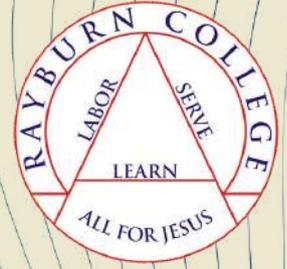




भारतीय वैश्विक परिषद्

Indian Council
of World Affairs



TWO DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

On

A Decade of Act East Policy: A Grassroots Perspective from Northeast India

Organized by
RAYBURN COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

Sponsored by
INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

DATE
5th & 6th March 2026

VENUE
Rayburn College,
Churachandpur, Manipur

MODE
Hybrid Mode (Offline and Online)

About Rayburn College

Rayburn, as a Higher Education Institution, was initially established as a Higher Secondary School in the year 1994. Seeking to serve the growing needs of the under-served student communities who are otherwise unable to continue their higher education outside the District and State due to a variety of reasons, Rayburn Higher Secondary was upgraded to a college in the year 2003. Drawing inspiration from the dedicated Christ-centred service of Dr Robert G. Rayburn, after whom the college is named by the founders of the institution, Rayburn College seeks to be a centre of excellence that promotes quality multidisciplinary education, and cultivates academically competent professionals and socially responsible citizens, through the medium of creative and innovative practices as well as integral and holistic learning experiences. The college is situated at a distance of 62 kilometres from the State capital city of Imphal, in the heart of Churachandpur District in Manipur, Northeast India. Ever since its establishment, the college has focussed on integral and holistic development of the students through a skill-based and research-centric academic learning, as well as a spiritual and whole-person centred development. During its 20+ years of existence as a college, it has established itself as one of the premiere higher education institutes in the Hill Areas of Manipur and the Northeast of India, and caters primarily to students from rural areas with a low-income family background and other challenges. Rayburn College received conferment of autonomous status from the University Grants Commission vide Memo No. F. 2-10/2023 (AC-Policy), on 13th November, 2023. Today, it is the only college in the hills of Manipur offering both Bachelor and Master degree programmes, under its six schools namely School of Humanities, School of Social Sciences, School of Human and Environmental Sciences, School of Commerce, and School of Mathematics, Physical and Life Sciences.

About Indian Council of World Affairs

The Indian Council of World Affairs was established in 1943 by a group of Indian intellectuals as a think tank. It was registered as a non-official, non-political and non-profit organisation under the Registration of Societies Act 1860. By an Act of Parliament in 2001, the Indian Council of World Affairs has been declared an institution of national importance. The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of ICWA. It is devoted exclusively for the study of international relations and foreign affairs. Historic international conferences like 'Asian Relations Conference' in 1947 under the leadership of freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu and 'United Nations and the New World Order' in 1994 have been held by this think tank in which world renowned dignitaries addressed huge gatherings of intellectuals. Scores of conferences, meetings and panel discussions have been organised by the Council in its elegant building called 'Sapru House'. The first Prime Minister of independent India, late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of India's foreign policy, was a regular visitor to Sapru House to confer with noted scholars, intellectuals and academics.

Concept Note

In an attempt to shift from a primarily economic engagement to a more comprehensive strategic partnership with Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region, India's Act East Policy (AEP) was introduced in the year 2014 as a successor to the previous Look East Policy of 1991. The rationale behind this expanded policy was to build closer economic, strategic, and cultural ties with the Indo-Pacific region, with a special focus on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This shift witnessed the reconceptualization of the Northeast of India as the gateway to Southeast Asia in India's foreign policy initiative, making their recognition and participation extremely vital in the success of the policy.

In the last decade, while the Act East Policy's macroeconomic achievements, particularly in boosting infrastructure and strategic partnerships have been significant, the policy has also faced implementation challenges on the ground. The experiences of border communities, local entrepreneurs, farmers, and ethnic groups in the Northeast, who are most directly affected by the policy's implementation, remain under-documented. To understand the impact of the policy and evaluate the policy's outcomes and its effects on local communities, economies and socio-cultural dynamics therefore requires a shift from top-down assessments to critical grassroots interrogations. As the policy marks a decade of its implementation, it is both timely and necessary to undertake a comprehensive stocktaking of its performance and relevance on the ground in light of the evolving political and cultural environment in the region.

As a way of supplementing strategic reflection on the challenges and possibilities of the Act East Policy and furthering India-ASEAN cooperation through inclusive participation from all stakeholders, this conference seeks to bring together policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and community voices from Northeast India to interrogate and examine what the policy has come to mean in practice. It approaches AEP through a grounded lens. Rather than adjudicating success or failure, it asks what stakeholders such as border communities, small traders, women's collectives, youth groups, and local administrations have learned from living with the policy's instruments, connectivity projects, border haats, visa and border management regimes, skills and enterprise schemes, cultural exchanges, and standards for trade and environment.

By focusing particular attention on the impact of the policy on the lived experiences of the local populations, the seminar will provide a more nuanced understanding of the policy's decade-long successes and failures and also introduce forward-looking recommendations. The approach is not only evaluative but also reflective and will draw out institutional lessons that link local realities with regional ambitions. The conference will foster conversation across scales by taking into account the perspectives from the ground, and dialogue those with perspectives from state and central agencies to identify the questions that the next decade of Act East must confront and reflect upon.

Several developments will serve as the contemporary backdrop: the reconfiguration of mobility after the end of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) on the India-Myanmar frontier; evolving security and administrative arrangements along fenced and unfenced stretches; climate-linked hazards affecting roads, rivers, and settlements; and a shifting regional context, including political transitions in Myanmar and ongoing work in BIMSTEC/MGC on connectivity and cooperation. For the Northeast, these dynamics register through daily events: a stalled truck at a check-post, a closed road, an interrupted market, a reopened school, the altered course of a river after the rains. The conference thus invites co-produced reflection: Act East as seen from below, with an emphasis on documentation, careful description, and practical next steps.

Significance of Conference

India's eastern flank is entering a period of heightened volatility. Political authority across the Indo-Myanmar frontier remains fragmented; commercial routes open and close with little notice; and climate shocks like flash floods, landslides, sediment-heavy rivers strike hill and valley systems with growing force. At the same time, Indo-Pacific supply chains are being rewired around critical minerals and clean technologies, creating incentives for speed that often outpace ecological and social safeguards. For Northeast India, these pressures are immediate and tangible. They are felt at border check-posts deciding whether an oxygen-seeking patient can cross; in villages absorbing displaced families; in roadside markets dependent on predictable small trade; at river bends where sand-mining and upstream siltation collide; and in classrooms where young people prepare for jobs tied to cross-border demand.

Objectives of Conference

- 1. To analyse local impact:** Examine the tangible and intangible effects of AEP initiatives— including infrastructure projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and border haats—on border communities, rural economies, and local livelihoods.
- 2. To highlight community agency:** Document how indigenous communities, civil society organizations, and local governments in the Northeast have engaged with and adapted to AEP- driven changes.
- 3. To assemble local evidence:** Bring district-level data (trade volumes in haats, mobility patterns, skills and enterprise uptake, environmental observations) into conversation with national policy targets.
- 4. To assess economic inclusion:** Evaluate whether the economic opportunities generated by the AEP have been inclusive or have exacerbated existing regional inequalities and challenges, such as land alienation and displacement.
- 5. Understand interface effects:** Explore how connectivity, security, market access, and environmental stewardship interact in specific locations (roads meeting rivers; borders meeting livelihoods).
- 6. To inform future policy:** Translate grassroots insights into actionable recommendations for policymakers, ensuring that future phases of the AEP are more inclusive, sustainable, and sensitive to local realities.

Main Themes

We welcome abstracts (for individual or co-authored papers) that focus on, but are not limited to, the following sub-themes:

1. Infrastructure, connectivity and local livelihoods
2. Trade, entrepreneurship, and the border haat
3. Security, governance, and mobility after FMR
4. Youth, skills, and people-to-people cross-border connectivity
5. Environment, settlements and social sustainability
6. Synthesis – Synthesis and recommendations from below

Sub-Themes

1. Road and transportation infrastructure development
2. Digital connectivity in the margins
3. Livelihood opportunities for border communities
4. Informal trade and its impact on local economy
5. Border markets as economic hubs
6. Impact of Free Movement Regime on border living
7. Governance structures and border management
8. People-to-people connectivity across borders
9. Environmental impact of border infrastructure development
10. Social sustainability and community engagement
11. Climate change and disaster resilience
12. Selfhood, identity and everyday border living
13. Contested knowledge and the repositioning of the region within the global
14. Preservation and production of indigenous knowledge and heritage
15. Popular culture and intellectual production
16. Cross-border cooperation and practical governance
17. Ultra-nationalism, border control and bordering practices
18. Violence, marginality and mental health
19. History, cultural memory and border futures
20. Legacy of empire and decolonization process
21. Policy recommendations for sustainable border development
22. Strategies for improving infrastructure, trade, and governance
23. Recommendations for enhancing people-to-people connectivity and social sustainability

Target Participants

We are pleased to invite indigenous artists, activists, journalists, independent archivists, independent researchers, curators, research scholars and teaching faculties studying, working, and researching in a variety of fields, to submit innovative proposals that will stimulate lively discussions beyond conventional paper presentations.

Submission Guidelines

- 1.The proposals are welcome to focus on a single major paper, book, organization, individuals, event as the subject of attention, a performance or reading of a creative work followed by a discussion, a workshop of works-in-progress with commentators, a debate on interpretations or methodologies, an exploration of teaching materials, etc.
- 2.The abstract must range between 300 to 350 words, outlining the topic, central argument and methodology of the research. The abstract must be submitted along with a short bio-data of up to 150-200 words, detailing the designation, institutional affiliation and areas of interests.
- 3.Submission must be an original work of the author and must not have been presented or published elsewhere.
- 4.A maximum of two authors are allowed per paper. An individual may not present more than one paper.
- 5.Selected papers will be considered for publication in an edited book bearing ISBN no.
- 6.Certificate of participation will be given to all participants, including registered listeners.

Submission Deadlines (Extended)

- 1.The deadline for abstract submission is extended to **31st January, 2026** by **11:59pm (IST)**
- 2.Accepted abstracts will be notified by **3rd February, 2026**
- 3.Email for submission: iqacrbcr@rayburncollege.ac.in

Registration Details

	Online	Offline (Without Accomodation)	Offline (With Accomodation)
Students (BA, MA)	400	500	1500
Scholars/Independent Reseearchers/Practitioners	500	600	1600
Faculty Members	800	1000	2000
International Presenters	1800	2000	3000
Attendees/Listeners	200	300	

Note:

- 1.Complimentary kits, tea, snacks and lunch will be available for all participants and delegates.
- 2.Accommodation for outstation presenters will be provided for the day of the presentation.
- 3.No TA will be provided for presenters.
- 4.Payment link will be shared separately with the abstract selection confirmation email.

Organizing Committee

Patron-in-Chief

1.Rev. Dr. Khen P Tombing, Principal

Chairperson

1.Dr. Samuel G Ngaihte, Registrar

Convenor

1.Lalngaihawmi, IQAC Director

Co-ordinators

- 1.Mercy Chingnunhoih, Academic Dean
- 2.Dr. L. Letkhomang Haokip, Head of Department, History Dept
- 3.Dr. Paolenthang Khongsai, Head of Department, Political Science Dept
- 4.Dr. Dorothy Lalneizo, Assistant Professor, Sociology Dept

Joint co-ordinators

- 1.Dr Chingbiakmawi, Assistant Professor, English Dept, Churachandpur College
- 2.Man Lun Kim, Assistant Professor, English Dept, Churachandpur College

Contact Us

Queries regarding the conference, including registration and administrative questions, should be directed to **Email** igacrbc@rayburncollege.ac.in and **Phone No.(s)** : +91 8413014934 or +91 8837234252.