

What do you understand by India's Look East Policy?

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The Look East Policy aims to cultivate economic and strategic relations with the South East Asian nations in order to secure India's position as a regional power. The Look East policy can mainly be implemented by using the border of the North Eastern states of India. The policy was developed by P.V. Narasimha Rao government.

The Act East Policy was adopted in 2014. It aims at the effective implementation of the Look East policy by developing better relations with the South East Asian nations through bilateral talks, trade and economic ties.

India's relationship with South Eastern Nations

India has always pursued good and supportive relations with the South East Asian countries. It has several trade agreements in Myanmar and has given active military support to Myanmar. India has time and again harnessed Myanmar's oil and natural gas reserves and has countered China's monopoly over them.

There is a broad cultural relation with countries like Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The commercial ties are also present with these countries. With Thailand, India has several Free Trade Agreements and also military cooperation. India performs its joint naval exercise with Singapore called SIMBEX. South Korea and Japan have several investments in India. India also participates in South Asian organizations like BIMSTEC, SAARC, East Asia Summit, ASEAN, etc. These organizations meet often and several important issues are discussed in these platforms especially those related to the South East Asian regions.

The importance of Manipur

Manipur shares about 355km border with Myanmar. It is the most economically viable border in the north east. It also has historical and cultural links with Myanmar for e.g.: the religion Buddhism. India plans to improve the infrastructure in Manipur and turn Moreh into a smart city. The trade route between Moreh in Manipur and Tamu in Myanmar is a great opportunity for improvement of trade links with Myanmar. India has also planned to extend this trade route till Thailand. With a bit more focus on the existing trade and infrastructure, Manipur can serve as a great opportunity for the implementation of the Look east policy.

INCREASING RAIL DERAILMENTS – a cause for worry for the administration and the public at large

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Recently, there has been increasing cases of trains getting derailed causing severe injuries and in some cases, deaths. The latest incidents of derailment of **Sealdah-Ajmer Express** and the **Indore- Patna Express** in November, 2016 near Kanpur (which caused atleast 146 deaths and 200 serious injuries making it one of the serious rail accidents in recent history) show that much is not right with the current way of functioning of Indian railways.

As per the official data available with **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, nearly 25,000 lives are lost due to train accidents annually, indicating that it is a cause for serious concern and cannot be taken as business as usual.

A natural question arises as to why these rail accidents are increasing. The current fiscal year has already witnessed a **33% rise with 87 rail accidents** till the New Year arrives.

1. There is no safety analysis done on rail accidents and problems are supposed to be solved by pinning it on the shoulders of the 'staff members' and not acknowledging it as a failure on the part of the 'institution' of railways.
2. Rigid application of **hierarchical traditions** prevents quick flow of information from the grassroots to the top level leading to delays which may pose grave danger to human lives.
3. **Knee-jerk reactions** after each disaster seems to be the problem with disaster management approach of not just Indian Railways but also elsewhere in public administration. The need of the hour should be prevention and not its cure.
4. Focus should not be upon increasing more investments or **blaming it on lack of adequate financial resources** with the ministry, but rather on what has been

achieved by way of past investments.

5. With every budget comes new line of trains and tracks, whereas maintenance and repair work is neglected. This is where the **merging of Railway Budget** with regular budget from next fiscal year may help.
6. Nearly 85 per cent of India's train coaches are **ICF (Integral Coach Factory) coaches** which are not equipped with anti-telescoping features and advanced coupling systems. In such cases, they "pile up" over each other and create huge delays in rescue efforts and the death toll rises proportionately.
7. As early as 2012, the **Anil Kakodkar high-level committee** on railway safety had suggested switching over to LHB coaches completely but only after recent accidents, the ministry has decided to stop producing ICF coaches from 2018. This shows that despite there being sufficient evidence for this issue, it was kept on shelf for years.
8. The accident enquiry reports are kept as confidential documents and not available for public scrutiny. This amounts to not only refusing the public the information most crucial for ensuring their safety, but also, not meeting with the spirit of **Right to Information** as guaranteed under RTI Act, 2005.
9. When derailments occur in **remote rural locations**, it is difficult to provide adequate first aid and relief operations. Health infrastructure in rural areas is severely lacking and not suitable for major disaster rescue efforts. This causes delays and the limited window of "Golden Hour" is missed.

Moving ahead, we need to coordinate our best efforts towards reducing such mishaps in future including the following:

1. First of all, we need to **rationally analyze** the factors behind and not let emotions and populism rule over the debate.
2. Bureaucratic principles should not be given precedence over requirements of travel safety of the citizens and a **Management Information System** needs to be devised for the same for prompt responses.
3. A lesson can be learnt from **British Railways** wherein they sought to receive information on "near misses" too which would have not been recorded via usual channels but only through active feedback mechanisms kept as confidential to encourage citizens to come ahead.
4. ICF coaches need to be converted to **LHB coaches** with anti-telescopic features to prevent major disasters as early as possible.
5. **Special Railway Safety Fund** was established in 2001 on the recommendations of a committee headed by Justice H.R. Khanna. Two years later, a **Corporate Safety Plan** was implemented in 2003. Both of these mechanisms led to perceptible reduction in road accidents from 0.44/million train kilometers in 2003 to about 0.13/million train kilometers by 2013. Clearly, we need to devise similar arrangements as soon as possible.
6. An annual report on the summary of the findings of major accidents and the

follow-up action taken needs to be put in the public domain. The **U.S. Department of Transportation** regularly uploads its reports on train accidents on its website. Same can be done by the Indian Railways too.

7. An improvement has been made whereby the **ultrasonic fault detection test** will be taken more frequently in order to pre-detect rail fractures, if any.
8. Finally, **improved training, regular exercises and signaling technology upgradation** can help in reducing such disasters in the immediate future.

With plans of launching superfast trains like bullet trains in near future, the challenge is only going to increase. One needs to realize that no compensation can ever bring the lost lives back to the families but it can surely be prevented in the future. Hopefully Indian Railways would rise to the occasion. Amen.

Source: xaam.in

How to decide which lies to forgive and which not to?

Your best friend has lied to you regarding a very big decision that he has taken in his life. He was the one with whom you shared each and everything in life and never lied to each other. But lying in one of the most important decisions of his life left you amazed. When you discovered this, you were deeply hurt and almost lost faith in humanity.

Now answer the following questions:

1. Should all lies be forgiven?
2. How to decide which lies to forgive and which not to?
3. What should you do in the above situation when your best friend lies to you? Will you actually lose complete faith in humanity?

Analysis:

This case study involves a situation which most of us have faced in our lives sometime or the other. It makes us feel helpless and hurts us deeply. Faith is an important factor in our lives. And getting betrayed by the one, whom we trust the most, is indeed very painful. It is difficult to forgive a person who lied to us or cheated on us.

But before reaching at any conclusion, there are some dimensions we should look into. Whether to forgive the person or not, will be decided after analysing the entire incident. First of all, we must try to understand the intention or motive behind the lie. In the above case, the intention of the friend might be different. The intention may not be to cheat or deceive. The lie may be told to protect his image. Although there is no justification for a lie, but all of us have lied sometime or the other in our lives. Therefore, the intention behind the lie has to be seen.

The question of forgiveness arises when the person admits his lie with genuine guilt or repentance. A habitual liar or cheat should not be forgiven, rather should be punished. I might forgive him if he admits his lie and wants to change. He should promise me that he should never lie again whatever may be the reason because friendship builds upon trust. If the lie is forgivable, we should forgive the person. We should also not show by any of our actions that we have done a favour on him by forgiving him. Only then it is called a true forgiveness.

There is no reason to lose faith in humanity. The world has both positive and negative, both good and bad people. Good and bad are just mere impressions; they do not make a person. And a timely forgiveness can also help improve one's character. History has the example of Mahatma Gandhi, who mentioned in his autobiography about stealing in his life once and later on forgiveness by his father turned him into a great personality. Also we have the example of a robber called Angulimal who got transformed into a saint on being in touch with Lord Buddha. We just have to be a little more careful in life and regarding any friendship before blindly trusting anyone.

Source: xaam.in