



Connectivity as Strategy: Assessing India's Key Infrastructure Initiatives in Myanmar and Thailand

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Abstract

As a regional power, India's ties with the South Asian nations are particularly significant. In order to maximise its relations with the region, excellent connectivity facilities have become tremendously important to enhance economic transactions, cultural interactions, and interpersonal contacts. In this regard, the ongoing India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) are undoubtedly two primary infrastructure initiatives by India that help in expanding its connectivity. Nevertheless, the advancement of these two has been hampered by various political and security concerns in Myanmar. Construction is delayed, costs have increased, and the project's long-term viability is uncertain due to the persistent political instability in Myanmar. This article considers how the recent general elections in Myanmar would impact India's ongoing infrastructure projects.

Keywords: Connectivity, Infrastructure Diplomacy, Regional Integration, Act East, IMT-TH, KMMTTP.

Introduction

One of the key tenets of geopolitics in the twenty-first century is connectivity. India's Act East Policy, which seeks to promote economic integration and rejuvenate civilizational relations, is centred on the country's desire to establish closer ties with Southeast Asia. Accordingly, the development of transportation routes, connectivity, and related trade infrastructure has received primary attention. It has been noted that there is a long history of connectivity between India and Southeast Asia. Ancient trading routes and cultural exchanges laid the foundations for India's current economic and regional ties with Southeast Asia. India's transition from the Look East to the Act East Policy has renewed interest in these historical linkages, positioning them as both a strategic foundation for strengthening economic relationships

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with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a means of revitalising historically rooted networks (Anjum, 2025). Against such a backdrop, India has been undertaking various developmental projects in the Southeast Asian region for regional connectivity, economic integration, and also to counter the influence of China. This article examines in detail India's two major infrastructure projects in Southeast Asia, their progress, and the obstacles to their successful execution. The article is descriptive and analytical in nature. Secondary resources are utilised to understand and analyse India's connectivity policy in the Southeast Asian region.

This article employs the framework of Complex Interdependence, developed by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye in the late 1970s. The essential tenet of traditional and structural realism, which holds that military might and security concerns are the only factors influencing interstate relations, was challenged by the theory of complex interdependence. The term interdependence in today's globalised world refers to a state of international politics in which all actors, including states and non-state actors, are dependent on one another. In the words of Keohane and Nye, "Interdependence in world politics refers to situations characterised by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries" (Keohane & Nye, 2012, p. 7). They argued that the world has become more intertwined in all areas, particularly economics, and that the very nature of international relations has been changed in the era of interdependence (Rana, 2015). Further, contemporary international relations are characterised by various channels of interaction between states, the lack of a rigid hierarchy of issues, and the increasing significance of economic, political, and societal interconnectedness. Thus, trade networks, infrastructure connectivity, and development partnerships emerged as important instruments for states to attain strategic objectives while also promoting mutual dependence and regional cooperation.

In this regard, India's connectivity initiatives with Myanmar and Thailand particularly demonstrate the relevance of complex interdependence. Projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project are essential mechanisms for strengthening economic integration, enabling cross-border mobility, enhancing supply chains, and deepening political engagement. These initiatives aim to reduce barriers to interaction, encourage regional growth, and establish patterns of long-term dependency that go beyond traditional security issues. This article therefore employs the framework of complex interdependence to analyse how India's connectivity initiatives support regional integration and its larger strategic objectives under the Act East Policy.

India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway

One of the flagship projects of India's connectivity policy is the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway. It is intended to provide a land-based corridor that supports maritime routes in the Bay of Bengal by connecting Moreh (an Indian town in Manipur State that shares borders with Myanmar) with Mae Sot (a town sharing borders with Myanmar in Tak Province) in Thailand, traversing Myanmar. This project is expected to boost regional economic growth and is undeniably a strategic asset for India's "Act East" Policy. The 1360-km Trilateral Highway is hailed as a transformative infrastructure project to improve regional connectivity and economic integration. Official narratives portray the highway as a catalyst for development, promising increased trade, investment, and cross-cultural interaction between the three countries (Lochan, 2025).

The highway was first envisioned as a "highway of opportunity and friendship" that could transport people, products, services, and ideas across international borders in the early 2000s. India is funding and building critical and complicated sections in Myanmar, such as the 120.74 km Kalewa-Yagyi road and the 149.70 km Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road with 69 bridges (Lochan, 2025). The majority of the expressway's construction is taking place within Myanmar, covering Tamu, Kalemmyo, Kalewa, Monywa, Mandalay, Meiktila, Naypyitaw, and Myawaddy. Currently, maritime logistics are used to transport commodities between India and Thailand. However, it takes a few days to reach the destination and is very expensive. Once the IMT expressway project is finished, goods will be able to get there quickly and affordably. Additionally, by revitalising the North Eastern Region (NER) and strengthening India's strategic and economic ties with Southeast Asia, the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway project has the potential to significantly reshape India's economic landscape. It should be noted that despite having a young labour force and abundant natural resources, the North East Region (NER) of India has long been constrained by inadequate connectivity. In this regard, the IMT TH is expected to stimulate the region's economy as it is intended to serve as the foundation for a network of economic corridors that will create thriving industrial and logistical hubs in both urban and rural areas along its path. India may be able to achieve industrial clustering and technology-driven growth through the strategic establishment of hubs like Moreh in the NER. The IMT TH's ability to foster inclusive growth is one of its main long-term advantages for India. The route can lessen regional disparities by bridging the infrastructure gap between the neglected NER and the prosperous urban areas (Anjum, 2025).

In addition to its economic effects, the IMT-TH project has important strategic and security ramifications for India. In the larger geopolitical contest against China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the IMT-TH is

increasingly seen as a strategic asset. The project serves as a counterbalance to China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative, providing India and its regional partners with an alternative framework for economic cooperation that prioritises transparency and multilateralism (Anjum, 2025). Moreover, Dhaka's growing alignment with China has led India to pursue long-term plans to bypass Bangladesh and establish direct connectivity between its northeastern states and the rest of the nation (Mukul, 2025).

Challenges to the Implementation of IMT-TH

The project was first conceived in 2002 and was supposed to be operational by 2015. However, there have been heavy obstacles and delays, and the deadline is currently set for 2027. The main causes of these delays include financial problems, other regional obstacles, but mostly the political unrest in Myanmar, especially after the 2021 civil war, which has made important portions of the road in the Sagaing Region and Chin State active conflict zones. The military's hold on power has led to increased violence and widespread instability, severely jeopardising the progress of the developmental project. Project timelines have been severely disrupted, and risks have increased due to the conflict between the military regime and opposition groups. Additionally, ethnic conflict in Myanmar and Northeastern India also poses significant hurdles. The long-standing conflicts between the various ethnic groups that live in the surrounding territories have complicated the highway's construction and maintenance. The project's advancement has been further hampered by the ongoing conflict between the junta and ethnic armed groups in the Chin State and Sagaing region as well as the recent communal disputes between the Kuki and Meitei populations in Manipur. One of the persistent bottlenecks is the replacement of 69 bridges along the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa road, which has been postponed since 2015 due to contractor agreement issues (Bhowmik, 2024).

Again, the full realisation of trade potential is hampered by several issues. Its efficiency may be limited by infrastructure gaps such as the absence of sufficient cold chains, logistics parks, warehousing facilities, and multimodal transport hubs (such as rail links to the highway). The advantages of shorter transit times may be offset by inconsistent and cumbersome border processes, different customs charges and non-tariff barriers (Anjum, 2025). The existence of different regulatory systems among countries in the region, where there is a lack of unified laws pertaining to visa requirements, logistics movement, and customs procedures stand in the way of achieving the project's potential to the fullest extent. Another significant challenge is creating a permanent system for the continuous maintenance and preservation of the IMT expressway. Regular monitoring and sufficient funding are necessary for the expressway's sustainable maintenance. Essential needs for the project include a perpetual mechanism for the regular

allocation and preservation of adequate funding. Moreover, the project's construction and maintenance activities have a significant impact on the environment. Deforestation and disruption of natural landscape constitute some of the ecological issues of the project (Nair, 2025).

The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project

The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport is another ambitious project under the initiatives of the Indian government's Act East Policy. It aims to strengthen links with Southeast Asian nations by utilising their economies to boost economic growth, attract investment, and improve livelihood opportunities in the Northeast. The project seeks to enhance the landlocked Northeastern states' connectivity to the Bay of Bengal by leveraging Myanmar's territory. In this regard, the Government of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Government of Myanmar signed a Framework Agreement in April 2008 to facilitate the implementation of this project. Building an integrated inland waterway and highway transportation system is part of the project's plan. In order to implement the port and inland water transportation components, the MEA assigned the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) the role of project development consultant (PDC) in March 2009. Notably, the construction of a new deep-sea port is underway in Sittwe, which will be an essential entry point for the transfer of goods to smaller vessels (Bhutia, 2024). The highway is a component of India's ambitious plan to serve as a bridge between the Atlantic Ocean in the west and the Pacific Ocean in the east (Padmanabhan & Krishnamurthy, 2004).

In a paper titled "Proposal for a road-river link from the Mizo Hills district to Akyab in Burma," published on March 18, 1968, India's renowned editor and geostrategist B. G. Verghese, who also served as information adviser to the late prime minister Indira Gandhi from 1966 to 1969, pushed for a multi-modal route transport through Burma by using the Arakanese port of Sittwe and the Kaladan river, which flows from India's Mizo Hills to the Arakan (now Rakhine) coast into the Bay of Bengal. Later, the memorandum of understanding for the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project, estimated at USD 110 million was signed during Myanmar Defence Services Senior Vice General Maung Aye's visit to Delhi in March 2008. It later grew in phases to USD 484 million. The project aims to connect Indian ports on the eastern seaboard with Sittwe Port in Myanmar, and then through road and riverine transportation to Mizoram. Myanmar will provide USD 10 million and free land for the project, while India would provide roughly USD 100 million and be responsible for any cost overruns. During Myanmar President U. Win's visit to Delhi on February 26-29, 2020, a joint statement from India and Myanmar was released in which the two governments reiterated their commitment to finish and implement the Kaladan Project. The road building for this long-delayed project started in April 2018 and is India's biggest development project on foreign land (Bhaumik, 2022).

The project consists of a road component that is divided into two packages and is estimated to be 109.2 km. Package 1 includes the 60.7 km stretch between Paletwa and Kaletwa. Package 2 includes the 48.5-km length from Kaletwa to Zorinpui. An 87.8 km stretch from Zorinpui to Lwangtlai is part of the project's final phase. In June 2019, a joint venture consisting of Engineering Projects India Limited (EPIL), a public-sector undertaking, and C&C Constructions, a private company based in Delhi, was awarded the Rs 1600 crore road project, which traverses mountainous and dense forest areas. Initially, the plan was to start the work from south to north, which means from Paletwa to Zorinpui. However, the Myanmar government permitted the construction to start from north to south, that is, from Zorinpui to Paletwa, because of the unrest in the area. According to the plan, Package 2 (60 km to 109.2 km) has been subcontracted to Engineering Projects (India) Limited (EPIL). The National Company Law Tribunal is currently handling the insolvency case, and MEA is investigating the possibility of transferring Package 1 (Paletwa to Kaletwa, or 0 km to 60 km). The 87.8-km road that connects Zorinpui with Lwangtlai on the Indian side is almost 80 per cent complete. Work here is being executed by the RDS Project Limited and ARSS Infrastructure Projects Limited (Bhutia, 2024).

In response to a question posed in the Lok Sabha in 2023 regarding the implementation of the Kaladan Multimodal project, the waterways component, which includes the Port and Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminal at Sittwe, the IWT terminal and associated facilities at Paletwa, the navigational channel along the Kaladan River from Sittwe to Paletwa, and six self-propelled IWT vessels, has been completed, according to Shri V. Muraleedharan, the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs. Sittwe Port has been operational since its inauguration in May 2023 (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2023).

Challenges and Constraints

Nevertheless, the persistent political unrest in Myanmar and the fighting between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armies, particularly the Arakan Army from the state of Arakan, also known as Rakhine, which has been fighting the Myanmar army for decades and has now joined hands with other ethnic armies to fight the Junta under the code name (Operation 1027), have always been New Delhi's major concerns. Following the Junta's overthrow of the newly elected government on February 1, 2021, the Arakan Army and the military junta State Administrative Council signed a truce. Despite this, the conflict escalated, and the Arakan Army was able to make various advancements, including the capture of several army installations and cities. Therefore, the safety of infrastructure and workers is directly threatened by ongoing conflicts in the areas surrounding the project route. On January 15, 2024, the conflict between the Arakan Army and the junta's forces took a

significant turn when the rebel forces captured Paletwa, the location of the project's IWT and highway transshipment components, posing a major security risk. Additionally, the initiative operates in regions with difficult terrain in both Northeast India and Myanmar. Construction and transportation are challenging and time-consuming due to dense forests, rugged mountains and river systems. Roads, rivers, and port facilities have frequently been delayed as a result of these geographical difficulties. The project has also been significantly delayed by bureaucratic obstacles in both Myanmar and India. Obtaining approvals, cooperating with other government agencies, and resolving legal and regulatory issues have all been difficult and often inefficient. The decision-making process has become even more complex due to the involvement of numerous stakeholders, including the federal and state governments. Moreover, even though India has signed agreements with banks in Myanmar, such agreements have not been carried out, making credit requirements and financing of the project a risky endeavour. There are only five local banks in Sittwe; there are no internationally recognised banks (Bhutia, 2024).

Despite these obstacles, V. K. Singh, the Governor General of Mizoram has reportedly declared on April 25, 2025, that the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project had been completed on the Indian side. India's ambassador to Myanmar, Abhay Thakur, also stated around the same time that work is ongoing on the unfinished Myanmar portion of the Kaladan project, and there is hope that it is getting closer to completion (Mukul, 2025).

As is evident, although India's infrastructural project in Myanmar faces logistical, financial, and administrative challenges, the most significant impediment has been the persistent political turmoil in Myanmar as discussed above. In this regard, the recent election of 2025 becomes an important development as the outcome affects Myanmar's political trajectory and consequently the necessary environment required for infrastructural cooperation. The extent to which the election contributes to political stability or further unrest will shape the prospects of Indo-Myanmar relations and therefore the progress of India's regional connectivity initiatives.

Myanmar's 2025 Election

The first nationwide elections since the February 2021 military coup was held from December 2025 to January 2026, with the military-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) led by U Khin Yi winning the elections. USDP won 109 of the 157 seats in the upper Amyotha Hluttaw and 232 of the 263 seats in the lower Pyithu Hluttaw. The election was portrayed by the military authorities as a step toward putting an end to open hostilities and restoring political order. However, the elections are more likely to be an attempt by the military dictatorship to normalise and legitimise its post-coup rule than to signal the end of the coup (Banerjee, 2026).

This could be perceived from the events leading up to the general elections since the coup, where the military used undemocratic methods to make all the required preparations, turning the election into a staged one. Zaman (2026) asserts that the election was held in a highly regulated setting where the media is closely watched and censored, and the official narrative is shaped by state media and military-affiliated institutions. The military deliberately created an information vacuum that it filled with its own version of reality, as evidenced by the prolonged internet shutdowns and telecommunications blackouts in conflict-affected areas, the targeting of independent media outlets, detention of journalists, and revocation of publishing licenses.

In actuality, the attempt to conduct elections came in the midst of a multi-front civil war involving the military, People's Defence Forces (PDFs), and other ethnic armed organisations (EAOs). Since 2021, millions of politically active people have been imprisoned, including opposition leaders and civil society activists. In fact, according to official admissions, 15 per cent of constituencies did not hold elections. The majority of well-known political parties are either disqualified or dissolved (Singh, 2025). Anfrel's analysis shows that 57 parties were on the ballot, but only one (the USDP) is strongly favoured by the legal framework and the junta's institutions, ensuring military dominance in the next parliament. Only six parties are registered at the Union level, while the remaining 51 parties are limited to running in a single state or region. The Union Election Commission (UEC), which was appointed by the junta, has examined and approved every registered party, with the majority of candidates widely seen as pro-military, co-opted, or reliant on the regime. Despite receiving more than 70 per cent of the vote and 90 per cent of the seats, 57 per cent of the parties that competed in the 2020 general election were no longer in existence under the new registration regulations (Anfrel, 2025).

In fact, a repressive legislative framework was used to manipulate the elections. The Political Parties Registration Law, introduced in January 2023 and the Law on the Protection of the Multiparty Democratic General Election from Obstruction, Disruption and Destruction, which was passed in July 2025, both prohibited 40 political parties from taking part in elections and criminalised and restricted the flow of information. This law was enforced with complete intolerance for dissent. Resultantly, by the time the polls ended, over 400 people had been arrested and over 229 had been formally prosecuted. The dissolution of 41 parties cleared the field for the military-backed USDP. Voters had few options because only six parties were eligible to run nationwide (Vasisth, 2026).

Heblikar (2025) asserted that in any real democratic sense, the 2025 polls were not elections. These were carefully planned control exercises.

The majority of opposition figures were prohibited by candidate-eligibility restrictions. The election's phased structure was a tactical tool in and of itself; by spreading out the process over several months, the regime could adjust strategies, intimidate opponents, and strengthen areas where the USDP performs poorly. Anti-junta constituencies were eliminated from voting by simply removing districts that are considered insecure from the electoral map. The entire process functioned less as an election and more as a state-run plebiscite intended to fabricate consent.

However, despite the military's effort to confer legitimacy upon its rule through the elections, it has failed to establish effective control over many strategically crucial areas of the country. As a matter of fact, in the aftermath of the elections, the military has lost control over several strategic and trade routes and retains authority primarily in those areas where the elections were held. Large parts of the country, including Rakhine State, remain under the control of resistance forces (Banerjee, 2026). It is also noteworthy that the borders with India and China largely remain under the control of opposition ethnic groups (Khaliq, 2025).

International Response

The international community is sharply divided between pragmatic engagement and non-recognition. This realignment reflects the changing trends in a multipolar world where interests in stability or resources outweigh democratic norms. For its sake, the military selected a particular group of foreign observers to create a favourable narrative that the elections were 'orderly,' 'free and fair,' and conducted freely in order to legitimise the results. These were mostly from countries like Russia, China, Belarus, and Nicaragua that have kept diplomatic relations with the regime (Vasisht, 2026).

ASEAN outrightly declined to send election observers. The junta is not recognised by the United Nations (UN). In October 2025, on the occasion of the UN-ASEAN summit, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: "I don't think anybody believes that those elections will be free and fair." The UN delegates have voiced concerns about widespread electronic surveillance during the vote. The UN has also voiced serious concerns about the country's humanitarian condition but attempts to seek a Security Council position particularly by the United Kingdom have mostly failed because of resistance from China and Russia (Ambrogio, 2025).

It should be noted that China has emerged as one country that openly supports the military-run elections, claiming that conditions for voting have been improved by truces negotiated with rebels and that this is consistent with Beijing's strategic goal of maintaining stability on its borders. China has also reportedly been assisting the junta in its airstrikes on rebels

(Singh, 2025). Major strategic towns, including Lashio, were retaken in July 2025 through Chinese mediation that pressured the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), along with Naunghkio, Hsipaw, and Kyaukme. As a result, China was able to regain control over important trade routes (Banerjee, 2026). It is important to note that China employs a dual-track diplomacy, giving the military financial grants under BRI while maintaining connections with the KIA and United Wa State Army (UWSA) to safeguard its rare earth supply and the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port. As the third-largest producer of rare earth materials, which are mostly found in the conflict-prone Kachin State, Myanmar is strategically positioned, thereby causing more geopolitical rivalry and outside interference.

There is no doubt that China has significant influence in Myanmar and has supported the junta militarily, politically, and economically. China has claimed to have even mediated ceasefires between rebel groups and the junta, putting pressure on the latter to stop their offensives. Evidently, Myanmar's geographical location is of major interest to Beijing as it gives access to the Bay of Bengal, lessening its reliance on the Malacca Straits and expanding its influence into the Indian Ocean. As a result, it is moving ahead with the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Significantly, China invited Min Aung Hlaing to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conference in August 2025, where Myanmar was granted the status of 'partner' (Ambrogio, 2025).

Implications for India

Developments in Myanmar are closely related to internal security concerns for India as well as its infrastructural initiatives in the Southeast Asian region where Myanmar serves as the only gateway. India has always advocated for a free and inclusive electoral process in Myanmar and has even sent monitoring teams during the elections. This demonstrates that stability and sustained engagement are more important to New Delhi than diplomatic isolation (Dhar, 2026). In his discussions with Min Aung Hlaing, Prime Minister Modi emphasised that there is 'no military solution' to the crisis in Myanmar and called for a 'Myanmar-led, Myanmar-owned' transition through credible elections. The Ministry of External Affairs reaffirmed this statement in official readouts (Aswani, 2025).

The elections have strengthened India's case for a measured and practical approach to Myanmar that puts stability, communication, and reducing violence over ideological stance. In order to maintain border security, humanitarian access, and avenues for political de-escalation, New Delhi continues to engage with the authorities in Naypyidaw. This approach is in contrast to that of a number of ASEAN nations, whose refusal to engage with the junta has given opposition groups the opportunity to refuse ceasefires

and use armed conflict to sabotage electoral and administrative procedures. India's policy reflects the understanding that prolonged instability in Myanmar has real regional implications and that isolating the government without providing practical political solutions runs the risk of escalating the conflict. Thus, New Delhi has attempted to strike a balance between its own security interests and support for peaceful initiatives by maintaining engagement while continuously advocating for inclusive dialogue and restraint, establishing itself as a regional actor focused on achieving practical outcomes (Dhar, 2026).

Similarly, Vaisisht (2026) also noted that, sharing a 1643 km long land and maritime border, India has attempted to strike a balance between its Act East policy and border security. By adopting a two-track policy, India has tried to balance its strategic interests, border security, and infrastructure projects. In order to secure border stability and counter China's influence, this strategy entails maintaining state-level engagement with the military and, more recently, its elected party, the USDP, to safeguard connectivity projects while simultaneously engaging with Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) and opposition groups, particularly the Arakan Army and Chin groups. To keep Myanmar from becoming completely isolated and moving farther into China's sphere of influence, continued engagement is necessary.

Clearly, there is a lot at stake for India as Myanmar's continued political unrest, widespread violence, and institutional fragility place considerable strain on India's developmental projects in the region while also posing risks to its internal security. Challenges such as policing cross-border arms trafficking and smuggling, along with managing refugee movements, present India with a set of complex and interrelated issues. Thida (2025) argues that upholding the status quo of military supremacy will permit lawlessness to continue, especially in cross-border cyber fraud and drug trafficking operations, which will harm both Myanmar's citizens and others around the world. As of February 2026, the spillover had sent around 31,000 refugees to Mizoram, and according to UN statistics, the number of synthetic drug seizures over the previous five years had increased by nearly 500 per cent. The shared porous border will be the most affected by this instability, increasing cross-border volatility and especially jeopardising the important connectivity and development projects, particularly the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (Kurian, 2026).

Conclusion

Since Myanmar is the only nation in Southeast Asia with which India shares land border, it serves as a critical strategic link between India and the broader Southeast Asian region. The successful implementation of

India's connectivity projects like the Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project is therefore essential for expanding India's presence and engagement in the region. In this regard, a stable and reliable government in Myanmar is of utmost importance for the realisation of these initiatives. However, the persistent conflict situation in Myanmar has significantly disrupted the smooth implementation and progress of these projects. The recent election clearly cannot be regarded as a meaningful move toward stability, as it was conducted under highly regulated and controlled conditions. In the post-election period, substantial portions of territory remain essentially outside the control of the military junta while intense fighting continues in regions such as Sagaing, Chin, Kachin, and Rakhine state, areas where India's key infrastructural initiatives are located. Consequently, the feasibility and timely completion of these projects will largely depend on the trajectory of the ongoing conflict as well as India's ability to sustain diplomatic outreach and coordination with multiple stakeholders on the ground. Given that several project sites are located in territories beyond the effective control of the military authorities in Naypyitaw, India should continue to diversify its engagement strategy by dealing not only with the central authorities but also with non-junta stakeholders who exercise control over regions that are critical to India's strategic and developmental interests.

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