

CHINA REJECTS CONCERNS OVER BORDER LAW

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

A day after India expressed strong concerns over a new land border law to be passed by China, Beijing on Thursday said it hoped “relevant countries” would not make “wanton speculation over normal legislation”.

India said on Wednesday the new Chinese land boundary law, to come into effect on January 1, should not be used to justify Beijing's actions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and expressed “concern” over the law.

The law, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, also should not be used as a “pretext” to formalise any of the Chinese military's recent moves, from amassing thousands of troops in forward areas to carrying out multiple transgressions in violation of past border agreements.

The MEA said China's “unilateral decision to bring about a legislation which can have implications on our existing bilateral arrangements... is of concern to us.”

Development projects

The border law designates various responsibilities for the Chinese military and local authorities in frontier areas, calling on the military to carry out drills and for local governments to step up border development projects. Among those projects are construction of civilian settlements called frontier villages in disputed areas along the India and Bhutan borders.

Responding to India's concerns, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Thursday it “hopes relevant countries will abide by norms of international relations and refrain from wanton speculations on China's normal domestic legislation.”

Its spokesperson Wang Wenbin stated, “The National Land Boundary Law was adopted at the 31st Session of the Standing Committee of the Thirteenth National People's Congress of China on October 23. On the same day, President Xi Jinping signed Order No. 99 of the President of the People's Republic of China and issued the document, which is proclaimed to be enforced from January 1, 2022.”

Boundary management

“This law consists of seven chapters and 62 articles. It stipulates clearly the leadership system and division of duties among different departments as well as between military and civilian authorities. It also offers clear provisions regarding delineation and demarcation of national land boundaries, defense and management of national land boundaries and borders, and international cooperation in national land boundary affairs,” he added.

He stressed that the “main purpose for formulating and promulgating this law is to further coordinate, regulate and strengthen boundary management and advance international cooperation in relevant fields.”

Mr. Wang added, “It will not affect China's compliance with existing treaties related to national land boundary affairs China has already signed or change China's current mode of boundary management and cooperation with countries sharing a land boundary with it. Nor will it alter China's position and proposition on relevant boundary issues.”

MEA response

The MEA on Wednesday noted that “unilateral moves” would have “no bearing” on agreements reached previously by the two sides. Many of those agreements are, however, under strain in the wake of the Chinese military’s moves along the LAC last year, with the crisis in eastern Ladakh as yet unresolved after multiple rounds of talks.

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