

## Prospects Brighten for Kunming Initiative

By Ramtanu Maitra (www.atimes.com)

Some new developments in Sino-Indian and Sino-Bangladesh relations indicate that the Kunming Initiative to rebuild the old Stilwell Road, linking northeastern India with southern China to enhance Sino-Indian trade, has been revived.

Optimism was raised by the statements of Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes, who is widely identified as the staunchest critic of China in India, that hinted at changes in Indo-Chinese relations. At a conference on "Asian Security and China 2003-2010" in New Delhi last month, Fernandes said that the September 11 tragedy had altered the nature of the discourse about security and how it is to be prioritized in consonance with the Indian experience of dealing with a similar situation for the past two decades. "The Sino-Indian relationship is to be rearranged in this altered context," he said.

Of equal importance was a seminar organized in the Indian state of Assam last December. Jointly staged by the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, based in Kolkata, and Dibrugarh University, the seminar suggested the reopening of the road to improve relations with neighboring countries. It also proposed that the road should measure up to international standards and be capable of carrying 40-foot containers. Senior professors attending the seminar observed that once the road was opened, the entire Southeast Asian region would become a major trade hub. For Yunnan province, which is landlocked, the road will pave the way for access to the Bay of Bengal.

### Indian Roadblock

The seminar's conclusion was, however, not endorsed by India's Home Ministry, a bastion of China antagonists. The ministry continued to show its disinclination to reopen the Stilwell Road, ostensibly in view of the continuing militancy problem in the region. The more likely reason is inertia: Indian bureaucracy, and the present Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seems to have no sense of seizing an

few people and I'd like to have that interest continue. I believe that the Ledo/Stillwell road as well as the Burma Road will join again in the future as I have read articles and reviews about the Authorities in India, Burma and China trying to put efforts into opening border trading which means some are looking into reconstructing or improving the conditions the historical route. The Yunnan Province will be hosting China-ASEAN Trade fair in October 2005 which means that Kunming and the Northern and the Northeastern part of Burma will have enormous exposure towards making investments and promoting tourism.

I personally would like to see my country open and would like to make personal contacts with those who would like to visit Burma in the future. I have corresponded with people from the flying tigers, the Merrill's Marauders as well as CNAC in order to introduce my interest in wanting to associate with their organization.

I speak the language, know the country and I still keep in touch with some of my father's former colleagues who would be able to assist me in organizing trips to certain remote places in the country. I also return to Burma every year and I will be doing so on Oct 29th to travel up north and cross over the border into China so that I will have first hand knowledge of the conditions and improvements if any, on the Old Burma Road.

I would gladly give any information you or other members may need so please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
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## Upcomming Burma Tour

**UPDATE:** Mrs. Khaing Fredricks, has subsequently advised us she is planning a commercial tour of Burma this winter. The tour will be for 16 days and will include visits to Myitkyina and Shinbuiyang. Anyone interested in considering such a tour can contact her at telephone (703) 821-2472 or by e-mail at: ktun@juno.com.