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India fast-tracks highway shortcut to China

Anubhuti Vishnoi

Posted online: Tuesday, September 04, 2007 at 0000 hrs  **Print**  **Email**

Stilwell road into Arunachal Pradesh included in N-E road expansion map; could turn region into trade hub

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 3 : India is set to fully revive its side of the famous Stilwell road of World War II, which stretches across Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and into China and Myanmar. Expanding the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme (SARDP) for the Northeast, the Union Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways is adding another 1,200 km to the original plan of 1,310 km. This will include a 32-km stretch on the Stilwell road route into Arunachal Pradesh.

Complete revival of the Stilwell road could provide the shortest land route from India to China. Besides being of strategic importance, this could also help convert the area into a major trade hub of south-east Asia.

"We had started work on 24 km of the Stilwell road in Assam. Arunachal Pradesh, where the remaining stretches of the strategic corridor lie, has now been included in the expanded SARDP-NE, with a 32-km border linkage right up to Pangsau pass on the Indo-Myanmar border," said a senior official.

The step comes about a year after India opened a trade passage with China along the ancient Silk route, via the Nathu La pass, east of Gangtok.

Myanmar is said to be reconstructing its side of the Stilwell road as well, with the deadline set for 2007. China is said to have already completed renovations on its 600 km segment, which has been upgraded to a six-lane expressway. It has also assisted Myanmar with construction on the road. The proposal will go to the CCEA in two weeks.



Double laning of Stilwell Road

<http://www.sentinelassam.com/>

From a Correspondent

JORHAT, Feb 18: In a bid to fast track the Centre's "Look East Policy", the historic Stilwell Road will be widened to a double lane up to the Myanmar (Burma) border in the Arunachal Pradesh sector this financial year. Work on double-laning has already started in the Asom sector this year. A source working in Arunachal Pradesh PWD stated that officials from New Delhi were monitoring the construction of the single track from Lekhapani to Phangsau Pass on the Indo-Myanmar border.