

Govt seeks China role in northeast connectivity plan

Beijing: India is seeking Chinese participation in a newly-drafted project that involves connecting the northeastern states with Bangladesh's Chittagong port. Making the pitch is BJP general secretary Ram Madhav and the cabinet ministers of three BJP-ruled states — Assam, Tripura and Nagaland, who are currently in China.

Significantly, the team of visitors does not have a minister from Arunachal Pradesh, which borders disputed portions of Tibet in China. Madhav admitted there are challenges in putting the new plan in place because of China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh. "We have issues in Arunachal Pradesh... and that remains a challenge," he said.

Madhav's announcement is significant because India has been reluctant to allow implementation of China's Belt and Road Initia-



Ram Madhav

tive across its borders.

He said Chinese investments can be in consumer goods and products like bat-

teries for e-bikes. He did not mention infrastructure development by the Chinese. "Where there is mutually beneficial arrangement possible, there we'll take them. Where there are concerns, we won't allow many people there," he said.

Very little has so far been done to improve connectivity in the northeast. "Southwest China can use the northeast as a hub to go to the Indian Ocean through Chittagong," said Madhav, who is in charge of BJP's northeast affairs.

Madhav said India is developing Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal as sub-regional hubs and even invited Chinese to use northeast to access the Indian Ocean through Chittagong. The new plan involves moving goods from the northeast to Chittagong port instead of shipping them all the way from Mumbai and Chennai ports.

"Right now, goods to northeast are taken by rail and road from Mumbai or Chennai through Kolkata to Guwahati," he said.