

India - Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

The India-Myanmar-Thailand-Trilateral Highway is a highway currently under construction as part of India's 'Look East Policy'. Upon its completion, it will connect Moreh in India with Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar.

By linking other highways in other East Asian countries such as Vietnam and Laos, it is believed this project will boost economic growth in the region.

This article will give details about the India-Myanmar Thailand Trilateral Highway project within the context of the IAS Exam.

History of the India-Myanmar-Thailand-Trilateral Highway

The Trilateral high was first proposed during a ministerial meeting in Yangon on April 2002. The approximated length of the highway is 1360 km. The 160 km long India-Myanmar Friendship road linking Moreh-Tamu-Kalmey-Kalewa forms part of the trilateral-highway. Having being built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) it was first inaugurated on 13 February 2001. The BRO maintained it until 2009 when full ownership was transferred to Myanmar.

Regarding the Friendship Road project, it was initially agreed between India and Myanmar that the Indian government would widen the existing roads in the area while Myanmar would upgrade single-lane bridges in the route. But the Myanmar government failed to do so. In May 2010, it was announced that India would repair the existing roads and as well as the 71 bridges in the region around the Friendship road project.

During Myanmar President U. Htin Kyaw's state visit to India in August 2016, an MoU was signed with the Government of India under which the latter will fund the construction of 69 bridges, including approach roads in the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa section (149.70 km). India provided funding for the renovation of 73 bridges along the route in Myanmar that were originally built during World War II.

On February 2017, Myanmar accepted a proposal from the Thai government to repair a 68 km road between Mon State and Ein Du in Kayah State. This repair will be funded by Thailand at a cost of US\$51 million. Myanmar also requested assistance repairing other sections of the road

In May 2017, it was proposed by the NITI Aayog to establish a Special Purpose Vehicle involving all three countries to closely monitor the project.

India and ASEAN have plans to extend the Trilateral highway route to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam as this connectivity will generate annually, an estimated US\$70 billion in incremental GDP and 20 million in incremental aggregate employment by 2025.

Travel Arrangement in the India-Myanmar-Thailand-Trilateral-Highway

A Motor Vehicles Agreement along with protocols for regulating and facilitating the movement of cargo and passenger vehicular traffic is under inter-governmental negotiations between India, Myanmar and Thailand.

India initiated a preliminary survey to determine the feasibility of establishing a rail link parallel to the trilateral highway in January 2018. Japan expressed interest in collaborating with India and funding the proposed rail link.

Status of Route Upgrades

The status of the upgrade of various segments of the highway according to the Ministry of Development of the Northeast Region is shown below:

The Upgrade Status of Routes of the India-Myanmar-Thailand-Trilateral-Highway		
Stretch	Distance	Status
Moreh-Tamu-Kalewa	149.70 km	Completed in 2017
Kalewa-Yagyi	120.74 km	Being upgraded, estimated completion on April 2021
Yagyi-Chaungma-Monywa	64.4 km	Completed
Monywa-Mandalay	136 km	Completed
Mandalay-Meiktila bypass	123.13 km	Completed in 2010
Meiktila bypass-Taungoo-Oktwin-Payagyi	238 km	Completed in 2010
Payagyi-Theinzayat (Thein Za Yat)-Thaton	140 km	Completed in 2017
Thaton-Mawlamyine-Kawkaik	134.4 km	Currently undergoing up-gradation as of August 2020
Kawkaik-Myawaddy	25.6 km	Completed in 2015
Myawaddy-Mae Sot	20 Km	Currently under up-gradation.

		The stretch is complete on the Thai side but the Myanmar side is still facing delay due to land acquisition issues
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