia. Talking to the Japanese can teach us a lot about how to improve our counter-China operations. Achieving the goals of the Look East Policy, which include strengthening ties with Asia's political and economic elites, would be challenging without an active realism approach.

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