

# Punj Lloyd Building Sikkim's First Greenfield Airport

Nestled in the foothills of the famous Himalayan range, Sikkim is a picture of perfection and pristine beauty. The State is known to have 28 mountain peaks, 21 glaciers, 227 high altitude lakes, five hot springs, and more than 100 rivers and streams. Eight mountain passes connect Sikkim to Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal. Infrastructure hence assumes a critical role in the development of Sikkim.

Punj Lloyd is proud to be associated with the building of Sikkim's first greenfield airport project in Pakyong which will provide air connectivity to this landlocked state. The airport being built at the Percheda top, 30 km south of Gangtok, the capital city of Sikkim, is a spectacular construction site as it is being built at an altitude of 4,700 ft with deep valleys at both ends of the runway. The new airport will make a significant contribution to the tourism infrastructure of the state which has been unexplored. Apart from giving tourism a big boost, the Airport will also help attract investment to the state. The Airport will also facilitate economic development of the area particularly floriculture. The completion of Pakyong airport will make it one of the five highest airports in India and will ensure Sikkim's better

connectivity with rest of the country. Currently, Sikkim is connected only by National Highway- 31A.

Difficult topography and hostile weather conditions make this project extremely challenging and exciting. Working in this heavenly abode, the project team's prime objective was to ensure that construction activities very minimally impact the environment, protecting the rich diversity of both fauna and flora. Composite reinforced soil technology was used to retain the high embankments by reinforced soil walls. In places where there is space constraint, gabions filled with boulders are provided to act as fascia for protecting the reinforced soil. In places where space availability is restricted but not acute, vegetation slopes using double-twisted, mechanically woven galvanized and PVC coated steel mesh provide fascia. The slope of 65 degree is maintained by using welded wire mesh and steel rods. Biodegradable coir mat is provided at the fascia to facilitate growth of vegetation. When completed the highest reinforcement wall will stand as high as 80.38 m, one of the tallest reinforcement walls in the world.



Sikkim is a rich amalgamation of various communities. A majority of the population of Sikkim comprises Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis. While executing this project, all efforts have been made to gainfully employ locals, generating employment opportunities. A harmonious relationship is being maintained with the local population at all times.

The completion of this airport will not only will help bridge the gap between North East India and the rest of the country but also give a boost to Sikkim's economy. ■