

India's Cooperation Efforts in Myanmar



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Development Cooperation has always been prominent in India's overall bilateral cooperation with Myanmar. Our involvement and assistance in this field extends from the setting up of major connectivity infrastructure as well as significant initiatives in setting up long-term, sustainable and relevant institutions for capacity building and human resource development in critical areas such as agricultural research and education, IT and skill development. In addition, India also extends a considerable amount of concessional finance for projects ranging from transport and communications to agriculture and farm mechanisation and highway development.

In the field of infrastructure, the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP) is perhaps the most significant project undertaken by India. The project will connect Kolkata by sea to Sittwe in Rakhine province and then, through the Kaladan river and a road connecting Paletwa in Chin State of Myanmar to Zorinpui in Mizoram, and extend this corridor all the way to India. Work on the development of the port at Sittwe, the Inland Water Terminal (IWT) in Paletwa and the navigational aids in the river channel has been completed. Work on the final stage of the project, consisting of a 109-km road from Paletwa to Zorinpui, is now underway and expected to be completed in 2020.

The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is the other major connectivity project, India is involved in. Work is now underway on the reconstruction of 69 bridges on the Tamu-Kalewa-Kyigone sector and on the 120-km long Kalewa-Yargi sector. Both these are also expected to be completed by 2020-21. In addition to these projects, India is also working on developing the Rih-Tedim road, on which final approvals are awaited from the Government of Myanmar.

In the area of capacity building, two flag-ship projects that India has been involved in are the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology in Mandalay and the Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education in Nay Pyi Taw. Both these are among the most well regarded institutes

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in their respective fields in Myanmar and are contributing to building up a highly skilled and well-qualified cadre of IT professionals and agricultural research scientists for future. In addition to these, India has also set up a Rice Bio-Park in Nay Pyi Taw that aims to demonstrate the full potential of paddy/rice value chain. This is particularly important in the context of Myanmar, which is a significant producer of rice, and farming communities can benefit enormously by exploiting the commercial opportunities offered by rice husk and rice bran oil. Assistance to centres that India has set up earlier, such as the India-Myanmar Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills, the Myanmar-India Centre for English Language Training and the Myanmar-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre, all in Yangon, is also continuing and being enhanced wherever necessary. India has also set up two Industrial Training Centres in Pakokku and Myingyan, and is providing maintenance support to these centres. In addition, two new centres will be set up in Thaton and Monywa.

In the cultural field, India has contributed to the spectacular restoration of the Ananda temple in Bagan and will shortly begin undertaking an extensive project on the restoration and conservation of as many as 92 structures that were damaged following an earthquake in Bagan in 2016. In the health field, India has undertaken projects to upgrade facilities in the Yangon Children's Hospital, the Sittwe General Hospital and the Monywa General Hospital. India also continues to extend assistance under the Border Areas Development Programme to assist projects in the neighbouring regions of Chin and Sagaing.

Indian assistance is directed not only at the creation of hard infrastructure but also focuses on the potential that they have for furthering peace and reconciliation in this country. The KMTTP is particularly important in this regard. Once fully completed, the potential of the project to generate economic opportunities for the populations living in its vicinity will undoubtedly contribute to development and peace in the troubled areas that this transport corridor passes through. Similarly, the upgradation of connectivity corridors in the neighbouring regions of India and Myanmar promises to significantly enhance cross-border trade and commerce and give a boost to sectors such as tourism. When supplemented with institutional mechanisms such as a Land Border Crossing Agreement and a Motor Vehicles Agreement, these corridors will have a truly transformative impact across this entire region.

Indian participation in development cooperation in Myanmar is tailored firmly to Myanmar's national priorities. The projects are fully cognizant of and sensitive to the need for pursuing good governance practices, conform to the requirements of environmental and social impact assessments and mindful of the imperative of transferring skills and technology to local communities. Given that the bulk of Indian development assistance is under the 'Grant-in-Aid' window and that concessional finance is offered on very generous terms, such assistance also does not result in creating any kind of financial unsustainability for Myanmar. India remains committed to a peaceful, prosperous and stable Myanmar and looks forward to continuing its multi-faceted development cooperation partnership with it.