

## Centre plans connectivity push on China border

Air waves: At Pasighat in East Siang. Many villages in Arunachal receive Chinese radio stations. Ritu Raj Konwar; Ritu\_Raj\_Konwar; Ritu\_Raj\_Konwar -

The 'invasion' of Chinese radio channels has made the Centre plan installation of optical fibre cables (OFC) in areas bordering China.

The OFC push is expected to arm civilians and defence personnel with cellular and radio connectivity strong enough to counter the Chinese waves, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in Arunachal Pradesh's capital, Itanagar, on Tuesday.

Ms. Sitharaman said she experienced poor communication network during her recent visit to Kibithoo, the last border village in Arunachal Pradesh's Anjaw district.

"I came to know people in the area access Chinese radio frequency but not All India Radio," she said.

"We will soon start work on extension of OFC in the remote border areas. The Union Cabinet discussed the issue 10 days ago and sanctioned additional funds," Ms. Sitharaman, in the frontier State to highlight the achievements of the four-year-old Narendra Modi government, said.

The Defence Minister also said the government was trying to recruit more women in the armed forces from border areas. "I am considering permanent commission to women in the defence forces, but the issue is caught in a legal battle," she said.

Women in the forces who did not get permanent commission had approached the court some time ago.

Ms. Sitharaman, however, declined to comment on reports about mining activities by China near the border with Arunachal Pradesh.

"I do not have the details and cannot say anything at this point of time," she said.

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