

‘LAND UNDER PLA CONTROL SINCE 1959’

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday said it was aware of infrastructure construction by China in the past several years “along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)” and that India has also stepped up its construction. The statement came after a report by NDTV showed satellite images of a new Chinese settlement in Arunachal Pradesh.

This is the first time the government has acknowledged Chinese construction, although official sources say the land has been under the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) control since 1959.

“The Chinese have been holding the area since 1959 and it is not a new development. Prior to that, there was an Assam Rifles post there which was overrun. They have been doing construction there on and off. There were some temporary constructions few years back. They have now done permanent construction there,” an official source said. A second official source said, “They are doing it [the construction] on their side and we are doing it on our side.”

Satellite images show the construction of a big village on the banks of Tsari Chu river in Upper Subansiri district between November 2019 and November 2020.

Stating that the government remains committed to the objective of creating infrastructure along the border areas for the improvement of the livelihood of its citizens, including in Arunachal Pradesh, the MEA said in a statement, “Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India’s security and takes all the necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

The MEA said that India, too, has stepped up border infrastructure, including the construction of roads and bridges among others, which it added has provided “much needed connectivity to the local population along the border.”

Briefing the Parliament in 2019 on the ongoing stand-off in eastern Ladakh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had said that China continues to be in illegal occupation of approximately 38,000 sq. km. in the Union Territory of Ladakh, and Aksai Chin, and also claims approximately 90,000 sq. km. of Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh.

In addition to infrastructure development on the border to improve military movement, China has in recent years established civilian settlements closer to the border.

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