



In a first, India funds poverty alleviation project in China

Saibal Dasgupta / TNN

Beijing: India has finally stepped into what has long been the preserve of western countries that want to understand grassroots China and forge ties with its provincial leaders—the funding of poverty alleviation projects. The first-ever such venture to be funded by India is an agricultural training and information centre in the relatively backward province of Ningxia. Farmers here will soon be logging in to India for advice on the latest farming techniques and marketing trends.

The project—really a diplomatic initiative to connect with a provincial government—was inaugurated by Nirupama Rao, Indian ambassador to China, and Wang Zhengwei, chairman of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (NHAR), in Liangtian township on Saturday. The NHAR is jointly funding the project with the Indian government.

China's decision to allow India to develop grassroots contacts in the predominantly Muslim Ningxia region is significant at a time when differences over border and other issues have intensified between the two countries.

Another notable initiative has involved funding for an Indian-style Buddhist temple near the historic White Horse temple in Luoyang in Henan province. But this is the first time Chinese and Indian officials will share experiences in the field of poverty eradication.

Rao emphasized this at the opening ceremony, when she highlighted the similarity of developmental imperatives in India and China. She called for a greater understanding and awareness about each other at the frontline of developmental activities.

The opening ceremony was also attended by Li Rui, vice-chairman of the NHAR People's Government, its secretary-general Zuo Jun, representatives from the municipal government of the provincial capital, Yinchuan, and hundreds of locals, the Indian embassy said in a press release.