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## Ministry wants over one billion for 2018 development aid

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Prague, June 12 (CTK) - The Czech Foreign Affairs Ministry wants to spend more than one billion crowns on development aid in 2018, it says in its draft budget that the government will debate on Wednesday.

According to the draft, the sum for bilateral development cooperation in 2018 is to rise by 100 million crowns compared with 2017.

The Czech Republic focuses on projects in six priority countries where it helps strengthen the democratic administration, the use and protection of natural sources and the development of farming and countryside.

The plan submitted by Foreign Minister Lubomir Zaoralek (senior government Social Democrats, CSSD) is based on a gradual rise in the funding of development aid that the government approved last July.

The cabinet earmarked 954 million crowns for 2017 and one billion for 2018.

More than a half of the finances will go to the Czech Development Agency that is preparing bilateral development projects and helps implement them.

The development aid budget includes the programmes of government scholarships to which 115 million crowns have been allocated.

Another significant item in the 2018 plan is Czech humanitarian aid abroad for which the Foreign Ministry demands 180 million crowns.

While the development projects aim to support sustainable development, humanitarian aid prevents casualties caused by natural disasters and armed conflicts.

The Czech Republic also uses development cooperation in relation to economic diplomacy. The Development Agency supports the projects that connect Czech firms with local partners.

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