



drishhti

China's New Strategic Highway

drishhtiias.com/printpdf/china-s-new-strategic-highway

Why in News

Recently, China has completed construction of a **strategically significant highway** enabling greater **access to remote areas along the disputed border** with Arunachal Pradesh in India.



Key Points

- **About:**

- The construction began in 2014 and is **part of a wider infrastructure push in border areas in Tibet.**

- The highway passes through the **Grand Canyon of the Brahmaputra river** (Yarlung Zangbo in Tibet).

The **Brahmaputra is the longest river in Tibet** and its **valley is the world's deepest with a 7,000-metre drop** from the highest mountain peak to the lowest basin.

- It connects Pad Township in the city of **Nyingchi and Medog County.**

- Nyingchi and Medog County both are located in **Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China.**

- **Medog is the last county in Tibet**, which is located **close to the Arunachal Pradesh border.**

- **China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet**, which is **firmly rejected by India.** The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long **Line of Actual Control (LAC).**

- The Highway will shorten **the road length** connecting the city proper of Nyingchi and Medog County and will reduce the **travel time by eight hours.**

- **Other Strategic Constructions by China:**

- **Railway Line:**

In 2020, China had begun work on a **strategically significant railway line** that will link **Sichuan province with Nyingchi in Tibet**, which lies close to Arunachal Pradesh border.

It is the second major rail link to Tibet after the **Qinghai-Tibet railway that opened in 2006.**

- **New Villages:**

- In January 2021, there were reports of **Chinese construction of three villages** in Arunachal Pradesh 5 kilometres from the Bum La pass.

- In 2020, satellite images emerged showing a **new village called Pangda built 2-3 km into what Bhutan sees as its land.**

- In 2017, the **TAR** government launched a plan to build **moderately well-off villages in border areas.**

Under this plan 628 **first line and second line villages** — referring to those right on the border and others in remote areas slightly further within — would be developed in the prefectures of Ngari, Shigatse, Shannan and Nyingchi, **along China's borders with India, Bhutan and Nepal.**

- **Concerns for India:**

- The highway is also expected to play a key role in the surveying of and planning for the **mega Yarlung Zangbo hydro-power project** that China is planning to build at the canyon in the same Medog county, **triggering unease among downstream countries like India.**
- A highway connecting the border will **largely improve the efficiency and convenience of military personnel and material transportation** and logistical supplies in the border area.

- **Steps Taken by India:**

- India will spend 10% funds of the **Border Area Development Programme (BADP)** only to improve the infrastructure along the China border.
- The **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** constructed the **Daporijo bridge** over Subansiri river in Arunachal Pradesh.
It links roads leading upto the LAC between India and China.
- Foundation of a **tunnel at Nechiphu in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh has been laid down which will shorten travel time for troops** till the LAC through Tawang, which China claims to be its territory.
- **A tunnel is being constructed under the Se La pass in Arunachal Pradesh** which connects Tawang to the rest of Arunachal and Guwahati.
- The state government of Arunachal Pradesh has advocated **selection of 10 census towns along the India-China border** as pilot projects for infrastructure development in order to stop people living along its international borders, specifically with China, from migrating to faraway urban centres in the State.
- **Sisseri River Bridge**, located at **lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh**, connects Dibang Valley and Siang.
- In 2019, the Indian Air Force inaugurated resurfaced runway at India's **easternmost Village-Vijaynagar (Changlang district)** in Arunachal Pradesh.
- In 2019, the Indian Army conducted **exercise 'HimVijay'** in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam with its newly **created Integrated Battle Groups (IBG)**.
- **Bogibeel bridge**, which is India's longest road-rail bridge connecting Dibrugarh in Assam to Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh was inaugurated in 2018.
It will **facilitate quicker movement of troops and equipment** to areas near the India-China border.

Way Forward

India needs to be vigilant enough for any new development in China near its border to protect its interests efficiently. Further, it **needs to build robust Infrastructure in difficult border areas** in its territory to ensure movement of personnel and other logistical supplies in an efficient manner.

Source:TH