

## **India, China must adhere to past agreements to keep the peace along the border.**

The Chinese government's announcement on December 30 that it had come up with its own names for 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh could not have come at a more precarious moment for an already strained relationship. The move is ostensibly aimed at "standardising" how places in the Indian State are depicted in official Chinese maps, which show all of Arunachal as "south Tibet". India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement in response to the move that "assigning invented names" will not "alter" any facts on the ground and Arunachal's status as an integral part of India. As the MEA noted, this is not the first time that Beijing has done so.

In 2017, Chinese authorities issued "official" names for six places in Arunachal. The first instance followed a visit by the Dalai Lama to the State, which Beijing had protested. The list on this occasion is longer, and not only includes eight towns but also four mountains, two rivers and a mountain pass.

The list covers 11 out of Arunachal's 25 districts, extending from Tawang in the west to Dibang Valley in the north and Anjaw in the east. The spread of the locations suggests the places were chosen to reiterate Chinese claims to the whole State.

If the latest move is largely symbolic and will not, as the MEA observed, change facts on the ground, it needs to be seen against the backdrop of broader changes in China's approach to the boundary dispute. The naming announcement was made ahead of a new border law coming into force on January 1, 2022.

The law, which was proposed in March 2021 and calls for various Chinese government bodies to take steps to "safeguard" Chinese territory, was put forward a year into the crisis along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). New Delhi, which has expressed concern about the law, has seen it as an attempt to formalise the transgressions made by the Chinese military since the summer of 2020 and put a stamp on China's unilateral measures to redraw the LAC.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry defended the latest move saying the matter was “within China’s sovereignty”. Yet, Beijing had a very different view on India’s own internal reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, which elicited not only sharp statements from China but also led to Beijing raising the matter at the United Nations Security Council.

The announcement this week came as India and China remain engaged at both diplomatic and military levels to complete the stalled disengagement process along the LAC. Restoring relations, as well as the status quo along the borders, will require mutual sensitivity and an adherence to past agreements that helped keep the peace, rather than needless provocations that expand an already long list of differences.

### Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

**Q. Which state of India has been shown by China as Southern Tibet recently?**

- (a) Ladakh
- (b) Arunachal Pradesh
- (c) Assam
- (d) Uttarakhand

### Expected Question (Mains Exams)

**Q. How will China's recent renaming of villages in Arunachal affect the India-China border dispute? What could be the symbolic implications of China's move?**

**(250 Words)**

**Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.**