

Ladakh's connectivity conundrum

Border roads leading to Ladakh remain snow-bound for most of the year. NISSAR AHMAD NISSAR AHMAD

At a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday to discuss issues in the implementation of the Border Area Development Programme (BADP), an official from Jammu and Kashmir said connectivity was a major issue in the Ladakh region. In areas bordering China, only Chinese telecom services were available, not those of Indian operators.

The meeting was attended by the magistrates of 25 districts in 17 States, a Home Ministry spokesperson said.

Leh Deputy Commissioner Avny Lavasa showed the satellite images of the development on the Chinese side. She briefed the Minister of the connectivity issues in the border areas.

Meanwhile, an official from Uttar Pradesh said a bridge was washed away within weeks of its construction as the Kosi river changed course. Under the BADP, the Union government plans to develop villages located 0-10 km from the international borders and make them "self-sustainable." A Home Ministry spokesperson said 61 villages were identified for being developed as 'model villages,' with health centres, schools and drinking water supply, and Rs. 126 crore was released for this purpose.

The Centre released Rs. 1,100 crore during 2017-18 for the development of the villages along the international border in 17 States. The BADP covers 111 border districts in 17 States to meet the needs of people living within 50 km of the international border. A total of Rs. 13,400 crore has been released since the programme was launched in 1986-87.

The governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal highlighted their achievements under the BADP, and the steps taken to improve the quality of life for the people in the border areas.

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