

Myanmar's Emerging Geopolitical Significance in India's Regional Vision

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Abstract

Myanmar's geographical position makes it an important geopolitical player. It also has significant geopolitical importance for India and many other nations in the area. Myanmar is also known in India as the 'Gateway to Southeast Asia.' Because a prosperous Myanmar is in India's best interests, it has to step up its involvement with Myanmar. The present paper discussed the geopolitical importance of Myanmar for India's regional vision through the lens of a realistic perspective. For this objective, the descriptive paper study with secondary information. The paper discussed various dimensions such as collaborations of infrastructures, defense, seaports, BIMSTEC, cultural diplomacy between Myanmar and India. The paper concludes that the urgent issue of the pandemic has created both difficulties and possibilities for regional collaboration. Although specific industries have suffered significant losses due to the current epidemic, there is an increasing need for neighbors to work together to reduce reliance on Western countries in times of crisis. India must take a proactive effort to prevent other countries from adversely meddling in the area. The relationship between Myanmar and India is improving in many areas, but significant efforts must be made to finish long-pending projects. This will also increase economic and cultural activity. India's aid in technology, agribusiness, infrastructure, social sectors, education, military, and soft power has already raised India's profile in the Southeast Asian region, including South Asia. As a result, India must accelerate the snail's pace of various undertakings that it's been doing in various nations across the region to create a difference in the area's previous geopolitics.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Geo-politics, Regional cooperation, Strategic significance

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Introduction

Myanmar's increasing geostrategic importance was spotlighted during India Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second oath ceremony on May 30, 2019, when he invited all heads of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) nations, as well as Mauritius and Kyrgyzstan. It was the first-ever oath-taking event attended by all leaders of BIMSTEC nations, according to Indian media [1]. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, all reliant on the Bay of Bengal, are members of BIMSTEC. A BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement has been negotiated by a regional organization known as the mini-SAARC. On the eve of the start of his second term, the prime minister laid out his foreign policy priorities. He made it clear that if regional collaboration via SAARC as a platform does not take off, BIMSTEC might be a viable alternative. Myanmar became a focal point of India's foreign policy because of its increasing geostrategic importance. Myanmar has begun to appear in India's geopolitical fantasies for the area that stretches from east to west.

The 19th round of foreign office talks between India and Myanmar was conducted on a virtual platform in October 2020. The conversation included a wide range of potential areas of collaboration between the two countries. Essential topics such as India's currently underway Development Projects in Myanmar, commercial and investment relations, power, and energy collaboration, consular and cultural cooperation, and repair work on

Bagan's earthquake-damaged pagodas were addressed. India's "Neighbourhood First" strategy and "Act East policy" were also reiterated [2]. India has committed to offering debt relief services to Myanmar via the DSSI (Debt Service Suspension Program) initiative of the G-20. The effect of COVID is being handled under this effort with the technical assistance of the World Bank and IMF, and the resources of low-income and poorest nations will be utilized to combat the epidemic and protect people's lives. This was also revealed during a virtual session with the foreign office. India has also helped to the battle against COVID-19 in the neighboring nation by donating 3000 vials of Remdesivir [3]. It has also promised Myanmar that the two governments would collaborate on vaccine research, manufacturing, and distribution. These efforts demonstrate the possibilities that are emerging in the face of the country's difficulties. Despite the many options for collaboration and great potential emerging, several additional areas need to be revisited, reemphasized, and reenergized.

Myanmar's Geostrategic Importance for India:

Myanmar's geographical position makes it an important geopolitical player. It also has significant geopolitical importance for India and many other nations in the area. Myanmar is also known in India as the 'Gateway to Southeast Asia.' Because a prosperous Myanmar is in India's best interests, it has to step up its involvement with Myanmar. The following are the most important reasons for Myanmar's geostrategic importance to India:

To begin with, India has land and sea borders with nine countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Myanmar is situated at the crossroads of three Asian continents: East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Myanmar is the only ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) country with which India has land and sea borders [4]. As a result, deeply cultural, economic, and political ties with Myanmar are critical for the northeast region's economic growth.

Second, Myanmar's position is critical for the growth of the northeast region. Myanmar has a 1,643-kilometer border with India in the four north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram [5]. The chicken's neck, also known as the Siliguri corridor, connects the seven states of North-East India with the Indian mainland. It's a 21-kilometer section of road that causes some of India's northeast's most severe transportation and humanitarian issues. As a result, India's north-eastern states have a natural connection with Southeast Asian nations. Increased economic interaction between India's northeast and Southeastern Asian countries will assist India's northeast's economic growth and prosperity. As Myanmar is India's doorway to Southeast Asia, this can only be accomplished via increased bilateral interaction. As a result, Myanmar is essential to India's geostrategic interests.

Thirdly, India has a 725-kilometer maritime border with Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. As mentioned, Myanmar is the only Asiatic nation with which India shares land and a marine border. India may also construct modernized ports throughout the Bay of Bengal's maritime zones to encourage international commerce across the area. This would also boost commercial routes to India through communication water channels. India has been expanding and modernizing the deep-water Sittwe port in Myanmar's Rakhine state, located in the Bay of Bengal. The port was built in 2016 as part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, also known as the Kaladan Project, due to its strategic location at the mouth of the Kaladan River. The project's overall goal is to improve infrastructure in southern Myanmar and northeast India [6]. The initiative is an excellent example of bilateral economic collaboration between India and Myanmar. Myanmar's geostrategic significance for India is reflected in India's significant involvement in the project. The project aims to improve trade and commerce between Indian ports on the eastern coast and the Arakan state's Sittwe port.

Fourth, from its junction with the Bay of Bengal at Sittwe to Setpyitpyin or Paletwa in Myanmar's north, the Kaladan is a navigable river. Not only will the project offer connection to India's landlocked northeast, but it would also relieve strain on the Siliguri corridor. For the last two decades, India has been engaging and courting Bangladesh to reach a transshipment agreement and enable a corridor via Bangladesh to India's northeast. Despite many discussions and pledges, Bangladesh has failed to allow for any such transshipment route to India. As a

result, the project would significantly decrease India's reliance on Bangladesh. As a result of the bilateral agreement between India and Bangladesh, Myanmar gains significant strategic importance.

Fifth, when the current political establishment came to power, India's 'Look East Policy' became an 'Act East Policy.' The main goal of India's "Act East Policy" (AEP) has been to broaden the country's economic ties with ASEAN nations and the rest of its near and far eastern neighbors. Myanmar has become the pivot of the AEP. India envisions any connection project in the east as part of its ALP would be feasible only if it has a reasonable level of trust with Myanmar. As a result, even India's signature foreign policy decision of AEP is dependent on the bilateral relationship between India and Myanmar.

Sixth, India's Act East Policy is a diplomacy effort to promote economic, strategic, and cultural ties with the Asia Pacific on various levels. For policy to succeed, a greater connection between Myanmar and Thailand is required. It is the only nation at the crossroads of India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies. It is an essential component of Indo-Pacific regional diplomacy and a land bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia [7]. The Act East strategy is an effort to pursue objectives in this direction, and its success relies mainly on India's and Myanmar's friendly ties. Myanmar's position is also crucial for expanding the network into other Southeast Asian nations. This will promote social stabilization and people-to-people connections in addition to the economic advantages. India has repeatedly shown readiness to deepen its ties with Southeast Asian countries as part of the AEP. It is the only Southeast Asian nation with which India has a border in the northeast. As a result, collaboration with Myanmar is critical to AEP's success in achieving its goals. As a result, Myanmar's geostrategic importance takes precedence in India's principal foreign policy decision.

Myanmar and India's Growing Collaboration:

Given Myanmar's enormous geostrategic importance, India has begun to strengthen its bilateral relationship with the country and has already started several initiatives. As previously mentioned, the Indian government has created initiatives such as "the Kaladan Multi-Modal Trade Transit Project and the Indo-Myanmar Trilateral Highway Project" to foster greater economic involvement via the development of connecting infrastructure.

Kaladana is a multi-modal transportation project

The agreement between India and Myanmar was reached in 2008 after the project was envisioned in 2003. It is an 87-kilometer roadway that runs from Lawngtlai in south Mizoram to Zorinpuri on the India-Mizoram border. The project aims to link Mizoram, a landlocked state, to the Bay of Bengal. Because the northeast is a landlocked area, the project seeks to connect the northeast's seven sister nations with Nations in Southeast Asia through Myanmar. As a result, Myanmar becomes even more critical for the implementation and success of India's Act East Policy, as previously stated. The project would facilitate the rapid and low-cost transportation of products to Myanmar's northeast area and strengthen commercial connections between coastal Indian hubs and Myanmar's corporate organizations. The "Future Gateway to Southeast Asia" is another name for it. The Kaladan project, consisting of four parts, would connect mainland India to the Northeast area through Myanmar [8].

The first segment runs from Kolkata to Sittwe port in Myanmar, covering 539 kilometers and allowing ships to be used as a method of transportation. The second section will run along the Kaladan River, connecting Sittwe and Paletwa and spanning 158 kilometers via Inland Water Transport (IWT). Within Myanmar, the third section stretches from Paletwa to the Indo-Myanmar border, covering 110 kilometers. Finally, the project aims to span 100 kilometers via road from Myanmar's border to India's Lawngtlai. The project's primary goal is to connect India's northeast with the nation's eastern coast through Myanmar's southern coast, using various means of transportation, including sea, inland water, and road [9]. Along with increasing economic interaction, the initiative will also strengthen India's position in Southeast Asia. However, infrastructure flaws, the Kaladan movement, demands for greater openness in the project, insurgency, and local disputes have caused the project to be delayed, and it has yet to be finished. Aside from the numerous issues that have caused the project to be consistently delayed, the latest repeated setbacks are linked to COVID 19. As a result of the pandemic, the current issue and

delays have worsened. The lack of daily wagers due to the pandemic and the need that employees be quarantined even if they have added to the project's delays. ^[10] Nonetheless, if finished, the project has enormous potential to transform the economic landscape of India's northeast. Myanmar's geostrategic importance would grow even more for India, implying that India must maintain very good bilateral ties with Myanmar and maintain constant interaction with Myanmar via creating a permanent communication channel with deputies from both sides. Creating a dedicated channel would lead to multi-sectoral discussion and deeper interaction between the two countries.

The India-Myanmar Trilateral Highway (IMTH)

The distance between the two points is 1,360 kilometers (850 miles) ^[11]. The IMT highway is one of India's most significant infrastructure projects to expand the country's Act East policy. Bangladesh has recently shown interest in joining this trilateral highway ^[12]. It will improve transportation connections, which will enhance cross-border possibilities. The project aims to connect Moreh, India, with Bagan, Myanmar, and Mae Sot, Thailand. The Indian half of the project was supposed to be finished by 2021. As a result, the highway is a project involving three nations, with India constructing two portions of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar, namely: Construction of the 120.74-kilometer Kalewa-Yagyi road segment, as well as 69 bridges and the access road on the 149.70-kilometer Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road portion^[13]. As previously planned, the project is now anticipated to be finished in April 2021 rather than April 2018.

The India-Myanmar Friendship Road, a 160-kilometer (99-mile) stretch of the highway that connects Moreh-Tamu-Kalemyo-Kalewa, was formally opened on February 13, 2001. This is currently part of the trilateral highway, including approximately 71 bridges India has committed to upgrading.

India also plans to expand the Highway to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam to create an East-West Economic Corridor. This decision was made at the ASEAN-India commemorating summit in 2012 to aid in developing India-ASEAN ties. The initiative will increase trade and commerce between ASEAN and India and the rest of Southeast Asia. The East-West Economic Corridor is a planned 3,200-kilometer operating route connecting India and Vietnam. Thailand-to-Cambodia-to-Vietnam service was launched in 2015. India also provided a one-billion-dollar line of credit for India-ASEAN connectivity projects in 2017. The NITI Aayog of India has suggested that the highway be built using Special Purpose Vehicles from three nations, which would speed up the project's completion ^[14]. Such efforts demonstrate India's desire to finish the project as soon as possible. However, considering the project's current state, it seems that the timeframe will be extended further since completion by April 2021 is unlikely. Nonetheless, if finished, it will strengthen India's East-West Economic Corridor project and further integrate Myanmar's connection with India, particularly in the northeast.

India's Sittwe Port Project

The Sittwe port in Rakhine state is set to open in the first quarters of 2021, thanks to a collaboration between India and Myanmar ^[15]. The project consists of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Project, for which the two nations inked an agreement in 2009. The mega-infrastructure port's development began in 2010. As previously stated, the project's goal was to connect India's northeast with Southeast Asia. It will also move products from Kolkata to Sittwe and subsequently to Mizoram by river and road. Developing an integrated port, inland waterway, and transport terminus in Sittwe was another element ^[16]. In April 2017, India handed over the finished Sittwe port and Paletwa Inland Waterway to Myanmar. In June 2017, India added six more gas tanker cargo boats to deliver gas to northeast India through Manipur ^[17]. As a result, despite being planned to begin operations in 2019, it has been postponed. It is, however, expected to be operating very shortly.

The most noteworthy aspect is that the Kaladana Project passes via the Rakhine region, which has been in the worldwide spotlight due to social upheaval over Rohingya problems. India has constantly prioritized the socio-economic improvement of Rakhine province to address local issues and allow refugees to return peacefully. With this approach in place, India and Myanmar signed an agreement (MOU) in 2017 to improve the socio-economic

situation of Rakhine state residents. The goal is to assist the dislocated Rohingya population in Rakhine State, prevent their migration, and concentrate on its socio-economic growth and livelihood. Its main goal is to bring the state of Rakhine back to normal. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Project is also based in this state, making the area very significant for India. Other areas of collaboration include major infrastructure and socio-economic initiatives in the many sectors of education, health, agriculture, community engagement, livelihood, road improvement, household crafts, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage [18]. Peace is always conducive to wealth and liberty, while any degree of social turmoil is harmful to economic activity, weakening even the most ambitious plans. As a result, India's efforts to provide socio-economic development to the Rakhine area are critical. It will bring peace and harmony to the region's people and engage them productively. A calm Rakhine is sure to bring wealth to the area, as well as a reduction in the province's long-running ethnic strife.

Myanmar is also the most important Southeast Asian location for Indian oil and gas investment. There is also a plan to construct a 1,575-kilometer pipeline connecting Sittwe, Aizawl, Silchar, Guwahati, Siliguri, and Gayag to carry gas from the Sittwe Gas Field, where Indian firms ONGC and Gail own a 30% interest in oil and gas development [19]. As a result, India and Myanmar have vast potential to collaborate in the energy sector. Collaboration in the energy industry may also be possible if these two nations have enough connections.

Myanmar's Role in BIMSTEC

Myanmar is a crucial participant in the Bay of Bengal Strategy for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). It is a sub-regional multilateral organization. Its goal is to promote bilateral and regional collaboration amongst the nations that border the Bay of Bengal. SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) has nearly failed to take off due to Indo-Pakistan animosity. India has lately shown interest in resurrecting this modality of sub-regional collaboration. India's efforts to revive BIMSTEC are encountering specific roadblocks since some nations cannot provide sufficient support due to regional and local pressures. In such conditions, bilateral ties between India and Myanmar must be emphasized for regional collaboration via BIMSTEC to be effective. A robust, stable, and independent Myanmar, least affected by China's expansionist strategy and debt trap tactics, will be of enormous geostrategic importance to India.

Defense collaboration between India and Myanmar

Myanmar is one of India's strongest defense allies, providing military training and participating in military drills with the Myanmar Army, such as the India Myanmar Bilateral Drill. India had prepared the Myanmar army to engage in UN peacekeeping missions such as combined military activities through exercises [20]. India's defense collaboration has grown in importance as it has committed to supplying weapons equipment, conducting joint border patrols with Myanmar, and continuously sending battleships to Myanmar's ports [21].

Other engagements among India and Myanmar have included a Project Agreement for building a modernized Integrated Check Post at Tamu, a Memorandum of Understanding for building 50 primary schools, and a Projects Agreement for agricultural mechanization upgrades [22]. As a result, one might readily conclude that the increasing economic interaction between India and Myanmar has become feasible since Myanmar has grown in geostrategic importance for India's geopolitical and geo-economics imaginations. India's AEP is a reflection of the country's geopolitical aspirations in Southeast Asia. As a result, India has been more aggressive in the area, attempting to assimilate its economy with Myanmar's to expand its influence in the southeast.

India's Soft Power leverages: From Cultural Diplomacy to Connectivity

Soft power projection to lure individuals and leaders from other nations has recently emerged as one of the most viable weapons of cultural diplomacy. Most countries have begun to promote their cultural assets to attract visitors from other nations. Myanmar and India have enormous soft power capabilities as well.

Myanmar also has historical, ethnographic, cultural, and religious connections with India, which should be strengthened. Theravada Buddhism is practiced by 90% of Myanmar's people [23]. It is also regarded as one of the

holiest Buddhist nations regarding the percentage of monks in its populace and religious expenditure. From the standpoint of being the “nation of origin of Buddhism,” India has much clout. Buddhist monks, among other devotees, must have visited India.

Soft power is another lively and rich domain that has been underappreciated. As a result, strengthening cultural connections with Myanmar is critical to increasing general connectedness with the area. The Buddhist link is an appealing and persuasive element that has enormous potential for both nations. The birthplace of Buddha, Bodh Gaya, is a popular tourist and devotional site for the citizens of Myanmar. The Sarnath-style Buddha statue given by the Indian government to the people of Myanmar and placed on the grounds of the Shwedagon Pagoda is a significant symbol of the two nations’ cultural and civilization ties. Myanmar is also a big fan of Bollywood and Bharatanatyam [24]. The intellectual, cultural, and spiritual connections must also be used to engage with Myanmar’s Buddhist majority. One project that has been developed to foster cultural relationships is the ambitious Buddhist circuit, which aims to link historic Buddhist monuments across states. Buddhist diplomacy and the ‘Incredible India’ initiative will boost the tourist industry and provide the groundwork for future economic, political, and cultural ties.

Myanmar’s tourism industry contributed to creating about 1.5 million employments in 2016, with visitor revenues totaling an anticipated \$2.2 billion. To increase these numbers, Myanmar has collaborated with Cambodia to establish a tourism corridor. Cambodia and Myanmar struck an agreement to increase the number of national and third-country visitors visiting the Angkor temples in Siem Reap and the archaeological site of Eagan in Myanmar [25]. Thus, comparable lines may be built in India to link Bodh Gaya in Bihar, Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh, and Amaravati, the future capital of Andhra Pradesh, with Buddhist monuments in Myanmar. This would help India’s cultural diplomacy, promoting Buddhi as soft power in its larger AEP framework. India may also consider an India-Myanmar tourism circuit that includes historical monuments in Myanmar such as Yangon temples and the tomb of the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who was banished to Myanmar by the British. Given the growing significance of India in the grouping of Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam (CMLV) nations [26], the possibility of a Cambodia-Myanmar-India circuit may also be investigated. India also considers the “Commerce, Culture, and Connectivity” trident to identify future areas of collaboration between ASEAN countries and India. As a result, India has been proposing visa liberalization for the 10-member ASEAN to increase Buddhist tourist visits due to shared historical ties, including expanding Buddhism throughout portions of Southeast Asia from India [27]. Considering India’s foreign policy perspective, soft power has enormous potential to increase the connection between India and Myanmar and other Southeast Asian nations.

Bilateral Relations between India and Myanmar: The Challenges Ahead

With India’s growth as an economic and political force, India’s Act East strategy is an ambitious attempt to improve its foreign policy connections and strengthen strategic ties with ASEAN countries. As previously said, Myanmar serves as a gateway for India to the remainder of the region. Myanmar has enormous geostrategic importance in the region’s current geopolitics. Myanmar’s geostrategic importance. This also includes India’s involvement with ASEAN. Infrastructure connections connecting India to the rest of Southeast Asia must pass via Myanmar. Even though the two countries have familial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic relationships, many difficulties must be solved so that all parties benefit. One of the significant issues that must be addressed is the slow pace of Indian projects such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Project and the India Myanmar Trilateral Highway. The projects’ deadlines have been shifting all the time, and they have yet to be finished. Even after decades of planning, the planned connection remains unfinished. As a result, both sides’ ambitions to expand bilateral interaction confront several difficulties, which may be summarized as follows:

- The Kaladan Projects’ path passes through a conflict zone in Rakhine state due to issues among an insurgent faction and the Arakan army;
- The slow pace of Indian initiatives throughout the years, with deadlines being altered and extended each time;

- The IMT Highway project has also been delayed, and the timetable has been amended and extended.
- Myanmar's alliance with China affects project policy execution since it leaves India in the dark about how it fits into Myanmar's strategic ties with its neighbors.
- Other powers are becoming engaged in Myanmar for their energy requirements, which will inevitably impact bilateral ties between the two nations.

Challenges for India in Sino-Myanmar Relations

China has a 2100-kilometer frontier with Myanmar and has expanded its influence in local politics and infrastructural development. The 1,700-kilometer China-Myanmar Economic Corridor is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (CMEC). There are 38 projects in all, 9 of which have been sanctioned [28]. The CMEC is a \$100 billion project that comprises an \$8 million project in Yangon, Myanmar. Myanmar is likewise a victim of China's debt trap, with China alone holding 40 percent of Myanmar's \$5-10 billion debt. Both nations have a 2+2 dialogue agreement. Despite these projects and obligations connected with China, Myanmar harbors deep distrust and skepticism, accusing China of supporting rebel groups and providing them with weaponry [29]. In 2017, China was Myanmar's biggest foreign investor, with authorized companies worth more than \$18.5 billion, while India's total investment was \$2 billion. India lags well behind China in economic interactions because it lacks a comparable budget with China. Myanmar is also a supporter of the BRI projects [30]. An oil and gas pipeline has been established, enabling oil to be transported from the Middle East to China's Yunnan region through Myanmar. Constructing a deep-water seaport free trade zone in Kyauk Phyu is a China-backed plan part of the superb BRI project. This will allow access to the Bay of Bengal [31]. As a result, China's economic involvement with Myanmar is much greater than India's, which must be of considerable worry to India given the Sino-Indian competition. The fact that China is looming big all across the area is a reality of regional geopolitics. As a result, India's geopolitical ambitions in the area are diminished due to China's perpetuation via its economic initiatives all over the region, notwithstanding allegations such as China's pursuit of 'debt-trap diplomacy.'

India is most likely learning to deal with the region's geopolitics and China's increasing physical presence. India has promised to construct a \$6 billion petrochemical refinery for energy sector investment and has accomplished 140 infrastructure projects. India's total grants are \$1.4 billion, while China has given \$3.5 billion in loans [32]. As a result, India does not need to compete with China in monetary terms; nevertheless, alternative methods such as upgrading current projects and creating people-to-people interaction are viable options.

Conclusions: Implications for India

India must execute its foreign policy vigorously to incorporate Myanmar into the geopolitical ingenuity. India must portray itself as a viable option to other emerging nations such as China to the countries and regions as a whole. There is an immediate need to develop a clear and unified plan to realize the enormous possibilities of the Act East Policy fully. Although the titles have been reestablished and refurbished by the current political regime, they need to be boosted to become more significant. India has announced new projects and plans, and regular efforts have been made to revitalize and rejuvenate foreign policy, which is a positive start.

However, delays in fulfilling deadlines have been seen at all levels of project execution. Instead of relying on previous rhetoric, there is a need to reenergize the pivoting to Asia at the execution level. A proactive strategy, as well as a dedicated and focused attitude toward Myanmar, is urgently required. Targeted efforts in all of the areas mentioned above are critical to promoting bilateral ties. As a result, India must accelerate the initiatives that have already been planned and begun. Infrastructure development, socio-economic development initiatives, and commercial connections benefit both countries and India's northeast regions and Myanmar's western area. As a result, Myanmar must be prioritized as the first country on the Act East Policy list. The aim of AEP will be such that the majority of the region's nation-states, especially Myanmar, adopt a foreign policy of 'India First.'

Given the limitations mentioned above, developing communications, political, and cultural connections with Myanmar is challenging. A comprehensive approach to policy formulation, coordination, and project implementation, on the other hand, may have a significant effect on the growth of both countries. The urgent issue of the pandemic has created both difficulties and possibilities for regional collaboration. Although specific industries have suffered significant losses due to the current epidemic, there is an increasing need for neighbors to work together to reduce reliance on Western countries in times of crisis. India must take a proactive effort to prevent other countries from adversely meddling in the area. The relationship between Myanmar and India is improving in many areas, but significant efforts must be made to finish long-pending projects. This will also increase economic and cultural activity. India's aid in technology, agribusiness, infrastructure, social sectors, education, military, and soft power has already raised India's profile in the Southeast Asian region, including South Asia. As a result, India must accelerate the snail's pace of various undertakings that it's been doing in various nations across the region to create a difference in the area's previous geopolitics. Myanmar has grown in geostrategic importance for India, and it will play a decisive role in reshaping the region's geopolitics. As a result, India has correctly recognized the situation and must now rise to the occasion.

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