



# Connectivity Projects: India and Southeast Asia

## Why in News

Recently, at the virtual [ASEAN \(Association of Southeast Asian Nations\) summit on Future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships](#), the Indian government underlined the importance of cross-border connectivity between India and Southeast Asian nations.

- **ASEAN** brings together **ten Southeast Asian states** – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam – into one organisation.

## Key Points

### ▪ Connectivity between India and Southeast Asia:

- India currently is working with ASEAN on multiple connectivity projects, **through land, water, and air.**
- Giving substance to ASEAN-India relations through connectivity will **gradually change the geopolitical landscape of this region.**
- In this context, India has now been **actively developing infrastructure in Northeastern India.**
  - [Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar \(BCIM\) Corridor](#) is part of this.
- These connectivity projects **will not only curb existing insurgencies**, but also help India's northeastern states to develop their economic potential and integrate with mainland India.
- Further, [India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement \(FTA\)](#) is central to India's growing engagement with her eastern neighbours.
  - It will enable small and medium-sized enterprises in the border areas to explore new business opportunities.

### ▪ Examples of Cross Connectivity Projects:

#### ◦ India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway:

- One of the flagship projects **for land connectivity** between ASEAN and India.
- Connecting the three countries **from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand to Bagan in Myanmar**, was first proposed in 2002.
- Besides this, the **India, Myanmar, and Thailand Motor Vehicles Agreement (IMT MVA)** is in the final stage.
  - On realization, this will become the **first-ever cross border facilitation agreement between South and Southeast Asia.**[//](#)



- **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP):**

- To develop connectivity **through water**, ASEAN and India are working on **KMMTTP**.
- Initiated by the Indian government in 2008 and is entirely funded by India.
- To seek an **alternative route through Myanmar for the transportation of goods to the northeast region of India**.
- Connects **Kolkata in India to Sittwe and Paletwa in Myanmar** by sea and river respectively.
- Alongside this initiative, India has contributed to build a sea link via Sittwe port in Myanmar in order to enable an **alternative transit route through Bangladesh**.

- **Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC):**

- Involves the integration of **four Mekong countries - Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia** - along with **India**, connecting Ho Chi Minh City, Dawei, Bangkok, and Phnom Penh with Chennai.
- The corridor will provide opportunities for the participant countries to develop infrastructure, enhance their economic base with the region, and especially reduce the transit distance between India and ASEAN countries.



## Way Forward

- **Extension of Trilateral Highway:** The Trilateral Highway can be extended to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. This will enable greater connectivity and economic integration of India's northeast with its eastern neighbours.
- **Digital Highway:** As such beyond movement of goods and physical connectivity, it is also important for two regions to explore ways to enhance digital connectivity.

- This is in concurrence with the Government of India efforts to turn India into a Global Data Hub.
- **Improving Maritime Connectivity:** With the introduction of the **“Sagarmala” project**, India plans to invest in port infrastructure for improved integration and connectivity through the sea. This is an encouraging step towards enhancing India-ASEAN Connectivity projects.

**Source: PIB**

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