

## **PLAN OF ACTION TO IMPLEMENT MEKONG GANGA COOPERATION (2016-2018)**

The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) is the first among all Mekong initiatives and reflects the unique civilizational and cultural links that bind India with the region. The developmental potential of the MGC dialogue needs to be strengthened and implemented by all the member countries. The traditional areas of cooperation comprising of tourism, culture, education, transport, information and communications technology (ICT) have been expanded to include new areas such as SME cooperation, conservation of Rice Germ plasm, Health and Pandemics Management, and heritage archiving including notably through the establishment of a Common Archival Resource Centre at Nalanda University. The MGC Quick Impact Project Fund was established to facilitate short gestation projects.

2. This Plan of Action seeks to implement the goals and objectives of the MGC partnership during the next two years (2016-2018). It lays out priorities and measures to be undertaken by all parties to further deepen and enhance their economic and cultural ties as well as to realise the full potential of the MGC cooperation in all areas of common interests.

### **i) Tourism**

- Member countries agreed that the MGC process will work towards exploring and tapping the potential in tourism, especially the Buddhist trail including greater connectivity between Buddhist sites, cultural tourism, pilgrimage tourism, medical tourism, eco-tourism, community based tourism and adventure tourism. Private sector networking for tour packing, marketing and promotion, and selling destinations in the region as a whole, would be encouraged.
- MGC countries will be invited as special guests to the International Buddhist Conclave to be hosted in India in October 2016.
- Cooperation and coordination among the Tourism Departments of MGC countries would be enhanced, and participation in regional Tourism Fairs encouraged.

### **ii) Cultural Cooperation**

- The MGC Traditional Asian Textiles Museum in Siem Reap, Cambodia, is one of the most visible and successful outcomes of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation process. All the member countries will support the initiatives to organise workshops and exhibitions at the Museum to attract more visitors.
- Member countries may also consider appointing a second Deputy Director to the Museum on rotation basis, in addition to a full-time Director appointed by

the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Deputy Director appointed by APSARA Authority.

- India will offer scholarships to other MGC countries for training in museology and conservation and expect the trainees will be deployed thereafter in the Museum.
- India will also offer scholarships to other MGC countries for training in film directing, sound, lighting and stage management as well as in Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- India has commissioned a film on the MGC Museum featuring the cross-cultural linkages in the textiles of the region and will share the film with MGC partners, to which wide publicity will be given by all.
- Member countries will also work towards finalizing the revised Concept Note on a Common Archival Resource Centre (CARC) at Nalanda University, which was circulated at the Senior Officials Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in August, 2015. The CARC will contribute to preserving history by compiling archives, digitizing them and making them available as an online resource for wider use.

### **iii) Education**

- India will provide more than 900 scholarships to MGC countries on an annual basis under the bilateral and multilateral tracks. MGC partners will work towards better utilisation of the scholarships. Efforts will be made to include more women in the knowledge exchange programmes. Scholarships in Engineering and Management and up gradation of teachers' education and training would be given priority.
- Member countries will make full use of the scholarships offered to students from CLMV countries to study at Nalanda University.
- Member countries will examine the equivalence of degrees in key fields like information and communication technology (ICT), medicine, engineering and management studies to kick start cooperation in this extremely important area.

### **iv) People-to-People Contacts**

- A conference will be held at Track 1.5 level to discuss ways to deepen cooperation within the MGC. India proposes to host the first such conference at the ASEAN-India Centre.

**v) Transport & Connectivity**

- India, Myanmar and Thailand will continue to work on early completion of negotiations on the Motor Vehicles Agreement for the Trilateral Highway.
- Member countries will look at various route alignments for the possible extension of the Trilateral Highway to Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam with a focus on the economic viability of these corridors.
- Member countries will also share best practices from the cross border transport agreements of the Greater Mekong Sub-region.
- Member countries will examine the prospect of developing coastal shipping.

**vi) Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**

- Member countries will also examine the possibility of an India-CLMV Fund for enhancing ICT literacy and expanding the base of ICT workers through capacity building programmes covering schools, the workplace and the community.
- Member countries will also share best practices on the development of software industry, ICT security, regulation and Universal Service Obligation (USO).

**vii) Cooperation in SMEs**

- In order to tap the trade and investment potential of the small and medium enterprises, a Joint Working Group on SMEs would be established and its first meeting will be held in India. Member countries would expedite comments on the revised Concept Note circulated in August 2015 and May 2016.

**viii) Health**

- Member countries will consider the establishment of a Working Group of health authorities to share information and cooperate in pandemics management.

**ix) Agriculture**

- Member countries will work on expanding cooperation in the preservation of rice germ plasm and the need to cooperate among others, in research and development of quality seeds, short duration and stress tolerant varieties, enhancing rice production through mechanization and downstream processing.

- Member countries will also explore the possibility of creation of an India-CLMV Fund for agricultural and agro-processing industries.
- x) Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)**
- Quick Impact Projects with short gestation periods and an individual outlay of upto US\$ 50,000 per annum have been instituted by India to facilitate speedy implementation of small projects which can directly benefit local communities in CLMV countries. A sum of US \$ 1 million per year has been committed for the QIPs, enabling Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam to each have projects worth \$ 250,000 funded under this scheme annually. The response to this initiative has been enthusiastic wherein five projects in Viet Nam, ten in Cambodia, three in Lao PDR and two in Myanmar have been identified so far. Implementation of Projects in Cambodia and Viet Nam has commenced. MGC partners committed to kick start -more projects in 2016-17.
- xi) Annual MGC Business Conclave**
- It is proposed that an MGC business forum may be organised annually by rotation in MGC countries, focusing on the priority areas for the grouping as well as for the host country. Special emphasis would be laid on engaging young entrepreneurs.
- xii) Sector-Specific Working Groups**
- Finally, Member countries will consider establishing sectoral working groups, to monitor and accelerate the implementation of initiatives in specific sectors.
  - To keep up the momentum of the Expert Group Meetings, they will submit the records of discussion of their meetings to the Senior Official Meetings of MGC.

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