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KALADAN CORRIDOR: A STRATEGIC DREAM MARRED BY GROUND REALITIES

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, has stated that the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project is expected to be fully operational by 2027. However, ground realities paint a far less certain picture, with significant delays and persistent challenges continuing to cast doubt over the timeline.

The strategically important project aims to bolster connectivity between India and Myanmar by linking India’s eastern ports to Myanmar’s Sittwe Port and further to Northeast India via an integrated network of sea, river and road transport. Despite its potential to transform regional logistics and strategic access, the project has been plagued by delays for over a decade. Funded under the Government of India’s ‘Aid to Myanmar’ initiative, the project comprises a 158-km waterway on the Kaladan river from Sittwe to Paletwa and a

109-km road from Paletwa to Zorinpui at the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram. Progress has been mixed. The waterway component – including the construction of ports and inland water terminals at Sittwe and Paletwa, the navigational channel along the Kaladan river, and six self-propelled vessels – has been completed.



Sittwe Port, inaugurated in May 2023, became operational more than 15 years after the project began. However, the advancement of the road component has been sluggish, primarily due to the ongoing security crisis in Myanmar. Although the Indian government approved a revised cost estimate of approximately Rs 2,900 crore in 2015, only Rs 356 crore had been spent as of November

Sittwe Port, inaugurated in May 2023, became operational more than 15 years after the project began. However, the advancement of the road component has been sluggish, primarily due to the ongoing security crisis in Myanmar. Although the Indian government approved a revised cost estimate of approximately Rs 2,900 crore in 2015, only Rs 356 crore had been spent as of November 2024. In Parliament, it was reported that construction work had begun on 70 km out of the 109.2-km stretch, with only 20 km of earthwork completed so far.

Security concerns are at the heart of the delay. The Arakan Army, a powerful insurgent group, has carved out a de facto autonomous region across Rakhine and southern Chin States, governing more than 2.5 million people. Paletwa, a key node in the Kaladan project located in Chin State, was earlier captured by the Arakan Army from the military junta.

Source: sentinelassam.com

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Kaladan corridor

India has managed to convince both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army of the project's importance. The original contract for the Zorinpui-Paletwa road was terminated and reassigned to the Indian Railway Construction Company (IRCON). Despite reported assurances from the Arakan Army, incidents such as the abduction of construction workers have occurred, and the risk of military airstrikes looms large.

The junta has launched indiscriminate aerial attacks in various conflict zones, including Arakan Army-held areas. The Kaladan initiative provides a critical alternative trade and access route to the Northeast, bypassing the vulnerable Siliguri Corridor – India's narrow land link with the region. For timely completion, sustained diplomatic engagement and security coordination with all parties involved remain essential.

■ Source: assamtribune.com

Afghanistan:
Humanitarian response over-
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Recent regional tensions and enforcement of deportation policies in Iran have triggered massive returns to Afghanistan overwhelming a humanitarian response already crippled by severe aid cuts and leaving needs unmet.

■ Source: nrc.no

ASSAM POLICE DEPORTS FIVE BANGLADESHI, THREE ROHINGYA IMMIGRANTS



The Assam Police on Thursday deported eight undocumented immigrants – five Bangladeshi nationals and three Rohingyas – who had been residing illegally in the state.

The immigrants were pushed back across the international border into Bangladesh from the Cachar and Sribhumi sectors, both located along the sensitive Indo-Bangladesh frontier.

Senior officials confirmed that the individuals had entered the state without valid travel or identity documents and were living unlawfully in the region, triggering concerns over security and demographic balance.

The operation was part of a broader effort by the state government to curb illegal infiltration and reinforce border security.

“This is part of our zero-tolerance policy towards illegal immigration. Assam's identity and territorial integrity are non-negotiable,”

said a top police official involved in the pushback.

The deportation came at a time when the Assam government has intensified its surveillance along the international border. Special task forces and border intelligence units have been deployed to detect, detain, and deport individuals who have entered the state without proper legal documentation.

Assam shares a 263-kilometre-long border with Bangladesh, parts of which are porous and difficult to monitor, particularly in riverine and forested stretches.

The deportation of Rohingyas – stateless Muslim minorities from Myanmar who often transit through Bangladesh before entering India – has been a contentious issue, with several such groups being detained in northeastern states in recent years.

■ Source: thestatesman.com

Waiting in hell: A refugee camp crisis in the Netherlands has led to a wave of suicides

■ Source: theins.ru