

# TIBET DIGEST

JANUARY 2025

FOUNDATION FOR

Non-violent  
Alternatives

To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region



## FOUNDATION FOR NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES (FNVA)

Tibetdigest is a monthly publication curated by FNVA, offering comprehensive coverage of significant developments pertaining to Tibet, Chinese politics, and Sino-Indian relations as gleaned from various open-source media outlets.

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## Summary- January Tibet Digest

FOUNDATION FOR

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Alternatives**

To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region

Tibet saw heightened repression in January, spanning cyber surveillance, cultural suppression, and environmental displacement. A Chengdu-based cybersecurity firm linked to China's public security ministry was exposed for hacking Tibetans and Uyghurs worldwide. Under the guise of conservation, China's national park initiative has displaced Tibetan nomads, severing them from their land and heritage. Villagers were coerced into singing CCP propaganda songs under threat of losing social benefits, tightening ideological control. Following the deadly Dingri earthquake, authorities barred monks and aid workers from affected areas, while monasteries suffered severe damage. Expanding solar projects encroached on nomadic lands, further altering Tibet's ecological and cultural landscape. Meanwhile, the U.S. suspended foreign aid, affecting Tibetan welfare programs, and UN experts demanded answers from China on human rights violations in Tibet and East Turkestan. Despite mounting repression, the Dalai Lama's forthcoming book, *Voice for the Voiceless*, reaffirms his hope for Tibet's future.

## CCP'S Tibet Policies

**Chinese Cyber Firm Hacking Tibetans and Uyghurs:** A Chengdu-based cybersecurity contractor, Sichuan Dianke Network Security Technology (UPSEC), linked to China's public security ministry, has been exposed for cyberattacks against Tibetans and Uyghurs. The firm, associated with the hacking group "Earth Minotaur," deployed malware like DarkNimbus to spy on targets through WeChat, extracting personal data and geolocation. Victims were found in China, North America, and Europe. UPSEC, which collaborates with public security units and universities, has not responded to allegations.

**China Pushes for Xi Jinping's Tibet Policies:** The 3rd session of the 12th Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) People's Congress emphasized implementing Xi Jinping's Tibet policies, focusing on further Sinicization. Wang Junzheng, TAR's party secretary, stressed political stability, ideological control, and adherence to party doctrines like the "Two Certainties" and "Four Confidences." Yan Jinhai, newly elected chairman of the TAR government, called for strict alignment with the CPC's Tibet strategy.

**New Leadership in Tibet Signals Continued Crackdown:** The TAR People's Congress and Political Consultative Conference confirmed the appointment of Karma Tseten as TAR chairman and Yan Jinhai as head of the TAR People's Congress, signaling continued Chinese control. Unlike past Tibetan officials who advocated for Tibetan rights, these leaders have shown no such record. The lack of a new TAR PCC chairman raises speculation about the health of the incumbent, Phakpalha Gelek Namgyal. The appointment of Jiang Wenpeng as head of the Supervisory Committee indicates a crackdown on cadres not fully aligned with Xi's policies.

**Tibetan Official Investigated Amidst Political Purge:** On the same day as Jiang Wenpeng's appointment in Lhasa, Chinese authorities announced an investigation into Che Dralha (Qi Zhala), a senior Tibetan official, for "serious violations of discipline and laws." This aligns with Beijing's continued efforts to tighten political control and eliminate dissent within TAR leadership.

**Tibetans Face Housing Discrimination:** Local Tibetans struggle to obtain permits for building homes, while Chinese investors face no such restrictions and freely construct hotels. This forces many Tibetans to rent housing in their own homeland, highlighting systemic discrimination in property rights.

**National Park Plan Displaces Tibetans:** Under the guise of environmental conservation, China's new national parks in Tibet are leading to the mass displacement of Tibetan nomads and farmers. Forced relocations are disrupting their traditional way of life, stripping them of land, livelihoods, and cultural heritage.

**Tibetans Forced to Sing Chinese Propaganda Songs:** In a push to enforce loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party, Tibetan villagers are being compelled to sing patriotic songs praising the CCP. Those who refuse risk losing access to social benefits, further tightening state control over Tibetan communities.

**Sinicization Drive Expands, Tibet's Ngari Cited as a Model:** China's National Ethnic Affairs Commission (NEAC) has highlighted Guangzhou's big data system for tracking ethnic minorities as a model for nationwide implementation. A newly published book cites Tibet's Ngari region as a success story in linguistic Sinicization, with Mandarin now the primary medium of instruction in schools. The book also promotes policies that embed ethnic minorities into Han-majority communities, with measures such as renaming schools and monitoring businesses. Officials claim these efforts strengthen national unity, while government academics work to reinterpret Chinese history to align with Beijing's ethnic integration policies.

**China Expands Surveillance and Mandarin Promotion in Tibet:** A recent NEAC publication showcases Guangzhou's big data system as a prototype for monitoring ethnic minorities across China. The book details how authorities track businesses, including halal noodle shops, and integrate minority communities into Han-majority areas. In Tibet's Ngari prefecture, Mandarin has become the primary language of instruction, with all teachers required to pass proficiency tests. The book, distributed nationwide, aligns with Xi Jinping's push for ethnic assimilation, while officials revise laws and regulations to further enforce integration policies.

**Chinese Catholics Raise Funds for Tibet Earthquake Victims:** Following a devastating 7.1-magnitude earthquake in Tibet's Dingri County that killed at least 126 people, Chinese Catholic groups have mobilized relief efforts. Jinde Charity, on behalf of Catholic parishes across China, sent an initial fund of 110,000 yuan to assist with debris removal and rebuilding. Several dioceses, including Beijing and Hangzhou, have launched fundraising appeals, while Wuxi Catholics donated 20,000 yuan to aid survivors. Catholic organizations continue to coordinate relief efforts to support affected communities.

**Chinese Military Provides Aid to Tibet Earthquake Survivors:** After a 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck southern Tibet on January 7, Chinese military forces reportedly treated nearly 22,400 injured people. The disaster resulted in 126 deaths and widespread destruction. Local authorities, alongside military personnel, are providing medical assistance and emergency relief to those affected. Official reports emphasize the scale of response efforts, though independent verification remains limited.

**Tally of Tibet Earthquake Injured Rises on Third Day of Search for Survivors:** The number of injured from the January 7 earthquake in Tibet has risen to 337, with 126 deaths confirmed. The harsh winter conditions continue to complicate rescue operations, with more than 47,000 displaced individuals. Despite ongoing aftershocks, search efforts persist, though survival chances are dwindling due to low temperatures and the prolonged exposure of survivors to the elements.

**Tibetan Social Media Influencers Silenced on Dingri Earthquake:** Chinese authorities have imposed strict restrictions on social media influencers in Tibet following the 7.1-magnitude earthquake in Dingri County. Many influencers have faced forced account shutdowns and bans on livestreaming or sharing accurate information about the disaster. Despite reports suggesting a higher death toll than the official 126, authorities continue to block independent reporting. The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has called for international aid access and transparency, while relief efforts from Tibetan regions have been redirected to government-controlled warehouses.

**Death Toll Underreported, Independent Access Blocked:** Unofficial reports suggest that at least 100 people may have died in a single township, casting doubt on China's official count of 126 fatalities. The Chinese government has banned independent media and restricted local travel, making it difficult to verify the true scale of the disaster. Many affected villages remain without aid, while Tibetan volunteers trying to deliver supplies have been blocked at newly established checkpoints. Strict censorship ensures only state-controlled media reports on the situation, raising concerns about the accuracy of official information.

**Tibetan Girl Airlifted for Treatment After Earthquake:** A five-year-old Tibetan girl, critically injured in the recent 6.8-magnitude earthquake in "Xizang" (Tibet), has been airlifted to West China Second University Hospital in Chengdu for treatment.

**Information on Earthquake Strictly Controlled:** Despite ongoing rescue operations in Dingri County, many affected villages remain without assistance. Local residents have been ordered not to share information, while internet access in the region has been tightly controlled. Reports indicate that aid efforts are primarily

concentrated in select areas, while many hard-hit villages continue to suffer without support. Authorities have blocked Tibetans from delivering aid directly, forcing them to hand over supplies to the government. Exiled Tibetan leaders, including the Dalai Lama, have expressed solidarity with those affected, as concerns grow over China's suppression of disaster information.

**China Erasing Tibetan Culture by Separating Children from Their Families:** Reports indicate that China is systematically placing Tibetan children in residential schools, where Mandarin is the primary language of instruction, diminishing their connection to Tibetan language, culture, and Buddhist beliefs. The program, endorsed by Xi Jinping, aims to instill a sense of Chinese national identity from an early age. While Chinese authorities claim the schools help children integrate into the modern economy, researchers and human rights groups warn of the psychological harm, limited parental visits, and reports of harsh treatment in these institutions. An estimated 800,000 Tibetan children—around three-quarters of those aged 6-18—are believed to be in such boarding schools.

**Update: Number of Reported Dead, Injured from Tibet Earthquake Unchanged:** Chinese authorities have halted search efforts following the earthquake in Dingri County, Tibet, leaving the official toll at 126 dead and 188 injured. No information has been provided on the number of missing persons. Freezing temperatures have worsened the survival chances of those trapped. Over 61,500 people have been affected, with 47,500 relocated to resettlement sites. Reports indicate extensive damage to homes and infrastructure, with 27 villages near the epicenter severely impacted. The earthquake caused significant shifts in terrain, and aftershocks continue to be recorded.

**Relief Efforts Continue After Deadly Tibet Earthquake:** Rescue operations in earthquake-hit Tibet have shifted to providing relief for survivors in freezing conditions. Over 46,000 people have been relocated, with tents, quilts, and stoves being distributed. The earthquake, which struck near a significant Tibetan Buddhist site, left 126 dead and 188 injured. Chinese state media reports ongoing efforts to provide emergency supplies to those affected.

**First Female Pilot in China's Xizang (Tibet):** Kelsang Pedron has become the first female pilot from Tibet recruited by the PLA Air Force, marking a milestone in gender representation in a traditionally male-dominated field. She underwent the same rigorous training as her male counterparts and has successfully completed a solo test flight. Her achievement aligns with China's broader push to increase female participation in various industries, supported by government policies promoting gender equality in employment.

**China Marks 30 Years of UNESCO Listing for Potala Palace:** China celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Potala Palace's UNESCO World Heritage designation with an exhibition promoting "ethnic unity." The event showcased Tibetan artefacts while emphasizing cultural integration within China. Critics view the celebration as part of Beijing's ongoing effort to use Tibetan heritage for propaganda while eroding Tibet's living culture through Sinicization policies. The palace, once the Dalai Lama's winter residence, suffered damage during China's military suppression in 1959, and its artefacts were plundered during the Cultural Revolution.

## Buddhism

**China Bans Monks and Aid Workers from Entering Earthquake Areas in Tibet:** Following the devastating January 7 earthquake in Tibet's Dingri county, Chinese authorities have blocked monks and aid workers from providing support, citing "cleanup" and "security" measures. The quake has killed over 100 people, with over 60,000 displaced. Tibetans in exile have voiced concerns about the lack of transparency and information, as Chinese media focus on propaganda activities. The Chinese government has been accused of censoring earthquake-related content online.

**At Least 8 Tibetan Monasteries Severely Damaged in Earthquake:** The 7.1-magnitude earthquake in Tibet's Dingri and Lhatse counties has left significant damage to at least eight monasteries, with some over 500 years old. Numerous smaller monasteries were also destroyed. The earthquake, which claimed 126 lives according to Chinese sources, has severely impacted religious buildings and caused the death of at least two nuns. Information about the full extent of the damage remains unclear due to government restrictions on sharing online posts.

**Tibetan Buddhist Panchen Rinpoche Prays for Quake Victims:** a Panchen Rinpoche held prayer sessions for victims of the January 7 earthquake in Tibet, offering chants and prayers for the safety and recovery of the affected areas. Along with approximately 900 monks from Tashilhunpo Monastery, he also donated funds to help survivors. The Panchen Rinpoche, a prominent Tibetan Buddhist figure, is a key political figure in China's Buddhist association.

## State of Ecology of the Tibetan Plateau

**Unraveling Glacier Retreat Patterns On The Tibetan Plateau:** A recent study maps glacial changes on the Tibetan Plateau since the Last Glacial Maximum, revealing patterns of glacier retreat. Researchers analyzed moraine data and boulder exposure ages to uncover five distinct phases of glacier retreat. The study links glacier retreat to changes in atmospheric conditions, particularly the role of local summer insolation. Notably, the retreat phases correspond with significant climatic shifts and regional variations. The findings highlight the influence of atmospheric dynamics on glacier behavior, offering insights for climate change projections, especially in light of current global warming trends.

**4.9 Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Khyungchu County:** A 4.9 magnitude earthquake struck Khyungchu County in Tibet on January 20, 2025. The earthquake affected neighboring counties and caused mild disruptions, including fallen household items and power outages. No significant casualties or structural damage have been reported. However, the Chinese government imposed restrictions on the sharing of disaster-related content on social media. Authorities also advised locals to set up outdoor tents as a precaution. Despite the restrictions, information on the earthquake's impact remains limited, and there are also reports of smaller tremors in other Tibetan regions.

**Solar Infra Expansion in Tibet Raises Environmental and Cultural Concerns:** China's solar power initiatives in Tibet are facing backlash due to the environmental and cultural impact on local nomadic communities. Large solar facilities, including the world's largest in Khokla Town, are replacing traditional grasslands and pastoral areas. Critics argue that the solar projects threaten Tibetan culture and ecology, with nomads forced to reduce livestock numbers. Despite China's claims of economic benefits, local entrepreneurs and environmental advocates warn of long-term harm to both the land and traditional lifestyles. These developments also coincide with government-imposed restrictions on nomadic practices.

**Damage Detected in Five Dams in Tibet After Dingri Earthquake:** Following a 7.1 magnitude earthquake near Dingri County on January 7, 2025, five dams in Tibet sustained damage, with cracks reported in their structures. Three dams were emptied to reduce risks, and a reservoir required the evacuation of 1,500 residents. Experts are concerned about the vulnerability of hydropower projects in Tibet, especially given the region's seismic activity. The earthquake has reignited debates over the safety of China's expanding hydropower infrastructure in Tibet, including a proposed mega-dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which has sparked environmental and geopolitical concerns.

**Heavy Metals Threaten Environmental Capacity of Tibetan Plateau Oases:** Recent research on the Tibetan Plateau has revealed alarming trends in heavy metal pollution, jeopardizing the unique biodiversity of the region's oasis ecosystems. The study highlights the impact of pollutants such as zinc, lead, copper, arsenic, mercury, and cadmium, with cadmium posing severe health risks. The research emphasizes the need for urgent conservation efforts to mitigate agricultural overexploitation, mining, and other human activities, which exacerbate the pollution. Long-term monitoring and strategic conservation plans are crucial to safeguarding these fragile environments. The findings underscore the importance of sustainable management to ensure the survival of Tibetan Plateau oases.

**China Emptying Dams as Cracks Found After Big Quake in Tibet:** Following a powerful 6.8 magnitude earthquake in Tibet on January 7, authorities have been draining three of five dams found to have cracks. The quake, which killed at least 126 people, caused significant damage to infrastructure and led to evacuations from areas downstream. The event has raised concerns about China's ambitious hydropower projects in a seismically active region, with critics fearing the potential downstream impacts on millions of people, particularly in India and Bangladesh. China's plans to build the world's largest hydropower dam on the Yarlung Tsangbo River further add to the growing unease about the environmental risks.



**China to Build 60GW Mega-Dam in Tibet Despite Seismic Risks:** China has announced plans for a \$137-billion hydropower dam on the Yarlung Zangbo River in Tibet, nearly three times the size of the Three Gorges Dam. Experts warn of potential disasters due to the project's location in a highly seismic zone, with risks of earthquakes, landslides, and flooding. India and Bangladesh have expressed concerns over water security, fearing reduced downstream flow. Despite criticisms, China insists the project has been scientifically assessed and will not harm the environment or neighboring countries.

**China's Yarlung Tsangpo Dam Seen as Strategic and Geopolitical Threat:** Analysts suggest China's massive dam project is not just an energy initiative but a strategic move to control Tibet's resources, weaponize water, and gain leverage over India and Bangladesh. Intelligence sources warn that China could use the dam to manipulate river flows during conflicts, impacting downstream regions. The project is also expected to displace local Tibetan communities, affecting regional stability. Additionally, NASA scientists have noted that China's existing Three Gorges Dam slightly altered Earth's rotation, raising concerns about potential global environmental effects from an even larger dam.

**1-Million-Tons and Seen from Space: China Opens the "Mother of All Mines":** China has discovered vast lithium reserves in Sichuan's Yajiang province, boosting its position as the world's second-largest lithium producer. With the demand for lithium soaring due to its role in electric vehicle batteries and renewable energy, China's new finds are pivotal for its green energy ambitions. The country is intensifying exploration of salt lakes and spodumene deposits, including a 2,800 km-long deposit in Tibet. This surge in lithium reserves is expected to increase prices and position China as a dominant player in the global lithium market, supporting both domestic production and international cooperation to meet rising global energy demands.

**Snow Leopards Dispersed Out of Tibetan Plateau Multiple Times, Researchers Say:** Scientists have discovered that snow leopards, a species native to the Tibetan Plateau, dispersed beyond the plateau multiple times during the Quaternary period. Research on fossils and modern snow leopard anatomy suggests that their adaptation to cold, high-altitude environments, steep slopes, and mountainous terrains occurred over time, especially since the Middle Pleistocene. These findings contribute to the conservation efforts for this vulnerable species as climate change threatens their habitat.

**Tibet Hit by Two Powerful Aftershocks of Last Week's Earthquake:** After a magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck Tibet on January 7, Tingri county experienced two strong aftershocks on January 12. Despite these aftershocks, there were no immediate reports of casualties. The initial earthquake caused significant damage, with 126 confirmed dead and 338 injured. Over 47,000 people have been resettled, facing harsh winter conditions with temperatures reaching as low as minus 15°C.

**Resilience Amid Ruins: Tibet's Earthquake Aftermath:** Following a magnitude 6.8 earthquake in Tibet, over 47,000 people have been relocated to shelters. The earthquake caused significant destruction, including the loss of over 3,600 homes. As rescue operations continue in freezing temperatures, Chinese authorities have mobilized over 11,000 rescuers. Reconstruction efforts are ongoing, focusing on providing temporary housing and ensuring long-term stability for the affected communities.

**China Has World's Second Largest Lithium Reserves After New Xinjiang-Tibet Discoveries:** China's lithium reserves have increased significantly due to new discoveries in Tibet and Xinjiang, making it the second-largest holder of lithium reserves globally. Lithium, essential for electric vehicles, energy storage, and various industries, is now more abundant in China than ever before, raising its share of global reserves from 6% to 16.5%. The discoveries are part of the extensive West Kunlun-Songpan-Ganzi lithium belt.

## Tibet in Exile

**Tibet friendship group reestablished in European Parliament:** The European Parliament's Friends of Tibet group held its first meeting after the 2024 elections, with MEPs from various political groups discussing initiatives to support Tibet. Key topics included the 66th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day and the upcoming World

Parliamentary Convention on Tibet. The group aims to maintain Tibet's presence on the EU agenda, especially amidst China's assimilation policies threatening Tibetan culture and identity.

**Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Attends FNF's Partners Meeting:** At the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's partners meeting in Delhi, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang highlighted collaborative projects between the Central Tibetan Administration and the foundation. She shared the history of the Tibetan Parliamentary Policy Research Centre and emphasized strengthening Tibetan democracy and non-violent struggles. The meeting also marked the transition of FNF South Asia Directors and discussed future collaborations.

**Seminar on "Environment and Security" Unites Tibet and India in Itanagar:** A seminar focused on the environmental and security concerns of Arunachal Pradesh, with over 700 attendees including political leaders and Tibet supporters. Key speakers, including Sikyong Penpa Tsering and Arunachal's Chief Minister Pema Khandu, emphasized the ecological interdependence between Tibet and India. They discussed Tibet's environmental degradation under Chinese control and its impact on India's security, calling for proactive measures.

**Announcement: The Department of Religion and Culture Requests the General Public to Refrain from Lhakar Dance Until the Completion of the 49 Days of Tibet Earthquake Calamity Mourning Period:** Following the devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Tibet on 7 January 2025, the Department of Religion and Culture requested Tibetans in exile to suspend the Lhakar dance for seven weeks to honor those affected by the disaster. The suspension will continue until the 49th day of mourning.

**US Announces 90-Day Foreign Aid Suspension, Tibetans and Taiwan Among Affected:** The U.S. has suspended nearly all foreign development assistance for 90 days, including aid to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). While military financing to Israel and Egypt and emergency food aid are exempt, the suspension affects Tibetan welfare programs and Taiwan's security aid. This review, stemming from a broader foreign aid policy assessment, may be reversed after 90 days.

**Dalai Lama Sends Message of Unity and Peace to Millions at Maha Kumbh Mela:** The Dalai Lama sent a message of peace and unity to the millions gathered at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, stressing the shared human need for compassion and the importance of seeking solutions based on peace. The festival, the world's largest religious gathering, draws millions of people to pray and reflect.

**Dalai Lama Advocates Collective Global Morality at PIC Campus Inauguration:** At the inauguration of Pune International Centre's new campus, the Dalai Lama emphasized the importance of combining ancient Indian wisdom with modern approaches to foster global harmony. He encouraged youth to lead efforts in promoting collective global morality through mindfulness practices like meditation.

**Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Begins Sweden Advocacy Tour with Warm Reception in Stockholm:** A Tibetan parliamentary delegation arrived in Stockholm for an advocacy tour, meeting with local Tibetan community leaders. The delegation's visit included discussions on preserving Tibetan culture and identity, as well as engagement with Swedish parliamentarians to further the Tibetan cause.

**As His Arunachal Pradesh Visit Ends, Sikyong Delivers a Strong Message on Grave Consequences of the PRC's Mega Dam Projects:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering concluded his visit to Tibetan settlements in Arunachal Pradesh, delivering a message on the ecological risks of China's proposed mega-dams on the Brahmaputra River. He warned that such projects could exacerbate natural disasters, stressing the geopolitical importance of the Tibetan Plateau and the need for continued Indian support for the Tibetan community.

**MPs Karma Gelek and Lobsang Thupten Pongsang to Visit Tibetans in South India:** As part of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile's visitation program, MPs Karma Gelek and Lobsang Thupten Pongsang are set to visit various Tibetan communities in South India. Their tour, spanning from 29 January to 11 February 2025, will include locations such as Bylakuppe, Chennai, Pondicherry, and Kanyakumari, among others. The MPs will engage with local Tibetans and hold various programs in the region.

**Department of Religion and Culture Hosts Second Consortium Conference on Tibetan Digital Library in Dharamshala:** The Department of Religion and Culture hosted the second Consortium Conference on the Tibetan Digital Library in Dharamshala, focusing on preserving Tibetan cultural heritage through digital archiving. The event, supported by USAID and featuring participants from various monasteries and cultural institutions, highlighted the importance of safeguarding manuscripts, Thangkas, and other cultural artifacts for future generations. The conference provided hands-on demonstrations of digital preservation methods and artificial intelligence applications to protect ancient Tibetan texts. Discussions on the first year's accomplishments set the stage for continued efforts to strengthen cultural resilience through modern technology.

**Prayers and Calls for Transparency Following Tibet Earthquake:** Exile Tibetan communities, Buddhist leaders, and international Tibet support groups are holding prayer services and urging transparency in disaster response following the earthquake in Dingri County. The Dalai Lama led prayers in Karnataka, while Sikyong Penpa Tsering highlighted the poor living conditions in Tibet despite China's claims of modernization. Protests and vigils have been held in Ladakh, Tokyo, and Estonia, with calls for China to allow independent media access and ensure open cooperation with humanitarian aid organizations.

**Tibet-India Delegation Meets in Arunachal to Counter China's Water Politics at India-Tibet Border:** A seminar in Arunachal Pradesh, attended by Tibetans and Indian officials, addressed the environmental and security risks posed by China's hydro-power projects on the Yarlung Tsangpo River. Led by CTA President Penpa Tsering, the seminar discussed the potential impact of China's mega-dams on India and Bangladesh. The participants voiced concerns over China's aggressive damming strategy, emphasizing the need for collective action to protect the region's natural resources.

**Office of Tibet and IPK Media Host New Year Gathering in DC to Foster Sino-Tibetan Dialogue, Highlighting His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Upcoming Book:** The Office of Tibet in Washington DC and IPK Media organized a New Year gathering to promote Sino-Tibetan dialogue, with a focus on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's upcoming book "Voice For The Voiceless." The event, attended by Chinese democracy advocates and policy experts, aimed to engage Chinese students and the broader community in discussions on Tibet, democracy, and international politics.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering Highlights China's Ongoing Oppression of Tibet at Miao Settlement Event:** During a visit to the Miao Choepheling Tibetan Settlement in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikyong Penpa Tsering emphasized the need for Tibetans to preserve their culture and identity against China's ongoing repression. He stressed the importance of language and heritage in resisting cultural assimilation and highlighted recent international support for Tibet. Sikyong also called for strengthening the Central Tibetan Administration's efforts to aid Tibetans worldwide in their struggle for cultural preservation and freedom.

**Taiwan could face same fate as Tibet amid China's aggression, warns former CTA President:** Dr. Lobsang Sangay, former President of the Tibetan Government in Exile, cautioned Taiwan about the potential risks posed by China's expansionist policies, which he compared to its historical treatment of Tibet. He highlighted China's territorial ambitions, stressing the possibility that Taiwan could face a similar fate. Sangay also criticized China's narrative of "liberating" regions like Tibet and East Turkestan, noting the broader pattern of repression under Beijing that extends to Taiwan and other regions.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering Visits Miao Choepheling Settlement, Calls for Unity with Locals and within Tibetans:** During his visit to the Miao Choepheling Tibetan Settlement, Sikyong Penpa Tsering inaugurated new community halls and emphasized the importance of unity among Tibetans and with local communities in Arunachal Pradesh. He encouraged the younger generation to learn Tibetan language and culture to preserve their identity. Sikyong also highlighted the successful seminar on "Environment and Security" in Itanagar, noting the growing support for the Tibetan cause and the strengthening of relations with local Indian communities.

**Sikyong and Hon'ble CM of Arunachal Pradesh Attended a Seminar on "Environment and Security" in Itanagar, Raising Concerns Over PRC's Proposed Mega Dam:** At the "Environment and Security" seminar in Itanagar, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, alongside Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu, raised concerns about China's proposed mega dam projects in Tibet, particularly the Siang River project, and its potential impact on India's security and the regional ecosystem. The seminar included significant participation from Tibet support groups, government

officials, and tribal leaders, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding both Tibet and India's environmental and security interests in the face of Chinese aggression.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering Delivers Keynote at Seminar in Itanagar on Tibet's Role in India's Security:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering delivered an insightful keynote at the "Environment and Security" seminar, emphasizing Tibet's strategic role in India's security. He discussed the ongoing Chinese occupation of Tibet and its impact on India's borders, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh. Sikyong stressed the importance of shared cultural and historical ties between Tibetans and the indigenous communities of Arunachal, and urged greater understanding and cooperation to address the growing Chinese threat in the region.

**New York City Council Passes Bill Recognizing Tibetan New Year with Parking Holiday:** The New York City Council unanimously passed a bill to suspend Alternate Side Parking on Losar, the Tibetan Buddhist New Year, in recognition of the city's Tibetan community. The bill, sponsored by Council Member Julie Won, will offer parking relief on February 28, allowing Tibetans to celebrate without concerns about parking restrictions. This legislation, the first of its kind for Buddhists in NYC, acknowledges the cultural contributions of Tibetans and is seen as a milestone in the city's recognition of Tibetan traditions.

**Parliamentary Committee Concludes Review of Rules and Regulations of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile:** A committee in the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile completed its review of parliamentary rules related to the removal of dignitaries. The review aimed to improve existing regulations or introduce new provisions. The committee submitted a draft proposal for amendments to the Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat. This effort followed a broad consensus among parliamentarians after the first reading of the bill amendment during the 8th session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

**Choeje Ayang Rinpoche, Preeminent Tibetan Buddhist Phowa Master, Has Died:** Choeje Ayang Rinpoche, a renowned Tibetan Buddhist lama and phowa master, passed away at the age of 83. Known for his teachings on phowa, a practice for preparing for death, Rinpoche played a significant role in spreading Tibetan Buddhism worldwide, especially through his phowa retreats. He established monasteries and centers in India, Nepal, and other countries and was recognized as the foremost phowa master of his generation.

**TYC's 20,000 km Long 'All-India Bike Rally' Concludes in Delhi:** The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) completed its two-month All-India Bike Rally in Delhi, covering over 20,000 kilometers across 20 Indian states. Starting from Bumla Pass on November 22, 2024, the rally aimed to raise awareness about the Tibetan movement and the ongoing situation in Tibet. The activists concluded their journey at the Tibetan Colony in Majnu Ka Tilla, having traveled for 63 days to highlight the Tibetan cause.

**The Dalai Lama Shares Thoughts on China and the Future in a New Book:** The Dalai Lama's upcoming book, *Voice for the Voiceless*, offers an in-depth account of his decades-long engagement with Chinese leaders and his efforts to preserve Tibet's culture, religion, and language. He reflects on his journey from meeting Mao Zedong to his recent interactions with President Xi Jinping. At nearly 90, he emphasizes his hope for a peaceful resolution of Tibet's struggle and offers guidance for future leaders. The book also touches on the Dalai Lama's stance on Tibet's cultural autonomy, criticism of China's policies, and his concerns about the future of the institution of the Dalai Lama.

**Tibetan delegation in Denmark highlights China's repressive policies during advocacy visit:** A delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile visited Denmark to raise awareness about China's repressive policies in Tibet. They met with Danish MPs and officials, discussing issues such as the forced assimilation of Tibetan children, the destruction of Tibet's environment, and China's treatment of Tibetans. The delegation called for stronger international support for Tibet's rights, emphasizing the Dalai Lama's leadership and the need for Tibet's democratic model to gain global recognition.

**New York's recognition of Losar would be a significant acknowledgment of Tibetan community:** A bill introduced in New York City recognizes Losar, the Tibetan New Year, on the city's street-cleaning calendar. This gesture aims to bring relief to Tibetans and other Himalayan communities who celebrate Losar, offering practical benefits like parking exemptions. For the Tibetan community, the recognition is a symbol of greater representation and acknowledgment of their culture and contributions in a multicultural New York, highlighting the city's commitment to diversity.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering addresses Dimapur Tibetan community amid Chinese suppression:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering, head of the Central Tibetan Administration, visited Dimapur in Northeast India to address the challenges faced by Tibetans in exile. He stressed the importance of preserving Tibetan culture and language in the face of China's continued efforts to erase Tibetan identity. Criticizing China's repressive policies, he compared them to Orwell's *1984*. Sikyong emphasized unity among Tibetans and reaffirmed the Middle Way Approach to resolve the Tibet-China conflict, highlighting the ongoing struggles and progress of the Tibetan cause.

**TIPA Conducts Outreach Program to Preserve and Promote Traditional Tibetan Arts:** The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) has launched outreach programs aimed at preserving and promoting traditional Tibetan arts, with a focus on Ache Lhamo (Tibetan Opera). From November 2024 to January 2025, TIPA representatives visited Tibetan schools across northern and southern India, engaging young Tibetans in the importance of Tibetan performing arts. These efforts are part of TIPA's initiative to inspire future generations to participate in preserving Tibetan cultural heritage.

**MPs Thubten Wangchen and Thupten Gyatso Visit Tibetans in Switzerland:** MPs Thubten Wangchen and Thupten Gyatso recently visited Switzerland as part of a Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile program, delivering a public talk in Geneva. The event, attended by local Tibetan community leaders, was a platform for discussion on the ongoing political concerns surrounding Tibet and the role of the diaspora in advocating for Tibetan rights.

**Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Congratulates President Donald Trump:** Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, on behalf of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, congratulated U.S. President Donald Trump on his second-term inauguration. Acknowledging the United States' continued support for Tibetan rights, Tenphel expressed hopes for further collaboration, especially regarding the resolution of the Sino-Tibetan conflict and the promotion of democracy and human rights globally.

**Tibetans Prepare for Dalai Lama's 90th Birthday Celebration Amid Succession Speculation:** The Tibetan government-in-exile is preparing for the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday in July 2025, with discussions surrounding the future of the Dalai Lama institution. Speculation about his succession continues, with many advocating for the continuation of the Dalai Lama's teachings. The Tibetan community globally has expressed their wishes for His Holiness to remain a central figure, with a year-long celebration planned to honor his life and contributions.

**Activists protest Chinese Vice President during Trump's Inauguration:** Activists, including Tibetans, Hongkongers, and Uyghurs, protested against Chinese Vice President Han Zheng during his attendance at US President Trump's inauguration. They condemned his role in China's human rights abuses in Tibet, Hong Kong, and East Turkestan, calling for stronger US actions such as sanctions on Chinese officials involved in these violations.

**Dalai Lama's 90th Birthday Sparks Succession Debate amid Beijing's Suppression:** As the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday approaches, Tibetans are preparing for grand celebrations, with a focus on his message of peace and non-violence. However, political tensions are rising over the issue of his reincarnation, with China attempting to control the process. The Dalai Lama's statements, along with international support for Tibet, highlight the ongoing struggle for Tibet's spiritual and political autonomy.

**Italian Senator drafts new resolution on Tibet:** Italian Senator Anderà Priamo has drafted a resolution aimed at amplifying Tibetan concerns in the Italian Parliament. This follows a meeting with the Central Tibetan Administration's security minister, Gyari Dolma. The resolution builds on Italy's historical support for Tibet, advocating for an end to oppression and renewed dialogue with Tibetans.

**1,200 Buddhist Monks Attend Guru Padmasambhava Chanting Program in Odisha, India:** Over 1,200 Buddhist monks from 17 countries gathered in Odisha for a Guru Padmasambhava chanting program to commemorate his spiritual legacy. The event, held at sites believed to be associated with Guru Rinpoche's birth, emphasized the importance of Tibetan Buddhism and global spiritual peace, while also promoting Odisha's Buddhist heritage as a tourism destination.

**Chinese Liaison Officer Attends Symposium on Zhao Ziyang in New York:** Tsultrim Gyatso, the Chinese Liaison Officer at the Office of Tibet, attended a symposium in New York to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Zhao Ziyang's passing. The event, organized by the Hu-Zhao Foundation and China Democracy Party, focused on Zhao's

contributions and influence. Gyatso highlighted the importance of Sino-Tibetan dialogue and criticized the CCP's handling of Tibet, particularly following a recent earthquake in the region. He also emphasized His Holiness the Dalai Lama's non-violent principles in fostering better relations.

**Tibetan Diaspora in America Organises Prayer Service for Earthquake Victims in Tibet:** In response to the recent earthquake in Tibet's Shigatse region, Tibetan communities in North America organized prayer services to support the victims. These prayer ceremonies, some of which will continue for 49 days, aim to bring solace to those affected by the disaster. The Office of Tibet expressed deep gratitude for the commitment of local associations and individuals in organizing these prayer gatherings, which serve as a meaningful Buddhist practice to offer solidarity to those suffering in Tibet.

**Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation to Advocate Tibet in Scandinavia:** A parliamentary delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will visit Denmark, Norway, and Sweden from 22 to 30 January 2025 to advocate for Tibet. The delegation, consisting of Geshe Monlam Tharchin, Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, and Konchok Yangphel, will participate in various programs across the three countries, aiming to strengthen support for Tibet in Scandinavia.

**Tokyo University Student Shares Study Experience in Tibetan Monastery in India:** Inui Masataka, a student from Tokyo University, shared his experience studying Tibetan language and Buddhist philosophy at the Gyumed monastery in South India. Speaking at Tibet House Japan, he discussed the monastery's educational system, the integration of Social, Emotional, and Ethical (SEE) learning, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's approach to Buddhism as both science and philosophy. Masataka's talk also touched on his gratitude for the Tibetan Buddhist teachings and the importance of student exchanges between Japan and Tibet.

**China rejects CTA President's appeal for proper assistance for Dingri earthquake victims:** The Chinese government dismissed the Central Tibetan Administration's (CTA) President Penpa Tsering's appeal for culturally sensitive disaster relief and long-term preparedness for the victims of the Dingri earthquake in Tibet. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson called the CTA a "separatist political group" and rejected their call for proper rebuilding efforts, highlighting the government's ongoing disaster response. Despite Chinese claims of effective relief, reports from Tibet suggest that several affected areas are still underserved and that local Tibetan volunteers have been barred from distributing aid.

**Kalon Dolma Gyari Concludes Her Official Visit to Europe:** Kalon Gyari Dolma of the CTA concluded her official visit to Europe with virtual meetings and in-person engagements, including discussions with Italian Buddhist leaders and Tibet Support Group members. During her visit, she acknowledged their support for the Tibetan cause and emphasized the importance of international advocacy. The Minister departed Rome on January 18, 2025, for India, where she was bid farewell by the Vice President of the Tibetan community.

**Tibetan MPs embark on Nordic advocacy tour for Tibet:** A delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will visit Denmark, Norway, and Sweden from January 22 to 30, 2025, as part of the ongoing Tibet advocacy campaign in Europe. The delegation, consisting of MPs Konchok Yangphel, Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, and Geshe Monlam Tharchin, aims to raise awareness about human rights violations, cultural erosion, and the need for international support for Tibet. Their visit follows a successful Tibet advocacy tour in the Netherlands.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering to Embark on Second Leg of Official Visit to Northeast India:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the CTA is set to travel to New Delhi and various Tibetan settlements in Northeast India from January 19 to February 5, 2025. His itinerary includes meetings with Tibet Support Groups and discussions on Tibetan issues, with a particular focus on the Arunachal Tibet Support Group and the Indo-Tibetan Coordination Office in Itanagar.

**Fears UK's trade deals could undermine the rights of Tibetan people:** Concerns have arisen that the UK's trade negotiations with China, led by Chancellor Rachel Reeves, could undermine Tibetan rights. A letter from UK-based Tibetans and Tibet groups expresses concerns over China's exploitation of Tibetan resources and the human rights violations occurring in Tibet. Critics fear that the UK government prioritizing trade with China could undermine international efforts for human rights reforms in Tibet. Despite this, the Chancellor defended the trade deals, claiming human rights were discussed during her visit to China.

**“It’s a human catastrophe waiting for us”:** NGOs warn about China’s dizzying dam construction project in Tibet: China’s plan to build 193 massive dams in Tibet threatens ecosystems, displaces 750,000 Tibetans, and heightens geopolitical tensions. Critics say it aims to control Southeast Asia’s water supply, impacting nearly two billion people. One dam alone will be three times larger than the world’s biggest, raising concerns over resource management and regional stability.

**Tibetans and Japanese Conduct Prayer Gathering for the People in Tibet:** Tibetans and Japanese gathered in Japan for a prayer session in solidarity with Tibetans affected by a recent earthquake. The event, organized by the Tibet House Japan and the Tibetan Community in Japan, included mantras and prayers for the victims, led by Tibetan Buddhist lecturer Kunchok Sithar. The earthquake, which struck Tibet on January 7, claimed over 120 lives. Representative Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya highlighted the role of China’s dam-building efforts in triggering the earthquake, while Tibetan leaders and Japanese lawmakers expressed support for the affected people.

**Dalai Lama Charitable Trust gets FCRA nod:** The Dalai Lama Charitable Trust has been granted a fresh Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registration by the Indian government. While the Trust is not directly affiliated with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, it is linked to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and supports Tibetan welfare activities. This registration allows the Trust to receive foreign funds for religious, cultural, and educational programs. The grant marks a significant step for the Trust, especially as it works to support Tibetan refugees and preserve Tibetan culture in India.

**CTA to Publish Map with Original Tibetan Names:** The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) plans to release a map and book documenting Tibet’s original place names to counter China’s renaming efforts. CTA President Penpa Tsering stressed its importance in preserving Tibet’s cultural identity amid China’s expansionist practices.

**Memorial Service in New York Honors Chinese Scholar Li Jianglin, Renowned for Her Work on Modern Tibetan History:** A memorial service held in New York on January 12, 2025, honored Li Jianglin, a Chinese scholar and author of key works on modern Tibetan history, including "Lhasa 1959" and "When Iron Birds Fly in the Sky." Attendees expressed gratitude for her contributions to educating the public about the Tibetan struggle and the Communist invasion. Li's daughter and several Chinese scholars attended the gathering, where speakers reflected on her impact on both Chinese and Tibetan societies.

**Tibet’s Mt Everest-County Earthquake Victims Mourned at World’s Largest Religious Gathering:** Victims of the 7.1-magnitude earthquake that struck Tibet’s Mt Everest-County in January 2025 were honored through various mourning events, including a prayer ceremony at the Maha Kumbh Mela in India. The Tibetan community in Nepal also held a prayer service, and candlelight marches were organized in India to express solidarity with the victims. The Tibetan government-in-exile called for rebuilding efforts, while the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama conducted a prayer service in Beijing.

**Exile Government Calls for Adequate Post-Earthquake Rebuilding Efforts in Tibet:** Following the January 2025 earthquake in Tibet, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) urged China to provide urgent emergency services and ensure rebuilding efforts in affected regions. The CTA also called for international aid, better reporting on casualty numbers, and transparency. Sikyong Penpa Tsering highlighted the importance of the 11th Panchen Lama’s presence, which was absent due to his abduction by the Chinese government.

**China Tightens Control Over Tibet; Escape to India Becomes Increasingly Difficult:** The number of Tibetans fleeing to India has significantly dropped in recent years, from over 3,000 annually prior to 2008 to just eight in 2024. Sikyong Penpa Tsering attributed this decline to intensified Chinese control, particularly after the 2008 uprising. Demographic shifts and increased government restrictions have made it more challenging for Tibetans to escape, affecting Tibetan schools and cultural preservation efforts in exile.

**US Special Coordinator for Tibet Completes Tenure, Urges PRC to Resume Dialogue with Dalai Lama:** Uzra Zeya, on her final day as US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, urged the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to restart dialogue with the Dalai Lama, emphasizing that a negotiated agreement remains the best hope for long-term stability in Tibet. Zeya also reflected on her tenure, highlighting the progress made in holding the PRC accountable for human rights abuses and advancing Tibetan cultural preservation.

**Threatened by Tibetan Identity, China Ramps Up Its Suppression Campaign:** China continues to intensify its efforts to assimilate Tibetans through forced relocation, cultural suppression, and harsh measures, including detaining activists like Gonpo Namgyal. The recent death of Namgyal, following torture in detention, exemplifies Beijing's ruthless crackdown on Tibetan identity. China's ongoing campaign to replace Tibetan culture with Mandarin is seen as an effort to secure national unity and security, though it faces widespread international condemnation.

**Tibetan Settlements in India, Nepal & Bhutan Hold Prayer Services in Solidarity with Dingri Earthquake Victims:** Tibetan communities across India, Nepal, and Bhutan held prayer services for victims of the deadly earthquake in Tibet on January 7, 2025. The quake caused over 126 deaths and hundreds of injuries, prompting collective grief and support from the Tibetan exile community. Despite being separated from their homeland, Tibetans reaffirmed their solidarity and commitment to preserving Tibetan culture and faith.

**Tibetan Activists Slam China's Attempt to Replace 'Tibet' with 'Xizang' During Mournful Events:** Tibetan activists have criticized China's efforts to use the term "Xizang" instead of "Tibet" in global discussions, especially during the aftermath of the recent earthquake. They argue that this is part of China's broader strategy to erase Tibet's historical identity and downplay the suffering of Tibetans under Chinese occupation. Activists have called on international media to use the name Tibet, warning against further erasure of Tibetan history.

**Security Kalon Dolma Gyari Discusses Critical Situation in Tibet with Westerwald Tibet Support Group** Kalon Dolma Gyari, Security Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, met with members of the Westerwald Tibet Support Group in Germany, highlighting the intensifying Chinese government restrictions on Tibetans, including the 157 self-immolations since 2009. The group reaffirmed their support for Tibet and discussed the challenges faced by Tibetan refugees. Kalon also emphasized Sino-Tibetan dialogue history and the group's plans to raise Tibetan flags on Flag Day in March 2025.

**Sikyong Expresses Deep Sadness Over Loss of Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering expressed condolences over the passing of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, remembering his lifelong advocacy for human rights, including his support for Tibet. Carter's close friendship with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and efforts to alleviate Tibetan suffering were highlighted. The Tibetan leadership praised his legacy, and the Central Tibetan Administration held a prayer service to honor him.

**Sikyong Congratulates Mike Johnson on Re-election as Speaker of the US House of Representatives:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering congratulated Mike Johnson on his re-election as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, thanking the U.S. Congress for its longstanding bipartisan support of Tibet. Sikyong expressed hope for continued collaboration on resolving the Sino-Tibet conflict based on the Middle Way Approach and emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between the Tibetan people and the U.S. Congress.

**Participants of 8th Tibetan General Conference on Education Condemn PRC's Assimilative Education Policies** The 8th Tibetan General Conference on Education condemned China's policies aimed at assimilating Tibetan culture and language, including forced enrollment of children in Chinese-run schools and the elimination of Tibetan language education. The conference reaffirmed the success of Tibetans in exile in preserving their culture, language, and religion, urging all Tibetans to continue safeguarding their unique identity despite China's oppressive measures.

**Dalai Lama urges compassion, solidarity after Tibet quake:** The Dalai Lama called for compassion and solidarity after the recent earthquake in Tibet, emphasizing that there was no reason to harbor anger toward China. During a prayer ceremony in southern India, he urged Tibetans to develop kinder hearts and not let political tensions affect their response to the natural disaster. The earthquake, which struck Dingri county on January 7, caused significant damage, including the loss of over 100 lives, though locals report a higher death toll. Tibetans in Dharamsala held a vigil to show support and demand transparency from China.

**'Not Xizang': Tibet govt-in-exile slams China's 'propaganda':** The Tibetan government-in-exile condemned China's use of the term 'Xizang' in its earthquake coverage, arguing that the term erases Tibet's historical and territorial identity. Sikyong Penpa Tsering urged international media to avoid using the Chinese name, stressing that doing so aligns with China's narrative of Tibet as part of its territory. Activists also criticized China for



referring to Tibet as “China’s Tibet” in media reports, which they viewed as an attempt to assert control over Tibetan culture and sovereignty.

**In Karnataka, Dalai Lama presides over prayers for quake victims:** The Dalai Lama led prayers for the victims of the January 7 earthquake at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Karnataka. Thousands of monks, nuns, and locals gathered to pray for those affected by the devastation in Tibet. The prayers were organized by the Poanta Cholsum Tibetan Settlement Office, with participation from various Tibetan organizations in the region, offering support and solidarity to the quake victims.

**Diplomatic Response from US Embassy After VOA’s “China” Reference in Tibet Quake:** The U.S. Embassy responded to the controversy over the Voice of America’s report on the January 7 earthquake in Tibet, which referred to Tibet as part of China. A spokesperson emphasized that VOA maintains editorial independence from the U.S. government. The report, which used the term “Xizang” instead of Tibet, angered the Tibetan community and advocacy groups, who called for media outlets to use accurate Tibetan place names and highlight human rights issues in the region.

**Motion Acknowledging the Tibetan Representative’s Role Introduced in Scottish Parliament:** A motion was introduced in the Scottish Parliament acknowledging the service of outgoing Tibetan Representative Sonam Tsering Frasi and welcoming Tsering Yangkey as his successor. The motion, which received support from multiple Members of the Scottish Parliament, commended Frasi’s contributions to the Tibetan cause and expressed hope for further strengthening the relationship between Scotland and Tibet under Yangkey’s leadership.

**UK Chancellor urged to raise Tibet issue during China visit:** Ahead of her visit to China, UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves was urged by Tibetan advocacy groups to prioritize human rights concerns in Tibet, particularly forced relocations, the destruction of Tibetan heritage, and recent human rights violations. The groups emphasized the importance of addressing these issues while discussing economic ties with China, calling on Reeves to use her influence to ensure that Tibet’s rights are not sidelined in favor of trade deals.

**CTA President Urges Int’l Media to Use “Tibet” Instead of “Xizang” in Coverage of Dingri Earthquake:** CTA President Penpa Tsering called on international media to use “Tibet” instead of the Chinese term “Xizang” when reporting on the recent earthquake in Dingri, Tibet. He emphasized that using “Xizang” endorses China’s claims over Tibet and undermines its distinct identity. The CTA’s public prayer ceremony to mourn the victims also saw solidarity from various Tibetan organizations, who condemned China’s policies and environmental degradation in Tibet.

**The Tibet Support Group Expresses Its Condolences to the Victims of the Shigatse Earthquake:** The Tibet support group of the Riigikogu expressed condolences for the victims of the 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Shigatse, Tibet. The group urged China to ensure transparency in relief efforts and called for international support. It also recognized the efforts of rescue workers and offered prayers for those affected, while noting the harsh conditions complicating recovery.

**“Transform Adversity into Opportunities for Spiritual Growth”, His Holiness the Dalai Lama Condoles Earthquake-Struck Tibetans:** His Holiness the Dalai Lama offered condolences and prayers for the victims of the devastating earthquake in Tibet. His message, delivered at a prayer gathering in India, encouraged turning adversity into spiritual growth. The Central Tibetan Administration also held prayer services, with Sikyong Penpa Tsering criticizing China’s policies for exacerbating the region’s vulnerability to such disasters.

**Tibetan Settlements in India Hold Prayer Services in Solidarity with Dingri Earthquake Victims:** Tibetan communities in various settlements across India organized prayer services to express solidarity with the victims of the recent earthquake in Tibet. Settlements such as Shimla, Miao, Poanta, and others gathered to offer prayers and show support, while local leaders emphasized unity and compassion for the affected families.

**Tibetans in-exile hold candlelight vigil to express solidarity with victims of Tibet's earthquake**  
Tibetans-in-exile gathered in Dharamshala for a candlelight vigil to show solidarity with the victims of the January 7 earthquake in Tibet. The event was organized by four Tibetan NGOs and called for immediate aid and support for the earthquake victims. The earthquake, which measured 7.1 in magnitude, killed over 126 people

and injured more than 100. Activists blamed China's mega-development projects for damaging Tibet's environment and possibly contributing to the earthquake.

#### **Security Kalon Dolma Gyari Visits Eberhard Karls University and Hambach Castle in Germany**

On January 6, 2025, Dolma Gyari, the Security Kalon of the Central Tibetan Administration, visited the Global Ethics Institute at Eberhard Karls University in Germany. During her visit, she met with university officials and politicians, including Julius Grunke of the Free Democratic Party. The following day, she visited Hambach Castle, a symbol of democratic reform in Germany, where she met Ralf Stuber, a candidate for the 2025 House of Representatives elections.

**Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Congratulates US Speaker Mike Johnson:** Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, representing the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, congratulated Mike Johnson on his appointment as Speaker of the US House of Representatives. He commended the United States for its ongoing support for Tibet and expressed hope for continued advocacy of the Middle Way Approach and the promotion of human rights and democracy worldwide.

**Dalai Lama says no reason to be angry at China over Tibet quake:** In a prayer ceremony for the victims of the January 7 earthquake in Tibet, the Dalai Lama urged Tibetans not to harbor anger toward China, emphasizing that natural disasters like earthquakes are not caused by political tensions. While Tibetans continue their own rescue efforts after Chinese authorities ceased official operations, the Dalai Lama encouraged his followers to transform this tragedy into an opportunity for practicing compassion.

**Tibet Earthquake a Warning by Nature to China, Says Sikyong Penpa Tsering:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering urged China to reconsider its mega dam project on the Yarlung Tsangpo River following a recent earthquake in Tibet. He highlighted the seismic risks in the region, noting that the dam could have catastrophic effects downstream. The Tibetan community in Dharamshala held a prayer service to show solidarity with those affected by the disaster.

**Beijing Implements New Restrictions Targeting Tibetan Education and Cultural Practices:** Chinese authorities have imposed new restrictions on Tibetan education, further eroding the use of the Tibetan language and culture. Tibetan students are banned from receiving private Tibetan-language tutoring and are forced to prioritize Mandarin and Chinese political education. These measures are part of China's broader strategy to assimilate Tibetans into the Han-majority culture.

**Dalai Lama gets Stirring Welcome in South India for Extended Stay:** The Dalai Lama received a warm reception from over 10,000 Tibetans in South India as he arrived for an extended stay at the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Bylakuppe. His visit marks his first in seven years, and Tibetans expressed deep joy and reverence for their spiritual leader. The Dalai Lama, 89, is focusing on rest and public blessings during his stay.

**Tibetan Parliament In-Exile Condemns China's Sanctions on Canadian Organizations:** The Tibetan Parliament in-exile condemned China's sanctions on Canadian civil society organizations, including the Uyghur rights project. Lawmakers urged the international community to take a stand against China's transnational repression, highlighting its reach beyond Tibet and its impact on Tibetan communities worldwide. The sanctions are seen as an attempt to suppress advocacy for human rights and autonomy.

#### **Suppressed truths: Man exposes China's brutal censorship and deceptive tyranny in Tibet**

A Tibetan netizen in his fifties from Central Tibet recently exposed the methods employed by the Chinese government to suppress dissent. He revealed how authorities silence Tibetans by controlling conversations, forcing citizens and officials to fabricate false reports, including claims of financial support from the central government, even when aid is not received. His testimony highlights how the Chinese regime manipulates information to present a false narrative to the international community, severely restricting free speech and covering up harsh realities in Tibet.

**China-Tibet: The one-thing you need to know:** Over the past seven decades, Tibet has faced severe political repression, environmental degradation, and cultural erosion due to Chinese occupation. The population has been subjected to military aggression, and over 1.2 million Tibetans have died since China's invasion. Additionally, 99% of Tibet's religious and cultural sites have been destroyed. The occupation has led to the forced assimilation of Tibetans, which continues to threaten their distinct cultural and spiritual identity.

**Paris museum accused of 'erasing' Tibet under pressure from China:** Tibetans in Paris have raised concerns about the Guimet Museum of Asian Arts' decision to rename its Tibet Nepal collection to "Himalayan World," accusing the museum of yielding to Chinese pressure to obscure Tibetan culture. This move coincided with the 60th anniversary of Franco-Chinese relations and Xi Jinping's visit to Paris. Although the museum claims the change is not influenced by China, experts argue that it inaccurately blends Tibet with other Himalayan regions, further erasing the unique identity of Tibet.

**'Tubo' term used to erase Tibet from history in French museum exhibition:** The Guimet Museum's current exhibition on the Tang Dynasty has been criticized for using the term "Tubo" to refer to Tibet, which Tibet scholars say is another form of erasure. The name, though historically accurate, is unfamiliar to the general public, thus obscuring Tibet's cultural identity. Critics argue that these changes, along with the broader renaming of Tibetan exhibits, serve to distort the narrative and obscure Tibet's unique history, benefiting Chinese political interests rather than the true representation of Tibetan heritage.

**Education Department Kicks Off Three-day Leadership Conference for Tibetan School Heads:** The Department of Education, CTA, launched a three-day leadership conference at Sarah to enhance the skills of Tibetan school principals and head teachers. Funded by Global Affairs Canada, the event emphasized strong leadership for holistic learning and future educational development.

**China Escalates Transnational Repression:** China imposed sanctions on the Canada Tibet Committee, Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, and 20 activists. Sikyong Penpa Tsering condemned the move as an attempt to silence Tibetan voices. The Tibetan exile and Canadian governments criticized the sanctions, reaffirming support for human rights and justice.

## Protests, Detentions and Other News from the PRC

**Tibetan writer put under surveillance after release from jail:** Tibetan writer Palgon, jailed in 2022 for praying for the Dalai Lama and contacting exiled Tibetans, remains under strict surveillance after his release in November 2024. Authorities have restricted his communication and erased his online writings, highlighting China's ongoing crackdown on Tibetan religious and cultural freedoms.

**Mass Arrests of House Church Leaders in Tibet on Christmas Day:** On Christmas Day 2024, Chinese authorities arrested 10 Christian leaders from the house church "All Ranges Church" in Tibet. The arrests, charged under Article 300 of China's Criminal Law, underline the Chinese government's crackdown on religious freedoms. The group had been using online platforms like Zoom and WeChat for prayer services. This move highlights China's repression of independent faith groups and its contradictory stance on religious freedom.

**UN Experts Demand Answers from China on Tibet and Turkestan Rights Violations:** UN human rights experts have raised concerns over systemic abuses in Tibet and East Turkestan, including arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, and cultural repression. The UN seeks clarification on the treatment of detained Tibetans, particularly those involved in religious activities. The letter calls for transparency and an investigation into torture allegations, highlighting the ongoing suppression of cultural and religious practices in both regions.

**China jails Uyghur woman for 17 years over religious teaching to sons:** Seylihan Rozi, a 49-year-old Uyghur woman, was sentenced to 17 years in prison for teaching religious verses to her sons in Xinjiang. The Chinese government labeled this as "illegal underground religious activities." Rozi's sons received prison terms as well. Critics argue that these actions represent an attack on Uyghur religious rights. This case is part of China's broader repression against Uyghur religious expression and culture.

**China: Investigate the Untimely Death of Tibetan Village Leader and Disclose the Whereabouts of 20 Detainees:** Gonpo Namgyal, a Tibetan village leader, died after being tortured during seven months of detention in 2024. He was arrested alongside 20 others, including religious leader Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye, for promoting Tibetan language preservation. Khenpo Dhargye remains detained, and his whereabouts are unknown. The case underscores China's crackdown on Tibetan cultural and religious figures, as part of its broader policy of cultural assimilation in Tibet.

# CHINA'S TIBET POLICY

## Sichuan-based 'cyber security' firm bared for hacking operations against Tibetans, Uyghurs

30 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

Intelligence Online, a group which monitors the organisation and functioning of the domestic and foreign intelligence services of key governments (CIA, MI6, BND, MI5, DGSE...), has said Jan 29 that it found a Chengdu-based cyber security contractor with China's public security ministry to be behind recent IT hacking operations carried out in China and abroad against Tibetans and Uyghurs.

On paper, Sichuan Dianke Network Security Technology (aka Sichuan UPSEC Technology or simply UPSEC) and its subsidiary, Chengdu Anmo Technology, and their 150-strong team of engineers, 90% of them working on research and development, claim simply to be contributing to China's cyber security effort. Based in the capital of Sichuan province, the company has an unremarkable online presence and presents itself as a humble provider of services to the police and to be a partner of numerous academic institutions.

However, in reality, it is a provider of particularly virulent cyber penetration tools, which are being used to target the Tibetans and Uyghurs, two ethnic groups especially reviled by Beijing.

The group said that in concrete terms, UPSEC, founded in 2018, seemed to have close human and IT links with a group of malicious hackers already identified by threat intelligence company Trend Micro, which has given it the name Earth Minotaur.

Trend Micro had published a report in Dec 2024 entitled "MOONSHINE Exploit Kit and DarkNimbus Backdoor Enabling Earth Minotaur's Multi-Platform Attacks", which looked at Earth Minotaur's use of an exploit kit (a box of tools for attacking vulnerabilities in IT systems to install malware or facilitate other hacking activities) called MOONSHINE as a means of distributing a "backdoor" (covert access system) called Dark Nimbus. This backdoor mainly targets the Chinese instant messaging service WeChat used on Android and Windows devices belonging to China's Uyghur and Tibetan minorities.

DarkNimbus allows information to be collected from the infected device, the applications installed on it and its geolocation. It extracts "personal information including the contact list, phone call records, SMS, clipboard content, browser bookmarks, and conversations from multiple instant messaging apps. It also supports call recording, taking photos, screenshotting, file operations, and command execution".

Trend Micro found the IP addresses of DarkNimbus victims in the logs of a badly configured – and therefore accessible – server used by the hacking group. These addresses were generally geolocated in China, but some were also located in North America

and Europe, particularly France. The victims outside China were stated to have been compromised via phishing attacks which redirected victims to online Tibetan and Uyghur music and dance videos.

While Trend Micro does not establish any link with UPSEC, Intelligence Online said it noticed that a number of IP addresses in communication with DarkNimbus were linked to the URL “aninfosec[.]cn”. Examining the URL using a WHOIS service – which makes available technical information about the URL and, in some cases, the name of its owner – revealed that it is owned by Chengdu Anmo Technology.

Other technical elements are also stated to make it possible to link the DarkNimbus infrastructure to a URL, ‘git[.]upsec[.]net’, and Intelligence Online has confirmed that the domain name ‘upsec[.]net’ is indeed linked to UPSEC’s website.

UPSEC claims to have established “relations of cooperation with the Ministry of Public Security and hundreds of public security units” throughout China, working in both the defensive and offensive domains using the “school-company cooperation model”. It has thus established a partnership with the public security technological research centre at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (UESTC) for the creation of two research institutes, the Kongming Security Laboratory and the Yufeng Security Laboratory., noted the *intelligenceonline.com* report Jan 29.

UPSEC has not responded when contacted by Intelligence Online for comments on its findings.

The report noted that the offices of UPSEC are located very close to those of Sichuan Silence Information Technology Co., which was hit with sanctions last month by the US Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). In fact, both firms are stated to be located inside the Chengdu High-Tech Zone.

The group said their proximity illustrates the rising importance of Chengdu in the Chinese cyber-intelligence world. The city is also home to Chengdu 404 Network Technology (IO, 18/07/24), which the US Department of Justice accuses of being behind APT41, the advanced persistent threat, attributed to the Chinese government, that also goes by the names Barium, Winnti, Wicked Panda and Double Dragon. Also based in Chengdu is i-Soon, the cyberoffensive firm that weathered a data leak early last year, the report noted.

## Call made to implement President Xi Jinping’s important instructions on Tibet affairs

24 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

China concluded on Jan 22 the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the 12<sup>th</sup> Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) people’s congress with new top government and regional congress appointments and an emphatic call to implement President Xi Jinping’s important Instructions on Tibet Affairs, a euphemism for speeding up the Sinicization of Tibet.

The meeting elected acting TAR government chairman Mr Karma Tseten as the chairman, Mr Yan Jinhai as the chairman of the regional people’s congress, Zhang Hungpo as his vice chair, and Jiang Wenfeng as the head of the TAR Commission of Supervision, the government anti-corruption body. Besides, Tashi Tsomo, Pema Norbu, Lui Tao and Zomka were made the regional congress standing committee members, reported China’s online Tibet news service *eng.tibet.cn* Jan 23.

Yan Jinhai, a Qinghai Tibetan native, earlier resigned – in late Nov 2024 – as the chairman of the TAR Government.

In his address, the regional party secretary Wang Junzheng has highlighted the significance of this year by noting that it is the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan and also the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the TAR. He has accordingly vowed to deepen the strict implementation of Xi Ping’s important instructions on Tibet affairs and the Tibet policy.

He has stressed the urgency to resolutely improve the region’s political stability and control its political direction as a means to more firmly observe the “Two Certainties” (*gtan ‘khel gnyis*). He has also called for the realization of the “Two Protections” (*srung skyong gnyis*). By deepening the understanding of the essence of the “Two Certainties”, there should be a deepening of the “four consciousnesses” (*‘du shes bzhi*) and strengthening of the “Four Confidences” (*gdeng tshod bzhi*) so that the “Two Protections” will be achieved.

For this purpose, Wang has called for strict coordination between The CPC Central Committee’s Strategic Plan for Tibet Affairs and the TAR Party Committee’s work planning.

In his address, Yan Jinhai has called for in-depth study of the important ideas and Important guidelines for Tibetan affairs and the implementation of the new era of the Party’s Tibet policy Study. He has called for the implementation of the provisions of Wang’s speech under the strong leadership of the CPC TAR Committee, focusing on the “Four Major Issues” and strengthen the “Four Innovations”.

The report did not specify what those “Two Certainties”, “Two Protections”, “four consciousnesses”, “Four Confidences”, “Four Major Issues”, and “Four Innovations” were, but were

obviously well understood within the party apparatus as means for carrying out the Sinicization of Tibet in keeping with Xi's vision for realizing a unitary communist party of China state.

### China rolls out new leaders in Lhasa – indicating continued clampdown in Tibet

24 January 2025, [ICT](#)

During the just concluded annual meetings of the People's Congress and the Political Consultative Conference, popularly called the "Two Sessions" (Chinese: Lianghui), of the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Chinese authorities announced the "election" of new leaders for the TAR government and the People's Congress while vowing to strengthen work "for closer unity around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core" in the coming years. This year's TAR Political Consultative Conference was held between January 18 and 21, 2025 while the People's Congress was held between January 19 and 22.

Chinese state media announced on January 23, 2025 that Karma Tseten has been elected on January 22 by the TAR PC as the new chairman of the TAR government and that Yan Jinhai as the chairman of the TAR People's Congress replacing Lobsang Gyaltsen. Given the course of promotion of Yan Jinhai last year, their selection this time was an expected one. Unlike the 10th Panchen Lama or Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal, who stood up for the rights of the Tibetan people even while working for the Chinese system, both Yan Jinhai and Karma Tseten have no such records in the positions they have held to date. Therefore, their assumption of the respective offices will not have any positive impact on the lives of the Tibetan people. Meanwhile, Lobsang Gyaltsen will continue his position as a vice chair of the National People's Congress in Beijing, making him the seniormost Tibetan leader at the national level of PRC.



Yan Jinhai, new chairman of the TAR PC



Karma Tseten, new TAR Chairman

However, there is no mention of a new chairman for the TAR Political Consultative Conference even though the octogenarian Phakpalha Gelek Namgyal, who continues to be the Chairman, was absent from this year's session. The customary report of the PCC Chairman was read at its inaugural session by Meng Xiaolin, one of the vice chairmen, and the session itself was presided over by another vice chairman Dorje Tsedrup. There were unconfirmed reports that Phapalha, who is the longest serving Tibetan official in the Chinese Communist regime, has been ill for some time.

Sonam Nyima, who was appointed head of the TAR United Front Work Department, was made one of the vice chairmen of the TAR PCC during its recent session. He is from Nangchen area of Kham in Eastern Tibet and was appointed to the United Front in 2024.



Sonam Nyima, head of United Front and new TAR PCC vice chair

The Chinese authorities' intention to strengthen the clamp down on party cadres who are seen not fully supporting Xi Jinping's objectives, the TAR PC selected Jiang Wenpeng as the director of the Supervisory Committee. This position was earlier held by Wang Weidong.



Jiang Wenpeng, director of the Supervisory Committee

Jiang has worked in the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection for many years and was posted to Lhasa in October 2024 as a member of the TAR Party Committee and Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Commission. When referring to his posting in Lhasa in October 2024, a Chinese news outlet called him a “tiger hunting” cadre indicating that he has a record of investigating senior officials.

### **Che Dralha is being investigated**

Whether coincidence or not, Jiang’s appointment to his new supervisory role in Lhasa came on the same day as the Chinese state media announcement that a senior Tibetan official, Che Dralha (Qi Zhala) was being subjected to investigation as he is “suspected of serious violations of discipline and laws.” This is the usual vague charge that China levels against everyone subjected to such investigations. He is from Gyalthang in present-day Yunnan province and had also been posted as chairman of the TAR government. His then colleague in Lhasa, Wu Yingjie, was similarly investigated in 2024 and subsequently expelled from the party in December 2024. ICT had in our report on Wu Yingjie in July 2024 had opined that given his work connections with Che Dralha and also because the two of them were unexpectedly removed from their Lhasa positions, “It may be the case that Wu and Che Dralha were already being scrutinized by the Party.”

This year’s Two Sessions was yet another platform for the officials to rally the loyalty of the cadres and the public to Xi Jinping. In its resolution, the TAR PCC called on all its “members to unite more closely around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core.”

### **China says former top Tibetan official is under corruption probe**

23 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

China said Jan 23 that former top Tibetan official of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Mr Qi Zhala, now serving in the Standing Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), has been placed under investigation for corruption, with no details about the allegations against him.

Qi Zhala (also written as Qe Dalha), a senior political adviser and former chairman of TAR government, is being investigated for suspected serious violations of the Party disciplines and national laws, reported China’s official *chinadaily.com.cn* Jan 23, citing the country’s and party’s top anti-corruption watchdogs. The announcement was stated to have been disclosed by the Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Commission of Supervision online, with no more details provided. Qi is currently a member of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Committee of the CPPCC. He

previously served in the Tibetan area of Yunnan province and the TAR for decades.

\* \* \*

The 66-year-old Tibetan was born in Zhongdian (Tibetan: Gyalthang) County, later renamed as Shangri-La, in Yunnan province. In 2001, he was promoted to Governor of the Dêqên (Dechen) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. In 2010, he became a provincial party standing committee member in Yunnan province.

In Sep 2010, Chi Dala was moved to the TAR where was appointed the Head of its United Front Work Department and he also became the Vice Chairman of the TAR People’s Political Consultative Conference in 2011. In 2012, he was appointed as the Party Secretary of the Tibetan capital Lhasa.

On Jan 15, 2017, he was appointed the Chairman of TAR government, remaining in that position until 2021. On Oct 23, 2021, he was appointed vice chairperson of the National People’s Congress Ethnic Affairs Committee. Later in Mar 2023, Chi Dala took the position of deputy head of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the National Committee of the CPPCC.

Meanwhile, Gama Cedain (Karma Tseten), 57, was elected the chairman of the TAR government on Oct 22 during the ongoing session of the TAR people’s congress. This followed the resignation in Nov 2024 of Yan Jinhai, 62, who held that position for a little over three years. No reason was cited for this Qinghai Tibetan native’s resignation.

### **China denies Tibetans to build houses on their land, but Chinese free to build hotels**

22 January 2025, [The Tibet Post](#), Tenzin Lhadon



*The buildings in the photo owned by Han Chinese and the small house belonged to Tibetans. There are a number of other buildings under construction in the Lhasa area of Tibet. (Photo: TPI)*

Dharamshala — The Chinese authorities in Tibet imposed restrictions on the construction of residential buildings by the Tibetan populace, requiring the submission of extensive documentation. Conversely, they have granted permission to Chinese individuals and entities to construct hotels without imposing such restrictions.

The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has formally denied the Tibetan people the right to construct residential buildings on their own land. However, Chinese citizens are permitted to build hotels. This discrepancy in policy has led to discontent among the Tibetan populace, as evidenced by a Tibetan source who expressed their sentiments by stating, "Tibetans are compelled to rent rooms on their own land, a situation that is profoundly disheartening."

A Tibetan from Tibet told TPI, "The current situation is deeply concerning. Many of us who are native to the region are compelled to seek accommodations in rented buildings. We are indigenous to this land and have inhabited it for generations. We aspire to construct a residence on our ancestral land. However, officials at both the local and regional levels have effectively impeded us from doing so. They have imposed a substantial documentation requirement for the construction of a dwelling on our land, which has left us very helpless."

"But, the Chinese who come from far away, whether they are civil servants or others, are allowed to build large hotels after buying small plots of land from local residents. They don't need any documents to build the hotels. They used to rent rooms to people, whereas here, these large buildings and hotels belong to outsiders, not Tibetans. Therefore, Tibetans will never be able to get rich," said the source, while pointing to large buildings in their areas and others under construction.

Another source from Tibet said, "I have been trying for two years to obtain the necessary documents to build a residential building in our area. However, I have encountered significant obstacles, as local authorities have restricted our ability to build residential buildings. In contrast, Chinese companies are able to easily obtain permission to build hotels for tourists." The source expresses frustration at their inability to defend their rights against the authorities, who they fear could bring political or criminal charges against them, even though they are not involved in any criminal activity.

The Chinese government intentionally brings millions of Chinese to Tibet annually, helping them to work and build, and encouraging them to stay. In so doing, it turns Tibetans into a minority in their own country, and discriminates against them in terms of employment, wages and treatment. The Chinese Communist Party's policy of assimilation has been imposed on Tibetans for years, and has recently been intensified by forcing Tibetan children into Chinese colonial-style boarding schools.

Today, Tibetans have to travel to Chinese cities to work, as work in their own country is often given to Chinese workers from far away places. In the worst cases, Tibetans who have gone to work in Chinese

cities have disappeared and their families can no longer trace them. In addition, young Tibetans who have graduated from higher education cannot find stable employment, and work for lower wages and in unsanitary conditions.

### **Much of Tibet Autonomous Region to be incorporated into China's national park plan**

22 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

The local Chinese government of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) has decided to incorporate "six regions enriched with unique natural landscapes and abundant biodiversity into its national park plan", greatly shrinking the Tibetan people's habitat and the space for their means of livelihood.

Such plans have led to large-scale forced relocation of Tibetan farmers and nomads who lost their traditional habitats and ways of life, greatly impoverishing them.

"These six distinctive ecological areas encompass the Three-River-Source region (specifically the Tangbei area), the Changtang reserve, Mount Qomolangma, the Gangdise Mountains, the Gaoligong Mountains (Xizang section) and the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon," reported China's official *chinadaily.com.cn* Jan 22, citing the TAR government at the third plenary session of the 12th People's Congress of the TAR.

The six regions cover a combined area of approximately 400,000 square kilometres, the report said, making for nearly a third of the total land area of TAR. Besides, these areas account for roughly 36% of the total area of national parks and candidates nationwide, "thus making Xizang rank first in the country in the quantity and total area of national parks," the report said, citing *Xizang Daily*.

The report said the TAR had since 2014 been advancing the establishment of national parks, undertaking initiatives such as conducting scientific surveys and resource assessments for the proposed national park areas of Mount Qomolangma and the Changtang reserve.

The report said the Changtang National Nature Reserve had completed all eight tasks and 22 work items in its establishment phase. "It has now entered the submission and approval stage for official designation as a national park. The remaining five regions are also in various stages of development."

The regional government was stated to have released regulations and policies to strengthen support for national park construction and provide basic guidelines for establishing national park demonstration areas in the region.



## **Sinicization drive targets every ethnic minority individual, Tibet's Ngari cited as success story**

18 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

Guangzhou, a city in China of 22 million people, is using big data to track the activities of its ethnic minority residents in a model for Sinicization that is likely to be applied across the People's Republic of China (PRC), reported the *scmp.com* Jan 17, citing a new book published in Nov 2024 by the National Ethnic Affairs Commission (NEAC). Western Tibet's Ngari region is stated to be covered in the book as a case study of success in implementing the linguistic Sinicization policy.

The report cited the latest official publication on China's ethnic integration policy as saying the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou is only the first in the PRC to set up a big data system relating to its 830,000 residents who are members of ethnic minorities.

The book is stated to cover Tibet with a mention of new details on the promotion of "standard spoken and written Chinese", or Mandarin.

In Ngari prefecture, in western Tibet, "3,478 children from 40 kindergartens were tested by 180 examiners on their Mandarin skills", the book was cited as saying in one case study cited by it.

All middle and primary school teachers there were stated to have passed the Mandarin proficiency test in this region, which is home to just 120,000 people, with nearly 92% being Tibetan.

The book was cited as saying Tibetan is now used as a medium of instruction only for the Tibetan language and culture course, with all other subjects being taught in Mandarin.

Published in Nov 2024 by the National Ethnic Affairs Commission (NEAC), the book was cited as saying that in the case of Guangzhou, the monitoring included oversight of halal noodle shops run mainly by Muslim minorities, such as Huis and Uyghurs. The database is stated to bring together more than 4 million records and cover every ethnic minority individual who rents a flat in the city.

This administrative framework is stated to be about to become a model for all Chinese cities because the commission includes it among the 100 "typical cases of practising correct ethnic concepts" – to be studied by ethnic affairs officials across the PRC.

Coming more than a decade after Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the idea of building "a sense of community for the Chinese nation", the book is stated to provide a fresh look at how local governments are pushing for ethnic integration.

One of the latest methods hailed by authorities is stated to be what is called the "all-round embedding of all ethnic groups" – whereby ethnic minority groups are "encouraged" to mingle with the majority Han.

Among the success stories cited in the book on this issue is stated to be the northwestern Hui autonomous region of Ningxia, where the Yinchuan municipal government had kept track of property agents to prevent them from using what is called "the gimmick of ethnic group clusters and religious beliefs".

The NEAC book has said the city had also changed the names of 42 schools that were named after only one ethnic group, the says.

Enterprises, schools, villages and residential complexes in Yinchuan had all achieved "ethnic group embedding" with government intervention, the book has added.

This book of "typical cases" was stated to have been distributed to ethnic affairs commissions across the PRC in June, then revised and published in November. But the NEAC announced the publication only on Monday (Jan 13, 2025), the report said.

Chairing a meeting of ethnic affairs chiefs from across the country in Beijing on Jan 15, NEAC director Pan Yue has said China had made "breakthrough progress" in its work with ethnic minorities in the past year, including "extensive and in-depth publicity and education to strengthen the sense of community for the Chinese nation".

He has added that another key task of the commission last year was to revise laws and regulations that were inconsistent with integration policies, with the work already done in Inner Mongolia and Ningxia.

Pan has also said a textbook used in compulsory courses at many Chinese universities criticises China's past ethnic policies, which were modelled on those of the Soviet Union, arguing that all ethnic groups had accepted the concept of Zhonghua, or Chinese culture or civilisation, since ancient times.

The book is stated to cite political divisions and "social cleavages" in the West to justify Beijing's current policy of ethnic integration.

The report said government academics were also working to reinterpret Chinese history, emphasising that the PRC's 55 ethnic minority groups have for centuries created the Chinese civilisation together with the Han majority.

## **Guangzhou noodle shops, Mandarin in Tibet in focus as China pushes ethnic integration**

17 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Yuanyue Dang

### **Latest publication by National Ethnic Affairs Commission hails Guangzhou for creating China's first big data set to promote integration**

Many people in the Chinese city of Guangzhou enjoy eating halal noodles, a popular and affordable option around the country. What they probably do not know is that the local government closely monitors these

restaurants as part of its ethnic integration programme.

Guangzhou, a city of 22 million, is using big data to track the activities of its ethnic minority residents in a model that is likely to be applied across China.

According to the latest official publication on China's ethnic integration policy, the southern city is the first in the country to set up a big data system relating to its 830,000 residents who are members of ethnic minorities.

Published in November by the National Ethnic Affairs Commission (NEAC), the book says the monitoring includes oversight of halal noodle shops run mainly by Muslim minorities, such as Huis and Uygurs.

The commission researches and formulates China's ethnic minority policy.

Though it does not explain how this is carried out, the book says the database brings together more than 4 million records and covers every ethnic minority individual who rents a flat in the city.

This administrative framework is about to become a model for all Chinese cities. This is because the commission includes it among the 100 "typical cases of practising correct ethnic concepts" – to be studied by ethnic affairs officials across China.

Coming more than a decade after Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the idea of building "a sense of community for the Chinese nation", the book provides a fresh look at how local governments are pushing for ethnic integration.

One of the latest methods hailed by authorities has been the "all-round embedding of all ethnic groups" – whereby ethnic minority groups are encouraged to mingle with the majority Han.

Among the success stories cited in the book is the northwestern Hui autonomous region of Ningxia, where the Yinchuan municipal government has kept track of property agents to prevent them from using "the gimmick of ethnic group clusters and religious beliefs".

The city has also changed the names of 42 schools that were named after only one ethnic group, the NEAC book says.

Enterprises, schools, villages and residential complexes in Yinchuan had all achieved "ethnic group embedding" with government intervention, according to the book.

The book also contains new details on the promotion of "standard spoken and written Chinese", or Mandarin.

In Ngari prefecture, in the western autonomous region of Tibet, "3,478 children from 40 kindergartens were tested by 180 examiners on their Mandarin skills", according to another case study cited.

The region is home to just 120,000 people, of whom nearly 92 per cent are Tibetan, and all middle and

primary school teachers there had passed the Mandarin proficiency test.

According to the book, Tibetan is used as a medium of instruction only for the Tibetan language and culture course. All other subjects are taught in Mandarin.

The book of "typical cases" was distributed to ethnic affairs commissions across the country in June, then revised and published in November. But the NEAC announced the publication only on Monday.

According to the preface, the commission selected cases from those submitted by its local branches.

NEAC director Pan Yue chaired a meeting of ethnic affairs chiefs from across the country in Beijing on Wednesday. He said China had made "breakthrough progress" in its work with ethnic minorities in the past year, including "extensive and in-depth publicity and education to strengthen the sense of community for the Chinese nation".

Pan added that another key task of the commission last year was to revise laws and regulations that were inconsistent with integration policies.

This has already been done in the northern autonomous region of Inner Mongolia and in Ningxia in the southwest, according to the book.

The commission's achievements for 2024 listed by Pan also included "defending ideological ground, preventing and defusing potential risks in the ethnic field, and effectively safeguarding national unity and social stability", according to an official readout.

Pan also highlighted a textbook used in compulsory courses at many Chinese universities.

The textbook criticises China's past ethnic policies, which were modelled on those of the Soviet Union, and argues that all ethnic groups have accepted the concept of Zhonghua, or Chinese culture or civilisation, since ancient times.

It also cites political divisions and "social cleavages" in the West to justify Beijing's policy of ethnic integration.

Government academics are also working to reinterpret Chinese history, emphasising that China's 55 ethnic minority groups have for centuries created the Chinese civilisation together with the Han majority.

### **Chinese Catholics raise funds for Tibet quake victims**

17 January 2025, [UCA News](#)

The Jan 7 earthquake left 126 people dead, hundreds injured and many structures destroyed.

Catholics in China have sent funds to survivors of last week's earthquake in the Tibet region to help them clear debris and rebuild their homes.

The 7.1-magnitude earthquake that hit Dingri County in Shigatse City on Jan. 7 devastated several villages in

the fragile Himalayan region, killing at least 126 people and injuring hundreds.

Catholic Charity in China, Jinde Charity, on Jan. 10, sent the first disaster relief fund of 110,000 yuan (US\$15,002) on behalf of various parishes and donors from all over the country.

The fund is to help a disaster-stricken village clean up the ruins and rebuild, Catholic publication *Xinde.org*, reported on Jan. 13.

The funds came from various Catholic parishes in Hangzhou Xiaoshan, Liaoning Fushun, Yanzhou Weishan, and other regions.

China-based Shantou Tianai Charity Foundation is negotiating with Jinde Charity to cooperate on disaster relief.

Beijing archdiocese, Hangzhou diocese, the Guangdong Provincial Catholic Patriotic Association, and others have issued fund-raising appeals to priests, religious, and laypeople.

The Catholic community in Wuxi City, southern Jiangsu province, also raised funds to help Tibet earthquake victims, according to a report on the state-run Bishops Conference of Catholic Church in China on Jan. 10.

Father Guo Mandong, the dean of the Wuxi deanery of Nanjing diocese, launched the fundraising initiative. He called on the Wuxi Catholic community to respond quickly, take positive action, and take the initiative to help.

He asked them to carry forward the traditional virtue of the Chinese nation of "helping each other in times of trouble."

On Jan. 8, the Wuxi Catholic community donated 20,000 yuans in disaster relief funds to [Nanjing Ark Charity Foundation](#) to support the disaster-stricken people in Tibet.

### Nearly 22,400 quake-hit people in Tibet treated by military, says China

17 January 2025, [Anadolu Ajansi](#), Berk Kutay Gökmen

Southern Tibet region jolted by 6.8 magnitude earthquake on Jan. 7

Nearly 22,400 people injured in China's Tibet region by an earthquake earlier this month were treated by the Chinese military, local media reported Friday.

The 6.8 magnitude earthquake on Jan. 7 killed 126 people, according to the Chinese authorities. More than 60,000 people were displaced.

The Chinese Defense Ministry deployed 2,055 officers and soldiers from the People's Liberation Army and armed police, 869 militia members, 20 aircraft, and 297 vehicles and engineering machinery, according to Wu Qian, a ministry spokesman.

"The efforts resulted in the rescue of 27 people, the relocation of 2,756 disaster-stricken residents, the establishment of 21 field medical support points, the

treatment and medical consultation of 22,359 injured people, the setting up of 2,812 tents and prefabricated houses, providing more than 95,000 hot meals, transporting over 4,300 tons of disaster relief materials, and the clearing over 4,700 cubic meters of debris," he added.

The 6.8 magnitude earthquake, with its epicenter in Tsogo Township, hit the city of Xigaze at 9.05 am local time (0105GMT) on Jan. 7, at a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles).

### Tibetan social media influencers reporting on Dingri earthquake restricted

13 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



A Tibetan girl from Kham has reportedly been ordered to shut her tiktok and not *livestream* content of Dingri earthquake by Chinese police (Screengrab/X)

Chinese authorities have imposed strict restrictions on social media influencers in Tibet on reporting facts and situation of Dingri County in Tibet, following the 7.1 magnitude earthquake that struck Dingri County, Shigatse Prefecture last week. The earthquake has triggered over 500 aftershocks, causing damage to life and property.

Social media users who attempted to report from the affected area have faced bans on livestreaming, forced account shutdowns, and restrictions on sharing accurate information. Authorities have also prevented individuals and organizations, particularly Tibetans, from entering the region, citing cold weather conditions and claiming that sufficient emergency relief resources are available.

While reporters from international media outlets are not permitted in the region, Chinese state media is allowed to cover the situation making it difficult to verify key details, including the actual death toll, number of injuries, and other conditions on the ground. Despite efforts by social media users from Tibet to provide updates, increasing restrictions have further hindered the free flow of accurate information. Several Tibetan social media broadcasters have publicly stated that they are being pressured by Chinese authorities to spread misinformation and

prevent livestreaming to conceal the true extent of the situation. Chinese state media reported that, as of January 9, 126 people have died, 337 people had been treated for injuries, with 246 discharged from the hospital, and approximately 3,600 houses destroyed. However, these figures have not changed since then, while social media posts from individuals who managed to reach the area suggest that the number of deaths is higher than reported.

Chinese state media continues to portray the government's response as comprehensive, reporting that 224 relocation sites have been established for 47,500 people, offering access to makeshift clinics, libraries, and counseling services. Despite these claims, hundreds of vehicles carrying relief supplies from Tibet's traditional provinces of U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo have been prohibited from distributing aid directly to local Tibetans. Authorities have instead ordered all supplies to be stored in government warehouses. Videos circulating online show large quantities of food and essential supplies stacked outside the Dingri local government office.

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) issued a fact sheet on January 11, calling on the People's Republic of China's government to provide timely emergency rescue, medical aid, and rehabilitation services. The CTA also urged China to grant unrestricted access to international aid organizations, ensure transparent reporting on casualty numbers, and guarantee sufficient post-earthquake rebuilding efforts. Additionally, the CTA called for disaster preparedness in Tibet, particularly in regions prone to earthquakes. The CTA appealed to the international community to assist with relief and recovery efforts, continue to highlight the ongoing situation in Tibet, and ensure that Tibetan cultural identity is respected in media reporting. The CTA also called for the cessation of Chinese propaganda terminology, including references to Tibet as "Xizang" and Shigatse as "Xigatze."

**Death toll info censored, access denied to the Tibet earthquake sites, casualties feared to be much higher than officially reported 126**

12 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

Unofficial sources have been stated to suggest that at least 100 people have died in one township as a result of the devastating earthquake that hit Tibet's Mt Everest county of Dingri in Shigatse City on Jan 7 morning, casting doubts on China's official claim of a total of 126 known casualties thus far. The doubt is reinforced by China's total ban on access to the affected region for everyone, including the independent media, except for government dispatched rescue groups.

Suggesting that at least 100 deaths had occurred in the county's Dramtso township alone, which has ten villages – including Senga (Zingkar, the Township headquarter), Gurong (Guring), and Chajiang – the Tibetan service of *rfa.org* Jan 10 said, based on Tibetan sources, that it was among the worst affected. China's official media had mentioned the epicentre Tsogo (with seven villages) and Chulho too among the worst affected townships in Dingri county.

Besides, China's official *globaltimes.cn* Jan 12 cited Sakya, Lazi (Lhatse), Dingjie (Tingkye), and Dingri as "four hard-hit counties" in the earthquake. The report stated this in the context of the Tibet regional cultural heritage bureau's dispatch on Jan 12 of an emergency cultural heritage team of 17 to Dingjie county to conduct inspections on the damage to cultural heritage sites.

China's official report of 126 deaths and 337 injuries thus far has been based on the search and rescue operations focused on just 27 villages located around a 20 km radius of the earthquake's epicentre.

While determining the exact death toll is currently very challenging, "everybody is sceptical of the official death toll, but we have no way to know the actual figures," the *rfa.org* report cited a resident of Tibet's capital Lhasa as saying.

The search was widened over other surrounding affected areas only from Jan 10, according to a *Reuters* report that day.

The *rfa.org* report said the earthquake had caused extensive structural damage, including to several century-old institutions such as the Dingri Dramtso Serkar, Gonta Phug, Tso-nga, Tso-go and Dewachen monasteries in Dingri's Chulho Township.

The report also cited an exile Tibetan with contacts in the affected areas as saying that following the earthquake, not only have local residents been restricted from traveling to neighbouring villages but also other Tibetans remained strictly prevented from travelling to the affected sites.

The report cited Tibetan sources as saying many remote villages in the earthquake-affected areas had yet to receive assistance, with no relief personnel having arrived there.

The available pictures of the disaster, which show rescue personnel actively helping victims, are mostly, if not all, those taken and released by China's official media. This is because China is reported to prohibit individuals from taking pictures or videos, with police being deployed to monitor aid workers to ensure compliance. Independent media continues to remain banned from Tibet.

The report also said Tibetans from across the region attempting to rush assistance were being blocked at various newly set up checkpoints, with authorities requiring permits for entry. They are said to be required to hand over to Chinese authorities all aid

materials for distribution, leaving volunteers unable to directly provide support to those in need. As a result, mountains of relief and aid materials donated for the earthquake victims are stated to be piled up at the government's local disaster relief management centre in Dingri county.

### **Tibetan girl injured in Xizang earthquake airlifted to Chengdu for treatment**

11 January 2025, [Global Link](#)



A 5-year-old Tibetan girl, critically injured in a 6.8-magnitude earthquake that hit Xizang, China earlier this week, has been airlifted to West China Second University Hospital in Chengdu for treatment. #GLOBALink

### **Tally of Tibet earthquake injured rises on third day of search for survivors**

10 January 2025, [Reuters](#)

China has almost doubled its tally of injured in Tibet's [deadly earthquake](#) as rescuers widened a search on Friday for survivors in a remote county near the foothills of the Himalayas, despite dwindling hopes for survival.

The state-backed Global Times newspaper said the magnitude 6.8 quake had injured 337, for the first increase since Tuesday's initial estimate of 188, although the number of dead stayed at 126.

It is not yet clear how many are still missing, but more than three days later, experts say those trapped under the rubble are likely to have died of hypothermia.

Night-time temperatures in the region average from minus 10 degrees Celsius to minus 15 degrees C (14 degrees Fahrenheit to 5 degrees F), at this time of year, excluding wind chill.

More than 1,600 aftershocks had rocked the disaster zone by Friday, adding to the difficulty of moving more than 47,000 affected people to temporary shelters.

"Make sure no one is left behind!" was the headline of a report in the state-run Tibet Daily that said the top regional official of China's ruling Communist Party took action in less than half an hour after the quake.

Tibet's most serious disaster in years, the earthquake presents authorities with the challenge of quickly rescuing those still trapped, finding the bodies of the dead, and housing the tens of thousands displaced.

Its party secretary, Wang Junzheng, visited the hardest-hit villages in the quake epicentre in the county of Tingri.

"The elderly people held Wang Junzheng's hands, touched his forehead according to Tibetan customs, and shed tears," the paper said.

Many grassroots cadres, including local Tibetan officials, joined the relief effort to sift rubble and guard resettlement sites, even though their own homes collapsed, it added.

Xi met top ruling party officials to "study and arrange disaster relief," the official Xinhua news agency said.

"Efforts must be made to ensure a decisive victory in this tough battle," it quoted top leaders as saying, as they urged faster rebuilding and improvement in resilience.

Authorities must also find longer-term housing for the tens of thousands displaced, beyond warm tents, while ensuring a steady supply of daily necessities.

### **Strict Restrictions Being Imposed on Information About Earthquake In Dhingri, Tibet**

10 January 2025, [Tibet Times](#), Kelsang Jinpa

Rescue operations persist in southern Latoe following the devastating earthquake that struck Dhingri County, yet many affected villages remain without critical assistance. Exacerbating the crisis, residents report being subjected to directives that forcibly restrict them from sharing information about the situation with the outside world.

At approximately 9:05 AM on January 7, a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 7.1 on the Richter scale struck the Shigatse region, located within the area designated by the Chinese government as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). The devastating quake caused significant damage to lives and property in Dhingri, Sakya, Lhatse, and Ngamring counties, among other affected areas.

Even as these affected areas grappled with the aftermath of the devastation, the very following day, local Chinese government officials announced that they would stop any relief or assistance from other regions. Moreover, internet access in Dhingri County has been tightly controlled, with residents prohibited from sharing photos or videos. Strict directives have also been issued, barring them from contacting the outside world. Meanwhile, many areas continue to struggle, as they remain without much-needed relief aid and assistance.

Sources interviewed by this reporter, both within and outside Tibet, have disclosed a stark disparity in relief

efforts following the earthquake with its epicentre in Tsogo Township. While the Chinese government has widely publicized its ongoing rescue and recovery operations in Tsogo, other hard-hit areas such as Damtso, Nyishar, Ngamrim, and Nyishar remain critically underserved. Reports indicate that in Damtso County, particularly in the regions of Gorung and the Phug Monastery, numerous fatalities have occurred, yet no aid or assistance has reached the affected communities.

A local Tibetan from Dhingri, who wished to remain anonymous, said *“Seven people have lost their lives in our village. Many homes have been damaged or destroyed. Yet, we have no one to turn to for aid or assistance. We are trying to set up tents to sleep outdoors at night, fearing another earthquake could strike. However, there weren’t enough tents for everyone, so some villagers decided to travel to other areas to buy them. Unfortunately, they were stopped by the police and prevented from leaving. We’ve also been instructed not to share videos, photos, or contact anyone outside for help.”*

According to our gathered information, the region of Latoe in western Tibet is divided into southern and northern areas. In southern Latoe, Dhingri County consists of approximately 20 townships and villages. The recent earthquake primarily impacted four locations within the county: Tsogo, Tsolho, Damtso, and Nyishar. Among these, Tsogo was the hardest hit, suffering the most severe damage. In the northern region of Latoe, the earthquake has devastated the counties of Sakya, Tingkye, Ngamrim, and Lhatse, as many other affected areas in the same region remain without access to aid or assistance.

As of this morning, the Chinese government’s official report states that 126 people have lost their lives, 188 have been injured, and 3,609 houses and properties have been destroyed in the disaster. However, a Tibetan source inside Tibet informed this reporter that rescue efforts or assistance have yet to reach Gurung village in Damtso, where numerous fatalities have reportedly occurred. Similarly, many other affected areas have not received aid or assistance. In Lhatse, two deaths have been officially reported, but the source said that the actual number of fatalities is significantly higher, with the Chinese government concealing the true figures.

Citing as the reason that the areas around the epicentre of the earthquake are very remote and lie in high altitudes, the Chinese government announced yesterday through official channels that relief aid and assistance from other regions would be stopped. Tibetans from all the three traditional provinces of Kham, Amdo and U-tsang, who had set forth days before to offer relief aid and assistance were ordered to return.

A Tibetan inside Tibet stated that many Tibetan volunteer aid and rescue workers have started to head towards Tingkye and Lhatse County today. These volunteers have been issued strict directives not to post any videos or photos.

Upon hearing the news of the powerful earthquake in Dhingri, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, along with other Tibetan spiritual leaders in exile, immediately offered prayers for the safety and recovery of those affected. The Central Tibetan Administration, along with various Tibetan NGOs and communities worldwide, continues to hold prayer sessions, expressing deep condolences and solidarity with the people of Dhingri and their fellow Tibetans in Tibet who are suffering due to this devastating disaster.



Inside Tibet, well-known Tibetan writers, poets, singers, social media influencers, businessmen, organizations, and the general public all contributed generously with donations. Many personally visited the affected areas to provide daily assistance, while others expressed strong solidarity with the people of Dhingri through their respective professions.

A researcher linked the Chinese authorities’ directive to immediately stop aid and assistance from other regions to a strong display of unity and spirit among Tibetans in Tibet, highlighting their collective identity as a unified people.

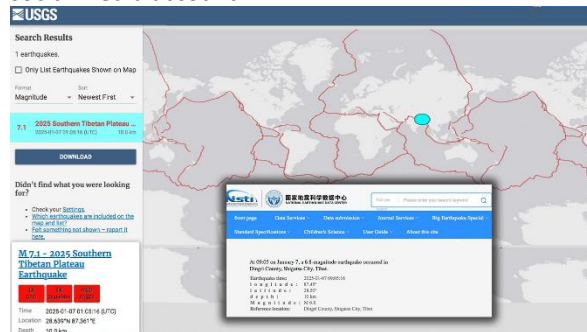
A local Tibetan from the area shared, *“Many of those who perished in the earthquake were young people. In Dhingri, we have a tradition of making smoke offerings on the day of Nine Bad Omens (Nyenpa Guzom) and celebrating with barley beer (Chang) on the day of Ten Good Omens (Sangpo Chuzom) with family and friends. Unfortunately, the earthquake struck the day after Ten Good Omens, and many young lives were lost. While the Chinese authorities are providing aid and assistance, it is largely because Dhingri is located near the border.”*

When the earthquake struck, Chinese government media outlets widely reported it as a 6.8 magnitude event centred in Dhingri County. However, the U.S. Geological Survey assessed the quake at a higher magnitude of 7.1.

Currently, social media feeds in Tibet are flooded with images and videos showcasing government officials and workers engaged in rescue and aid operations—a

strikingly staged display orchestrated by the Chinese government.

Despite the severe restrictions faced by local Tibetans in the affected areas, many Tibetan social media influencers have travelled directly to these regions. However, they have been prohibited from sharing any information about the damage and devastation. Even mentioning the phrase 'Donations for Earthquake' is enough to result in the immediate suspension of a social media account.



Photos from the Internet. Compiled by Tibet Times

Although the U.S. Geological Survey reported on the 7th of this month at 1:05 AM that there was an earthquake in Dhingri, the Chinese government announced that the earthquake occurred at around 9:05 AM on the 7th.

The earthquake struck with a focal depth of 10 km, primarily impacting Dhingri and the surrounding areas, including Sakya, Ngamring, Lhatse, Shigatse, and Tingkye. Tremors were felt in over twenty cities and regions, extending as far as Nepal, Sikkim in India, Bhutan, and other neighbouring countries. Dhingri, located south of the Tibetan capital Lhasa at an elevation of 4,300 meters above sea level, had previously experienced a 5.9 magnitude earthquake in March 2020.

Reports have also emerged of a 5.8-magnitude earthquake that struck the Matoe area in Golog, Tibet, yesterday afternoon, January 8. According to Chinese authorities, the earthquake hit on the mountainous terrain, thus resulting in no reported damage to life or property. We will continue to gather additional information from the region.

### China erasing Tibetan culture by separating children from their families

10 January 2025, [Business Standard](#)

*Chinese officials say the schools help Tibetan children to quickly become fluent in the Chinese language and learn skills that will prepare them for the modern economy*

Tibetan rights activists, as well as experts working for the United Nations, have said that China is systematically separating Tibetan children from their

families to erase Tibetan identity and to deepen its control of people who historically resisted Beijing's rule. They have estimated that around three-quarters of Tibetan students age 6 and older - and others even younger - are in residential schools that teach largely in Mandarin, replacing the Tibetan language, culture and Buddhist beliefs that the children once absorbed at home and in village schools.

When China's top leader, Xi Jinping, visited one such school in the summer, he inspected a dormitory that appeared freshly painted and as neat as an army barracks. He walked into a classroom where Tibetan students, listening to a lecture on Communist Party thought, stood and applauded to welcome him.

Xi's visit to the school in Qinghai Province in June amounted to a firm endorsement of the program, despite international criticism. Education, he said, must "implant a shared consciousness of Chinese nationhood in the souls of children from an early age."

Chinese officials say the schools help Tibetan children to quickly become fluent in the Chinese language and learn skills that will prepare them for the modern economy. They say that families voluntarily send their children to the schools, which are free, and that the students have classes in Tibetan culture and language. But extensive interviews and research by The New York Times show that Tibetan children appear to be singled out by the Chinese authorities for enrollment in residential schools. Their parents often have little or no choice but to send them, experts, parents, lawyers and human rights investigators said in interviews. Many parents do not see their children for long stretches.

Dozens of research papers and reports from experts and teachers within the Chinese system have warned about the anxiety, loneliness, depression and other psychological harm of the schools on Tibetan children.

China has been expanding its boarding schools for Tibetan children even as countries like the United States, Canada and Australia have been grappling with the trauma inflicted on generations of Indigenous children who were forcibly removed from their families and placed in residential schools.

China has been eager to show that happy, well-fed Tibetan children are proudly declaring that they are Chinese. Gyal Lo, a Tibetan education researcher, became alarmed by the boarding schools in 2016, when he saw that his two preschool-aged grandnieces, who were attending one in his hometown in northwestern China, preferred to speak Mandarin, not Tibetan.

Children as young as preschool age were being sent away, he said, and parental visits were limited. The Times talked to three Tibetan parents with children of elementary-school age in residential schools who said that they were not allowed to visit their children at will.

Physical punishment is outlawed in Chinese schools, but studies by Chinese academics have found that the practice persists in Tibetan boarding schools. A 2020 study by Chinese researchers on boarding schools for children from ethnic minorities said that some teachers “lacked concern for the students,” treated them roughly and were “even resorting to physical punishment.”

Local legislators and researchers in Tibetan areas have reported that the already overcrowded schools face serious shortages of teachers and support staff.

The Chinese government does not say how many Tibetan children are in boarding schools. The Tibet Action Institute, an international group that has campaigned to close the schools, estimates that among children aged 6 to 18, the figure is at least 800,000 - or three in every four Tibetan children.

**Update: Number of reported dead, injured from Tibet earthquake unchanged; no info on missing; 61,500 people affected**

09 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

As Chinese authorities called off search for survivors from the devastating earthquake just a day after it hit Dingri County near Mt Everest in southern Tibet's Shigatse city on Jan 7 morning, the official figures have remained unchanged at 126 deaths, 188 injured.

However, authorities have yet to say how many people remain missing, which could provide a measure of how many may have actually died.

Those trapped under the rubble are likely to have succumbed to hypothermia, with temperatures dropping to as low as zero degrees Fahrenheit at night, noted *Reuters* Jan 9.

The State Council Information Office, which handles media requests for the central government, did not respond to a request for comment on this matter, the report said.

As of 6 am Thursday (Jan 9), 61,500 people were affected by the earthquake. So far, a total of 224 resettlement sites have been set up for 47,500 relocated residents, with their basic living needs ensured, reported China's official *Xinhua* News agency Jan 9, citing an official press conference.

Meanwhile, a total of 1,211 aftershocks had been detected as of 3 pm Thursday (Jan 9) after the 6.8-magnitude earthquake of the day before, the report said, citing local authorities.

The report also said 484 tourists in Dingri, including 13 non-Chinese foreigners, had all returned to the city of Shigatse.

An official named Hao Tao told a press conference Jan 9 that officials were still assessing the scope of the disaster, which damaged four reservoirs, as well as the scale of losses, said another *Reuters* report Jan 9.

The quake, which shook buildings as far away as Nepal and India, reduced to rubble more than 3,600 homes in Dingri and damaged 27,000 more at an average elevation of more than 4,000 metres (13,000 feet), the report said.

In the worst hit villages, 80-90% of houses had collapsed, reported the *lemonde.fr* Jan 8.

The rescue was stated to be focused on 27 villages – home to 7,000 people – spread 20 km (12 miles) around the earthquake's epicentre Tsogo Town.

The earthquake was so strong that it caused part of the terrain around the epicentre to slip as much as 1.6 m (5 ft) over a distance of 80 km (50 miles), according to an analysis by the United States Geological Survey which measured its magnitude at 7.1.

**Tents arrive for survivors of a quake that killed 126 in freezing, high-altitude Tibet**

08 January 2025, [The Lawton Constitution](#)

Rescuers in the freezing, high-altitude Tibet region in western China searched a second day for any remaining victims of a deadly earthquake that struck near a holy city for Tibetan Buddhists, before shifting their focus to resettling the survivors

Relief teams in western China shifted their focus to resettling survivors after a search Wednesday for any remaining victims of a deadly earthquake that struck a day earlier near a holy city for Tibetan Buddhists.

Tents, quilts, stoves and other relief items were being delivered to people whose homes were uninhabitable or unsafe. State media said that more than 46,000 people had been relocated following the quake, which killed 126 and injured 188 others.

**First female pilot in China's Xizang (Tibet): Breaking boundaries in a male-dominated sector**

04 January 2025, [AM](#), Adlens Wong

4 January 2025 – A large number of Chinese women are breaking the glass ceiling to enter professions that were previously dominated by men. The first female pilot recruited by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force in China's Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region has attracted wide attention.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of China, the labor force participation rate of Chinese women has risen from 7.5 percent in 1949 to 61.1 percent in 2023. In recent years, a large number of women have played important roles in manufacturing, service, high-tech, and green industries, etc. They not only promote economic development in traditional fields but are also doing “male jobs”, with the number of female pilots, academicians, entrepreneurs, and diplomats on the rise.



Kelsang Pedron, a woman of the post-2000 generation, i.e., youths born from 2000 to 2009 in China, is the first female pilot from Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region recruited by the PLA Air Force. She has had a dream of “flying into the blue sky” since childhood. In Kelsang Pedron’s eyes, gender is no longer an obstacle on the road for women to pursue dreams. She went through the same rigorous selection and training as her male classmates before becoming a qualified fighter pilot.

“I had undergone an entire selection process and procedures to get this far, and I was determined to excel and not to be eliminated, so I studied very hard,” she said.

Kelsang Pedron has successfully completed a single test flight for a fighter aircraft, delivering excellent results in this stage of training. She said that flying has become a goal from merely a passion at the very beginning.

“I should train hard to become a fighter pilot to protect the blue skies of our motherland,” said Kelsang Pedron.

At present, there are more and more female college graduates like Kelsang Pedron. For their diverse employment needs, the Chinese government has also put forward many support measures. In September 2024, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council unveiled a set of guidelines to promote high-quality and sufficient employment by implementing the employment-first strategy, which proposed to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of women in employment and entrepreneurship, career development, skills training, occupational health, and safety, etc., and build a birth friendly employment environment.

### **China celebrates 30th anniversary of propaganda UNESCO listing of Potala palace**

03 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

The iconic Potala palace is a propaganda mascot for China’s claim that it protects Tibetan culture in the face of allegations that it is destroying the living culture of the Tibetan people: their ethnography and ethnicity, language, religion, and their traditional way of life. On Dec 31, China celebrated the 30th anniversary of its designation of the palace as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The palace has attracted floods of visitors since 2014, receiving over 14.4 million visits, reported China’s official *chinadaily.com.cn* Jan 3, citing official data and underlining its propaganda value.

An exhibition took centre stage at the Potala palace, located in Tibet’s ancient capital Lhasa, on Dec 31. The event was organized by the region’s cultural relics bureau and executed by the Potala Palace

Management Office. It features over 100 cultural relics symbolizing ethnic unity, the report said.

In keeping with China’s ongoing campaign to Sinicize Tibetan culture and dilute Tibet’s ethnography, the report said, “The exhibition uses a blend of physical artefacts, imagery, archival materials, videos and multimedia presentations to showcase the colourful history of cultural interflows between Tibetan ethnic heritage and the diverse ethnic cultures across the nation.”

The report continued, “Visitors will find a delineation of various facets of the palace, such as relic preservation, ancient architectural conservation and technological advancements, showing its evolution from traditional roots to modern adaptations and from a tapestry of diversity to a unified entity.”

The palace’s management office was also stated to have convened a symposium to commemorate the 30th anniversary on Dec 31 night.

The Potala was the winter residence of successive Dalai Lamas and the seat of the Tibetan government since 1649, even as its construction continued till 1694. China bombarded the palace during its suppression of the Tibetan uprising in 1959, greatly weakening its structural stability.

The palace’s invaluable artefacts, accumulated over the millennia, were plundered during China’s Cultural Revolution (1966-76), with the losses having never been accounted for.

# BUDDHISM

## China bans monks, aid workers from visiting quake-hit areas of Tibet

20 January 2025, [NewsGram](#)

*Chinese authorities in Tibet have forbidden aid workers and Buddhist monks from entering areas of the region struck by deadly earthquakes last week, three residents of the region and a Tibetan in exile told Radio Free Asia.*

Chinese authorities in Tibet have forbidden aid workers and Buddhist monks from entering areas of the region struck by deadly earthquakes last week, three residents of the region and a Tibetan in exile told Radio Free Asia.

On Jan. 7, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck Dingri county, near the border of Nepal. Chinese state media says it killed 126 people, but Tibetan sources said the toll was likely higher given that at least 100 people were killed in the town of Dramtso alone.

State media also said the disaster injured 337 people and displaced more than 60,000 people.

Starting Monday, authorities blocked off access, preventing monks, relief volunteers and aid providers from entering the affected area under the pretext of “cleanup,” and “security work,” the residents said under condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

The blocking of monks was painful for survivors because in Buddhist tradition, prayers and rituals are conducted at the end of each week for the first seven weeks after a person’s death.

Tibetans in other areas of Tibet, as well as those abroad or in exile in India, Nepal, Bhutan and elsewhere, gathered Monday to offer prayers.

### **Aftershocks**

Since last week’s quake, more than 1,200 aftershocks have been reported by Chinese authorities.

On Monday evening, two strong aftershocks — with magnitudes of 5.1 and 4.6 — struck Dingri County’s Tsogo township (Cuoguoxiang in Chinese) and Tashizong township (Zhaxizongxiang), respectively, according to the United States Geological Survey.

According to a Dingri county official quoted by Chinese state media on Monday, “no casualties have been reported so far” in the latest aftershocks. The official added that “further investigation is underway.”

### **Information censorship**

The Chinese government has also been deleting photos and videos about the impact of the earthquake from social media, residents said.

“Chinese state media has been focusing on propaganda activities such as having Tibetan children wave Chinese flags. They are forcing affected residents to express their gratitude to the Chinese government, and they display [Chinese President] Xi Jinping’s photos in the temporary shelters provided,” another resident said.

On Sunday, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, the government-in-exile based in Dharamshala, India, issued a statement in which he called on Beijing to “...ensure transparency and accountability in relief efforts by granting unrestricted and immediate access to international aid organizations and media delegations.”

“Strict information censorship by the PRC government continues to pose significant challenges in verifying the accuracy of casualty reports and assessing the adequacy of relief operations,” Tsering said.

He also called on the Chinese government to “provide adequate assistance in rebuilding efforts that takes into account the traditional Tibetan needs and fundamental rights of the Tibetan people.”

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun, in a press briefing on Monday, responded to a query raised on Tsering’s statement, saying, “The disaster response and relief work is generally proceeding smoothly. We are confident in winning this tough battle of quake response and returning work and life to normal in the affected areas as soon as possible.”

### At least 8 Tibetan monasteries, nunneries heavily damaged by earthquake

15 January 2025, [RFA](#)

#### They are among an estimated 40 religious buildings affected by the deadly temblor on Jan. 7.



Rescue workers search for survivors in the aftermath of an earthquake in Changsuo township, Dingri county, in the city of Shigatse in western China's Tibet Autonomous Region, Jan. 7, 2025. (Liu Yousheng/Xinhua News Agency/AP)

At least eight Buddhist monasteries and nunneries in southern Tibet have been severely damaged by the recent 7.1-magnitude earthquake, sources in the region told Radio Free Asia.

The Jan. 7 quake that struck Tibet’s Dingri and Lhatse counties left 126 people dead, Chinese state media says — although Tibetan sources believe the toll to be higher — and damaged thousands of buildings.

All told, an estimated 40 monasteries and places of worship — some of them more than 500 years old — suffered varying degrees of damage, the sources said. They include the Dzekar Choede, Tsonga, Tsogo, Gonta-phuk, Choelung, Dhakphuk, Tashi Zomrung and Choeling monasteries.

The first three — historic monasteries in Dingri county — sustained heavy damage, according to two sources in the region and three Tibetans living in exile.

“In Dewachan Monastery in Chulho and Dzekar Choede Monastery in Dramtso, there has been significant damage to the monasteries’ assembly halls and the three main Buddha statues, with most of the precious statues inside the shrines destroyed,” one source said.

The Dzekar Choede Monastery is a 15th-century building that houses many holy Buddhist relics, which now have been transferred to the custody of Dingri county officials, Chinese state media said.

#### Full extent unknown

However, the full extent of the damage to monastic centers in Tingye, Lhatse and Sakya counties is unknown as China continues to clamp down on any sharing of information about the earthquake, the sources said.

“Most of the monks’ residences have also collapsed, and tragically, two nuns from Dzongtuk Nunnery have died,” the second source said. “One of the nuns was buried beneath the rubble of the collapsed buildings and, despite efforts, could not be rescued in time, leading to her death.”

More than half of the shrine at Choeling Monastery in Lhatse county’s Mangbhu township was destroyed, said a Tibetan source in exile.

“Also, many smaller monasteries situated on the hills of Dingri and Lhatse counties have sustained damage,” he source said. “In many cases, these monasteries have been completely destroyed.”

According to Chinese state media, a local cultural heritage team has inspected the damage to monastic centers in Sakya, Lhatse, Tingye and Dingri counties.

By Jan. 12, the team completed inspections in Lhatse and Dingri counties. It will submit its findings to the National Cultural Heritage Administration, or NCHA, the government agency that oversees the protection and preservation of cultural relics across mainland China.

The NCHA told state media that preliminary inspections of the “first batch of national key cultural heritage units” found “no obvious damage” in the renowned Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse or in Pelkor Choede Monastery (Baiju Temple) and Shalu Monastery (Xialu Temple).

The agency also said Sakya Monastery suffered “repairable damage such as component displacement and wall cracking” with “no major structural risks” found.

### **Crackdown on online posts**

In the aftermath of the quake, Chinese authorities have cracked down on Tibetans for sharing information online about the natural disaster.

On Wednesday, state media said authorities “investigated and punished” 21 Tibetans for allegedly “posting false information” on the death toll.

Sources earlier told RFA that Chinese authorities forbade people from posting information online about the earthquake and were deleting related videos and information from social media.

Three of the 21 were punished for posting that the death toll in quake-hit areas was more than 200, with one Tibetan having cited a figure of 265.

The Chinese government has not changed the official death toll it issued on Jan. 8, the day after the quake.

Sources in the region previously told RFA that they believed more than 200 had been killed and that one of the three worst-hit townships in Dingri county recorded around 100 deaths alone, raising further questions about the official count.

The Chinese government’s Public Information Network Security Supervision Department under the Ministry of Public Security on Wednesday said it would continue to crack down on “online rumors related to the Shigatse earthquake” and on any “fabrication, dissemination, and spread of online rumors.”

### **Tibetan Buddhist Panchen Rinpoche prays for quake-hit areas in Xizang**

13 January 2025, [CGTN](#)

Panchen Rinpoche has prayed for areas affected by the M6.8 earthquake that struck Dingri County in southwest China’s Xizang Autonomous Region, claiming the lives of at least 126 people.

Panchen Erdeni Chos-kyi rGyal-po, one of the most influential figures in Tibetan Buddhism, held prayer sessions with fellow monks, chanting scriptures and praying for the swift recovery and safety from calamity of the disaster-stricken areas.

They also prayed for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

Last week, Panchen Rinpoche, along with approximately 900 monks from Tashilhunpo Monastery – his traditional seat – donated money to help those affected by the quake.

Panchen Rinpoche is a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, China’s top political advisory body. He is also vice president of the Buddhist Association of China.

# STATE OF ECOLOGY OF THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

## Unraveling Glacier Retreat Patterns On The Tibetan Plateau

30 January 2025, [The Pinnacle Gazette](#)

**New study maps glacial changes since the Last Glacial Maximum, offering fresh insights on regional climate shifts.**

The Tibetan Plateau and its surrounding mountains have experienced significant glacier retreat since the Last Glacial Maximum, with detailed mapping and moraine dating shedding light on this important climate event. A recent study published highlights the spatiotemporal patterns of glacier retreat, providing insights not only on the historical movements of these glaciers but also on the changing atmospheric conditions influencing their behavior.

Researchers from various institutions compiled data from 196 moraines, determined from 994 boulder  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages, to analyze glacier activities spanning from approximately 26,500 to 10,000 years ago. The study uncovered five distinct phases of glacier retreat, the most notable initial retreat phase commencing around 22,000 years ago. This synchronized retreat across the entire Tibetan Plateau was attributed to rising local summer insolation.

"Synchronous glacier retreat across the entire TPSM began around 22 ka in response to onset of rising local summer insolation," the authors of the article stated, emphasizing the pivotal role insolation played during this period.

The research corresponds with various notable climatic shifts during the Last Glacial Maximum and indicates significant atmospheric adjustments. For example, the continuous but uneven glacier retreat was marked by five primary phases, each aligning with varying climatic conditions such as temperature changes influenced by both summer insolation and atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

During the last deglaciation between 19,000 and 11,000 years ago, previous studies indicated the influence of the Indian Summer Monsoon (ISM) becoming more prominent, superseding the Westerly winds over Central Tibet. This change was fundamentally related to the glacier responses observed during the later retreat phases, with synchronized retreat occurring at defined intervals.

"This work offers new insights... adjustments in atmospheric circulation on the TPSM," the authors remarked. This statement alludes to the importance of atmospheric dynamics and their impact on glacier movements. The findings of this research could help deepen understandings of glacial responses to climate change, which is increasingly relevant today.

Notably, the research conducted highlights regional variation, with certain areas such as the Pamir and the East Himalayas demonstrating differing glacier behavior during some phases. The researchers noted

clear signals of glacier recession at multiple climatic proof points, comparing these events with paleoclimatic data from other significant global glaciers. For example, the glacier retreat observed during the 22,000 to 20,000-year phase was contemporaneous with significant regional climate shifts.

The significance of this study extends beyond historical climate records, as it contributes to modern climate change discussions as well. Understanding how glaciers responded to past warming could provide insight for future projections, especially with current global warming trends reminiscent of these past periods. The Tibetan Plateau is particularly sensitive to climate shifts, and exploring these glacier patterns aids researchers striving for more accurate climate models. Conclusively, the study's insights have far-reaching impacts on both historical climate analysis and modern understandings of climate change. The research implores for continued study, particularly focusing on high-elevation early Holocene moraines, to offer more clarity on the processes dictating glacier dynamics and climate interactions.

### China discovers up to 25 tonnes of potential gold reserve in Tibet's Lhoka

20 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

A Chinese company and its subsidiary have reported on Jan 20 the discovery of a potentially large reserve of gold in southern Tibet's Lhoka (Chinese: Shannan) City.

China Silver Group Ltd and its subsidiary CSMall Group Limited have announced this following the completion in Dec 2024 of a general exploration in the Lhoka Exploration Area in Tibet, conducted by an independent geological expert.

The two companies jointly announced that a geological expert engaged by Tibet Longtianyong, their non-wholly owned subsidiary, conducted general exploration on mineral resources in the Lhoka exploration area, during 2H24.

Based on the results of the analyses conducted and subject to further analyses and exploration works to be carried out, it is preliminarily anticipated that the Lhoka exploration area could reach a prospective metal volume of approx. 20-25 tonnes of gold, displaying potential for a large-scale gold mine, reported [aastocks.com](#) Jan 20.

China Silver Group Ltd. is an investment holding company, which engages in the manufacture and sale of silver and other non-ferrous metals. Founded in 2002, it is a leading silver producer in China and among the select few silver manufacturers in China capable of producing silver ingots with purity grade of 99.999%, currently the world's highest standard.

It is involved in the mining industry with a focus on silver exploration and production. The company, along with its subsidiary CSMall Group Limited, is actively engaged in mining operations and exploration activities in Tibet, aiming to expand its resource base and strengthen its market position in the mineral industry, noted [tipranks.com](#) Jan 20.

The CSMall Group Limited, founded in 2013, is, with its subsidiaries, collectively the largest integrated online and offline Internet-based jewellery retailer in China, said the [aastocks.com](#) report.

### 4.9 Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Khyungchu County 20 January 2025, [Tibet Times](#), Palden



4.9 Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Khyungchu County and nearby Counties in Tibet at 5.7a.m January 20th 2025.

A 4.9-magnitude earthquake struck Khyungchu County in Tibet this morning. In response, the Chinese government has imposed restrictions on the sharing of photos and videos related to the event.

Early this morning, January 20, at approximately 5:07 AM, a 4.9 magnitude earthquake struck Khyungchu County, affecting nearby regions including Zoega County, Ngaba County, Sungchu County, and Machu County. The strongest tremors were reported in Dachen and Serdheu villages in Khyungchu County. While a few brief reports have appeared in government-controlled media, the Chinese government has imposed strict restrictions on information related to the earthquake across social media platforms. Consequently, there is no reliable information available about the extent of human casualties, livestock losses, or damage to households. A related source reported that the earthquake, which struck Khyungchu County and nearby regions at around 5 a.m., was relatively mild in strength. While there were incidents of household items falling and porcelain utensils breaking, no confirmed reports of casualties or significant structural damage have emerged so far. However, the affected areas are experiencing electricity outages and severe disruptions to internet connectivity.

Another source said, “Today’s earthquake in Khyungchu County was most strongly felt in the lower river regions, including the villages of Dachen, Mewa, and Serdheu. Government officials and police arrived early in the morning, advising locals to pitch tents outdoors as a precautionary measure.”

Another source also described that since the powerful earthquake devastated the Shigatse region, numerous photos and videos were widely shared on social media platforms both within and outside Tibet. In response, Chinese authorities have imposed strict controls on the publication of photos and videos related to the recent earthquake in Matoe County in Golog and the current earthquake in Khyunchu County. Furthermore, they are threatening individuals with arrest if they share disaster-related content online.

This morning, mild earthquakes with magnitudes below 5 on the Richter scale were recorded in the Tibetan regions of Dritoe County in Qinghai Province, Dhongkye County in Shigatse, and Ashgar Prefecture in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

### Solar infra expansion in Tibet raises environmental and cultural concerns

18 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



Solar Power Station, Nyemo County (Photo/tibettimes)

The Chinese government’s ambitious solar power initiatives across Tibet are facing mounting criticism from local communities as traditional grasslands and pastoral areas are increasingly converted into vast solar installations, according to the Tibetan media outlet, *Tibettimes*.

According to the report, extensive solar projects are being constructed across Tibet’s mountains, valleys, and grasslands, with one of the most significant developments being a 1,000,000-watt solar facility in Khokla Town, Nyakchu County. Chinese authorities claim this project, reportedly generating 20 billion watts annually, is the world’s largest of its kind.

Local entrepreneur Mingyur Dorjee has raised alarm about the cultural and environmental impact of these developments. In a recent sixteen-minute video, he emphasised that Tibetan nomadic communities have relied on these grasslands for generations, warning

that separating nomads from their traditional lands threatens to erode centuries-old customs and ways of life.

The solar expansion coincides with new restrictions on nomadic practices. Since early 2023, authorities have implemented a mandatory livestock tagging program in regions including Golog, Ngaba, and Khyungchu. Nomadic households face strict limitations, being forced to reduce their herds to just seven yaks per family member. Additionally, communities report being charged 50,000 yuan as a “national tax,” despite initial promises of compensation for livestock losses if the animals are tagged.

China, currently the world’s leading solar power producer, began installing solar panels in Tibet around 1980. The installations now span numerous regions, including Ngari, Nyemo, Shigatse, and Nyingchi. A notable example is the recently completed solar station in Ruthog County, Ngari, which covers 566 square meters at an elevation of 4,400 meters.

Environmental advocates warn that the rapid expansion of solar installations is disrupting the region’s delicate ecological balance, affecting wildlife habitats and traditional grazing lands. Critics argue that while the Chinese government frames these developments as steps toward creating an affluent middle-class society, the projects are effectively displacing traditional communities and transforming vital pastoral lands into commercial zones under China’s National Grassland Rights Act, which designates grassland ownership to the state.

### Damage detected in five dams in Tibet after Dingri earthquake

18 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon



The Three Gorges Dam in China’s Hubei, world’s biggest hydropower project (Photo/AP)

China has reported structural damage, including cracks, to five out of 14 hydropower dams in Tibet following a powerful earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale. The quake struck near Dingri County in the Shigatse Prefecture on January 7 at 9:05 AM local time.

Following an investigation into 14 dams in the earthquake-affected area, Tibet’s emergency

management officials announced in a press conference that five dams had sustained damage. Of these, three dams have since been emptied to mitigate risks. One reservoir suffered severe damage, with its walls tilting, necessitating the evacuation of approximately 1,500 residents from six downstream villages.

Currently, efforts to reduce water levels in three reservoirs are ongoing, while a fourth is being fully drained. Monitoring equipment has been installed to track the stability of the impacted structures, and emergency repairs are underway.

The earthquake has reignited concerns about the vulnerability of China's extensive hydropower projects in Tibet. Analysts argue that the projects' locations on a seismically active plateau pose significant risks. Despite these warnings, China continues to expand its hydropower infrastructure in the region. Notably, in December 2024, less than two weeks before the earthquake, China announced plans to construct the world's largest dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet. The river, known as the Brahmaputra in India, flows into Arunachal Pradesh and Assam before reaching Bangladesh, raising environmental and geopolitical concerns for downstream nations.

China dismissed these concerns, stating, "China's construction of the hydropower project over in the Yarlung Tsangpo River has gone through rigorous scientific verification and will not have any negative impact on the ecological environment, geology, and water resources of the downstream countries."

Following the earthquake, President Penpa Tsering of the exile Tibetan government known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) issued a strong warning to China during a special prayer service. Speaking to exile media, he said, "This is a warning signal from nature to the Chinese government. They must prioritise environmental assessments for mega-projects in Tibet, particularly the planned dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River at Pemako. This dam is expected to generate three times the electricity of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest in China. Considering the Tibetan plateau's seismic activity, any damage to such a massive structure could have catastrophic consequences for downstream countries."

The Tibetan plateau, formed by tectonic shifts between the Indian and Eurasian plates, remains one of the most seismically active regions in the world. Environmentalists and geopolitical experts have called for increased scrutiny of China's infrastructure projects in Tibet to prevent disasters that could impact millions across Asia.

## Heavy Metals Threaten Environmental Capacity Of Tibetan Plateau Oases

17 January 2025, [The Pinnacle Gazette](#)

### Research reveals alarming pollution trends impacting biodiversity and ecosystem stability.

The delicate ecosystems of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau are facing increasing threats from heavy metal pollution, which poses significant risks not only to the environment but also to human health. A recent study highlights how the environmental capacity of oasis soils is impacted by heavy metals, shedding light on the urgent need for conservation efforts.

The Tibetan Plateau, often referred to as the "Roof of the World," includes unique oasis ecosystems, which serve as oases of biodiversity amid vast desert landscapes. These systems rely heavily on water sources and are fragile, making them particularly vulnerable to human activities such as agricultural overexploitation and mining.

Researchers examined the Delingha-Wulan region, conducting extensive soil sampling across multiple sites, where they analyzed the concentrations of six key heavy metals: zinc, lead, copper, arsenic, mercury, and cadmium. The findings revealed concerning trends, with pollution levels being influenced by anthropogenic pressures resulting from cultivation, land use, and geological factors.

The order of heavy metals based on their environmental capacity revealed troubling insights: zinc had the highest residual capacity, followed by lead and copper, with cadmium registering significantly lower levels. Notably, cadmium, which poses severe health risks, showed the most concerning trends indicating ecological hazards.

One of the study's authors emphasized, "heavy metals are hazardous to soils and human health due to their cumulative nature and difficulty in management and degradation," highlighting why this research is so pertinent today. The geographical background of the study area was found to significantly affect the residual capacities for all metals, showing how local geology influences heavy metal accumulation.

The analysis covered 1,517 soil samples and employed rigorous scientific methodologies, including advanced geochemical analyses and statistical evaluations. By mapping the residual capacities, the researchers were able to predict future trends of heavy metal accumulation and establish environmental capacity indices, providing tools for assessing risks and planning conservation strategies.

"The predicted results of the dynamic environmental capacity were consistent with actual observations," noted the authors, pointing to the reliability of their methodology. This alignment between forecasts and observable data enhances the study's credibility and



reinforces the pressing need for proactive environmental management.

Findings from this research are alarming, particularly with the average integrated environmental capacity index indicating a mild health risk due to the accumulated heavy metals. Ongoing and future human activities—primarily driven by agriculture—pose significant threats to these fragile ecosystems. The authors conclude, "The study findings provide scientific support for the preservation of the environment and effective resource utilization."

Given the unique nature of oases in arid environments, the study's conclusions also paved the way for recommendations aimed at safeguarding these regions. It is evident there must be immediate action taken to mitigate human impacts, manage agricultural practices wisely, and conduct thorough risk assessments concerning soil pollution.

The research also indicates the necessity for long-term monitoring of heavy metal concentrations and taking preventative measures to avoid possible contamination—a task of increasing urgency as climate change and resource pressures continue to escalate.

To wrap up, as the pressure mounts on Tibetan Plateau ecosystems, this research serves as both a warning and a guide for future actions aimed at ensuring the environmental sustainability of these unique and invaluable oases.

### **China Emptying Dams as Cracks Found After Big Quake in Tibet**

16 January 2025, [Asia Financial](#)

***Three of the five affected dams have been emptied since the big quake on January 7, a Tibet emergency management official told a news conference on Thursday***

Authorities in Tibet in southwestern China have detected cracks at five of more than a dozen dams inspected after a 6.8 magnitude quake rocked the region last week.

Three of the five affected dams have been emptied since the big quake on January 7, a Tibet emergency management official told a news conference on Thursday, according to Reuters.

The walls of one hydro dam in Tingri county, near the quake's epicentre, had tilted, which prompted officials to evacuate about 1,500 people from six villages downstream to higher ground, he said.

At another hydroelectric dam, monitoring devices have been installed as it is being drained.

The earthquake, which has killed at least 126 people and injured hundreds, was a reminder of the risks from

a hydropower-building spree by China and India in one of the world's most remote, quake-prone regions.

Earthquakes have damaged dams in the past, particularly by setting off landslides and rockfalls. A massive earthquake in Nepal in 2015 shuttered almost a fifth of its hydropower for more than a year.

The January 7 quake in Tibet was the fifth-deadliest in China since the 2008 Sichuan temblor. It destroyed more than 3,600 houses and damaged religious structures, and aftershocks of up to 5.0 in magnitude have continued to shake the area.

Southwestern parts of China, Nepal and northern India are often hit by earthquakes caused by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. Tingri, which sits atop the zone where the Indian plate pushes under Tibet, is particularly vulnerable.

### **World's biggest dam planned near quake zone**

The earthquake and China's announcement in late December that it **plans to build the world's largest hydropower dam** on the Yarlung Zangbo (Tsangbo) River has alarmed its neighbours, who say it could affect could affect tens of millions of people downstream in India and Bangladesh.

Four days before the big quake, India's foreign ministry said New Delhi had conveyed its concerns to Beijing about China's plan to build another huge dam on the Yarlung Tsangbo, which flows into the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam states and finally into Bangladesh.

In these countries the river is known as the Brahmaputra.

Chinese officials claim that hydropower projects in Tibet will not have a major impact on the environment or on downstream water supplies, but India and Bangladesh have serious doubts about that.

**Tibetan activists** claim China's dams in Tibet "**threaten the water supply**, livelihoods and health of up to 1.8 billion people across China, South and Southeast Asia." "The Chinese side has been urged to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas," Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told a media briefing on January 3.

"We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests," he said.

The construction of the dam, which will be the largest of its kind in the world with an estimated capacity of 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, was approved last month.

### **New Chinese counties in disputed area**

Jaiswal said that New Delhi had also lodged a "solemn protest" with Beijing against its creation of two new counties – one of which includes a disputed area also claimed by India – last month.

"Creation of new counties will neither have a bearing on India's longstanding and consistent position

regarding our sovereignty over the area nor lend legitimacy to China's illegal and forcible occupation of the same," he said.

Relations between Asian giants India and China, that were strained after a **deadly military clash on their disputed border in 2020**, have been on the mend since they reached an agreement in October to pull back troops from their last two stand-off points in the western Himalayas.

The two armies have stepped back following the agreement and **senior officials held formal talks** for the first time in five years last month where they agreed to take small steps to improve relations.

### China Announces It Will Build Controversial 60GW Mega-Dam in Tibet

16 January 2025, [ENR](#), Soidal Dasgupta



*Tibet project estimated at 60GW would be nearly three times the size of China's Three Gorges Dam, pictured above, which began operating in 2006.*

After years of speculation, China last month announced it would build what it described as the world's largest hydropower dam in its Tibet region—a \$137-billion megaproject nearly three times the size of the Three Gorges Dam to be located on the Yarlung Zangbo River in one of the deepest gorges on Earth. But the estimated 60-GW project has raised serious concerns from environmentalists and neighboring countries India and Bangladesh because the dam site is in an earthquake fault zone, experts say.

Just two weeks after China announced the project on Dec. 25, the Tibetan region suffered a massive 6.8 magnitude earthquake that killed 126 people in the thinly populated area and left 180 injured. The Jan. 8 quake was followed two days later by a major 5.5-magnitude aftershock. The epicenter is about 1,200 km from the dam site, but environmental advocates cite risks involved in constructing the project in a region that has seen a series of quakes in the past several decades.

China has rejected criticism about the risks involved in the project. "Let me reiterate that the decision to build the project was made after rigorous scientific

evaluation and the project will not have a negative impact on the ecological environment, geological conditions and the rights and interests related to water resources of downstream countries," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told media.

According to the government, the dam will be built in the Yarlung Zangpo Grand Canyon, where the river makes a U-turn before entering India. It has a steep descent of nearly 2,000 meters over a 50-km stretch creating vast hydroelectricity potential. The project would include one or more 20-kilometer-long tunnels necessary to divert the river's flow.

"The project raises concerns about the risks of flooding and structural collapse, particularly in the event of an earthquake. The project is located in the vicinity of the world's deepest gorge, which poses unique geological and engineering challenges," Neeraj Singh Manhas, special advisor for South Asia at South Korea-based think tank Parley Policy Initiative, told ENR.

Manhas said the region is highly seismically active due to tectonic interaction between the Indian and Eurasian plates in the Earth's crust. "A large-scale hydroelectric project in such an area must contend with the potential for earthquakes, landslides and glacial lake outburst floods, which can all compromise dam integrity," he said.

The Yarlung Zangbo River flows from China to India and Bangladesh while merging with other rivers to become the Brahmaputra, which has led the governments of India and Bangladesh to express concern.

"The Chinese side has been urged to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas. We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests," Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for India's Ministry of External Affairs, said in a statement.

After the quake, China's Ministry of Water Resources said it had carried out inspections and found that the event had no impact on any existing dams and reservoirs in the Tibet region, which has 68 structures that tap hydroelectric potential of high-altitude rivers and lakes.

#### 'World's Riskiest Project'

China is interested in the project to replace pollution-causing coal-sourced energy, seeking cleaner sources such as hydropower, as well as nuclear and solar energy, observers say, but they are not sure if Beijing will be able to sustain the investment when it is facing an economic slowdown.

"This is possibly the world's riskiest project, and a serious engineering challenge to build and maintain," Himangshu Thakkar, coordinator for South Asia Network of Dams, Rivers and People, a Delhi-based research group, told ENR. "I think the Chinese

government would not undertake such a foolhardy project. If there is a disaster, a part of China would also be affected apart from downstream places in India and Bangladesh.”

Engineers entrusted to build the dam would face a major obstacle in the form of a frozen lake called Sedongpu located a few dozen kilometers upstream from the construction site. Created by a landslide in 2018, it is like a colossal tank hanging above the dam site.

The government has sent several groups of scientists and engineers in recent years to determine how to get rid of the artificial dam. “The situation is very difficult. There is not an immediate solution yet,” said Xing Aiguo, a civil engineering professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, who was involved in one of the studies, in a report by Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post. The expert teams also reported climate change impacts may lead to similar disasters resulting in formation of more lakes. “The area is large and there are many glaciers,” he said.

Development of natural resources and energy in the Yarlung Zongpo River "must fully consider" risks of avalanches and debris flows in the Sedongpu valley, noted a 2019 Ministry of Natural Resources report. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that 25% of glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau have disappeared since the 1970s, and two-thirds of those remaining will be gone by the end of the century.

China has been often criticized for building 11 dams over the cross-border Mekong River that are believed to have caused severe droughts in neighboring Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. “China has no water treaties with neighbors who share common rivers. It always acts on its self-interest without bothering how its dam projects would impact life in other countries,” Thakkar said.

China’s foreign ministry defended the Yurland Zangbo project, emphasizing that it "will not negatively affect the lower reaches," spokesperson Mao Ningshe said, adding that the government "will continue to maintain communication with countries [there] through existing channels and step up cooperation on disaster prevention and relief" for people affected.

## 1-million-tons and seen from the space: China opens the “mother of all mines”

15 January 2025, [Eco News](#), Sanusha S.



*Credit: Environmental Inequality*

In the province of Sichuan, located in the region of Yajiang, China has recently put much effort into discovering **900,000 tons of lithium reserves**. China ranks second-well after Australia in the world in terms of holding the biggest deposits of lithium. This breakthrough should be seen as having come so far indeed.

China’s new energy revolution is fueled by 1.06 trillion Yuan in exports

Truly 2017, it is for the people to welcome the establishment of Asia’s largest pegmatite lithium deposit in Yajiang. Now, China is bracing to make sure that it already has ample local raw materials for the booming electric car and renewable energy sector.

This is generally called “white gold” in the energy industry. Lithium is indispensable to the development of electric vehicle batteries, photovoltaic cells, and other fresh energy technologies. In 2023, the big three of **China’s trade-new-energy vehicles, lithium batteries, and solar panels-combined exports into a huge sum of 1.06 trillion yuan (\$148.89 billion)**.

Despite its success, the uneven global distribution of lithium resources has been a perennial bane. Historically, the major riches were confined to South America, Australia, and the USA, so recent investigations by China have fundamentally altered the global lithium picture.

The writing was done to drive the **transition to green energy by the MNR**. The Korean government’s dependence on international commodity markets with events was handled domestically with an increased emphasis on exploration and many outside works as part of the very effort to overcome such dependence on imported goods that the country really did not have.

2,800 km-long spodumene deposit in Tibet extended to develop lithium potential across China

China has managed to hike its lithium reserve from 6% to 16.5% percent globally making it to the second-largest producer in the world. This development was

largely attributed to the country's efforts to continuously explore and better optimize its metal resource potential.

The new resource was found to be still not adequately viable yet for practical industrial mining, a **2,800 km long spodumene deposit may lie in Xikunsong-Pan-Ganzi area in Tibet**. Another thing that caught attention was the tripling of lithium lake resources in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region.

These make the lakes third largest worldwide after those in the lithium triangle located in South America and the west of the US. Salt lakes allow the economically viable processing of lithium besides allowing China to stand witness to an increase in demand for this critical mineral as lithium supplies in the world keep growing.

Consequently, an imminent hike in the price of lithium was predicted, and the royal mineral proceeded to improve its downstream processing capability as domestic production started picking up. There had been an **increase in lithium reserves emerging from both salt lakes and spodumene mines** that might enable the country to meet the increasing demands of the global market while further reinforcing its position in the lithium economy (like this underground geothermal lithium which was considered a myth).

International cooperation helps China establish global presence as lithium exporter

Chinese lithium has extended beyond its boundaries for security. It was revealed in a national resources summit that 'The future of natural resources: international cooperation catalyzes domestic effort' announces the entire global cooperation in the exploration of national approach to consistent encouragement of effective transference processes and support from global partnerships and to Chinese ambition of opening to active lithium battery manufacturing and meeting market consumption needs.

Lithium integrates into ceramics, glass, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy systems demonstrate its versatility. Domestic exploration will not only support China's green energy ambitions but will also contribute to improving its **position in the global supply chain for different industries**.

China's vast reserves of lithium the exploration at this point is not just an evolution towards energy security and sustainability: it is a way in which one completes his becoming, while Asia hosts the biggest pegmatite deposit in the world and the planet's third greatest salt lake lithium. In a word, it will change everything concerning global energy and drive a future that is less dirty and greener (such as this one which was discovered beneath a supervolcano).

## China's Yarlung Tsangpo super-dam project in Tibet seen as insidious

15 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

The dangers of building any dam in a known and acknowledged seismically active earthquake-prone zone does not bear any mentioning. Nevertheless, China has pushed ahead with its decision to build the world's largest dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo river at a site just before it enters India. This has led experts to suggest that with it, China looks to kill three birds with one stone for insidious reasons.

By building the dam, reportedly the world's most expensive infrastructure project of its kind, China intends to end the Tibet issue, weaponise water, and gain control over downstream countries like India and Bangladesh, reported *news18.com* Jan 13, citing top intelligence sources.

"The construction will be dangerous and will impact geology because drilling will hit tectonic plates, which could cause earthquakes," the report cited them as saying.

Besides, the construction will lead to displacement of communities from the region and this will have impact on security of the region. "This will create major imbalance and ultimately damage the regional balance, economic stability and security."

Also, the construction is taking place very close to India's border – just five kilometres away in Gelling, Upper Siang, 5.75 kilometres from Gelling village, 1.62 kilometres from the McMahon Line, and 35 kilometres from Medog town in the Nyingtri City of Tibet, the report said.

The sources have warned: "The dam construction is a strategic project of China and Chinese have clear advantage to store or divert the flow of the river system. The Chinese have never worked on any project without a purpose. This dam will serve as a tool where both India and Bangladesh will suffer in the times of stand-off like the recent one after Galwan and Doklam."

Besides, "China's intent may be to divert water from multiple water reservoirs under the project, which will dry the regions of Tibet. In case China does this, the river coming to India — which is Siang — will also lose its water flow and impact both Assam and Bangladesh."

The sources have also said that by building dams in the Tibetan plateau, China will gain significant upstream leverage over multiple neighbouring countries to which the rivers flow.

The report said New Delhi was already aware of the dangers and taking measures to deal with the long-term threats arising from it.

"Special Representative-level talks are going to discuss all these issues and we will take it forward. We have also announced some dams in Arunachal Pradesh in

light of developments in our areas and tackling Chinese threat,” the sources said.

Even without the earthquake danger, the sheer size of the dam represents a threat in other ways, besides the transnational effect on the environment and ecology. NASA scientists have warned that China’s Three Gorges Dam, the world’s largest hydroelectric power station, has the potential to slightly alter Earth’s rotation. The massive dam, which spans the Yangtze River in Hubei province, has caused a measurable change in Earth’s rotation by slowing it down by 0.06 microseconds per day, reported the *republicworld.com* Jan 13.

While the change is minuscule and not noticeable in daily life, it is scientifically significant.

NASA’s Benjamin Fong Chao has explained, “Redistribution of mass within the Earth’s system produces an effect on Earth’s rotation. While the delay of 0.06 microseconds per day may seem negligible, it is a measurable consequence of this redistribution.”

The principle behind this effect, it was explained, is that moving mass closer to the poles accelerates Earth’s rotation, whereas shifting it toward the equator slows it down.

This shocking discovery by NASA reveals effects of large-scale human activities on natural systems. As China plans to build an even larger dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo, the potential for further impacts on Earth’s rotation and environment becomes a topic of concern, the report said.

### **Snow Leopards Dispersed Out of Tibetan Plateau Multiple Times, Researchers Say**

15 January 2025, [Sci News](#)

The snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is a large feline unique to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and its surrounding areas. How this apex predator gradually adapted to the extreme environments remains unexplored due to the scanty fossil record in Tibet. In new research, scientists examined five outside-Tibet records of the snow leopard lineage. Their results suggest that the snow leopard dispersed out of the Tibetan Plateau multiple times during the Quaternary period. The anatomy of the modern snow leopard shows adaptations to the steep slope and cold/high-altitude environment. The new results suggest that the snow leopard experienced a gradual strengthening of such adaptation, especially since the Middle Pleistocene (0.8 million years ago).

The snow leopard is one of the iconic animals of the Tibetan Plateau and distributes also in the ranged mountainous regions of central Asia as the Mongolian Plateau.

It has distinctive features, e.g., long and dense pelage, long tail, short face, steep and wide forehead, large

cheek teeth etc., that clearly distinguish it from the other members of the genus *Panthera*.

The snow leopard typically inhabits within high alpine regions, above 3,000 m, or above the tree line, but may also occur at much lower elevations below 1,000 m in some areas of Siberia.

The status of the snow leopard in IUCN’s Red List is *Vulnerable*, with 4,000 individuals. However, under global warming, its distribution is expected to be substantially affected, as moving northward or upward to a higher altitude.

“While the distinctive characteristics of the snow leopard have long been acknowledged, the correlation between these traits and its adaptation to the Tibetan Plateau environment, as well as their evolutionary history, remains largely unexplored,” said Dr. Qigao Jiangzuo, a researcher at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Peking University, and colleagues.

“This gap in understanding is primarily due to the scarcity of snow leopard fossils in the Tibetan Plateau and its surrounding regions.”

In the study, the researchers described snow leopard fossils from five sites: Longdan in Gansu, China; Arago in France; Zhoukoudian locality 3 in Beijing, China; Manga Larga in Portugal; and Niuyan Cave in Mentougou, Beijing, China.

Except for the fossil from Niuyan Cave, which can be classified as a modern snow leopard, the others show significant differences compared to existing snow leopards.

The scientists concluded that the snow leopards found outside the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau are not an independent lineage but rather comprise small offshoots from the main snow leopard branch.

It is likely that these offshoots represent multiple dispersals of snow leopards out of Tibet at different times.

To study the evolution of important morphological features, the authors conducted a systematic analysis of the functional morphology of modern snow leopards using anatomy, geometric morphometrics, and finite element analysis.

Their findings indicate that snow leopards have large eye sockets and highly developed binocular vision, suggesting they possess advanced stereoscopic vision that allows them to quickly focus on prey in complex terrain.

“Snow leopards have a short snout and a steeply angled jaw, with canines that feature a nearly round cross-section,” the researchers said.

“This structure enables them to exert powerful forces to subdue strong prey, although it may also compromise flexibility.”

“Furthermore, snow leopards’ well-developed frontal sinus system warms inhaled air and enhances

respiratory efficiency, making them animals well-adapted to cold, low-oxygen environments.”

“Moreover, snow leopards possess a pronounced tympanic bulla, which increases their sensitivity to infrasonic waves, allowing them to detect prey sounds from greater distances in open areas.”

“Their large cheek teeth (i.e., premolars and molars) also enable them to consume most meat from prey before it freezes in the cold environment.”

“In addition, these teeth improve snow leopards’ ability to chew already frozen carcasses.”

“While the scapulae and pelvis of snow leopards are relatively small, their distal limb bones are elongated.”

“This indicates that their forelimbs have less muscular power but greater flexibility in movement, making them suited for running and jumping in mountainous regions.”

“Most of these features represent adaptations to mountainous environments and to their primary prey, the Caprinae (sheep and related species), which tend to have slower speeds but short, robust limbs and strong horns for resistance.”

“Only a small portion of snow leopard adaptations pertains to high-altitude, low-oxygen conditions.”

The scientists also studied the functional morphology of fossil snow leopards by correlating various morphological features with their functions.

They discovered that early snow leopards, including the Early Pleistocene *Panthera* aff. *pyrenaica* from Longdan and the Early Middle Pleistocene *Panthera pyrenaica* from France, had mandibles that were already steeply angled but had not yet shortened.

Additionally, their cheek teeth had not increased in size. This suggests an initial adaptation to Caprinae prey; however, no significant specializations for cold environments were apparent at this stage.

Later fossils, such as the Late Middle Pleistocene *Panthera* aff. *uncia* from Zhoukoudian locality 3 and the Late Pleistocene *Panthera uncia lusitana*, were found to be very similar to modern snow leopards, displaying comparable adaptations.

However, certain features, including the development of the ectotympanic chamber and the extent of forehead expansion, were generally less pronounced in the European *Panthera uncia lusitana* compared to contemporary snow leopards.

“Bayesian analyses of morphological evolution rates indicate that snow leopards began to change rapidly in the Middle Pleistocene,” the authors said.

“This timeframe coincides with the emergence of large ice sheets on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.”

“Since the Middle Pleistocene, global climate variability has increased, resulting in more severe and prolonged glacial periods.”

“These conditions allowed snow leopards to expand their range beyond the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.”

“Notably, the Middle Pleistocene also marks the period when many members of the Caprinae subfamily began to migrate from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau into North China and Europe, paralleling the movement of snow leopards from the plateau.”

To determine if fossil snow leopards had similar ecological adaptations to modern snow leopards, the researchers analyzed the relationship between the distribution of modern snow leopards and climate data.

They employed a random forest approach, training a model known as species distribution modeling to predict how snow leopards might adapt based on climate conditions.

Subsequently, they applied climate data from the Last Glacial Maximum to evaluate the potential maximum distribution of modern snow leopards during that time period.

“The results indicate that the potential suitable distribution for snow leopards during the Last Glacial Maximum was significantly larger than it is today,” the scientists said.

“However, regions such as Europe and Beijing were outside the areas deemed suitable for their distribution.”

“This suggests that fossil snow leopards may have developed ecological adaptations distinct from those of modern snow leopards.”

“Consequently, the distribution of fossil snow leopards can’t be entirely predicted using modern snow leopard models.”

“Additionally, it is important to note that while these fossil sites are generally located at relatively low elevations (below 500 m), they were situated in mountainous environments and typically contained Caprinae fossils.”

“The only exception is the site in Portugal, which lacks faunal records. This observation suggests that mountainous terrain and the availability of related prey may have been more critical for snow leopards than the high-altitude, low-oxygen conditions.”

“Niuyan Cave is the only known site in the world containing both snow leopard and leopard fossils.”

“Since we know that snow leopards today occasionally share habitats in transitional zones near the forest line, the Niuyan Cave discovery suggests that similar environmental conditions may have existed there when the fossils were deposited.”

“By integrating paleobiology, molecular biology, finite element analysis, and species distribution modeling, we were able to trace the evolutionary history and functional morphological adaptations of the snow leopard, a key target of ecological conservation on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.”

“Our findings reveal the evolutionary path of snow leopards, suggesting that mountainous terrain may

have played a more critical role in their survival than climate factors alone.”

These insights are important to ongoing snow leopard conservation efforts and also prove the usefulness of preservation paleontology.

“The analyses we have carried out lead us to conclude that surely the high altitude and snow would not have been the limiting factor for the distribution of the species, but rather the presence of open and steep spaces,” said Dr. Joan Madurell Malapeira, a researcher at the Università di Firenze and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

“In other words, the snow leopard has always been adapted to live in the mountains, but not necessarily at high altitudes and with snow.”

“And this, in a context of climate change like the current one, is encouraging to ensure their survival.”

### **Tibet hit by two powerful aftershocks of last week's earthquake**

13 January 2022, [Reuters](#)

A rural county in the Chinese region of Tibet, still feeling tremors from last week's magnitude 6.8 earthquake, was jolted on Monday night by two powerful aftershocks barely a minute apart.

A magnitude 4.9 quake struck Tingri county at 8:57 p.m. local time (1257 GMT), according to China Earthquake Networks Center. That was followed by a magnitude 5.0 aftershock a minute later whose epicentre was just 9km from last week's quake.

There were no immediate reports of casualties, Chinese state media said, following the magnitude 5.0 aftershock, which struck at a very shallow depth of 10km.

The Jan. 7 earthquake, the fifth-strongest in China since the destructive 2008 Sichuan temblor, left at least 126 people dead and injured 338 in Tibet.

More than 47,000 people in Tingri had to be swiftly resettled in tents and prefab houses, in a high-altitude environment where nighttime temperatures in winter plunge to as low as minus 15 degrees Celsius (5 degrees Fahrenheit).

Southwestern parts of China, Nepal and northern India are often hit by earthquakes caused by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. Tingri, which sits atop the zone where the Indian plate pushes under Tibet, is particularly vulnerable.

### **Resilience Amid Ruins: Tibet's Earthquake Aftermath**

09 January 2025, [Devdiscourse](#)

A severe earthquake in Tibet has forced over 47,000 people into shelters as rescuers continue to search for survivors amidst increasingly difficult conditions. The disaster has caused significant damage, prompting

large-scale relief and rebuilding efforts, with Chinese officials emphasizing maintaining order and ensuring social stability.

Authorities have relocated more than 47,000 individuals to shelters following a devastating earthquake in Tibet, Chinese officials reported on Thursday. Despite the daunting odds, rescuers are intensifying their search near the Himalayas' foothills for survivors of Tuesday's 6.8 magnitude quake, which claimed 126 lives and injured 188 others.

Officials remain committed to the rescue mission, even as temperatures plummet to minus 18 degrees Celsius (zero degrees Fahrenheit). Hao Tao announced the completion of the first full-scale search and rescue phase, with plans for more in-depth efforts. Damage assessment continues, with four reservoirs impacted and 11,000 rescuers deployed swiftly after the quake struck.

Centered in Tingri, near Mount Everest, the earthquake destroyed over 3,600 homes, with damages extending to 27,000 more. The quake's power led to tectonic shifts, including a 1.6 m terrain slip over 80 km. Ongoing reconstruction includes setting up prefabricated shelters, with authorities stressing the need for vigilance in relief efforts and stability maintenance.

### **China has world's second largest lithium reserves after new Xinjiang-Tibet discoveries**

08 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

Thanks to recent new discoveries in occupied territories of Tibet and Xinjiang, China, the world largest consumer of lithium, has the second largest known reserve of the mineral, trailing only Chile. Lithium is a critical element for a wide range of emerging industries, including electric vehicles, energy storage systems, mobile communications, medical treatments, and nuclear reactor fuel.

The lithium reserves in the People's Republic of China have increased from 6% to 16.5% of the global total, propelling it from sixth to second place in the world rankings, reported the official *Xinhua* news agency Jan 8, citing China Geological Survey under the Ministry of Natural Resources.

A world-class spodumene-type lithium belt spanning 2,800 kilometres in “west China” has been discovered, the report said.

China's official *globaltimes.cn* Jan 8 said the breakthrough resulted from significant discoveries along the 2,800-kilometer-long West Kunlun-Songpan-Ganzi lithium belt in the country's western swathes. This encompasses areas from Xinjiang (East Turkestan) to the historically Tibetan domiciles in Sichuan provinces.

The report said the lithium resources found in the Tibetan Plateau's salt lakes have also seen substantial growth, positioning China as the third-largest salt lake lithium resource base globally, the report said.

Extracting lithium from salt lake brine, known for its low cost and reduced environmental impact, resulted in substantial lithium resource growth in the broad Tibetan Plateau region, the report said.

China's increased domestic lithium exploration is expected to reduce its reliance on foreign supplies and contribute to a more balanced global lithium market, the *Xinhua* report cited experts as saying.



## Tibet friendship group reestablished in European Parliament

30 January 2025, [ICT](#)



*European Parliament's Friends of Tibet group*

The European Parliament's Friends of Tibet group held today its first meeting following last year's European elections, marking a significant step forward in continued support for Tibet within the European Union.

Convened by Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Dainus Žalimas (Renew, Lithuania), the meeting brought together MEPs or their assistants from various political groups to discuss the current situation in Tibet and explore potential parliamentary initiatives to support the Tibetan people. MEPs present were: Petras Auštrevičius (Renew, Lithuania), Hannes Heide (S&D, Austria), Mariusz Kamiński (ECR, Poland), Beatrice Timgren (Sweden, ECR), Brunno Tobbac (S&D, Belgium), Sebastian Tynkkynen (ECR, Finland) and Dainus Žalimas (Renew, Lithuania).

Žalimas, who was nominated as Chair of the group, highlighted the importance of this group in light of the bleak situation in Tibet. He raised a number of upcoming opportunities that MEPs could join – including the 66th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day on March 10; the 9th World Parliamentary Convention on Tibet (taking place this year in Tokyo from June 2-4); and the 90th birthday of the Dalai Lama. The group also agreed to explore the possibility of pushing the adoption of urgency resolutions on Tibet by the European Parliament – for example about the situation following the recent earthquake in Tibet. The meeting was also attended by Rigzin Genkhang, the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Brussels, and of ICT, who provided an overview of the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet – including the forced assimilation policies including the boarding schools system for Tibetan children, restrictions on religious freedom and environmental destruction.

"As Chinese assimilation policies are being implemented at a rapid pace, threatening the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity, we welcome the reestablishment of this Tibet friendship group within the European Parliament," ICT's EU Policy

## TIBET IN EXILE

Director Vincent Metten said. “It is crucial that Members of the European Parliament from different political groups meet regularly and launch coordinated initiatives on Tibet to ensure the issue remains high on the EU’s agenda,” Metten added.

The reestablishment of the group followed the EU4Tibet campaign, a coordinated effort by the Office of Tibet in Brussels and ICT ahead of the 2024 European Parliament elections. Through this campaign, candidates were encouraged to publicly pledge their support for Tibet, which helped lay the groundwork for the group’s relaunch. The campaign also garnered strong support from Tibet Support Groups across Europe, whose tireless work played an essential role in raising awareness about Tibet among the European public. On the occasion of a meeting of Tibet Support Groups in Copenhagen on January 30 and 31 – which was convened by the Office of Tibet in London for the Nordic and Baltic countries – the attendees expressed their great joy at the reestablishment of the Tibet friendship group, and wished Mr. Žalimas and his colleagues much success in their work.

The Tibet Intergroup, established at the beginning of the European Parliament’s third legislature in 1989, was one of the institution’s oldest intergroups. Since 2014, it was reestablished as a more informal group, which has been pivotal in maintaining Tibet on the political agenda of the EU.

### Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Attends FNF’s Partners Meeting

29 January 2025, [CTA](#)



*Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Attends FNF’s Partners Meeting.*

On 23 January 2025, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile attended a partners meeting of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) at the Milan Conference Hall of the Jaypee Vasant Continental Hotel in Delhi. During the meeting, she spoke about the long-term collaborative projects between the Central Tibetan Administration

and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation’s South East Asia division, as well as its productivity.

In her address, the Deputy Speaker highlighted that the Tibetan Parliamentary Policy Research Centre (TPPRC) was established by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in New Delhi, during the tenure of Professor Samdhong Rinpoche as the Parliament Speaker.

The main objectives of establishing this centre were to strengthen democracy and reinforce the non-violent nature of the Tibetan struggle, to assist the Central Tibetan Administration particularly the Tibetan Parliament in fulfilling Tibetan aspirations and to promote the political status of the Central Tibetan Administration. To achieve these objectives, several publications were produced and distributed, including Comparative Government Studies, Path to Democracy, Eight volumes of Parliamentary speeches by Speaker Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, Compilations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s March 10th statements, Studies on autonomy and Tibetan perspectives, Compilations of Tibet-related matters in both houses of Indian Parliament. These publications helped enhance analytical understanding among Tibetan parliamentarians and other interested parties. Regarding parliamentary programs, they initiated strategic meetings for parliamentarians and orientation programs for new MPs on the constitution and regulations, which continue to this day. Local Tibetan Assembly members also received hands-on guidance and workshops on their duties, legal regulations, and youth leadership development, which helped strengthen democratic processes and the rule of law.

Although the TPPRC office in Delhi had to close in 2014 due to financial difficulties, collaborative projects continued through the Social and Resource Development Fund (SARD) of the Department of Finance. The current FNF South Asia Director, Dr Carsten Klein, has facilitated visits of German parliamentarians and various diplomatic representatives to Dharamsala, allowing them to visit the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Upper TCV School, and the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts. These visits helped showcase not only the structure of the Tibetan administration but also the nature of the Tibetan struggle.

Additionally, the Deputy Speaker had the opportunity to participate in a study tour with Southeast Asian parliamentarians to observe the functioning of both houses of the German Parliament while also raising awareness about the Tibet issue.

Under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, more than 3 decades of partnership have greatly helped in strengthening democracy through non-

violent means in nurturing the elected leaders and people with democratic maturity. On behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people, she expressed gratitude to the consecutive FNF directors, German government officials, and the German people for their valuable contribution. She also requested other FNF partners to invite representatives from either the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile or the Tibet Policy Institute to participate in future environmental and climate-related conferences in Southeast Asian countries to raise awareness about the importance of the Tibetan plateau.

After her speech, she presented ceremonial scarves (khatas) and gifts to both the outgoing and incoming directors and ceremonial scarves to other participants along with informational booklets about the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. The meeting concluded with ten-minute presentations from each participating section about their work, followed by a question and answer session.

The main purposes of this meeting were to mark the transition of Dr Carsten Klein, the FNF South Asia Director for India, who is being transferred to Germany and his replacement by Moritz Kleine-Brockhoff, the FNF Bangkok Director, who will take over the India division. It was also to review the collaborative work and achievements of organisations associated with the Foundation to date, to explore opportunities for mutual learning among related organisations, and to identify key areas for potential future collaboration.

### **Seminar on “Environment and Security” Unites Tibet and India in Itanagar**

29 January 2025, [CTA](#)

On 24 January 2025, a significant seminar on “Environment and Security” was successfully organised by the Himalaya Suraksha Manch, Arunachal Pradesh, at the Dorjee Khandu State Convention Hall, Legislative Assembly, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. The seminar, aimed at spreading awareness on the dependent security of Regional Ecosystem of Arunachal Pradesh, and witnessed an overwhelming participation of over 700 attendees, including Hon’ble Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of Arunachal Pradesh, Former Ministers and MLAs, Major and Corporators of Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC), as well as prominent members of the Arunachal Indigenous Tribal Forum (AITF), which is the apex organisation of community-based organisations (CBOs).

Representatives from all tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, various NGOs, the Arunachal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), Market Welfare Associations of Itanagar, Naharlagun, Banderdewa, and Gohpur, along with student organisations, also actively participated

in the seminar. Additionally, the Core Group for Tibetan Cause – India were represented at the event. Delegates from various Assembly Constituencies of Arunachal Pradesh further enriched the discussions.

The seminar commenced with a ceremonial reception and exhibition tour for Shri Pema Khandu, Honourable Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Honourable leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).

Shri Tapir Gao, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) and Co-Convenor of the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, in his welcome address, stressed the significance of the seminar in addressing the environmental and security concerns caused by Tibet’s mismanagement under Chinese control. Shri Rinchen Khando Khrimy, National Convener of the Core Group for Tibetan Cause – India, in his introductory remarks, provided an overview of the organisation’s objectives, emphasising the longstanding historical and cultural ties between India and Tibet.

In his address, Sikyong Penpa Tsering gave an overview of the Central Tibetan Administration’s initiatives, functionalities, and vision, and elaborated Indo-Tibet’s historical relations. His Excellency highlighted the urgent need for India to take proactive measures to safeguard the region’s shared ecological and cultural heritage and raised concern about Tibet’s environmental degradation and its geopolitical implications for India’s security.

Hon’ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri Pema Khandu, in his keynote address, emphasised the environmental and ecological interdependence between Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh. He highlighted the historical basis of Arunachal Pradesh’s border, which was demarcated under the Shimla Treaty, and expressed concerns over China’s expansionist policies. Shri Khandu clarified that India shares its border with Tibet, not China, and condemned the forceful occupation of Tibet by China, and criticised the cultural genocide being done by China in the name of development. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Shri Tarh Tarak from Himalaya Suraksha Manch.

The afternoon session, moderated by Shri Moji Riba, Assistant Professor and Founder Head of the Department of Mass Communication at Rajiv Gandhi University, included an insightful presentation by Shri Vijay Kranti, a noted Tibetologist and Former National Co-Convenor of the Core Group for Tibetan Cause – India and an insightful and impactful presentation by His Excellency Penpa Tsering, Hon’ble Sikyong, Central Tibetan Administration. His Excellency Penpa Tsering presented a comprehensive overview on Tibet being the Water tower of Asia and stressed on the urgency of Tibet’s degrading environmental concern due to China’s dam construction projects, and its implications on Arunachal Pradesh’s geopolitical security. The

session concluded with a highly engaging and interactive Question and Answer segment, allowing attendees to directly address their queries and discuss significant issues with the Hon'ble Sikyong and Shri Vijay Kranti. The dialogue enriched the seminar, fostering a deeper understanding of the geopolitical nature of the regional ecosystem.

The event was enhanced by a significant exhibition on Tibet, organised by the Tibet Museum, themed "India and Tibet: Ancient Ties and Current Bonds," offering participants deep insights into Tibet's history, culture, and challenges. The seminar also highlighted the contributions of the India-Tibet Coordination Office (ITCO) in promoting India-Tibet relations. ITCO facilitated the distribution of insightful books, including Handbook on Tibet and India Leaders on Tibet, to participants. ITCO Coordinator Tashi Dekyi further honoured dignitaries by presenting souvenirs, symbolising the enduring bond between India and Tibet and reinforcing ITCO's commitment to strengthening these ties.

The Seminar ended with a vote of thanks by Shri Surendra Kumar, Co-Convener, Core Group for Tibetan Cause – India. The seminar served as a platform to raise awareness about the environmental challenges in Tibet and their implications for India's ecological security, marking the event as a key platform for fostering discussions on ecological protection, regional stability and addressing the Tibet issue for lasting peace.

**Announcement: The Department of Religion and Culture Requests the General Public to Refrain from Lhakar Dance Until the Completion of the 49 Days of Tibet Earthquake Calamity Mourning Period**

29 January 2025, [CTA](#)

As directed by the Kashag Secretariat, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Tibet on 7 January 2025, causing significant destruction, particularly in Dingri. In solidarity with survivors and to honour those who lost their lives, Tibetans in exile have decided to suspend the Lhakar dance (Gorshey-Tibetan Circle dance) for seven weeks. The Department of Religion and Culture announces that the suspension will continue until the 49th day after the earthquake.

*-Issued by the Department of Religion and Culture, 29 January 2025*

**US announces 90-day foreign aid suspension, Tibetans and Taiwan among affected**

29 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

The U.S. State Department has announced a 90-day suspension of nearly all foreign development assistance, following an executive order issued by

President Donald Trump in his first week in office. The directive, aimed at "assessment of programmatic efficiencies and consistency" with U.S. foreign policy, places over \$60 billion in aid under assessment.

As part of the suspension, Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued immediate "stop-work orders" for ongoing foreign assistance programs. While waivers have been granted for military financing to Israel and Egypt and emergency food aid, the broader pause impacts numerous aid recipients, including Tibetans consisting of stakeholders like the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), also known as the exile Tibetan government, aid organisations working for the Tibetan community, Taiwan, among many others.

Reliable sources have confirmed to *Phayul* that stakeholders have been informed by the US authorities of the executive order halting aid, for at least 90 days. The CTA has historically received U.S. assistance for cultural preservation and refugee support, as well as welfare projects. Although the CTA's aid allocation is small, its inclusion in the aid freeze underscores the sweeping nature of the policy, which has also affected major recipients such as Ukraine (\$17.19 billion), Israel (\$3.3 billion), Jordan (\$1.69 billion), and Egypt (\$1.5 billion).

Observers note that the measure is not a targeted sanction against the CTA or Tibetans, but a consequence of the broader foreign aid review. Since Tibetan affairs and its portfolio has had strong bipartisan support over the years from the United States, the suspension of aid may be reversed following the 90-day review.

The suspension may disrupt key programs supporting Tibetan communities in exile, including welfare initiatives, educational scholarships, and socio-economic development projects. Despite multiple inquiries by *Phayul*, CTA officials declined to comment on the situation.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a primary conduit for U.S. assistance to the CTA, has directed implementing partners to immediately suspend performance under the agreement awarded by USAID/India and to take all reasonable steps to minimise the incurrence of costs allowable to the agreement during the period of award suspensions.

Taiwan, a significant recipient of U.S. foreign military financing, is also affected by the suspension. In April 2024, the U.S. Senate approved a \$2 billion aid package to bolster Taiwan's Indo-Pacific security. However, the 90-day pause has raised concerns about the continuity of this support, with the State Department yet to clarify whether exemptions will be made. The uncertainty comes amid heightened tensions between the U.S. and China, which has repeatedly called for Washington to halt military aid to Taiwan.

Analysts say the full implications of the suspension remain unclear, but the policy shift has introduced uncertainty for several key U.S. allies and aid recipients.

### **Dalai Lama sends message of unity and peace to millions at Maha Kumbh Mela**

28 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



*His Eminence the 7th Kyabje Yongzin Ling Rinpoche delivering His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's message at Prayagraj during Maha Kumbh mela (Photo/Ling Rinpoche Facebook )*

The Tibetan spiritual leader, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, has sent a message of peace and global unity to the gathering at Hindu religious festival of Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on January 25.

“We human beings depend on each other and must live together on this one planet that is our only home,” stated the octogenarian leader in his message, which was delivered to the gathering by His Eminence the 7th Kyabje Ling Rinpoche. His message highlighted the shared foundations of religious traditions, noting that they all emphasise “cultivating love and compassion in our daily lives.”

The Nobel peace laureate, who has attended the Kumbh Mela in 2010 in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, and 2015 in Nashik, Maharashtra, spoke of the festival’s potential to influence global change. He expressed hope that the gathering of spiritual practitioners at Prayagraj would “send a positive message, not just to the people of India, but to the world at large, of the need to seek solutions founded on peace and warm-heartedness.”

In addressing current global challenges, the spiritual leader emphasised the importance of recognising human commonality. “We need to appreciate the oneness of humanity,” he stated, “a recognition that we are all the same—we all want to lead a happy life free from suffering.”

The Maha Kumbh Mela, the world’s largest religious assembly, began on January 13 and continues until

February 26, drawing millions to the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. The festival takes place based on the alignment of the sun, moon, and Jupiter—a cycle that spans 12 years.

The previous Maha Kumbh Mela in 2013 drew 120 million attendees to Prayagraj, according to government records. Between major celebrations, smaller versions of the festival (Kumbh Mela) rotate among three other locations—Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain—on a three-year cycle.

### **Dalai Lama Advocates Collective Global Morality at PIC Campus Inauguration**

28 January 2025, [The Bridge Chronicle](#), Sai Urunkar

PIC is the first fully autonomous think tank, breaking the monopoly of Delhi in policy research. PIC would inspire transformative ideas and make an impact on national and global policies.

**Pune:** Spiritual leader Dalai Lama underscored the importance of integrating ancient Indian knowledge with contemporary approaches to promote economic development and global harmony.

Speaking about the relevance of mental training techniques like meditation, the Dalai Lama expressed optimism about the youth shaping the 21st century and urged collective efforts to create a morally sound foundational path for the world.

The Dalai Lama’s message was read out during the symbolic inauguration of Pune International Centre’s (PIC) new campus on Republic Day (January 26) by PIC President Dr. Raghunath Mashelkar.

The event saw the presence of key PIC members, including Vice President Dr. Vijay Kelkar, Treasurer Dr. Ravi Pandit, General Secretary Prashant Girbane, and Director Major General Nitin Gadkari.

In his address, the Dalai Lama commended Pune’s dynamic intellectual environment, which PIC utilizes as a platform to deliberate on critical issues influencing regional and national policies.

#### **A Landmark for Independent Policy Research**

Highlighting the uniqueness of the institution, Dr. Vijay Kelkar stated, “PIC is the first fully autonomous think tank, breaking the monopoly of Delhi in policy research.” Echoing this sentiment, Dr. Ravi Pandit emphasized the campus’s focus on independent, objective, and actionable policy development.

Dr. Prashant Girbane detailed PIC’s journey from a modest beginning to becoming a center with state-of-the-art infrastructure. He expressed hope that the campus would inspire transformative ideas and continue to make an impact on national and global policies.

The event concluded with Dr. Mashelkar describing the new campus as the fulfillment of a dream. “PIC is

a torchbearer of change. When people think of Pune, they must associate it with PIC,” he said.

### **Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Begins Sweden Advocacy Tour with Warm Reception in Stockholm**

28 January 2025, [CTA](#)



*Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Begins Sweden Advocacy Tour with Warm Reception in Stockholm*

On 26 January 2025, Tibetan parliamentarians Geshe Monlam Tharchin, Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, and Konchok Yangphel arrived in Stockholm this afternoon, marking the commencement of their advocacy outreach program in Sweden.

Upon their arrival, the delegation was warmly received at their hotel by Mattias Björnerstedt, Chairperson of the Swedish Tibet Committee, and Lobsang, Chairperson of the Tibetan Community in Sweden.

In the evening, the Tibetan Community in Sweden hosted a special gathering at Yeshin Norbu, a prominent Buddhist Center in Stockholm, providing an opportunity for the parliamentarians to connect with the Tibetan diaspora. Representative Tsering Yangkey of the Office of Tibet, London, inaugurated the event with an inspiring address, emphasising the critical role of preserving the Tibetan language, culture, and identity. She also introduced the distinguished parliamentary delegation.

Addressing the gathering, each parliamentarian highlighted the significance of community engagement in fostering a vibrant democratic society. They encouraged Tibetans to contribute to the Tibetan cause in their own unique capacities. An engaging hour-long interactive session followed, where a wide range of pressing issues were discussed.

To honour the visiting delegation, the Tibetan Community in Sweden hosted a dinner, drawing Tibetans from across the country, some traveling from distant locations to participate in this significant occasion.

On 27 January, the delegation visits the Swedish Parliament for a series of official meetings aimed at furthering Tibet-related advocacy efforts.

### **As His Arunachal Pradesh Visit Ends, Sikyong Delivers a Strong Message on Grave Consequences of the PRC’s Mega Dam Projects**

28 January 2025, [CTA](#)



*Sikyong Penpa Tsering with Kyabje Dzogchen Ganor Rinpoche making prayer offerings before a tea reception accorded by Rinpoche at his residence.*

As part of his ongoing second leg of official visits to Tibetan settlements in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and West Bengal, Sikyong Penpa Tsering arrived at the Tezu Dhargyeling Settlement on 27 January 2025. During his day-long visit, he conducted several engagements, including an inspection of the 16th Kashag’s projects in the settlement.

Upon arrival, Sikyong was warmly received by Dhargyeling Settlement Officer Kunga Jigme and the local residents. His visit began with a paying of obeisance to Kyabje Dzogchen Ganor Rinpoche at the Rinpoche’s residence. Sikyong also held brief meetings with local officials and dignitaries, during which he expressed sincere gratitude on behalf of the Tibetan community for the ongoing support extended to the Tibetan settlers in the region.

To assess the welfare of the Tibetan residents, Sikyong visited all camps within the settlement, including the site for a new camp that will house several Tibetan families from Tuting.

Later in the day, Sikyong addressed a public gathering, emphasising the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Tibetan Plateau. He also briefly discussed the PRC’s proposed mega-dam project on the Brahmaputra River, warning of the severe ecological and strategic consequences for riparian communities. Highlighting the region’s seismic sensitivity, he cautioned that such a massive construction would only exacerbate the risks. “The recent devastating earthquake in Tibet’s Dingri region is a stark reminder of the natural disasters that could follow,” Sikyong noted.

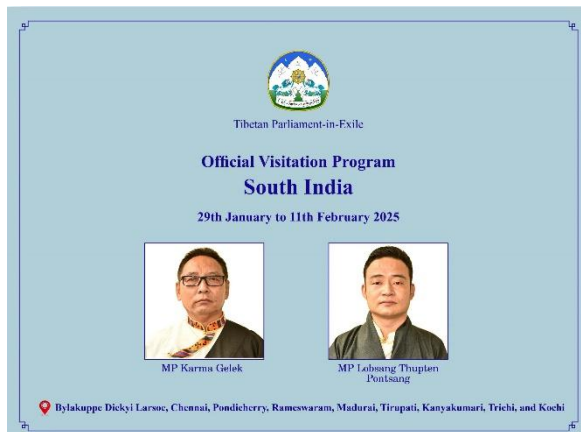
Beyond this regional concern, Sikyong provided an update on both completed and ongoing initiatives under the 16th Kashag, while acknowledging the visionary leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He also expressed deep appreciation for the elder generations of Tibetans, whose efforts helped establish the thriving Tibetan exile community, which has built a robust democratic system and continues to advocate for the restoration of Tibetan freedoms through the Middle Way Policy.

Sikyong also took the opportunity to thank the government and people of India, particularly the leadership of Arunachal Pradesh, for their unwavering support. He urged Tibetan residents to continue fostering harmonious relations with the local population and to adhere to local laws.

As Sikyong proceeds to visit the Tibetan settlements in West Bengal, his visit to Arunachal Pradesh is deemed a significant success, highlighted by the successful conduct of a seminar on 'Environment and Security' in Itanagar.

### MPs Karma Gelek and Lobsang Thupten Pongsang to Visit Tibetans in South India

27 January 2025, [CTA](#)



### MPs Karma Gelek and Lobsang Thupten Pongsang to Visit Tibetans in South India.

As part of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile's periodical visitation program, a delegation consisting of parliamentarians Karma Gelek and Lobsang Thupten Pongsang is scheduled to visit Tibetans in Bylakuppe Dickyi Larsoe, Chennai, Pondicherry, Rameswaram, Madurai, Tirupati, Kanyakumari, Trichi, and Kochi from 29 January to 11 February 2025.

MP Lobsang Thupten Pongsang will depart to Delhi from Dharamshala on 29 January, and on 30 January MP Karma Gelek will depart from Nagpur to Chennai and MP Pongsang will depart to Chennai from Delhi. They will have programs in Chennai from 31 January to 1 February. This will be followed by engagements in Pondicherry and Auroville for the next two days. For

the following week, they will visit other aforementioned places and return to Dharamshala on 11 February 2025.

### Tibet-India Delegation Meets in Arunachal to Counter China's Water Politics at India-Tibet Border

27 January 2025, [Tibet Express](#), Tenzin Chokyi

Penpa Tsering, the President of the Central Tibetan Administration(CTA), commonly known as the Tibetan Government in Exile, participated in a day-long seminar on "Environment and Security" on Friday last week to address China's rampant damming along the India-Tibet border. The seminar was held at the state Legislative Assembly hall in Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh(AP), in the Presence of the Chief Minister, Pema Khandu.

The Seminar comes in response to China's approval of plans to construct the world's largest and the riskiest hydro-power project along the Yarlung Tsangpo River in occupied Tibet which flows into India via the Indian state of AP. This has caused a grave state of insecurity for riparian states like India and Bangladesh.

Organised by the Tibet Support Group of AP, the seminar was attended by notable Tibet supporters, including Indian Parliamentarian Tapir Gao, renowned Tibetologist Vijay Kranti and Rinchen Khando Krimay, the National Convener of the Core Group for the Tibetan Cause.

The Tibetan delegation, led by *Sikyong* Tsering, (the political head of the exiled Tibetans) includes the Tibetan Settlement Officer from Tenzingang in AP, Rapten Tsering and the Coordinator of the India-Tibet Coordination Office, Tashi Dekyi, among others.

Pema Khandu, the Chief Minister of AP in his inaugural speech expressed concerns in the northeastern region over China's refusal to enter into international water treaties.

He said the seminar holds "the significance of finding solutions to mitigate the alarming environmental situation in Tibet" which he said, "poses significant risks to the entire region".

According to *Tibet.net*, the official webpage of the CTA, the *Sikyong* also expressed concerns over China's growing global influence and its disruption of the Himalayan border region and India's Maritime areas.

The *Sikyong* reiterated the establishment of the McMahon line during the Simla Convention, a treaty between Tibetan and British India, which demarcated the border between Tibet and India.

Since China's occupation of Tibet, China has denied this treaty and made various attempts to claim the Indian state of AP as southern Tibet to impose its sovereignty over the region.

This intensifies the issue with the West-East Energy Transfer project, where China is constructing massive

hydropower projects to redirect the flow of some of the world's largest and most vital rivers from occupied Tibet towards its arid northern regions.

The seminar attended by both the Tibetan and the Indian delegates echoed a collective initiative of the people at the receiving end of China's aggressive development strategy.

Citing grave Human rights violations and mismanagement of natural resources in Tibet and concerns over the Mega-dam project on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra, MP Tapir Goa, who is also the Co-Convenor of the all-party Indian parliamentary forum for Tibet said "We must collectively voice our opposition to this pressing issue" and reiterated his call on the Indian government to officially recognise the institution of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

### Office of Tibet and IPK Media Host New Year Gathering in DC to Foster Sino-Tibetan Dialogue, Highlighting His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Upcoming Book

27 January 2025, [CTA](#)



Office of Tibet and IPK Media Host New Year Gathering in DC to Foster Sino-Tibetan Dialogue, Highlighting His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Upcoming Book.

On 24 January 2025, the Office of Tibet in Washington DC and IPK Media jointly organised an informal New Year gathering for Tibetans and Chinese in the Washington DC area. This gathering was joined by Representative Namgyal Choedup, IPK Media Director Wang Ruiqin, prominent Chinese democracy advocates including Guo Baosheng, Wu Chaoyang, and Luo Shengchun, along with Chinese students from local universities and policy researchers from various think tanks.

In his address, Representative Choedup emphasised Chinese outreach as a core mission of the Office of Tibet, highlighting their long-standing commitment to fostering Sino-Tibetan dialogue through such annual gatherings. He announced the upcoming release of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's new book "Voice For The

Voiceless" in March, describing it as an essential work documenting His Holiness's seven-decade relationship with China, and encouraging its reading among Chinese audiences.

Chinese Liaison Officer Tsultrim Gyatso spoke about the evolution of Chinese outreach initiatives, inspired by His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision and implemented by the Office of Tibet under a policy of the Central Tibetan Administration for over ten years. He emphasised the importance of expanding these dialogue opportunities to reach a broader Chinese audience.

The Chinese democracy advocates present, including Wang Ruiqin, Guo Baosheng, Wu Chaoyang, and Luo Shengchun, praised His Holiness's visionary leadership and His global impact. They criticized the Chinese Communist government's failure to engage with His Holiness's long-standing proposals for resolving the Tibet-China conflict while advocating for the continuation and enhancement of such dialogue platforms.

The gathering concluded with engaging discussions between Chinese students, the Representative, and other participants on various topics including Tibet, democracy in China, and international political developments.

### Sikyong Penpa Tsering highlights China's ongoing oppression of Tibet at Miao settlement event

27 January 2025, [The Tribune](#)

*Sikyong Penpa Tsering, leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), addressed the Miao Choepheling Tibetan Settlement in Itanagar, stressing the need to preserve Tibetan culture and identity amidst China's ongoing suppression. He emphasised cultural resilience, recent international progress, and strengthening the CTA to support Tibetans globally.*

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), addressed a large gathering at the Miao Choepheling Tibetan Settlement in Itanagar, emphasising the persistent oppression faced by Tibetans under Chinese rule, as reported by Tibet.net. During his visit to the settlement, Sikyong stressed the urgency for the Tibetan exile community to preserve their culture, language, and identity amidst China's continuous efforts to erase them, Tibet.net reported. He highlighted how China's policies in Tibet have led to widespread cultural suppression, with systematic attempts to eradicate Tibetans' language, religion, and traditions.

Sikyong urged Tibetans, especially the youth, to prioritise learning the Tibetan language and understanding their rich history to resist cultural assimilation. "The struggle to protect Tibet's identity is not just political; it is deeply cultural," he said,



emphasising the critical role of maintaining a strong sense of Tibetan heritage while living in exile.

He also celebrated recent international progress, including the passing of US legislation supporting Tibet, describing it as a significant step in countering China's aggression. However, he cautioned that much work remains to be done and called on Tibetans to continue advocating for greater global awareness of China's oppressive policies, as reported by Tibet.net.

In his speech, Sikyong highlighted the importance of strengthening the administration within the CTA. He outlined initiatives such as digitising important Tibetan documents and establishing a Buddhist digital library to better support Tibetans globally in their ongoing struggle for freedom and cultural preservation.

Echoing the sentiments of the Dalai Lama, Sikyong reiterated that Tibet's future would be shaped by the principles of unity, non-violence, and the resilience of the Tibetan people in the face of China's ongoing repression.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering also participated in the 76th Republic Day celebrations of the Miao sub-division as the Guest of Honour, alongside R D Thungon, the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Tibet.net reported.

### Taiwan could face same fate as Tibet amid China's aggression, warns former CTA President

27 January 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon



*Screenshot of Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the former President of the Tibetan Government in Exile during the interview with Taiwan Talks*

Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the former President of the Tibetan Government in Exile known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), cautioned Taiwan against potentially facing a fate similar to Tibet if Beijing continues its aggressive policies. [In an exclusive interview with Taiwan Talks](#), Dr. Sangay drew stark parallels between China's historical approach to Tibet and its current stance on Taiwan, highlighting the Chinese regime's systematic expansionism.

Dr. Sangay reflected on China's historical territorial expansion, pointing out that Han Chinese traditionally lived within the Great Wall for thousands of years. "Up north, it was the Manchus and Mongols who were considered barbarians and foreigners. Toward the west, East Turkestan (Xinjiang), Uyghurs, and Tibetans

were also seen as barbarians and foreigners," he explained. He emphasised that the Great Wall marked the historical border of China for centuries, with successive emperors focused on maintaining and fortifying it. "Now, they've gone beyond that boundary and claim these regions as part of China. The area traditionally inhabited by Han Chinese constitutes only about 40% of the current territory they control. Their expansionist design has now moved southward to claim Taiwan, East China Sea, and South China Sea," he noted, adding, "What happened to Tibet could happen to Taiwan next."

He also addressed the narrative China has employed to justify its control over regions like East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and Tibet, framing it as a mission to stabilise, liberate, and develop those regions. "This is a classic colonial argument," he stated. "They portray these regions as feudal, backward, and poor, claiming to have brought prosperity and civilisation. This narrative expects gratitude from the colonised to the coloniser. If you read Chinese history textbooks, they explain the so-called '100 years of humiliation' this way, but now the victim has become the victimiser. Tibetans, as victims, are not even supposed to complain."

The Harvard educated statesman highlighted a broader pattern of repression under Beijing, linking Tibet's plight to the genocide in the Uyghur region, crackdowns in Inner Mongolia, and the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong. "In the past, Tibet was seen as an exception. The international community used to say, 'Tibet is an exception,' but now there is a clear pattern," he remarked. "The repression of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and Hongkongers, along with the increasing pressure and intimidation on Taiwan, clearly shows that we are dealing with a systematic strategy on the part of Beijing to expand its region."

Dr. Sangay pointed out China's longstanding "Five Fingers and Palm Strategy," a concept attributed to Mao Zedong. He explained that Mao envisioned Tibet as the palm that must be occupied, with the five fingers being the regions of Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh. Galwan Valley lies in Ladakh, while Doklam borders Bhutan and Sikkim, a chokepoint for India. Arunachal Pradesh has seen ongoing conflicts and tensions, and recent revelations indicate the construction of over 300 border villages stretching from Tibet's Karakoram to Myanmar. This demonstrates China's strategic intrusions into neighbouring countries, including Nepal, Bhutan, and India, as Mao's vision is systematically implemented today.

He further emphasised, "If you want to understand China, you must first understand Tibet. Without understanding Tibet, you'll never understand China. The blueprint of their United Front approach—marked by cooptation and intimidation—was perfected in Tibet and is now being replicated globally. What

unfolded in Hong Kong, where they used the United Front to ‘win without fighting,’ is a stark example. This strategy is likely being employed in Taiwan as well. The warning from the former CTA President comes against the backdrop of Beijing’s escalating military aggression in the Taiwan Strait, where China has intensified pressure on the self-governed island through frequent air and naval drills. Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly reaffirmed Beijing’s resolve to achieve reunification with Taiwan, viewing the island as an inseparable part of China’s territory. Taiwan, however, staunchly rejects these claims. President Lai Ching-te, a vocal proponent of Taiwan’s sovereignty, has drawn sharp criticism from Beijing, which has labelled him a “dangerous separatist.” Lai’s Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) firmly upholds Taiwan’s distinct identity and rejects China’s sovereignty assertions. Despite President Lai’s repeated calls for dialogue, Beijing has rebuffed these efforts, dismissing them as threats to China’s territorial integrity.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Visits Miao Choepheling Settlement, Calls for Unity with Locals and within Tibetans**

26 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Following successful engagements in Itanagar, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration arrived at the Miao Choepheling Tibetan Settlement on the evening of 25 January 2025 to a warm and enthusiastic reception from the Tibetan residents and local officials.

Upon arrival, Sikyong began his official visit by touring the settlement’s offices and institutions to compress his programs for the following day. Sikyong continued with his remaining visitation programs the next day, after attending the Miao sub-division’s 76th Republic Day celebrations as the Guest of Honour, alongside Shri R.D. Thungon, the Additional Deputy Commissioner.

To mark the successful completion of the 16th Kashag’s community hall constructions, which included halls for the settlement’s five camps and a common hall, the residents invited Sikyong to inaugurate all six halls one after another as he continued the settlement tour.

Before convening the general public at the newly built community’s common hall, Sikyong briefly attended a gathering at Sambhota Tibetan School in Miao, where he addressed the students. He introduced them to the significance of the Tibetan Plateau, using a PowerPoint presentation to simplify complex topics for the younger audience. Sikyong also encouraged the students to preserve the distinct Pemako dialect, which has seen a gradual decline as many community

members have integrated with other societies in search of better opportunities outside the settlement. Afterwards, Sikyong proceeded to the community hall to address the public. In his keynote address, Sikyong briefed the audience about the recently held day-long seminar on “Environment and Security” in Itanagar and acknowledged the steadfast support of Hon’ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri Pema Khandu, for the well-being of exiled Tibetans and the Tibet cause. “The seminar was a great success, with participation from a majority of high-level state government officials as well as representatives from local indigenous tribal communities. Most importantly, it helped resolve misunderstandings between the local communities and Tibetan refugees in the region,” remarked Sikyong, also revealing that a leader from the opposing group personally approached him to express regrets. However, Sikyong urged Tibetans to remain humble and always appreciate the support from both the people and the government of the state, emphasising the importance of maintaining close relations with the local populace. Furthermore, Sikyong highlighted that the 16th Kashag’s work is shaped by His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s vision, especially in political, social welfare, and administrative matters, with any achievements credited to His Holiness’ guidance and blessings.

In addition, Sikyong’s address focused on the need to understand the demographics of the Tibetan exile population to better preserve Tibetan culture and language, urging the community to prioritise learning Tibetan and studying their history to resist the Chinese government’s efforts to erase Tibetan identity. Sikyong also highlighted key achievements in Tibetan advocacy, such as the recent U.S. legislation on Tibet, and emphasised the need to build a stronger administration with enhanced staff capacity to support ongoing initiatives like digitising CTA documents and developing a Buddhist digital library. During the visits, Sikyong was accompanied by Choepheling Tibetan Settlement Officer Tenzin Tsangpa, along with Deputy Secretary Sonam Topgyal and Under Secretary Thinley Umawa from the Department of Home.

**Sikyong and Hon'ble CM of Arunachal Pradesh Attended a Seminar on "Environment and Security" in Itanagar, Raising Concerns Over PRC's Proposed Mega Dam**

25 January 2025, [CTA](#)



*Sikyong and Hon'ble CM of Arunachal Pradesh Attended a Seminar on "Environment and Security" in Itanagar, Raising Concerns Over PRC's Proposed Mega Dam.*

On 24 January 2025, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, alongside the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri Pema Khandu, inaugurated a day-long seminar on "Environment and Security" at the Dorjee Khandu Auditorium Hall, Legislative Assembly, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. The seminar focused on discussing the implications of mismanagement and large-scale projects in Tibet, which pose a significant threat to India's security and disrupt the regional ecosystem.

The opening ceremony was also attended by Shri Tapir Gao, MP (Lok Sabha), Co-Convenor of the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet; Shri Rinchen Khando Khrimy, National Convenor of the Core Group for the Tibetan Cause; and Shri Tarh Tarak, President of the Himalayan Suraksha Manch, Arunachal Pradesh. The event saw substantial participation from Tibet Support Groups across India, along with prominent former and incumbent ministers, political figures, and senior officials from the Arunachal Pradesh state government. Notably, Shri P.K. Thungonk, the first Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, was present. Representatives from over 26 tribal communities of the state also attended to emphasise the significance of the seminar.

On the Tibetan side, the seminar was graced by Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement Officer Raptan Tsering, Tashi Dekyi, Coordinator of the India-Tibet Coordination Office, secretary of the Tibetan Settlement Office along with representatives from local Tibetan civil societies, and officials from the Department of Home and the Department of Information and International Relations.

In his welcome address, MP Shri Tapir Gao condemned the People's Republic of China (PRC) for its ongoing

violations of fundamental human rights and the mismanagement of Tibet's natural resources. He emphasised that the lack of security and freedom in Tibet would have far-reaching consequences for neighbouring countries, particularly India. He also expressed grave concern regarding China's approval of a mega-dam project on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra (known as the Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh). "We must collectively voice our opposition to this pressing issue," said Shri Gao, urging the Government of India to officially recognise the institution of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Shri Gao also conveyed a message from Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, the Convenor of the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, who, despite being unable to attend, reaffirmed his unwavering support for the Tibetan cause.

Shri R.K. Krimmey provided a succinct overview of the Core Group for the Tibetan Cause and the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, explaining their roles in advancing the seminar's objectives. He emphasised, "We are not merely supporting Tibetan refugees, but advocating for a cause that is directly linked to our national security." He also highlighted that such high-level seminars, attended by current and former politicians and officials, are essential to safeguarding India's borders. "Our borders did not require large standing forces for patrolling until China's occupation of Tibet," he added.

Following this, Sikyong Penpa Tsering delivered the keynote address, reflecting on the 66 years of Tibetan refugee presence in India. "None of us anticipated that we would remain here for such an extended period," he noted. Drawing upon historical ties between Indian and Tibetan civilisations, Sikyong emphasised the shared linguistic and religious bonds, as well as the 6th Dalai Lama's Arunachali origins. He also referenced the treaty between Tibetan and British East India plenipotentiaries, which established the McMahon Line.

Sikyong further introduced the structure of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), explaining its three democratic pillars and departments that work toward advancing the Tibetan struggle for freedom. He highlighted the role of Tibetan monasteries in India, which currently host over more than 60% of Himalayan Buddhist followers, ensuring the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism in the face of PRC's attempts to erase it in Tibet.

Addressing China's growing global influence, Sikyong spoke about its disruption of the international order and increasing security threats to India, not only along the Himalayan border but also in India's maritime regions. He also discussed the potential risks posed by China's expanding economic power.

To address these geopolitical and strategic challenges, Sikyong elaborated on the CTA's "Middle Way

Approach,” introduced by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which seeks a peaceful and mutually beneficial resolution to the Tibet-China conflict.

The Hon’ble Chief Minister, Shri Pema Khandu, extended his appreciation to the organising committees and participants, underscoring the interconnectedness of Tibet’s issues with Arunachal’s environment and security. “The challenges faced beyond our northern borders have far-reaching consequences, particularly for the lifeline river systems in Arunachal Pradesh,” he said. The honourable Chief Minister also stressed the importance of shared Buddhist traditions and the historical ties between Tibetans and the indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. “The occupation of Tibet by China has directly threatened our borders,” he stated, raising concerns about China’s intentions to construct massive infrastructure projects in Tibet, including the proposed world largest one in Metok County. He also pointed out that China’s non-signatory status to international water treaties exacerbates the risks posed by these mega-dams.

The honourable Chief Minister commended the international recognition of Tibet’s struggle, particularly the recent passage of supportive legislation in the United States, which garnered unprecedented bipartisan and bicameral support.

The Chief Minister further urged the people of Arunachal Pradesh to better understand the Tibetan refugees in their midst, who are integral to preserving the region’s shared culture. “Many of our monks and nuns are studying in Tibetan monastic institutions, and their contributions are vital to the survival of Tibetan Buddhism,” he emphasised.

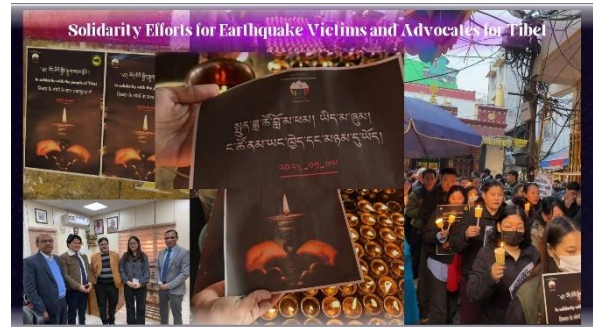
In his vote of thanks, Shri Tarh Tarak, President of the Himalayan Suraksha Manch, recalled his visit to the border regions of Arunachal Pradesh connecting Tibet. “It is striking how many communities in Tibet share ethnic ties with our tribal populations. Our scholars must delve into this history to uncover these deep-rooted connections,” he concluded.

Later that afternoon, Sikyong Penpa Tsering and Shri Vijay Kranti, Tibetologist and Former National Co-Convenor of the Core Group for Tibetan Cause-India, gave a compelling presentation during the afternoon session of the seminar on “Environment and Security.” The session was moderated by Shri Moji Riba, Assistant Professor and Founder Head of the Department of Mass Communication at Rajiv Gandhi University.

A grand dinner reception was also hosted by the Hon’ble Chief Minister in honour of Sikyong Penpa Tsering and participating members of the Tibet Support Group’s presence at his residential office.

## V-TAG Leads Solidarity Efforts for Earthquake Victims and Advocates for Tibet

24 January 2025, [CTA](#)



V-TAG Leads Solidarity Efforts for Earthquake Victims and Advocates for Tibet.

In a powerful demonstration of solidarity and advocacy, the Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group (VTAG) has recently spearheaded multiple initiatives to support Tibet and its people following a devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Shigatse, Dingri County and other Tibetan areas. On January 8, 2025, VTAG actively participated in a candlelight vigil organised by the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC) Delhi and Regional Tibetan Women’s Association (RTWA) Delhi at Majnu Ka Tilla, Delhi. The vigil brought together members of the Tibetan diaspora and the local Indian community to honour the lives lost and pray for the victims. VTAG’s impactful posters, which carried messages of compassion and resilience, designed by Tenzin Choezin, Delhi V-TAG member and social media handler, added a visual depth to the event, amplifying its message of unity and compassion.

In addition to the vigil, VTAG’s “Prayers for Earthquake Victims in Occupied Tibet” initiative raised ₹16,500, which was distributed among 11 Tibetan monasteries across India. The funds were used to light butter lamps and conduct prayers for the victims, fostering a spiritual connection with those affected. The monasteries included Tsuglhakhang in Dharamshala, Sakya and Mindroling Gompas in Dehradun, and others in Bylakuppe, Sikkim, Mundgod, Solan and Shimla. Visuals of this initiative, shared on VTAG’s social media, further spread the message of solidarity and compassion. This initiative was led by V-TAG members, Dadon, Bangalore V-TAG member, Tsering Yeshi, Dehradun V-TAG member, RinchenWangyal, Mysore V-TAG member, LodrakTharchin, Delhi V-TAG member and Tenzing Dheden, Dharamshala V-TAG Coordinator, in coordination with regional V-TAG Coordinators and National Coordinator.

On 21 January 2025, V-TAG representatives, led by Delhi V-TAG Coordinator Tenzin Lhatso and Delhi V-TAG member Tenzin Dhamdhul, visited the National Centre for Seismology (NCS) in New Delhi, and addressed concerns regarding the use of the term

“Xizang” in official NCS communications instead of “Tibet.” Delhi V-TAG member Tenzin Dhamdhul, who is also a Senior Researcher at the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternative (FNVA), in his research revealed 48 instances of “Xizang” in NCS documents at the time, raising geopolitical and cultural concerns to address the use of the term “Xizang” in official communications. V-TAG highlighted that “Xizang,” a term promoted by China, limits Tibet’s identity to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and carries geopolitical implications by challenging India’s sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh. The delegation urged the adoption of “Tibet” to reflect the region’s true cultural and historical identity. The NCS Director and team acknowledged VTAG’s concerns and assured them of serious consideration, reaffirming India’s support for Tibet.

*-Report filed by Tibet Advocacy Section, Department of Information and International Relations, CTA*

### **New York city council passes bill recognizing Tibetan New Year with parking holiday**

24 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



*Representatives from around 25 Tibetan and Himalayan organisations on the day of hearing (Photo/Nick Gulotta)*

The New York City Council has unanimously passed legislation to suspend Alternate Side Parking (ASP) on Losar, the Tibetan Buddhist New Year, marking an important recognition for the city’s Tibetan community’s cultural traditions on Thursday.

Council Member Julie Won (D-Queens), who represents the 26th Council district in Western Queens, sponsored the bill, which received support from 40 co-sponsors. The legislation, known as Intro 100, will provide ASP relief on Losar, which is the first day of the first month of the Tibetan lunar calendar, which falls on February 28 this year.

“At least 61,000 New Yorkers in my district and across New York City celebrate Losar, the Tibetan Buddhist New Year. My bill to suspend Alternate Side Parking will allow our neighbors to focus on celebrating the new year without disruption or fear of getting towed,”

said Council Member Julie Won. “This historic bill is the first ASP holiday that is specific for Buddhists. I am honored to celebrate this milestone with our Tibetan and Himalayan community and honor their sacred traditions and time with their families.”

In a letter from the Office of Tibet, Namgyal Choedup Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Central Tibetan Administration to North America said, “The suspension of Alternate Side Parking in a city of 8.8 million people in honor of Losar marks the most significant recognition of Tibetan Americans by a municipality in the United States. We extend special thanks to the New York City Council and Council Member Julie Won, the prime sponsor of Intro. 100, for passing this historic legislation.”

Tsering Kelsang, President of the Tibetan Community of New York and New Jersey, while speaking to local media, expressed gratitude for the bill’s passage. “Tibetans came to New York as refugees, and today our most important holiday was recognised by the largest city in America,” Kelsang said. “To see Losar, our Tibetan New Year, recognised by the City of New York is a profound recognition of the tens of thousands of Tibetan New Yorkers.”

The bill’s journey began on Aug. 2, 2024, when Council Member Julie Won first introduced the bill in the city council, and on September 28, around 25 representatives from Tibetan and Himalayan community organisations testified before the City Council. Organisations including the Tibetan Community of New York and New Jersey, the United Sherpa Association, Lo Nyamship Association, and the Walung Community of North America played crucial roles in advocating for the legislation. More than 1,000 Himalayan New Yorkers sent their written testimonies in support.

Tenzin Dorjee, a Columbia University lecturer and Tibet activist, testified that the bill represents more than a parking holiday and is a gesture of respect and inclusion for a community that contributes to the city’s cultural diversity. “By declaring Losar a street cleaning holiday, we are acknowledging the contribution of a diverse community that has given so much to the city,” he stated.

Alternate Side Parking, a street cleaning mechanism in New York City, typically requires residents to move their vehicles on designated days. The new legislation provides an exemption for Losar, allowing community members to celebrate the holiday with their families without worrying about parking restrictions.

The new law adds Losar to the list of holidays where alternate side parking rules are suspended, joining other religious and cultural observances such as Christmas, Eid Ul-Fitr, and Diwali.

## Parliamentary Committee Concludes Review of Rules and Regulation of Parliamentary Procedure and Conduct of the Business of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

24 January 2025, [CTA](#)



*Parliamentary Committee Concludes Review of Rules and Regulation of Parliamentary Procedure and Conduct of the Business of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.*

On 24 January 2025, A committee consisting of parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende (Chair), Youdon Aukatsang (Secretary), and Lobsang Thupten successfully completed its review of the *Rules and Regulations for Parliamentary Procedures and Conduct of Business of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile*, specifically focusing on the provisions related to the removal of dignitaries within the Central Tibetan Administration.

The committee has submitted its report, including a draft proposal for amendments to the relevant rules and regulations, to Secretary General Sonam Dorjee of the Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat.

The committee commenced its review on 6 December 2024, following a decision made during the 8th session of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. After the first reading of the bill amendment during the 8th session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, and in light of a broad consensus among parliamentarians, it was agreed that a thorough review should be conducted. This review aimed to either improve the existing regulations or, if necessary, introduce new provisions, based on feedback from the session and previous draft proposals.

## Choeje Ayang Rinpoche, a Preeminent Tibetan Buddhist Phowa Master, Has Died

23 January 2025, [Tricycle](#), Joan Duncan Oliver

A holder of both Drikung Kagyu and Nyingma lineages, the late lama established numerous monasteries and was widely considered to be the foremost phowa master of his generation.

Choeje Ayang Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist lama widely considered to be the foremost *phowa* master

of his generation, died on December 4, 2024, in Bylakuppe, India, a Tibetan settlement in the Mysore region of Karnataka state. He was 83 years old.

Phowa, or “transfer of consciousness,” is a powerful method of preparing with confidence for one’s own death and that of others. It helps the practitioner overcome their fear of dying and attain enlightenment or a better rebirth at the moment of death or in the afterdeath state known as the bardo. A Drikung Kagyu, Ayang Rinpoche was a lineage holder of both Drikung phowa and Nyingma phowa.

“There is one phowa master declared in every generation, and he was the master for his generation,” notes Rande Brown, a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst who was one of Ayang Rinpoche’s chief disciples for fifteen years. “He gave phowa transmission to lineage holders in all four (Tibetan) Buddhist traditions.” However, his annual ten-day phowa retreat, held in a tent in Bodhgaya, India, was open to anyone, Buddhist or not; in attendance were Tibetan monastics and Tibetan laypeople from far and wide, some having traveled for days by foot, as well as Westerners. Although traditionally considered an advanced teaching for students who have at least completed *ngondro* (preliminary practices), Ayang Rinpoche offered phowa to all who wished to die a better death and help others through the dying process.

“Everybody has to die, and at that moment [we wonder] where to go, what to do, what to think,” he pointed out in a 1997 documentary posted on YouTube. “For these reasons, phowa, particularly at the death moment, is very important. Those people who receive these teachings have no reason to fear death. They already know, at the death moment, what to do, where to go. It is already arranged.” Further, phowa is “one of the great methods, a direct way, for achieving enlightenment,” he explained. “Many people are praying to attain the Pure Buddha Land [realization]. But what is the method? That is the phowa practice.”

Choeje Ayang Rinpoche—*Choeje* an honorific meaning “Lord of the Dharma”—was born in 1942 to a nomadic family in Kham, in eastern Tibet. There were auspicious signs at his birth: His mother had a dream in which a Buddha-like figure held a golden vajra that merged into the crown of her head, and a second dream in which a bright light appeared in the night and dissolved into her body, filling the earth and sky with red light.

Ayang Rinpoche was recognized as a tulku (reincarnated master) when he was very young. A delegation of senior lamas that included the 16th Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, and Yongdzin Jabra Rinpoche identified him as the wisdom emanation and seventh incarnation of the *terton* (treasure revealer) Rigzin Chogyal Dorje, founder of the Ayang Monastery

in Kham. Though Ayang Rinpoche was a Dripung Kagyu, he considered the 16th Karmapa, a Karma Kagyu, his root teacher, and he received many teachings and initiations in the Nyingma and other Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

Ayang Rinpoche received his early training at Drikung Thil Changchu, the main Drikung Kagyu monastery, in central Tibet. From 1951 to 1955, he studied at Drikung Nyima Changra Philosophical College, receiving *Nyingthig* (Dzogchen) teachings and initiations, as well as his first phowa teachings, in the Nyingma tradition. He later received Drikung phowa instruction from Chungsang Rinpoche and Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche, the 36th and 37th heads of the Drikung lineage. He received teachings on Mahamudra and the Six Yogas of Naropa at his home monastery, Ayang Monastery, a branch of Drikung Thil Changchu. After ordination in 1955, Ayang Rinpoche went on a pilgrimage to the sacred sites associated with Guru Rinpoche, or Padmasambhava, the legendary master said to have brought Buddhism to Tibet. After doing a retreat in Phulung in southern Tibet, where Padmasambhava had practiced phowa, Ayang Rinpoche performed an offering puja. It was attended by many Nagas, an ethnic people descended from tribes in China, Tibet, and Burma (Myanmar), and he later said he took their presence as a sign that he would one day teach phowa in foreign lands.

In 1959, Ayang Rinpoche was among the first Drikung lamas to leave Tibet after the Chinese takeover. He spent the next five years in Bylakuppe, where exiles from the different Tibetan Buddhist schools built monasteries. Ayang Rinpoche lived at a Nyingma monastery, Namdrol Ling, until he started a Drikung monastery, Thupten Shedrub Jangchub Ling Monastic Institute, in Bylakuppe. "At the time I had only one hundred rupees in my pocket," he later said. While clearly not enough to build a monastery, he forged on with determination. "I thought [that] through positive thought—pure motivation—if we do this activity, something will happen." Ayang Rinpoche's pure motivation paid off, as he was able to collect enough donations from the Tibetan community to build Thupten Shedrub Jangchub Ling. "The Tibetans were very poor but still donated," he said. "We started from that seed."

The foundation of the building was stone and mud. "No cement. We thought very soon Tibet would be an independent country, and we would be going back," he explained. Today, a new temple is being built at Thupten Shedrub Jangchub Ling, and construction is also under way at a monastery Ayang Rinpoche established two hundred fifty miles north of Bylakuppe, in Mundgod, India.

Ayang Rinpoche also founded a large center, Opak Kyilkhor Choling (Amitabha Mandala Temple and Retreat Center), overlooking the Kathmandu Valley in

Nepal. The mountaintop temple is surrounded by fifteen smaller temples and sixty-four retreat cottages that are open to lay visitors as well as Buddhist practitioners. And even after his passing, construction continues on the Amitabha Meditation Center in Bodhgaya, with recent renovations including the replacing of a tent where for many years Ayang Rinpoche's annual phowa retreat was held.

"Every Tibetan is expected to get phowa transmission once before they die," Rande Brown points out. With his phowa teachings well established in Asia, Ayang Rinpoche was asked by the Dalai Lama and the 16th Karmapa to teach phowa in the West so that even "inexperienced practitioners" could benefit from the practice. Buddhadharma is new to Westerners, the Karmapa told him, but "phowa's effect of quickly producing physical signs in the practitioner's body would help give the materialistic European or American student confidence in the dharma," a biography from the Amitabha Foundation US states. When Ayang Rinpoche checked his teaching methods with the Dalai Lama, His Holiness told him to continue, assuring him that the results of phowa would be positive not only at the time of death but also in this lifetime. From the 1980s on, Ayang Rinpoche taught in Europe, Australia, and North America, as well as in Asia.

Ayang Rinpoche established the Amitabha Foundation in 1986 as a worldwide network for the preservation of Tibetan culture. The foundation supports a number of cultural and humanitarian projects in Tibet, India, and Nepal, including the Ayang Gompa Clinic and Safe Childbirth Education Project in Rima, Tibet. And there are now Amitabha practice centers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and America.

According to a biography on Ayang Rinpoche's website, "The core of Rinpoche's vision is compassionate activity (bodhicitta) undertaken from pure motivation and supported by strong practice. These three themes—compassionate activity, pure motivation, and strong practice—are woven through all of Rinpoche's talks, activities, and directions."

"He was incredibly charismatic without being showy," recalls Rande Brown. "He was very serious—he could be incredibly stern—but he was very compassionate, warm, and welcoming." And yet it was his mastery of the teachings that truly set him apart. "His devotion to dharma was absolute," says Brown. "He really devoted his life wholeheartedly."

## TYC's 20,000 km long 'All-India Bike Rally' concludes in Delhi

23 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



TYC activists at the Indo-Tibet border Zero Point, Bumla pass. (Photo/TYC Facebook)

The largest Tibetan pro-Independence group Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) successfully concluded its two-month All-India Bike Rally at the Tibetan Colony in Majnu Ka Tilla, Delhi, on Wednesday.

The rally, which started on November 22, 2024, from the Indo-Tibet border's zero point at Bumla Pass in Arunachal Pradesh, saw 12 activists biking for 63 days traversing over 20,000 kilometres across 20 Indian states to create awareness over the Tibetan movement and the current situation of Tibet.

Speaking with Phayul, TYC President Gonpo Dhundup spoke about the rally's achievements stating, "During the 63 All India bike rally, we covered 20 states and engaged with chief ministers, governors, union ministers, members of Parliament (MP), state legislators (MLA's), and mayors. More importantly, we advocated and spread awareness of the Tibetan cause to a few hundred media outlets, including national and local platforms. We also visited all Tibetan settlements and winter business hubs in these states."

He further elaborated on the journey's challenges: "The bike rally spanned twenty thousand kilometres in 63 days, with an average daily travel of 300 to 400 kilometres. Some days saw us covering 600 to 700 kilometres. We encountered dynamic weather conditions and experienced three major accidents—in Assam, on the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border, and in Lucknow. While some participants sustained fractures, their conditions have improved and recovery is ongoing."

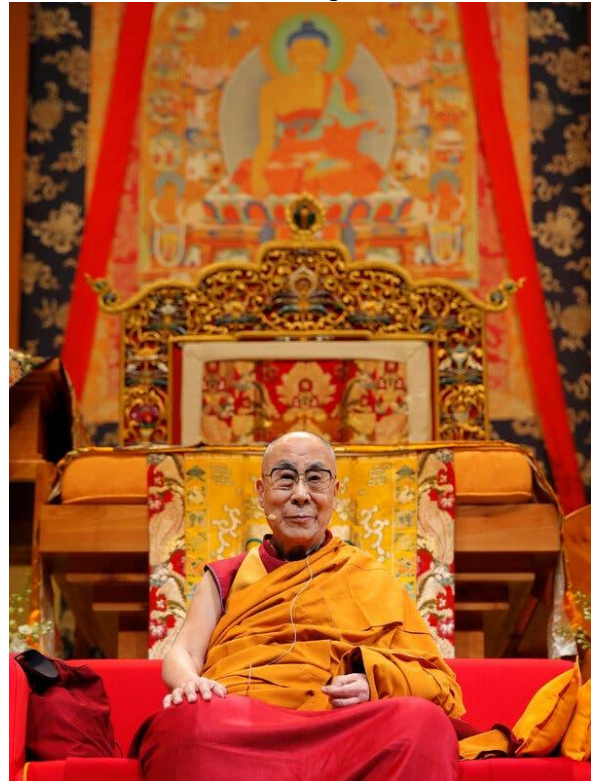
The campaign focused on three objectives, which include urging the international community to press China to halt actions affecting Tibetan cultural and environmental integrity, thanking India for its support while advocating for official recognition of Tibet's historical independence, and calling for measures to protect Tibet's environment from resource exploitation.

The 63-day campaign was fully funded by the Tibet Youth Congress. And with total expenses reaching approximately 26 lakhs (2.6 million) Indian rupees.

## The Dalai Lama Shares Thoughts on China and the Future in a New Book

23 January 2025, [The New York Times](#), Alexandra Alter

The spiritual leader of Tibet has published amply but seldom written in depth about politics. Now, as he approaches 90, he shares a detailed and personal account of his decades dealing with China.



*The Dalai Lama is Tibet's spiritual leader. He fled in 1959 after China's occupation, and has worked to uphold Tibet's culture, religion and language from exile since then.*

During his decades living in exile, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, has published dozens of books — including two autobiographies and works on ethics, Buddhist philosophy and practice, and the overlap between religion and science. But he has rarely delved extensively into raw politics.

Now, in "Voice for the Voiceless: Over Seven Decades of Struggle With China for My Land and My People," which comes out in March, he offers his first detailed account of his fraught negotiations with a succession of China's leaders, from meeting with Mao Zedong when he was just 19, to his more recent attempts to communicate with President Xi Jinping and other Chinese officials. It also delves into the Dalai Lama's efforts to preserve Tibet's unique culture, religion and language, and to ensure protections for Tibetans living under Chinese rule.



The book arrives at a particularly tenuous moment for the Tibetan people, with an ascendant China flexing its military and economic muscle around the world, and with Tibet's aging leader trying to ensure that Tibetans' struggle for autonomy isn't forgotten amid other global crises.

As he nears 90, the Dalai Lama writes, he aims to leave a record of his work, and guidance for those who take up the Tibetan cause after his death.

"Despite all the suffering and destruction, we still hold fast to the hope for a peaceful resolution of our struggle for freedom and dignity," the Dalai Lama said in a statement. "Drawing on the lessons learned from my decades of engagement with Beijing, the book also aims to offer some thoughts on what might be the way forward."

He continued, "My hope is that the book will stimulate fresh thoughts and conversations today and provide a framework for the future of Tibet even after I am gone."

Born into a farming family in 1935 in what was then northeastern Tibet, the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was recognized at age 2 as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, and began monastic training and Buddhist philosophical studies.

When Chinese troops entered Tibet in 1950, he suddenly, at age 16, had to become Tibet's political leader and guide the country through the crisis. Tibet's right to independence has been in dispute ever since. In 1959, during the Tibetan uprising, the Dalai Lama fled the country for India, and he has never returned. "I had hoped that I would be able to go back at least once before I die," he writes. "This is looking increasingly unlikely."

In "Voice for the Voiceless," the Dalai Lama describes the personal toll that came with bearing responsibility for leading Tibet from a young age. He recalls meeting with Mao, the Chinese Communist Party's supreme leader, who revealed his disdain for Tibet's deeply spiritual culture.

He describes how, after years of fruitless negotiations with Chinese leaders, he came to the decision that fighting for Tibetan independence was a lost cause. Instead, he began advocating for Tibetans to have cultural autonomy within China, rather than full independence.

He acknowledges that his moderate stance infuriated some Tibetans who felt he had abandoned their hope for restoring independence, and concedes that his approach has largely failed to get results. He also expresses his conflicting feelings about Tibetans who have self-immolated as a form of protest, noting that he sees their actions as a result of profound helplessness, even as he disagrees with their methods and insists on nonviolent protest as the only morally defensible form of resistance.

In 2011, the Dalai Lama stepped down as the political leader of Tibet, paving the way for the Tibetan government in exile to elect its political leaders. He notes that his formal dialogue with the Chinese government over the status of Tibet stalled in 2010, but he continued to have informal and sometimes confidential contact with Chinese leaders until 2019.

In the years since, he has watched with alarm as China has continued its efforts to force Tibetans to assimilate, using tactics that include placing Tibetan children in boarding schools where they learn in Mandarin and are taught that the Chinese liberated Tibetans from serfdom. He also delivers blunt criticism of China's treatment of its own citizens.

"Judging by Xi's last decade in office, when it comes to individual freedom and everyday life, China seems to be reverting to the oppressive policies of Mao's time, but now enforced through state-of-the-art digital technologies of surveillance and control," he writes.

The Dalai Lama also addresses the fraught issue of his own succession.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that the Dalai Lama is the 14th reincarnation of previous Dalai Lamas, and that he is an enlightened being who returns in successive lives to continue his work as a spiritual leader. But the Dalai Lama has warned that China might try to choose the 15th Dalai Lama after his death, as it has done with the Panchen Lama, another high-level Tibetan spiritual leader.

To avoid Chinese interference, the Dalai Lama has said he will reincarnate in "the free world," outside Tibet or China. And when he turns 90 this year, he writes, he will consult Tibetan religious leaders and citizens about whether they want to end the institution of the Dalai Lama altogether.

"Voice for the Voiceless" will be published by William Morrow in the United States and HarperNonFiction in Britain on March 11, and later released in Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, France, Holland and Brazil. It is also being published in Tibetan and translated into Chinese, in hopes that it might influence some Chinese readers, said Thupten Jinpa, the Dalai Lama's longtime translator, though the book will very likely be banned in China.

"He wanted a testimony and an account of the evolution of his thinking," Jinpa said. "This book is an attempt to present in a single volume all of his efforts, in not only reaching out to the Chinese for a negotiated settlement, but also rebuilding Tibetan civilization in exile."

## Tibetan delegation in Denmark highlights China's repressive policies during advocacy visit

24 January 2025, [ANI](#)



Delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile in Denmark (Image Credit: X/@CTA\_TibetdotNet)

A delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, including members Geshe Monlam Tharchin, Namgyal Dolkar Lhagyari, and Konchok Yangphel, began their advocacy tour in Denmark with a meeting at the Danish Parliament, Folketinget, reaffirming resistance to China's repressive policies, Central Tibetan Administration announced in a statement. They were warmly received by Sascha Faxe MP, the foreign affairs spokesperson for the Atlantic and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, according to the statement. During the meeting, MP Faxe highlighted Denmark's democratic traditions while reiterating her commitment to defending human rights and opposing China's growing influence. In response, Namgyal Dolkar Lhagyari delivered an in-depth presentation on the severe impact of China's policies in Tibet.

She described the systematic efforts to erase Tibet's unique language, culture, and identity through the forced assimilation of Tibetan children in state-run boarding schools. She also raised concerns about the environmental devastation caused by China's construction of mega dams and the exploitation of Tibet's natural resources, which threaten the livelihoods of millions of Tibetans who depend on the plateau's delicate ecosystem, Central Tibetan Administration reported.

The delegation called on MP Faxe and the Danish Parliament to translate their moral support for Tibet into concrete actions, urging stronger international advocacy for the Tibetan cause. In response, Faxe praised the leadership of Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama, noting that his promotion of democracy within the Tibetan exile community serves as a powerful example for the world.

The delegation also held discussions with Mathias Parsbaek, Director, and Marlene Croydon Harittso, Senior Advisor at the Danish Institute of Parties and Democracy, exploring opportunities to highlight Tibet's democratic model on the global stage. The Tibetan delegation's visit will continue with further meetings aimed at increasing international awareness of the ongoing struggles faced by Tibetans under Chinese rule.

The Tibetan delegation's visit to Denmark underscores ongoing efforts to raise global awareness of China's repressive policies in Tibet, seeking stronger international support for Tibet's rights and democratic aspirations.

## New York's recognition of Losar would be a significant acknowledgment of Tibetan community

23 January 2025, [ICT](#), Tsejin Khando

I was born and raised in New York City by Tibetan refugees. My parents were born in Tibet, escaped to India in 1959, and ultimately immigrated to New York in the early 1990s. It's a point of pride for me to share that I am a Tibetan, an American, and a New Yorker.

Growing up, the Tibetan community in New York was small. In the early 2000s, our Sunday Tibetan school was made up of a couple dozen students when my brothers and I first joined, and our apartment often served as a temporary home for newly arrived Tibetan friends navigating their first steps in this city. More and more, Tibetans began to leave India in pursuit of better opportunities in the west, and many of these Tibetans settled in New York City.

For as long as I can remember, our community would rent the basement of an Armenian church near 34th St for all our cultural and religious events. However, as our Tibetan community grew, so did a demand for a community space that was accessible to the majority. We settled on a property in Queens, and thus *Phuntsok Deshe* was established as the Tibetan Community Center of New York and New Jersey.



Students of the Tibetan Sunday School in the early 2000s.

Today, New York City is home to the largest number of Tibetans in the country. The Phuntsok Deshe Tibetan Community Center holds the Sunday Tibetan School, catering to over 500 students, and the two halls host

all our religious and cultural events, including Trungkar Dhuchen (His Holiness's birthday), prayer sessions, Tibetan school events, and Losar.

Losar, or Tibetan New Year (*Lo* = year, *Sar* = new), is a distinct Tibetan holiday that is based on a separate astrological calendar than the Lunar calendar, and it's a holiday I look forward to every year. It's a time where my entire family comes together to wear our newest Tibetan *chubas* (traditional Tibetan dress), consume Tibetan butter tea and *dresil* (a Tibetan dish consisting of rice, sugar, butter, raisins, and *droma*), and visit Tibetan temples for blessings – it's a time for community to gather.

Early in 2024, Councilwoman Julie Won introduced the bill, "**Suspension of alternate side parking regulations on Losar**", recognizing Losar on the city's street-cleaning calendar – allowing residents to park that day without worries of receiving a ticket. Councilwoman Won's office estimates there are 61,000 New Yorkers who celebrate Losar – "including Tibetans, Bhutanese, Highland Nepalese, Sikkimese, Mongolians, Monpas, and more."

For someone like me, it isn't just about having alternate side parking. I still don't drive, and I probably won't in the near future ("classic New Yorker," some might say). However, this legislation isn't about me. For many of my Tibetan and Himalayan community members – many of whom who are Uber, Lyft, and taxi drivers – this bill brings a sense of relief and recognition.

For decades, New York City has taken pride in being a melting pot of a myriad of cultures. Yet, representation in policy and legislation remains a powerful reminder of whose stories are seen and valued. Recognizing Losar in this way is not merely a practical accommodation, but a significant acknowledgment of communities like mine.

Celebrating our city's diversity means uplifting the traditions, contributions, and voices of all its communities, and recognizing Losar through legislation on a citywide level is not just a win for Tibetans and the broader Himalayan diaspora – it is a testament to the strength and beauty of New York's multicultural identity.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering addresses Dimapur tibetan community amid Chinese suppression**

23 January 2025, [The Tribune](#)

*Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), began the second phase of his official visits to Tibetan settlements in Northeast India, aimed at understanding the challenges faced by the Tibetan community in exile.*

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the head of the Central Tibetan

Administration (CTA), has commenced the second phase of his official visits to Tibetan settlements in Northeast India, aimed at understanding the challenges faced by the Tibetan community in exile.

During his visit to Dimapur, Sikyong underlined the critical importance of preserving the Tibetan language, culture, and Buddhism, which hold significance not only for Tibet but also for the Himalayan region and the global Buddhist community. He stressed the urgent need for Tibetans to learn their native language and understand their history, particularly in light of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) continued efforts to erase Tibetan identity, the CTA reported.

Sikyong criticized the Chinese government's increasing control over Tibetans, comparing it to George Orwell's dystopian world. He highlighted the CCP's oppressive policies, including mass surveillance and the indoctrination of young Tibetans, aimed at eradicating Tibetan culture and autonomy.

"The Chinese Communist Party is creating a society reminiscent of Orwell's 1984," Sikyong remarked, pointing to the regime's attempts to suppress Tibetan religion, language, and freedoms, CTA reported.

Upon his arrival in Dimapur, the CTA stated that Sikyong was warmly welcomed by the local Tibetan community and state officials.

During a community gathering, he addressed the audience on the progress and ongoing struggles of the Tibetan cause on the international stage.

The CTA further noted that Sikyong spoke about the challenges faced by Tibetan settlements in exile, emphasizing the importance of sustaining these communities amidst demographic changes and maintaining strong ties between the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people.

In his address, Sikyong reaffirmed the importance of the Middle Way Approach in resolving the Tibet-China conflict, urging unity among Tibetans regardless of their political views. He stressed that a united Tibetan front is essential for the success of their pursuit of justice and freedom, both in Tibet and in exile.

### **TIPA Conducts Outreach Program to Preserve and Promote Traditional Tibetan Arts**

22 January 2025, [CTA](#)

In alignment with the vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) has developed comprehensive curricula, qualifications, and objectives to preserve and promote traditional Tibetan performing arts, with a special focus on Ache Lhamo (Tibetan Opera).

Recognising the importance of fostering awareness and engagement among young Tibetans, TIPA has initiated a series of outreach programs in major Tibetan schools. From 20 to 27 November 2024, a

team comprising; Tenzin Phuntsok, Artistic Director; Sonam Tseten, Cultural Teacher and Arts Researcher; Tenzin Jangchup, Performance Teacher and Kalsang Dolma, Performance Teacher visited key schools in the northern region of India.

Similarly, from 9 to 17 January 2025, Dhondup Tsering, TIPA's Director, travelled to southern Tibetan settlements to meet with school administrators and settlement officers. During his visit, he also met with two senior Ache Lhamo artists, Kundeling Thubten la, residing at the Old People's Home in Lugsam, Bylakuppe, and Trinley Gompo (Dobdob la), residing in Bylakuppe Dekyi Larso. These meetings aimed to express gratitude and seek guidance from the elder artists in the preservation of Tibetan opera traditions. This marks the first time TIPA has undertaken such an extensive outreach initiative to directly introduce its performing arts curriculum and vision to young Tibetans in schools. Through these programs, TIPA aspires to inspire greater interest and participation in the preservation and promotion of Tibetan performing arts among the younger generation.

### MPs Thubten Wangchen and Thupten Gyatso Visits Tibetans in Swiss

21 January 2025, [CTA](#)



MPs Thubten Wangchen and Thupten Gyatso Visit Tibetans in Swiss

As part of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile's periodic visitation program, parliamentarians Thubten Wangchen and Thupten Gyatso began their European tour with a public talk in Switzerland on 18 January 2025.

The event was attended by Representative Thinlay Chukki (Tibet Bureau, Geneva), President Drogtsang Gyatso, and Vice President Kelsang of the Tibetan Community in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, along with the local community. During the event, the MPs delivered insightful talks, with the Vice President of the Tibetan Community offering an introductory address, followed by a report presentation by the community's President.

### Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Congratulates President Donald Trump of the United States of America on Taking Oath of Office

21 January 2025, [CTA](#)



Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Congratulates President Donald Trump of the United States of America on Taking Oath of Office.

Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, on behalf of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, representing Tibetans both within Tibet and throughout the global diaspora, extended his heartfelt congratulations to President Trump on taking the oath of office for a second term as President of the United States.

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel wrote, "The United States has long been a steadfast advocate for the rights of Tibetans, amplifying our voices on the international stage. Through its unwavering support, the United States has demonstrated a strong commitment to the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the fundamental dignity of all peoples. I look forward to your continued efforts in facilitating the resolution of the Sino-Tibetan conflict, particularly through the Middle Way Approach."

"I deeply appreciate the enduring bipartisan support from the United States government and its people over the years. I am confident that our partnership will continue to grow and strengthen, fueled by renewed optimism and trust in your leadership."

"Under your guidance, I am hopeful that you will achieve great success in fulfilling the aspirations of your people and meeting the global expectations for peace, justice, and the promotion of human rights around the world."

### Tibetans prepare for Dalai Lama's 90th birthday celebration amid succession speculation

21 January 2025, [The Sentinel](#)

*The Tibetan government in exile is preparing for the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday celebration on July 6, 2025, with speculation surrounding the Dalai Lama addressing the issue of his succession*

The Tibetan government in exile is preparing for the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday celebration on July 6, 2025, with speculation surrounding the Dalai Lama addressing the issue of his succession during that time. In 2011, the Dalai Lama indicated that he would address questions regarding his succession around the age of 90, including whether he would be reincarnated.

Speaking on the matter, Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong (political leader) and President of the Tibetan government in exile told about the situation, noting that there has been much speculation on the subject. "It's all open speculation because his holiness has sometimes said that this could be the last Dalai Lama. When he was asked whether the next Dalai Lama would be a woman, then his holiness said, Why not? And then there are also issues about appointing somebody before your demise. Then there is, of course, the issue of reincarnation. So one thing that has been consistent with his Holiness's statement since 1969 is whether there should be a 15th Dalai Lama or not will be decided by the Tibetan people," Tsering said.

Tsering also mentioned that Tibetan people worldwide have been urging the Dalai Lama to continue the institution of the Dalai Lama, citing its importance to both Tibetans and the broader world.

Despite speculation, Tsering acknowledged that the Dalai Lama may decide not to address the matter immediately, as reincarnation is a process that takes place after the current Dalai Lama's passing and he emphasized that it is difficult to make decisions on the matter before that time.

"Tibetan people all around the world have been writing to the private office (of the Dalai Lama) and also copying the religion and culture department here in Dharamshala, requesting His Holiness to continue the institution of the Dalai Lama, which is not only important for Tibetans but for the whole world through the ancient Indian wisdom and the messages that are embodied through His Holiness the Dalai Lama," he said.

"According to prophecy, it is said that this Dalai Lama will live very long, to 113 years of age so even at 90, if his holiness feels good and if he thinks it is too early, he might say it's too early to come out with any... Because reincarnation is a process that happens after the demise of the present Lama to carry on the responsibilities left behind by this Lama, till you reach that stage," he added.

Regarding the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday celebration, Tsering said, "Internationally we will be celebrating this. Every country that his holiness has visited has made contacts with organizations and institutions that have honoured his holiness and requested them to organize at least one event coinciding with his

holiness's 90th birthday on any of the commitments of his holiness."

"We will also have international exhibition materials in the form of traditional Thangkas about the life of his holiness, modern-day pictures and movies about his holiness' messages and his life and deeds. It will be international and there are also quite a lot of programmes planned in Dharamshala as well, including the conference of all the religious heads on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of July, the long-life prayer offering to his holiness on the July 5 and then the official 90th birthday celebration on the 6th of July this year," he added.

As the Tibetan government-in-exile plans for a year-long celebration to mark the occasion of the 90th birthday of the Dalai Lama, the issue has gained much attention due to China's interest in the reincarnation process for political reasons.

### Activists protest Chinese Vice President during Trump's Inauguration

21 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



Activists including Tibetan, HongKongers and Uyghur activists protests in front of the Chinese embassy against the Chinese VP Han Zheng who attended US President Trump's Inauguration (Photo/X)

Human rights activists staged protests against Chinese Vice President Han Zheng during his attendance at US President Donald Trump's inauguration ceremony on January 20 in Washington, D.C., highlighting concerns over China's human rights record in Tibet, Hong Kong, and East Turkestan.

In a joint statement, Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), Washingtonians Supporting Hong Kong (DC4HK), and the Uyghur American Association (UAA) condemned Han Zheng's presence at the inauguration on Monday, describing him as "a key architect of China's oppressive policies." The groups emphasised Han's role in implementing policies they say have led to "ongoing genocide against Uyghurs and Tibetans" and the erosion of Hong Kong's freedoms under the guise of "national security." They also argued that his attendance "stains this solemn democratic event."

The rights groups called on the incoming Trump administration to prioritise human rights in its dealings with China, urging specific actions including meetings

with diaspora leaders and expanded sanctions on Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses. They also advocated for stronger legislation promoting accountability, such as the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act and the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act.

Separately, more than 40 protesters, including members of Tibetan Youth Congress chapters from New York and New Jersey and Uyghur rights group gathered in front of the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C. The demonstrators maintained a three-hour protest, voicing opposition to oppressive China's policies in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Hong Kong.

Trump's spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt characterised the invitation as part of an effort to create "an open dialogue" with both allies and adversaries. While Xi Jinping did not attend the inauguration personally, he sent Han as his representative.

Han Zheng, born in 1954, is a member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) of the Chinese Communist Party's top decision-making body, since 2017. He has held the position of Party Secretary of Shanghai since 2012. Han has been a member of the Politburo since 2012 and a full member of the CCP Central Committee since 2002.

### **Dalai Lama's 90th Birthday Sparks Succession Debate amid Beijing's Suppression**

21 January 2025, [Republic World](#), Yuvraj Tyagi

As the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday approaches on July 6, 2025, Tibetans worldwide are preparing grand celebrations under the "Year of Compassion."

As the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday approaches on July 6, 2025, excitement is building among Tibetans and supporters worldwide. The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the Tibetan government-in-exile, is rolling out grand plans to commemorate the spiritual leader's incredible journey, designating July 2025 to July 2026 as the "Year of Compassion." While the celebrations will focus on honouring his lifelong message of peace and non-violence, there's an unavoidable undercurrent of anxiety surrounding one critical issue—the question of his succession.

According to a recent Devdiscourse.com report (January 20, 2025), the Dalai Lama is expected to address the contentious issue of his reincarnation during the celebrations. This revelation has only added to the anticipation, given the immense political and spiritual weight his words carry.

#### **A Celebration Overshadowed by Political Tensions**

The Dalai Lama's reincarnation is not just a spiritual matter for Tibetans; it's the heart of their cultural identity and struggle for self-determination.

Traditionally, the process follows ancient Buddhist customs, where senior lamas search for signs of their rebirth, ensuring continuity of leadership rooted in Tibetan beliefs. However, China, never one to miss an opportunity to extend its authoritarian grip, has been aggressively manoeuvring to control the succession process, turning a deeply religious practice into a geopolitical weapon.

For years, Beijing has been obsessed with inserting itself into Tibet's spiritual matters, claiming that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama must be "approved" by the Chinese government. Their justification? Maintaining "social stability" in Tibet—Beijing's go-to euphemism for crushing dissent and enforcing its rule through cultural erasure.

China's stance isn't new. In 2007, Beijing implemented Order No. 5, requiring all reincarnated Tibetan lamas to receive state approval—a bureaucratic absurdity that completely disregards centuries of Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Essentially, this means China wants to handpick a Dalai Lama who will obediently toe the Communist Party's line and rubber-stamp Beijing's control over Tibet.

#### **The Dalai Lama vs. Beijing's Propaganda Machine**

Despite China's relentless efforts to rewrite Tibetan history, the Dalai Lama has consistently pushed back, asserting that the decision on his reincarnation rests solely with Tibetans, not Communist bureaucrats in Beijing. In a clear message to the world, the spiritual leader has hinted that he may choose to reincarnate outside of Chinese-controlled Tibet, or perhaps even opt for no reincarnation at all—throwing a wrench into Beijing's plans to install its puppet leader.

Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong (President) of the CTA, has been equally vocal, recently stating:

**"The Tibetan people will decide the future of our spiritual leadership, not the Chinese Communist Party."**

But China's tactics go beyond mere rhetoric. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has ramped up efforts to indoctrinate Tibetan monks, forcing them to attend "reincarnation training" programs designed to exclude the Dalai Lama's authority from the process altogether. This isn't just an attempt at religious interference; it's an outright hijacking of Tibetan culture in broad daylight.

#### **Beijing's Desperate Bid for Control**

Why is China so hell-bent on controlling the next Dalai Lama? Simple—it wants to neutralize the Tibetan independence movement once and for all. The current Dalai Lama, despite his peaceful approach, remains a thorn in Beijing's side, representing the very idea of Tibetan autonomy that the CCP is desperate to crush. By anointing a Beijing-approved Dalai Lama, China hopes to pacify Tibet and erase any remaining resistance to its rule.

However, Beijing's plan comes with one major flaw—Tibetans simply do not recognize China's authority over their faith. Any attempt to install a state-approved Dalai Lama will be widely rejected, potentially leading to further unrest within Tibet and beyond. The international community is watching closely, and Beijing's continued heavy-handedness is only fueling global sympathy for the Tibetan cause.

#### **International Concerns and Support for Tibet**

The Dalai Lama's succession struggle has caught the attention of world leaders and human rights organizations alike. Countries such as the United States, India, and several European nations have openly condemned China's interference in Tibetan religious matters. The U.S. Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 explicitly warns Beijing against meddling in the reincarnation process, stating that any Chinese-appointed Dalai Lama "will not be recognized" by the global community.

Despite international pressure, China continues to dig in its heels, with state-controlled media regularly pushing propaganda narratives that portray Tibet as an inseparable part of China and any talk of independence as "Western interference." Beijing's narrative, however, falls flat in the face of overwhelming evidence of its systematic oppression of Tibetans—ranging from mass surveillance to forced assimilation policies targeting Tibetan language and culture.

The Dalai Lama's 90th birthday offers Tibetans a chance to celebrate their spiritual leader's wisdom, resilience, and unwavering commitment to non-violence. For Tibetans in exile, the celebrations will serve as a powerful declaration of their refusal to bow to Beijing's pressure.

#### **Italian Senator drafts new resolution on Tibet**

20 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup

Italian Senator Anderà Priamo has stated that a new resolution addressing key Tibetan concerns has been drafted, following a meeting with Central Tibetan Administration's security minister Gyari Dolma during her recent European diplomatic tour.

According to the exile Tibetan government run [tibet.net](#), the Italian senator Anderà Priamo informed Minister Dolma during the meeting in Rome's Senate building on 16 January that a resolution addressing key concerns related to Tibet has already been drafted that aims to amplify the Tibetan voice in both the Italian Senate and the Chamber of Deputies (lower house of the parliament) of Italy.

The former member of parliament, Gyari Dolma, was on a European diplomatic visit that included stops in Germany and Switzerland from January 5th to 18th. The security minister met with Italian

parliamentarians and the former deputy foreign minister to discuss pressing issues concerning Tibet.

The meeting, attended by former Italian MP Gianni Vernetti and other Tibetan representatives, builds upon Italy's historical support for the Tibetan cause. The Italian Parliament has previously taken strong positions on Tibetan issues, notably through a 2014 resolution by the Senate's Special Committee on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, which called for an end to the oppression of Tibetan people and urged resumed dialogue with the Dalai Lama's envoys.

That 2014 resolution specifically addressed concerns about teaching the Tibetan language in schools and called for unrestricted access to Tibet for international press, diplomats, and EU officials. It also emphasised the need for United Nations monitoring of human rights conditions in Tibet.

This latest initiative follows a pattern of Italian parliamentary action on Tibet, including a 2012 resolution by the Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Affairs Committee that called for an immediate end to violence against Tibetan people and religious practitioners while advocating for renewed dialogue between Chinese authorities and Tibetan representatives.

#### **1,200 Buddhist Monks Attend Guru Padmasambhava Chanting Program in Odisha, India**

20 January 2025, [BDG](#), Dipen Barau

More than 1,200 Buddhist monks from 17 countries gathered in the eastern Indian state of Odisha (formerly Orissa) to participate in the first-ever Guru Padmasambhava chanting program, which took place from 12–16 January.

Organized by the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation in collaboration with Odisha's state government, and supported locally by the Udaygiri Buddha Mahotsav Committee, the event was aimed at commemorating the spiritual legacy of Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche.

The program was inaugurated on 12 January by Sikkim Minister Sonam Lama, along with Jajpur Member of Parliament Rabindra Narayan Behera, Barchana Legislative Member Amar Nayak, and others.

This event held a special significance as many believe that Guru Padmasambhava was born in Udaygiri, in modern-day Odisha's Jajpur District, in the eighth century. Guru Rinpoche played a crucial role in spreading Buddhism in Tibet and the Himalayan region. His teachings have become the cornerstone of Vajrayana Buddhism, and he is regarded as a "second Buddha" for his essential contributions to establishing Buddhist practices and doctrines far beyond India.

Participants not only commemorated this legacy but also prayed for world peace during uncertain times marked by wildfires in Odisha and an earthquake in Tibet.

Jajpur MP Behera emphasized that Jajpur was an important district of India, being the birthplace of the poem and national song “Vande Mataram.” The Toshali dynasty of Emperor Ashoka (r. c. 268–232 BCE) was based in this district, with its capital at Radhanagar. Historically, Jajpur has also been a center of intellectual and cultural excellence.

The head of Padmasambhava Monastery in Jiranga, Odisha, said: “There has been [a] long-time aspiration in the hearts and minds of all the Buddhists who follow the teachings of Padmasambhava to hold such a gathering in memory and gratitude of Guru Padmasambhava. Especially here, in this holy place, because we believe and many historians now believe that Guru-ji probably was born in Odisha, but it is very sure that from here he carried the Buddhadharma to Tibet and the rest of the Himalayas.” (ANI)

Odisha’s Culture Minister, Suryavanshi Suraj, participated in a session, highlighting the importance of the state’s Buddhist sites in global spiritual tourism. He noted that Odisha was a treasure trove of Buddhist heritage, with sites such as Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri, and Udayagiri offering profound insights into history and culture. Such gatherings, he said, were vital for promoting their heritage and sharing the timeless teachings of peace, compassion, and enlightenment worldwide.

Udaygiri, Lalitgiri, and Ratnagiri are collectively known as the Buddhist Golden Triangle in Odisha, with local Buddhists campaigning for the region’s designation as a World Heritage site.



Delegates from Thailand. From aninews.in

“In an effort to attract more tourists, particularly overseas tourists, the authorities should chalk out plans to develop the famous Buddhist sites at Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, and Lalitgiri, known as the ‘diamond triangle;’” suggested Dhavarahu Dhummo, a monk from Cambodia. (*The Times of India*)

“I wish that this Guru Rinpoche Program will be held every year in Orissa, and that tourism will also be developed here along with Dharma because wherever there is a Buddhist shrine, a temple, or any other holy

place, there are many tourists who go there. They get blessings from there,” said Sonam Lama. “I want to see tourists and devotees of Guru Rinpoche come to Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, and Udaygiri.” (ANI)

### Tibetan Diaspora in America Organises Prayer Service for Earthquake Victims in Tibet

20 January 2025, [CTA](#)



The Office of Tibet in Washington, D.C., issued an appeal to Tibetan associations under their jurisdiction to organise a prayer service in solidarity with the victims of the devastating earthquake in Tibet’s Shigatse region, which brought immense grief to the Tibetan communities worldwide. Tibetan communities across North America responded promptly and organised prayer gatherings according to their local circumstances and schedule.

Over the past two weeks, various prayer ceremonies have been conducted in remembrance of the deceased and to support those injured. While some Tibetan communities are continuing ongoing prayer recitation, some have announced they will hold extended 49-day prayer services, for which the Office of Tibet, North America, expresses profound gratitude. Offering prayers and dedication for those suffering physical and mental hardships is a deeply meaningful Buddhist practice. In these challenging times, prayer services serve as a significant way for the Tibetans in exile to express solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Tibet.

The Office of Tibet also extended heartfelt thanks to local associations and individuals for their unwavering commitment to supporting this collective cause.



## **Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation to Advocate Tibet in Scandinavia**

20 January 2025, [CTA](#)

As part of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile's Europe Tibet advocacy program, a parliamentary delegation will visit Scandinavian countries Denmark, Norway, and Sweden from 22 to 30 January 2025 to advocate for Tibet. The delegation will consist of parliamentarians Geshe Monlam Tharchin, Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar and Konchok Yangphel.

The delegation will arrive in Copenhagen on 22 January and have scheduled programs there for three days. They will then travel to Stockholm to participate in programs from 26 to 28 January. On 28 January, they will arrive in Oslo and have engagements there on 29 January. The delegation will depart from Oslo to Delhi on 30 January.

## **Tokyo University Student Shares Study Experience in Tibetan Monastery in India**

20 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Inui Masataka, a Tokyo university student researching Indian Buddhist philosophy, delivered a talk on his experience studying Tibetan language and Buddhist philosophy at Gyumed monastery in Hunsur Tibetan Settlement in South India. On 19 February 2025, Tibet House Japan organised a talk to enable Inui Masataka to share his experience with his fellow countrymen, especially those interested in studying in the Tibetan community.

Representative Dr Tsewang Gyalpo Arya welcomed the participants and informed them about how Inui Masataka studied the Tibetan language at the university and in the Tibet House's language class, as well as his study at Gyumed monastery in India. He also informed the gatherings about the online Nalanda certificate and diploma courses conducted by the Tibet House New Delhi.

Inui Masataka first offered the Heart Sutra prayer for the people in earthquake-affected areas in Tibet. He talked about his education at Gyumed monastery and appreciated how Buddhism is taught in Tibetan monasteries. He appreciated H.H. the Dalai Lama's effort to share Buddhism more as science and philosophy than as a religious dogma. He talked about the Gyumed monastery's curriculum and how it is covered in 16 years of study. He spoke of Social, Emotional and Ethical (SEE) learning and how it is being embraced by many in the West as scientific and compassionate education.

People from different backgrounds, some already learned scholars and monks, have come and participated in the questions and answers session. Some expressed interest in such talks to promote

better student exchange between the two communities.

Representative Dr Arya while updating on the recent earthquake in Tibet explained that the Tibet House has arranged to receive donations for the earthquake relief fund at the request of several individuals and organisations who want to express their solidarity with the people in Tibet. He said the people would be informed once the funds had been sent to the destination.

Hasegawa Naoko, the office secretary, moderated the event and shared the office's information booklets with the visitors.

*-Report filed by the Office of Tibet, Japan*

## **China rejects CTA President's appeal for proper assistance for Dingri earthquake victims**

20 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

The Chinese government has dismissed an appeal by the President of the Tibetan Government in Exile, officially known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) Penpa Tsering, urging Beijing to prioritize the needs and rights of Tibetans during disaster relief efforts, in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck Dingri in Shigatse Prefecture, Tibet.

President Tsering, in a public statement on January 12, called for culturally sensitive disaster relief measures and emphasised the necessity of long-term disaster preparedness plans. "We also call upon the PRC government to provide adequate assistance in rebuilding efforts that take into account the traditional Tibetan needs and fundamental rights of the Tibetan people," the statement read.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Guo Jiakun, responded by rejecting the appeal and denouncing the CTA as a "pure separatist political group," unrecognised by any country. "We are fully aware of the group's separatist nature and political agenda," the spokesperson stated, accusing the CTA of exploiting the disaster for political purposes.

Guo asserted that the disaster response was progressing smoothly, stating, "We are confident in winning this tough battle of quake response and returning work and life to normal in the affected areas as soon as possible."



Guo Jiakun, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson in an undated photo (Photo/China Daily)

Chinese state media highlighted the government's disaster response as comprehensive, claiming the establishment of 224 relocation sites for 47,500 people, along with access to makeshift clinics, libraries, and counselling services. However, social media reports from Tibet suggest that several disaster-hit regions remain underserved. Tibetan volunteers and social organisations have reportedly been barred from directly distributing aid to affected residents, with all relief supplies directed to government-controlled warehouses. Videos circulating online depict large quantities of essential supplies stacked outside the Dingri local government office.

On January 11, the CTA also issued a fact sheet calling on the Chinese government to ensure timely emergency rescue, medical aid, and rehabilitation services. The appeal also urged Beijing to grant unrestricted access to international aid organisations, provide transparent casualty reports, and guarantee sufficient post-earthquake rebuilding efforts.

The 7.1-magnitude earthquake caused widespread devastation, impacting areas including Lhatse, Dramtso, Chula, Tsogo, Sakya, Tingkye, and Ngamring. Chinese state media reported 126 deaths and 337 injuries as of January 9, with 246 patients discharged from hospitals and 3,600 homes destroyed. However, Voice of America's Tibetan Service, citing reliable local sources, confirmed that the death toll had risen to 134 by January 14, exceeding official figures.

### **Kalon Dolma Gyari Concludes Her Official Visit to Europe**

20 January 2025, [CTA](#)

On January 17, 2025, Kalon (Minister) Gyari Dolma of the Department of Security, Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), held a virtual meeting with Filippo Scianna, a former director of the Tara Cittamani School of Buddhist Psychology and Philosophy and Lama Tzong Khapa Institute. Scannia has been instrumental in promoting Tibetan Buddhism in Italy emphasising the development of inherent human qualities like kindness, compassion and wisdom.

Scianna's initiatives at ILTK included the Mind Science Academy, which aimed to bridge ancient Buddhist knowledge with Western science.



Kalon (Minister) Gyari Dolma of the Department of Security holds an online meeting with Filippo Scianna and Claudio Cardelli.

As President of the Italian Buddhist Union, he welcomed His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and participated in the "Tibetan Culture Week" in Bologna. His commitment to Tibetan culture and Buddhism has significantly contributed to their promotion in Italy.

In addition, Kalon Gyari Dolma held a meaningful virtual meeting with Claudio Cardelli and also in-person meeting with Marilia Bellaterra, members of Aref International members of the Tibet Support Group. During these interactions, Kalon conveyed deep appreciation for the group's steadfast support for the Tibetan cause. She acknowledged their unwavering commitment to advocating for Tibet on international platforms and highlighted the critical role such collaborations play in amplifying Tibet's voice globally.

On 18 January, Kalon concluded her engagement in Rome and departed for India. Nyima Dhundup, Vice President of the Tibetan community and the Vice President of the Regional Tibetan Women's Association (RTWA) were present at the hotel to bid farewell to the Minister.

### **Tibetan MPs embark on Nordic advocacy tour for Tibet from January 22-30**

20 January 2025, [The Tribune](#)

*A parliamentary delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will go to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden from January 22 to 30, 2025, as part of the Tibet advocacy campaign in Europe.*

A parliamentary delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will go to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden from January 22 to 30, 2025, as part of the Tibet advocacy campaign in Europe.

Parliamentarians Konchok Yangphel, Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, and Geshe Monlam Tharchin will be part of the visit, the Central Tibetan Administration

said. The planned visit underlines the ongoing struggles of Tibetans under Chinese rule, including human rights violations, cultural erosion, and the need for international support.

According to the Central Tibetan Administration, parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten and Yeshe Dolma successfully wrapped up their official Europe Tibet Advocacy campaign in the Netherlands last year.

Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten and Yeshe Dolma, two members of the Tibetan Parliament, visited with Tibetans living in the Netherlands. They met and spoke with representatives of four groups: the Tibet Support Group, Students for Free Tibet, the International Campaign for Tibet, and the local Tibetan association. The Tibetan community in the area came together to celebrate the 35th anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance. The community was addressed by the two visiting MPs. According to the Central Tibetan Administration, the program started with a briefing from Norbu, the president of the Tibetan Association, and then Representative Rigzin Choedon of the Office of Tibet Brussels introduced the visiting MPs and made welcome remarks.

After discussing His Holiness the Dalai Lama's outstanding achievements and the activities of the Central Tibetan Administration, the two MPs engaged the public in a Q&A session. The Tibetan Association's secretary gave concluding remarks to wrap up the program. Additionally, traditional cultural dances were performed by Tibetan kindergarten through fifth-grade kids.

The delegation will now arrive in Copenhagen on January 22 and will have three days of scheduled programs there. After that, they will go to Stockholm to take part in events from January 26 to 28. They will arrive in Oslo on January 28 and have appointments there on January 29. The Central Tibetan Administration has announced the delegation's departure from Oslo to Delhi on January 30.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering to Embark on Second Leg of Official Visit to Northeast India**

19 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration will undertake an official visit from 19 January to 5 February 2025. During this time, he will travel to New Delhi, the capital of India, and Tibetan settlements in the northeast region of India, including Dimapur, Itanagar, Tuting, Miao, Tezu, and Darjeeling. In Itanagar, Sikyong will address members of the Arunachal Tibet Support Group and the Indo-Tibetan Coordination Office. At their invitation, he will engage in discussion with members of these organisations.

### **Fears UK's trade deals could undermine the rights of Tibetan people**

18 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

There are fears the British Government is willing to place trade and access to Chinese markets above the rights of Tibetan people, as well as those affected by crackdowns in regions such as Hong Kong and Xinjiang. The UK's Chancellor Rachel Reeves visited Beijing on Jan 11, claiming she would strike deals worth more than £600m to the UK economy over the next five years. However, the plan has faced widespread backlash from opposition Members of Parliament, with the UK's former Hong Kong governor Christopher Patten calling it "delusional".

In an open letter, UK-based Tibetans and Tibet groups voiced concerns about Ms Reeve's visit to China, warning it is taking place at a "historic low point for human rights in Tibet". They highlight Beijing's intensifying exploitation of resources through hydropower dams on Tibetan rivers and unregulated mining causing "mass displacement and destruction of Tibetan heritage".

The letter continues: "The exploitation of Tibet's environment and the harm being caused to lives and livelihoods has prompted Tibetans around the world to call for an international moratorium on megadevelopment inside Tibet last year. The UK must support these calls and avoid undermining them by seeking trade without tying it to improvements in China's human rights record."

The chancellor has defended the plan saying she remains willing to have "uncomfortable conversations" with Beijing, particularly about human rights. But when *Tibetan Review* reached out to the chancellor's office in London to ask whether trade deals would exclude companies responsible for exploiting Tibet's natural resources, such as lithium, copper and gold, they responded saying they would trade in areas "that benefit the UK's national interest". The chancellor's office also confirmed human rights were discussed with Beijing, specifically in Hong Kong yet it was unclear whether Tibet was raised at all.

The UK is facing economic turmoil and the chancellor appears to believe a deal with China may be the key to addressing it, yet some have compared the recent visit to former Prime Minister David Cameron's attempt to start a "golden era" of relations with China in 2015. At the time, Mr Cameron claimed a strong relationship would bring "investment and jobs and higher living standards" but despite some short-term benefits, this era is now considered a mistake. Research shows it failed to deliver substantial long-term economic growth for the UK. Furthermore, in 2022 then-Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called his predecessor's plan for a golden era "naïve", adding that China presents a "systemic challenge to our values and interests".

## **“It’s a human catastrophe waiting for us”: NGOs warn about China’s dizzying dam construction project in Tibet**

18 January 2025, [India Defence Review](#)

**China plans to build 193 massive dams in Tibet, potentially disrupting ecosystems and displacing 750,000 people. This ambitious project raises urgent questions about water control, human rights, and geopolitical tensions. What’s really at stake? Discover the full story.**

China’s got a plan to build at least **193 dams in Tibet**, and it’s causing quite a stir worldwide. Why? People are worried it could seriously mess with the environment, culture, and human rights. This ambitious project was spotlighted in a report by the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** on **December 5th**. The findings are a big deal, especially since they come from four years of research. It’s not just about Tibet; neighboring regions could feel the heat too.

What’s Up with the Environment and Resources?

These dams might give China a whole lot of control over water resources across Southeast Asia. Nearly **two billion people** depend on these waters, so you can imagine why this is a huge deal. The ICT report calls this move an aggressive grab for natural resources like water, lithium, uranium, copper, and cobalt. Vincent Metten from ICT put it bluntly: “There’s a frenzy and a grabbing of Tibet’s natural resources...and now, obviously, water.”

This raises all sorts of questions about environmental sustainability and resource management. Changing how water flows can shake up ecosystems inside and outside China’s borders. Having such control over essential resources risks not only biodiversity but also regional peace and cooperation.

How Big Are These Dams Anyway?

The scale of these dams is mind-blowing. One of them is set to be **three times larger than the biggest dam we know!** Dechen Palmo points out: “One of the dams is going to be three times bigger...It’s unimaginable what’s happening in Tibet.” All these dams together are expected to crank out around **270 gigawatts of energy**, which is about as much as Germany produces! Now, consider that Tibet has only about **six million** people living there. So who really benefits from all this energy? Does it meet local needs or serve some larger geopolitical goals?

What’s the Deal with Geopolitics Here?

It’s not just about nature—there’s some serious geopolitical stuff at play too. Countries nearby that rely on Tibetan water sources could find themselves in deep trouble if fair resource sharing isn’t sorted out. **Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio**, a senator from

France-Tibet group, warns: “If we don’t work on water sharing, it’s a human catastrophe that awaits us.” Her statement highlights how crucial international dialogue and cooperation are to avoid conflicts over scarce water resources.

Plus, around **750,000 people in Tibet** might have to leave their homes because of these dam constructions. This displacement brings tough human rights issues into play and threatens cultural heritage in one-of-a-kind regions.

Who’s Speaking Up?

The ICT report has caught the attention of big names like American actor **Richard Gere**, who uses his platform to raise awareness about what’s happening in Tibet. His involvement shows how cultural icons can sway public opinion and bring global focus to critical issues.

Vincent Metten adds urgency: “There is a frenzy...and now, obviously, water.” Voices like his push important perspectives into public discussions, urging everyone involved to tackle these challenges head-on.

Building these dams isn’t just an engineering feat; it’s where environmental care meets geopolitical strategies and human rights advocacy head-on. As China moves forward with this massive project in Tibet, keeping an eye on its wide-reaching effects becomes super important for everyone around the globe.

By understanding both immediate threats and long-term outcomes from developments like this in Tibet—and all over Southeast Asia—there’s room for collective action towards solutions that respect nature’s balance while securing humanity’s shared future.

## **Tibetans and Japanese Conduct Prayer Gathering for the People in Tibet**

18 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Tibetans and Japanese gathered at the Tibet House Japan and prayed for the people in Tibet who lost their lives in the recent earthquake and for the quick recovery of the situation. The Tibet House Japan and the Tibetan Community in Japan (TCJ) organised the prayer gathering. A brief moment of silence was observed to mourn and pay respect to the people who lost their lives in the devastating earthquake.

Kunchok Sithar, a Tibetan Buddhist lecturer at Potala College, led the prayers and recitations of the mantra. Recitations included Bardo thodrol, liberation through hearing in the intermediate state, and Chodjug, the Bodhisattva’s conduct. Mantras of Avaloketeshvara and Bodhisattva Tara were recited. Ven. Kobayashi led the prayers in Japanese, reciting Hangyashingyo, the Heart Sutra.

Representative Dr Tsewang Gyalpo Arya of the Liaison Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama thanked the participants for demonstrating solidarity with the Tibetans suffering in the earthquake-affected regions. He updated the situation based on the information available in the news. He informed the gathering that although the media reported that the earthquake was due to friction between the Indian and Eurasian plates, one of the main reasons was China's dam-building frenzy in the region. He also informed them of how H.H. the Dalai Lama had advised to take this disaster to practice the path of Bodhisattava.

A magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck the area around Dingri county of Shigatse prefecture in Tibet on 7 January. Chinese officials reported 126 dead and claimed efficient conduct of the rescue missions.

H.H. the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) have expressed solidarity with the people in Tibet and offered prayers.

Japanese participants expressed relief for being able to join in prayers and lamented the disaster. Japanese lawmaker Yamatani Eriko, Chairperson of the Japan Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet and Nagao Takeshi, a former lawmaker earlier visited the Tibet House Japan to express their solidarity and support.

### **Dalai Lama Charitable Trust gets FCRA nod**

17 January 2025, [The Hindu](#), Vijaita Singh

#### **Trust not directly linked to the Dalai Lama, but associated with the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, says Trust official; fresh FCRA registration granted for religious purposes, among others**

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has granted a Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registration to 'His Holiness the Dalai Lama Charitable Trust' for "religious" purposes, among others. FCRA registration is a mandatory requirement to receive foreign funds.

An official with the Trust said that the NGO is not directly linked with the spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, but is associated with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), which looks after the welfare of the Tibetan community in India. The CTA is headquartered in Himachal Pradesh's Dharamsala.

The Trust, registered in Delhi, had applied for the renewal of an existing FCRA registration, the official said. However, MHA data shows that a fresh registration was granted.

#### **Religious purposes included**

The Trust was granted an FCRA registration for the purpose of undertaking a "religious (Buddhist)" programme, along with cultural, economic, social, and educational activities. To receive FCRA registration, an NGO must have a definite cultural, social, religious,

economic, or educational programme. It can be registered under one or multiple categories.

#### **Supporting Tibetan refugees**

In 1959, thousands of Tibetans arrived in India along with the Dalai Lama in the face of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The Indian government provided asylum as well as assistance towards temporary settlement. Per the 2022 census conducted by the CTA, there are 63,167 Tibetan refugees in India.

The Foundation for Universal Responsibility, another non-profit that was founded in 1990 with the funds from the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Dalai Lama, is also registered under the FCRA.

In 2015, the BJP-led government at the Centre sanctioned ₹40 crore to the Central Tibetan Relief Committee which is part of the CTA, to provide aid to Tibetan refugees. The scheme was extended in 2022 for another five years.

### **CTA to counter China's cartographic aggression, to publish map with original Tibetan names**

17 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

The Central Tibetan Administration, also known as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, has announced plans to publish a comprehensive book and map documenting the original Tibetan names of places and boundaries. This initiative, aimed at countering China's escalating cartographic aggression, was disclosed by CTA President Penpa Tsering during an interview with *Hindustan Times*.

President Tsering emphasised the project's significance in preserving Tibet's cultural and historical identity amidst China's systematic efforts to rename Tibetan locations. "This book will preserve for future generations the original names and the historical stories behind them, ensuring that this cultural heritage is protected. This is not merely a response to China's cartographic aggression but also a step toward preserving the cultural heritage of Tibet," he stated.

He further explained the challenges and scope of the project, noting that the complexity would vary depending on the depth of research undertaken. "The work on the map is under process, and much will depend on to what level we need to go to find out the original names in Tibetan. If we restrict it only to townships, the task becomes much easier. Maybe we will begin by focusing on townships and later expand it to include villages, and that involves a lot of work."



CTA President Penpa Tsering (Photo/tibet.net)

The CTA’s initiative follows intensified cartographic aggression by China, including its widespread promotion of the term “Xizang” for Tibet in official narratives and media. Speaking about this trend, President Tsering remarked, “It is not just about renaming Tibet as ‘Xizang’, it’s about erasing the historical background behind the name. When you adopt these terms, as China insists, it aligns with their narrative.”

Prominent international media organisations, including *The Guardian*, AFP, ANI, and NDTV, have been criticised for using the term “Xizang” in their reports. A recent example involved coverage of the devastating earthquake in Dingri County, Shigatse Prefecture, which claimed 134 lives, injured 337, and destroyed thousands of homes. These reports prominently featured the Chinese term, drawing criticisms from the Tibetan community.

In another instance, the Musée du quai Branly in France faced backlash for using “Xizang” in its catalogue of Tibetan artefacts. Following strong opposition from the Tibetan community, supporters, and activist groups like Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) in France, the museum eventually removed the term. Scholars argued that the use of “Xizang” aligns with China’s official narrative and diminishes Tibet’s cultural and historical autonomy.

The head of the Tibetan polity acknowledged these developments as positive but stressed the need for continued advocacy despite limited resources. “One museum in France agreed to make corrections, which is a positive development, and we hope other governments will respect the historical status of Tibet as an independent state. Otherwise, even the middle-way policy loses its meaning. When His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaks about the middle-way policy, it inherently involves acknowledging the polarities—one being Tibet’s historical status,” he stated.

The Tibetan leader further emphasised the importance of addressing China’s broader strategy stating that China’s renaming efforts extend beyond Tibet to areas in India and the South China Sea. “We have been reaching out to governments and media and urging them to not use the Chinese term ‘Xizang’

because they (China) are not only doing this to Tibet but also in areas in India and the South China Sea.”

### Department of Religion and Culture Hosts Second Consortium Conference on Tibetan Digital Library in Dharamshala

15 January 2025, [CTA](#)

The Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration, organised second Consortium Conference on the Tibetan Digital Library from 15 to 16 January 2025, at Hotel Imperial, Khanyara, Dharamshala, in collaboration with Wadhvani AI and Monlam ITRC. This event, funded by USAID, aims to further strengthen the cultural resilience of the Tibetan community by enhancing collaboration and developing actionable strategies.

The ceremony was honoured by the presence of Department of Religion and Culture Secretary Dhondul Dorjee, the Project Management Specialist Radharani Thakuria and development assistance Specialist Balaka Dey of the USAID, founder of Monlam AI and Monlam IT Geshe Lobsang Monlam, and Director of Buddhist Digital Resource Center Dr. Jann Ronis. Around 58 participants from different monasteries and cultural institution attended the conference.

The inaugural ceremony began with Secretary Dhondul Dorjee, Radharani Thakuria, and Balaka Dey lighting a butter lamp and offering prayers, followed by an introduction to the conference. The Department of Religion and Culture also screened a video showcasing the project’s first-year accomplishments and undertakings.



Secretary Dhondul Dorjee and USAID Project Management Specialist Radharani Thakuria and development assistance Specialist Balaka Dey lighting the butter lamp. Photo/ Tenzin Phende / CTA

During his address, Secretary Dhondul Dorjee, expressed gratitude to stakeholders involved in the program, from USAID, Tibet Fund, SARD, Wadhvani AI, Monlam ITRC, and the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). He highlighted the Tibetan Digital Library’s role in preserving Tibetan cultural heritage, such as manuscripts, Thangkas, statues, videos, and

audios, ensuring the community's cultural continuity through secure and accessible digital archiving. He further noted that the program, titled "Strengthening Cultural Resilience of Tibetan Communities", was launched by Sikyong Penpa Tsering on 3 November 2023, marking a crucial step in safeguarding Tibetan heritage and ensuring its continuity for future generations.

Project Management Specialist Radharani Thakuria of USAID extended her thanks to the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC) and Monlam AI for their technical expertise. She remarked, "monasteries are the pillars of Tibetan Buddhism, the custodian of culture and heritage and the house of knowledge, passed down for centuries. The creation of the Tibetan Digital Library, is essential for preserving and transmitting Tibetan Culture for future generations".

Around 11:30 p.m., Dhondup Tsering from the Department of Religion and Culture presented an overview of the project's first-year achievements, along with plans and budget proposals for the upcoming year. This was followed by an introduction to the Tibetan Digital Library Catalog System, highlighting its features, benefits, and future potential. The afternoon sessions focused on hands-on activities and expert presentations. Participants observed the examination and digitization of ancient texts and documents, while also exploring the use of modern technology for preservation. Key highlights included a demonstration of the Tibetan Digital Library (TDL) platform and its prototype model by Deepashree Mahajan, Acting COP and product manager of Wadhvani AI, as well as a session on the application of artificial intelligence in digital preservation presented by Dr. Geshe Lobsang Monlam, founder of Monlam AI and Monlam IT. Additionally, methods for preserving ancient texts was shared by Ngawang Thinley, Founding Director of Esukhia and Open Pecha.

The event concluded with group discussions and debates, providing a platform for participants to share ideas and insights. The conference build upon the achievements of the first year, setting the stage for continued innovation and collaboration in the preservation of Tibetan heritage.

## Memorial Service in New York Honours Chinese Scholar Li Jianglin, Renowned for Her Work on Modern Tibetan History

15 January 2025, [CTA](#)



*Commemorative Gathering for the Chinese writer Li Jianglin, a Chinese scholar of modern Tibetan history and author.*

On 12 January 2025, the Chinese Women's Rights Organisation and the Office of Tibet, Washington DC jointly held a memorial service for Li Jianglin, a Chinese scholar of modern Tibetan history and author. Attendees remembered the distinguished Chinese scholar's contributions, particularly how her research into Tibetan history helped many readers understand the truth about the Chinese Communist Party's military invasion, including the massacres and destruction that the CCP government had attempted to conceal.

Tsultrim Gyatso, the Chinese Liaison Officer of the Office of Tibet, introduced Li Jianglin's numerous works on modern Tibetan history, including "Lhasa 1959" "When Iron Birds Fly in the Sky," and "Three Lives in One Lifetime". These works helped many Chinese and international readers understand the history of massacres and destruction during the Communist invasion. Kalsang Tsering, President of the Tibetan Community of NY & NJ, and Tenzin Nawang, President of the NY & NJ Middle Way Approach Movement, expressed their gratitude for her support of the Tibetan cause, particularly through historical education.

Li Jianglin's daughter attended the memorial service, along with many Chinese scholars, friends, and admirers. Speakers included Zhang Jing, President of the Chinese Women's Rights Organisation; Hu Ping, renowned editor of Beijing Spring magazine; Chen Xiaonong, prominent Chinese economist, and Dr. He Qinglian; Chen Pokong, famous political commentator; and Wang Ruiqin, Founder of IPK Media. They reflected on Li Jianglin's lifetime achievements and her influence on both Chinese and Tibetan societies. Both Tibetan and Chinese attendees expressed hope that more Chinese intellectuals like Li Jianglin would emerge in the future to support Tibet and truth.

## Tibet's Mt Everest-county earthquake victims mourned at world's largest religious gathering

14 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)



More religious and other mourning events were held for the victims of the 7.1-magnitude earthquake that hit Tibet's Mt Everest-County of Dingri in Tibet, China, Nepal and India, including at the world's largest ever religious gathering in the Indian city of Prayagraj in the Uttar Pradesh state.

On the first day of the Maha Kumbh Mela on Jan 13, an *aarti* (lamp prayer ceremony) was performed for the victims of the earthquake.

"Today, I prayed on the bank of Sangam – for those people who suffered as many houses were destroyed and lives were lost in Tibet and Nepal due to a disastrous tragedy (earthquake)," the *ANI* news service Jan 13 quoted Swami Chidanand Saraswati, President of the Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh, as saying.

Sangam, or Triveni Sangam, is the confluence of three sacred rivers of Ganges, Jamna and the invisible, legendary Saraswati rivers.

"All of India is with them. The relation between India, China and Tibet continues to flourish and we continue to peacefully co-exist – today's *aarti* was dedicated to that cause as well..," he has added.

Held every 12 years, the Maha Kumbh Mela, or Great Pitcher Festival – as the religious event is called – attracts more than 400 million visitors, both Indians and tourists, noted the *scmp.com* Jan 13.

The festival, to be held over 44 days, originates in a Hindu tradition that the god Vishnu, known as the Preserver, wrested away from demons a golden pitcher that held the nectar of immortality.

In a 12-day celestial fight for its possession, four drops of the nectar fell to earth, in the cities of Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik, where the festival is held every three years in rotation.

The Maha Kumbh Mela, held once in 12 years in this cycle, the most auspicious, attracts the largest crowds. In Nepal's capital Kathmandu, the Tibetan community gathered at the Shelkar Chode Gaden Lekshey Ling—a Nepal-based heritage replica of the Shelkar Chode Monastery in Dingri—to offer prayers and mourn the loss caused by the devastating earthquake.

The mass prayer service, organised by the Tibetan Refugee Welfare Office (also known as the Office of Tibet), was attended by around 167 representatives from 47 Tibetan civil society organisations and various other institutions, said the Office of Tibet, Kathmandu, in a statement posted on the Central Tibetan Administration's *Tibet.net* website Jan 13.

In northeast India's Tibet-border state of Arunachal Pradesh, Thousands of people, including lamas and students, took out a candlelight march from Tawang Monastery to Masang Dungyur Mani in Old Market on Jan 12 to express solidarity with the victims of the earthquake, reported *arunachal24.in* Jan 12 and *arunachaltimes.in* Jan 13.

The march was initiated by Tawang MLA Namgye Tsering. He, along with Galden Namgyal Lhatse monastery abbot Shedling Tulku Thupten Tendar Rinpoche, monks and well-wishers offered condolences to those who lost their lives, and prayed at the monastery for the wellbeing of the injured and the homeless, the report said.

Public leaders, members of MMT, Govt officials, AMSU, ATDSU, Taxi Association, WWA, Social Organisations, Bazar Secretaries of all the three markets, its members and people of all walks of life took part in this event, said the reports.

A memorial service was also held Jan 13 morning in Dramtso Township of Dingri, the worst-hit area, reported China's official *Xinhua* news agency. It said hundreds of people, including government officials, rescue workers and local residents, took off their hats and stood in silence for three minutes in memory of the dead.

In Beijing, the Chinese government-appointed Panchen Lama Gyaincain Norbu was stated to have held a prayer service in Beijing for the earthquake victims. He and fellow-monks chanted scriptures and prayed that all lives in the disaster-stricken areas may soon be freed from calamities and rebuild their homes. They also prayed for the peace and prosperity of the nation, said another *Xinhua* report Jan 13.

The report made it a point to note that Gyaincain Norbu, who hold his position only on the basis of the Chinese government's appointment rather than by mass appeal, made it a point to note that he is a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body. He is also vice president of the Buddhist Association of China.



## Exile government calls for adequate post-earthquake rebuilding efforts in Tibet

14 January 2025, [The Hindustan Times](#), Dar Ovais

According to a fact-sheet on the January 7 earthquake – which levelled thousands of houses and killed over 100 people in Tibet – issued by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), they have called upon China to provide timely emergency rescue and rehabilitation service along with medical aid

Following last week's devastating earthquake in Tibet, Dharamshala-based Tibetan government-in-exile has called upon the Chinese government to guarantee adequate post-earthquake rebuilding efforts and disaster preparedness, especially in earthquake prone regions of Tibet.

According to a fact-sheet on the January 7 earthquake – which levelled thousands of houses and killed over 100 people in Tibet – issued by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), they have called upon China to provide timely emergency rescue and rehabilitation service along with medical aid.

CTA has pressed for unrestricted access for international aid organisations to affected areas and ensuring transparent reporting and accountability in casualty numbers and relief efforts.

The exile government has also appealed to the international community to provide assistance in the relief, recovery and rebuilding efforts besides continuing to spotlight the critical situation inside Tibet and refrain from using the Chinese name 'Xizang' for Tibet.

A 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Shigatse's Dingri county and surrounding towns and counties including Lhatse, Dramtso, Chulo, Tsogo, Sakya, Tingkye and Ngamring in Tibet.

### Presence of 11th Panchen Lama would have brought hope: Sikyong

In his statement, Sikyong Penpa Tsering said that the Dalai Lama led a major prayer gathering at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in South India, drawing thousands of participants in support of earthquake victims.

"The location held particular significance due to the monastery's traditional connection to Shigatse, home to the revered Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama. The presence of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, whom the People's Republic of China (PRC) government abducted in 1995 and since remains missing, would have brought the much-needed spiritual solace and hope to our people in this time of great suffering. Concurrent with this event, the CTA also organised a separate prayer service in Dharamshala, further demonstrating our community's united response to the earthquake," he said.

## China tightens control over people inside Tibet, escape to India is not an easy task now, says Tsering

14 January 2025, The Economic Times

China's intensified control over Tibet has made it increasingly difficult for Tibetans to **escape to India**. In 2024, only eight Tibetans managed to flee to Dharamshala, a significant decline from over 40 in 2023 and the 3,000 who crossed into India annually from the 1990s to 2008.

According to Sikyong Penpa Tsering, President of the **Tibetan government-in-exile**, the sharp decline in Tibetan arrivals is attributed to increased Chinese control following the 2008 uprising. Tsering also pointed to demographic shifts in Tibet, noting that there are fewer children due to reduced family sizes.

Speaking to ANI, President of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Sikyong Penpa Tsering said, "Just like any other community, the **Tibetan diaspora** community is also facing a lot of social and demographic change. One reason is, of course, from 1959-60 people proceeded or followed His Holiness the Dalai Lama--about 80-85 thousand Tibetans who came to India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Then till about the early 80s, there was no movement from Tibet at all, and from the early 80s onwards, some Tibetans were coming out during Hua Guofeng's time, and then from the 90s and year 2000, there were quite many Tibetans coming out up to 2008. We used to receive any number between 2,500 to 3,500 Tibetans every year. Most of them were young children who were left behind to study in India, not knowing whether they would be able to meet their families again or not."

This drastic decline has resulted in the Tibetan Reception Centre in Khaniyara village near Dharamshala standing largely vacant. The dwindling influx of Tibetans has also impacted Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) schools in exile, with some reporting no new admissions last year and one school in Dharamshala on the verge of closure. Some Tibetan schools reported no new admissions last year, and one school in Dharamshala is reportedly on the verge of closure.

"After the 2008 uprising in Tibet, there was more control inside Tibet, and there may be other reasons why those things are happening. After Xi Jinping came into power, the control over the whole of China, more particularly over the Tibetan people, has been very strong, and even small variables like tourist guides who have been bringing these people over the Himalayas by taking money--have also been removed from Lhasa, as a lot more pressure on the Nepalese government," said Tsering.

"There are fewer children in Tibet now because earlier, you could have 4, 5, or 6 children, and there were people who could look after the parents, and some people could go and join the monastery. Now the

number of children has come down to 2 or 3, so there may be a multiplicity of reasons why the numbers are going down, affecting our community here," he added. Tsering noted that the dispersal of Tibetan communities has posed a challenge to preserving cultural identity. "The compact community that was started by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in consultation with Pandit Nehru at that time... has helped over the last 65 years in preserving our identity in terms of language, culture, arts, and crafts and dance forms and all kinds of things. So now that is getting affected. One of our objectives is also how to repopulate the compact community, and this programme is called building back compact communities--how to bring back people to the settlements," he said. Addressing initiatives in the Tibetan diaspora, Tsering highlighted efforts in Western countries to create new compact communities. "The larger number of Tibetans are in North America, Europe, Australia--all these countries. So there have been some initiatives from some Tibetans, particularly in Manasota, where we are talking about at least 3,000 to 5,000 Tibetans. They are planning to acquire about 80 acres of land to accommodate about 300 families where the compact Tibetan communities [can thrive]. Another group is also planning to open a charter school for Tibetans. These are new ecosystems within the Tibetan community," he said.

Tsering reflected on the Tibetan diaspora's progress, noting that it has reached a mature level, with many Tibetans establishing themselves in Western countries. He believes that establishing new Tibetan compact communities in these countries could set an example for other Tibetan communities. Tsering added, "Now it has been over 30 years since the first lot of one thousand Tibetans moved to the United States. Now it multiplies to several thousands, and most of them have bought their houses, and paid their mortgages. They have reached a stage, and their children have grown up there with those kinds of education."

He continued, "I think our community has reached a mature level where we can establish new Tibetan compact communities in Western countries. So if this is successful, this could set an example for other Tibetan communities where there are larger numbers of Tibetans to establish similar compact communities in this free world."

## US Special Coordinator for Tibet completes tenure, urges PRC to resume dialogue with Dalai Lama

13 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon



US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Uzra Zeya at the celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 88th birthday organised by the Office of Tibet in Washington in July 2023 (Photo/CTA)

On her final day as Under Secretary of State and US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Uzra Zeya renewed calls for the People's Republic of China (PRC) to resume dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his representatives. Highlighting the 14-year stalemate since the last round of talks, she emphasised that a negotiated agreement is the best hope for long-term stability in Tibet.

"It has been 14 years since the last round of dialogues between the PRC governments and the Dalai Lama and his representatives," she remarked. "We maintain that a negotiated agreement is the best hope for long-term stability in the region and we continue to urge the PRC to resume dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama or his representatives without preconditions."

Reflecting on her tenure, she expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work with Tibetan communities and international partners, describing it as the privilege of a lifetime. She added, "Until meaningful autonomy is achieved, and Tibetans everywhere can exercise their fundamental freedoms—including the practice of their faith, language, and traditions—our work remains unfinished."

Under Secretary Zeya's plea comes amid ongoing concerns about the PRC's reluctance to engage with Tibetan representatives. The latest Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) annual report, released on December 20, highlights this impasse. The report criticised the PRC's unwillingness to resume formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama's representatives, noting that the last round of official talks occurred in January 2010. "The Commission did not observe any interest from People's Republic of China (PRC) officials in resuming formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama's representatives, the last round of which, the ninth, was held in January 2010," the report stated.

Between 1982 and 2010, Tibetan and Chinese delegations engaged in nine rounds of dialogue to address the Sino-Tibetan conflict. The ninth and final round, held in January 2010, ended without progress, with Chinese officials levelling unsubstantiated accusations against the Dalai Lama. Despite this, Lodi Gyari, the lead Tibetan negotiator at the time, expressed hope for future talks. "We do not see any reason why we cannot find a common ground ... if the Chinese leadership has the sincerity and political will to move forward," Gyari said.

Since her appointment in 2021, Under Secretary Zeya has also played a pivotal role in advancing human rights and addressing Tibetan issues on a global scale. Reflecting on her four years in office, she noted significant progress in holding the PRC accountable for human rights abuses in Tibet and supporting Tibetan cultural preservation and humanitarian needs.

She highlighted the United States' decisive actions against the PRC's systematic repression in Tibet, including, the first-ever Tibet-related Global Magnitsky sanctions in December 2022, targeting PRC officials responsible for human rights abuses in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), visa restrictions on PRC authorities involved in the repression of Tibetan ethnic and religious communities and restricting access to Tibetan areas, and sanctions against officials complicit in forcibly assimilating over one million Tibetan children in government-run boarding schools. She added that these efforts were amplified on the international stage, with over 20 countries raising concerns about PRC policies in Tibet during the PRC's January 2024 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council.

Under Secretary Zeya also highlighted sustained US assistance for Tibetan refugees and diaspora communities, addressing critical needs such as health, education, water, sanitation, and economic development. She noted that under her leadership, the United States partnered with USAID to provide \$82 million in programming aimed at preserving Tibetan culture. Initiatives included support for Tibetan religious institutions, traditional practices, and cultural education.

She also reflected on her three audiences with His Holiness the Dalai Lama since 2022, noting his tireless advocacy for Tibetan cultural preservation. She condemned the PRC's efforts to undermine Tibet's rich heritage through forced relocations, loyalty pledges, and interference in traditional succession processes.

## Threatened by Tibetan Identity, China Ramps Up Its Suppression Campaign

13 January 2025, [Japan Forward](#), Professor Pema Gyalpo

International condemnation is not enough as Beijing escalates its campaign to erase Tibetan identity through detention, torture, and forced relocation.

China's high-handedness in expunging Tibetan Buddhists' cultural and spiritual legacy has once again taken a brutal toll. On December 24, 2024, a wave of shock hit the world when it was reported that a Tibetan village head named Gonpo Namgyal, who was in his 40s, had succumbed to horrific injuries.

Namgyal was detained in Darlag County by Chinese authorities for about seven months, according to reports. The county is in Golog, the so-called Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China. He passed away on December 18, 2024, just days after his release from detention.

Gonpo Namgyal, along with 20 other Tibetans, was arrested in a crackdown by Chinese authorities in May 2024 for participating in a "pure mother tongue" campaign to preserve the Tibetan language. Their initiative countered Beijing's thrust of the Mandarin language on all in the TAR. As per media reports, Namgyal was subjected to frequent beatings and electrocution during his detention.

### International Condemnation Rebuffed

The incident took place at a time when the UN Human Rights Council and other international bodies had expressed concern about the deteriorating human rights conditions of Tibetans, Mongolians, Uyghurs, and other minorities in China. However, Beijing, which refers to Tibet as Xizang, has always rebuffed such concerns, dismissing them as "interference" in the internal affairs of China.

"Xizang affairs are China's internal affairs which brook no interference by any external forces. [And] Xizang today enjoys social stability and harmony, with sound economic performance and people's well-being well protected," China's Foreign Ministry said.

However, the recent incident of Gonpo Namgyal's torture and death has confirmed Beijing's unbridled ambition to eliminate its minorities' cultural and other fundamental rights.

In 2021, China launched a campaign to make Mandarin the country's national language. It set a target of 85% of its citizens using Mandarin as the primary language by 2025. Along with this, Beijing has advocated for making Mandarin nearly universal by 2035, including people who live in rural areas and ethnic minorities.

### Assimilation at All Costs

Behind this move is China's cultural insecurity. It justifies these measures by saying they will help safeguard China's unity, stop ethnic separatism, and

ensure national security. Yet, it should not be forgotten that the process of Sinicization of Tibet and its culture, traditions, and way of life has only accelerated since Xi Jinping became the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) General Secretary in 2013.

In September 2020, when China and entire parts of the world were grappling with the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, Xi Jinping attended the seventh central symposium on Tibet. The event is considered to be China's highest-level meeting on Tibet. There, he proposed three goals for the complete assimilation of Tibetans into Chinese mainstream life.

The first goal included strengthening political and ideological education in Tibetan schools by replacing religious texts with the CCP rulebook. Second, the Chinese President emphasized strengthening border defense and frontier security in Tibet by crushing any dissent. Finally, the third goal included replacing Tibetan scripts with Chinese characters.



Chinese police patrol in front of the Potala Palace in Tibet's capital Lhasa in a file photo. (Radio Free Asia via Central Tibetan Administration)

### **The Impact on Tibetan Children**

As a result of these proposals, China separated around one million Tibetan children from their families. It forcibly placed them into Chinese state-run boarding schools. This was part of Beijing's efforts to assimilate them "culturally, religiously, and linguistically into the dominant Han Chinese culture," as *Time Magazine* reported.

The American news magazine was quoting a 2023 UN report, which further stated that Tibetan children from rural areas were placed in residential schools. At the schools, lessons were "conducted solely in Mandarin Chinese with scant reference to Tibetan history, religion, and certainly not exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama."

In the name of maintaining long-term peace and stability, monasteries in the Tibetan region are subjected to monitoring. Monks and nuns are harassed and often persecuted by Chinese authorities. Furthermore, large-scale data on Tibetans is being collected through DNA extraction, iris scans, and facial recognition in the name of so-called social management.

### **Intensification of Crackdowns**

Beijing's campaign received a boost when Chen Wenqing, China's top intelligence officer addressed a group of provincial security chiefs in Gannan in Gansu province on August 27, 2023.

Chen is a member of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee and is also the Secretary of the CCP Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission. In his speech, he called for taking a clear stand to safeguard the unity of China, oppose ethnic separatism, and ensure national security.

State-backed Xinhua news quoted Chen Wenqing as further saying that the provincial security chiefs "must take the initiative to prevent and control risks and resolutely maintain the long-term peace and stability of not only the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but also of prefectures with Tibetan majorities in the surrounding four provinces."

This statement clearly shows the lack of confidence among Chinese authorities regarding national security. To overcome it, they often resort to torture and killings of Tibetans and other minorities in the country.

Beijing's crackdown on Tibetan people for participating in the "pure mother tongue" campaign, as well as the detention, torture, and death of Gonpo Namgyal, clearly demonstrates this mindset of Chinese officials.

### **A Disguise for Oppression**

But the question remains: Has China's forced cultural assimilation of Tibetans yielded any positive outcomes for the country? Not at all. Rather, it has brought disrepute to China. A recent report by Human Rights Watch revealed that since 2016, Chinese authorities have relocated 500 villages in Tibet, affecting 140,000 residents, in violation of international law.

In its 70-page report, the HRW cites China's official data which suggests that more than 930,000 Tibetans in rural areas have been relocated since 2000. Approximately 76% of these relocations have taken place since 2016.

To make Tibetans comply with their relocation order, Chinese authorities have used coercive measures. These include repeated home visits and threats of punishment, the HRW report said. However, China has justified the relocation of Tibetans by claiming that it has been undertaken to "eradicate absolute poverty and to "protect the ecological environment." This fits into China's usual practice of denouncing the truth.

### **Tibetan Settlements in India, Nepal & Bhutan Hold Prayer Services in Solidarity with Dingri Earthquake Victims**

13 January 2025, [CTA](#)

In a deeply moving display of solidarity, Tibetan settlements across India, Nepal, and Bhutan held prayer services for the victims of the devastating

earthquake that struck Tibet on 7 January 2025. The quake, which severely impacted Dingri and other regions in upper Tibet, occurred at approximately 9:00 AM. While Chinese state media reported a magnitude of 6.8, the U.S. Geological Survey recorded it as 7.1. As of 9 January, this disaster has tragically claimed over 126 lives, injured over 337 people, and caused untold suffering in a land already enduring decades of occupation.

The Tibetan exile community, bound by an unbreakable connection to their homeland, responded with collective grief and compassion. Settlement Officers coordinated prayer services in monasteries, where local communities gathered to offer their prayers and condolences. Addressing the attendees, officials emphasized the immense pain of witnessing such a tragedy unfold in their beloved homeland, made even more heartrending by the ongoing challenges Tibetans face under Chinese occupation.

The services became a powerful expression of shared sorrow and resilience. Monks, nuns, and laypeople of all ages united to honor the lives lost and pray for the swift recovery of the injured. The anguish of being unable to offer direct aid to their people under occupation was palpable, yet these gatherings reflected the enduring strength of Tibetan culture and faith.

Participants offered heartfelt condolences to the grieving families and lit butter lamps as a symbol of hope and remembrance. Through tears and prayers, the Tibetan exile community reaffirmed their unwavering solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Tibet, vowing to keep their spirit and struggles alive despite the immense challenges of separation and loss.

*-Report filed by Department of Home, CTA*

### **Tibetan Activists Slams China's Attempt to Replace 'Tibet' with 'Xizang' during Mournful Events**

13 January 2025, [RTV](#)

The Tibetan people in-exile feel sad as China is using the term 'Xizang' for Tibet to gain global recognition in the wake of the recent earthquake in the region.

Tibetans in exile believe that China and some media houses are using mournful events to downplay the name Tibet which is disheartening.

Tenzin Phakdon, an activist from Students for a Free Tibet, told ANI, "It is very sad to see not only China but then some paid Chinese media and also some of the major media in the world using Xizang instead of Tibet. We are very saddened to see the loss of over 128 lives of my brothers and sisters inside Tibet due to the recent earthquake but then China and some other media are using this mournful event to downplay the

name Tibet itself as it is not only China, but some other media houses too.

So we will definitely tackle all those media houses and we have also reached out to some media houses, not to use Xizang and use the word Tibet... we are very worried... in the UN they are using Xinjiang instead of Uyghur and East Turkistan, so we fear that in the next 10 years or 20 years, it might happen also to Tibetans so that's why we have been working very hard to let everybody know at the grassroot level that it is Tibet and not Xizang."

Another Tibetan activist in Dharamshala, Tenzin Rinzin told ANI, "As Tibetans, we feel this is one of the most disgusting moves by China. It's one of the policies actually to propagate and distort the very history of Tibet. Tibet is and was always called Tibet. There was no other name in history if you look back.

This has been a Chinese manoeuvre to distort history and we have seen especially now it's disheartening to see international media houses, saying the same tune of the CCP. They are using Xizang and some of them are even using China's Tibet which is absurd and I think such negligence, such mistake is kowtowing to China's propaganda. This is something that we object that we should be careful in terms of using those terms because these are propagated by China."

The recent earthquake in Tibet has raked up the issue of China using the term 'Xizang' instead of Tibet.

An earthquake jolted a remote region of Tibet on January 7, killing at least 126 people and injuring over 100 others, with tremors felt in Nepal, Bhutan and parts of northern India, Al Jazeera reported. The earthquake was followed by 49 aftershocks.

The epicentre of the quake was Shigatse, one of the holiest cities of Tibet, as per Al Jazeera. The United States Geological Survey said the earthquake measured 7.1 on the Richter scale, while the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC) recorded a magnitude of 6.8.

Earlier, hundreds of Tibetans in exile gathered in Dharamshala to mourn and offer special prayers for the whole night for the victims of the earthquake. Tibetan monks and nuns led the special prayers in the main Tibetan temple Tsuglagkhang, Dharamshala.

The leading four Tibetan NGOs including the Tibetan Youth Congress, the Tibetan Women's Association, the Student for Free Tibet and the National Democratic Party of Tibet, had jointly organised the special prayer service.

## Security Kalon Dolma Gyari Discusses Critical Situation in Tibet with Westerwald Tibet Support Group

12 January 2025, [CTA](#)

On 10 January 2025, members of the Tibet Support Group from Westerwald, Germany, organised under FNF (Friedrich Naumann Foundation), convened with Kalon (Minister) Dolma Gyari of the Department of Security, Central Tibetan Administration, at a cafe. The gathering reaffirmed their strong support for the Tibetan cause. When Security Kalon saw the Tibetan flag at the entrance of the cafe, she expressed her deep gratitude. She remarked on the profound significance of the flag for Tibetan people and conveyed her appreciation for the heartfelt gesture.

Kalon Dolma Gyari also extended her gratitude to Sandra Weeser, a member of the German FDP Parliament for her attendance and unwavering support for Tibet and its people.

During the meeting, they discussed the critical situation inside Tibet, particularly how Chinese government restrictions and harassment of Tibetans have intensified since 2008, leading to 157 self-immolations by Tibetans since 2009 due to their desperate situation. She also discussed the history of Sino-Tibetan dialogue, explaining that in 2001, the European Parliament warned China that if they didn't engage in dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama's exile government to resolve the Tibet issue, the European Parliament would recognise the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Under this pressure, China initiated dialogue in 2002.

The Kalon further addressed challenges faced by Tibetan refugees in various countries, including issues with documentation which differ from the privileges afforded to local citizens. The support group members expressed their willingness to assist in addressing such challenges wherever possible.

The Westerwald Tibet Support Group, established in 2008, shared its plans for observing Flag Day on 10 March 2025 by raising Tibetan flags in approximately 500 locations across Germany. The group also conveyed a letter from Sabine (SPD), a German Parliament member, who, despite being unable to attend in person, expressed her solidarity with the Tibetan cause through a message that was read during the meeting.

Responding to a query from one of the attendees, Ghanshyam Tiwari, spokesperson for India's Samajwadi Party, reaffirmed that all Indian political parties unanimously support the Tibetan cause.

The Security Kalon Dolma Gyari was accompanied by Under Secretary Dawa Dolma during the visits.

## Sikyong Expresses Deep Sadness Over Loss of Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter as State Funeral Was Held Yesterday

10 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Yesterday, on 9 January 2024, a state funeral was held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., to honour the late former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who passed away last month at the age of 100. The memorial paid tribute not only to his remarkable life but also to his enduring legacy, particularly his steadfast advocacy for human rights—both during his presidency (1977–1981) and throughout his post-presidential career.

President Carter was one of the first U.S. leaders to publicly acknowledge the human rights abuses in Tibet and maintained a close friendship with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. As a result, the Tibetan leadership and people have expressed their condolences to his family. In His message, His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote, "The Tibetan people and I remain forever grateful to President Carter for his deep concern for the situation in Tibet and for his efforts to alleviate the suffering of our people."

Similarly, the Central Tibetan Administration, including Sikyong Penpa Tsering and Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, conveyed their sorrow at the passing of the late Nobel laureate.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering shared his heartfelt condolences, describing President Carter as "a close friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and a towering figure whose life was dedicated to advocating for peace, justice, and human rights worldwide."

"President Carter's principled leadership shone through even in politically challenging times, whether by supporting His Holiness's presence in the United States or by courageously addressing the human rights violations endured by Tibetan people. As a President, he displayed remarkable moral courage and foresight and as a Nobel Laureate, he exemplified the values of peace and justice," Sikyong Penpa Tsering wrote.

Sikyong also highlighted the shared ideals between President Carter and His Holiness in his letter, stating both believed deeply in peace and the rights of all people. "His Holiness has often spoken of his admiration for President Carter's tireless efforts to assist the poor and oppressed, particularly through The Carter Center, which has improved countless lives around the globe."

Sikyong concluded, "We mourn the loss of a man who committed his life to the wellbeing of others and lived a truly meaningful life. We remain ever grateful for his steadfast support to the Tibetan people. His noble legacy will be remembered with profound admiration."

On 30 December 2024, the leadership and staff of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) held a [prayer](#)

[service](#) to mourn the passing of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. In tribute, the CTA offices were closed that afternoon.

### **Sikyong Congratulates Mike Johnson on Re-election as Speaker of the US House of Representatives**

10 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration wrote to Mike Johnson, congratulating him on his re-election as Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.

In his congratulatory letter, Sikyong expressed, “On behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people, I extend our heartfelt congratulations on your re-election as Speaker of the US House of Representatives.”

He further noted, “The United States Congress has been an unwavering champion of the Tibetan cause, providing crucial bipartisan support through the decades. This steadfast commitment from both sides of the aisle has been instrumental in solidifying longstanding US policy and support for the Tibetan cause. Under your Speakership, we look forward to continuing our critical work towards resolving the Sino-Tibet conflict based on the Middle Way Approach through a negotiated dialogue.”

Sikyong conveyed his gratitude and highlighted the significance of the US Congress’s enduring support for the Tibetan people. He also expressed his desire to meet Speaker Mike Johnson in person to strengthen the longstanding ties between the US Congress and the Tibetan people.

### **Participants of 8th Tibetan General Conference on Education Condemn PRC’s Assimilative Education Policies**

10 January 2025, [CTA](#)

#### **PRESS STATEMENT**

The Chinese government’s policies in Tibet fundamentally conflict with the genuine aspirations of the Tibetan people. Particularly, the education policy in Tibet is being weaponised to impose Chinese Communist ideology on Tibetans. Under its broader agenda of Sinicizing Tibet, approximately one million Tibetan children have been forcibly admitted into the state-run boarding schools, separating them from their parents and ancestral language and culture. The medium of instruction in these schools has been changed to Chinese, continuing to eradicate the Tibetan language and culture. Recently, it has planned to make Tibetan language optional in middle and high school examinations, effectively denying Tibetan youth opportunities for higher education and employment, and making it impossible for them to

preserve their national identity. As these actions severely violate fundamental human rights, through this 8th Tibetan General Conference on Education organised by the Department of Education, Central Tibetan Administration, we strongly condemn the Chinese government’s hardline policies in Tibet and call for an immediate end to these oppressive measures.

Although Tibetans in exile constitute only a small fraction of the total Tibetan population, under the visionary leadership and guidance of His Holiness the Great 14th Dalai Lama – manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, sovereign of the entire Buddha’s teachings on earth, the protector of all Tibetan people, and our supreme leader – we have achieved remarkable success in preserving and promoting Tibetan religion, culture, and language. Among Tibetans who arrived later and denied access to suitable education in Tibet, 27,083 have joined monasteries and religious institutions while 34,866 Tibetan children have enrolled in schools that offer both traditional and modern education. Additionally, 100% of Tibetan children born in exile have access to education in Tibetan language and culture. All Tibetans, young and old, have been provided with better opportunities and facilities to learn and practice Tibetan language, religion and culture than those available in some independent nations.

All Tibetans living in free countries must deeply value the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and, inspired by the unwavering determination and courage of Tibetans inside Tibet, strive harder than ever to preserve and promote our religion, culture, and language. We urge everyone to redouble their efforts in safeguarding this invaluable world heritage and upholding the unique identity of the Tibetan people.

### **Dalai Lama urges compassion, solidarity after Tibet quake**

10 January 2025, [UCA News](#)

No reason to show anger or hatred towards China, he says at a prayer ceremony for victims

The Dalai Lama has urged Tibetans to develop a kinder, more compassionate heart, and refrain from showing anger towards China over its calling off search-and-rescue operations in quake-hit Tibet region.

“There is no reason to show anger or hatred towards China,” he said during a prayer ceremony for the victims, held in southern India on Jan. 9, *Radio Free Asia (RFA)* reported.

The top spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism was visiting the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Bylakuppe

town which has the largest Tibetan settlement in the world outside Tibet.

The Dalai Lama urged the 12,000 Buddhist clergy members present at the ceremony to not lose heart. It was a natural disaster and “not caused by political tensions,” he said.

A 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck the Dingri county of Shigatse prefecture in the Tibet Autonomous Region on Jan. 7, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

“Seeing the pictures of ruins of Dingri after the earthquake encourages me to meditate upon compassion and emptiness and pray to Chenrezig, the Buddha of Infinite Compassion,” he said. “It empowers us to take adversities in our stride and not be crushed by them. That is our advantage as religious people.”

The earthquake left 126 people dead and destroyed 3,600 houses, according to Chinese officials. However, residents inside Tibet say the death toll probably exceeds 200, *RFA* reported.

Tibetans had expressed dismay after the Chinese authorities called off search-and-rescue operations.

Two unnamed sources within Tibet’s capital Lhasa told *RFA* that Tibetans are conducting their own rescue efforts in the villages.

“Most of the casualties were elderly people and children because many young people were away at work when the temblor struck,” the source said.

According to Li Ling, a deputy director at the Tibetan Administrative Region’s Special Disaster Investigation Office, the earthquake was caused due to tectonic plate movement.

Li had blamed the high casualty numbers on poorly constructed traditional buildings.

Meanwhile, the Shigatse government has ordered residents not to post earthquake-related photos and videos on social media, saying it would harm rescue efforts. It threatened severe punishment for violators, *RFA* reported.

The locals also accused the authorities of restricting documentation of the actual situation in Tibet and preventing people from taking photos or sharing information about casualties and damage.

Some remote areas have not received government assistance three days after the quake, *RFA* reported citing an unnamed source who added that many villagers are sleeping in damaged building compounds without food.

Meanwhile, Tibetans in Dharamsala — the residence of the Dalai Lama and the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile in northern India — held a candlelight vigil and prayer service for those affected by the quake.

The Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women’s Association, Students for a Free Tibet, and the National Democratic Party of Tibet jointly organized a candlelight vigil from the Dharamsala suburb of

McLeod Ganj to the Tsuglagkhang Temple, followed by a prayer service.

The groups said that the vigil was to show solidarity with Tibetans inside Tibet and to demand transparency from Chinese authorities about the disaster.

### ‘Not Xizang’: Tibet govt-in-exile slams China’s ‘propaganda’

10 January 2025, [Hindustan Times](#), Dar Ovais

After the strong earthquake levelled thousands of houses and killed over 100 people in Tibet on Tuesday, Tibet was referred to as ‘Xizang’ or China’s Xizang, in Chinese media coverage.

A fresh row erupted after the Chinese government again referred to Tibet as ‘Xizang’ during its earthquake relief efforts in the region.

The move drew sharp criticism from the Tibetan government-in-exile.

Sikyong (president) of Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering appealed to the international community not to fall into the trap of Chinese ‘propaganda’ of using Chinese names for Tibetan places and said, “It not only has implications of renaming a place, but in terms of the larger geo-strategic importance of what Tibet consists of as well.” After the strong earthquake levelled thousands of houses and killed over 100 people in Tibet on Tuesday, Tibet was referred to as ‘Xizang’ or China’s Xizang, in Chinese media coverage.

“It is not just a name change from Tibet to Xizang. The Chinese use of Xizang refers to Tibet only as the Tibet Autonomous Region, which is only half of its territory. If you fall into this trap of using Xizang, you are very much being complicit in China’s narrative on Tibetan territory as well as historical sovereignty,” said Penpa Tsering.

Tenzin Tsundue, Tibetan writer and activist based in Dharamsala, said, “Surprisingly, much of the international media reported it as the Tibet earthquake this time. Therefore, China is frantically doing extra duty to insert the possessive predicate, China’s Tibet. Tibet epitomises global imagination to the culture and civilisation on the Tibetan Plateau. China’s interruptive act of replacing Tibet with a Xizang is a cheap and futile attempt, especially when the international community is de-risking and de-coupling China.”

### In Karnataka, Dalai Lama presides over prayers for quake victims

The 14th Dalai Lama on Thursday presided over prayers for the earthquake victims.

The prayers were held at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, where thousands of monks,



nuns and locals gathered in and around the temple to pray for victims of the devastating earthquake.

The Dalai Lama is staying at the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

Poanta Cholsum Tibetan Settlement Office organised a gathering of all locals, including the affiliated Shalu Monastery, Men-Tse-Khang branch (Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute) and the local Tibetan community. The participants assembled at the public prayer hall to offer prayers.

### **Diplomatic Response from US Embassy After VOA's "China" Reference in Tibet Quake**

10 January 2025, [Tibet Express](#), Lobsang Tenchoe

After the English section of the Voice Of America (VOA), the largest and the oldest international broadcasting state media network funded by the federal government of the US ran a headline that read, "Earthquake in China kills at least 126 near Mount Everest," referring to the 7 January earthquake in Tingri, Tibet in the Chinese occupied Tibet, the spokesperson for the US Embassy in New Delhi said that the US Government funds VOA but it "maintains editorial independence from the US government."

"VOA is funded by the US Government through the US Agency for Global Media. However, it maintains editorial independence from the U.S. government," Christopher Elms, the spokesperson for the US Embassy in New Delhi told *Tibet Express* when asked how he will respond to the factually incorrect reportage by the VOA that has deeply enraged and disappointed the Tibetans across the diaspora and the global coalition of Tibet-related NGOs alike.

The spokesperson added, "The State Department extends its condolences to all those affected by the 7 January earthquake in southern Tibet."

The controversy extends beyond the headline. While VOA maintains that it is committed to comprehensive and truthful news coverage, its report referred to the Tibetan city of Shigatse by its Chinese name "Xigaze," describing it as being in "southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region."

The President of the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibetan NGOs and Tibetans alike have called out international media outlets for misleading headlines and for referring to Tibet as "Western China," "China's Tibet," and "China".

CTA President Penpa Tsering urged international media outlets to use the term "Tibet" instead of "Xizang" while reporting on the earthquake in Tibet on Wednesday.

The International Tibet Network, a global coalition of Tibet-related NGOs has also declared in a joint press statement that "Tibet quake victims need help and not harm," as they called on news media organisations and

governments to "use Tibetan place names in any statements or reporting, both as a matter of historical accuracy and respect for the cultural identity of the Tibetan people, This includes, for example, using Shigatse instead of the Chinese name Xigaze, and Tibet instead of the Chinese name Xizang".

Meanwhile, *The Strait Times* reported that the Chinese officials ended the search for survivors a day after the calamity struck Tingri on 8 January stating that they wanted to focus on relocating the displaced and treating the injured after pulling 407 people from the rubble.

To further aggravate matters, China has reportedly started restricting access to Tibetans inside Tibet -who have inhabited the Tibetan plateau – who can be seen voluntarily driving to the sites in hoards with truckloads with aids and assistance, citing harsh winter, high altitude and low oxygen levels.

A massive earthquake hit Tingri County in Shigatse City in the traditional Tibetan province of *U-Tsang* on 7 January. While the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC) stated that the earthquake measured 6.8 on the Richter scale, according to data from the US Geological Survey, the earthquake measured 7.1 on the Richter scale.

The last update by Chinese state-run media *Xinhua* on the 7 January evening on the earthquake in Tibet said, the calamity took lives of 126 people with 188 cases of injuries, while the natural calamity had also toppled 3,609 houses.

### **Motion Acknowledging the Tibetan Representative's Role Introduced in Scottish Parliament**

10 January 2025, [CTA](#)

The Scottish Parliament this week published the motion lodged by Ross Greer, Member of Scottish Parliament (MSP), of the Scottish Green Party and Chair of the Cross-Party Group for Tibet (CPGT) in the Scottish Parliament, acknowledging the work tenure of outgoing Representative Sonam Tsering Frasi, and furthermore welcoming Representative Tsering Yangkey with the hope of further strengthening the bond between the people of Scotland and Tibet.

Greer's Motion has attracted the support of nine MSPs till date with the number of supporters likely to go up in the coming weeks.

The motion, a short statement written by an MSP, is a way for the MSPs to raise awareness of an issue.

The full text of the Motion reads:

*His Excellency Sonam Tsering Frasi, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to the UK and Northern Europe (Motion Ref. S6M: 15983)*

*That the Parliament congratulates His Excellency Sonam Tsering Frasi on the conclusion of his service as the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to the UK and Northern Europe, a position that he has held since 2018; appreciates what it sees as his sincere engagement with the Cross-Party Group on Tibet in the Scottish Parliament, and with the Tibetan community in Scotland; notes his service to the Tibetan people over many decades, including as an elected Member of the Tibetan Parliament-In-Exile from 2001 to 2011, and as a member of the Tibetan Task Force for Negotiation with China; acknowledges what it sees as the dedication that Frasi has shown to the peaceful struggle of the Tibetan people throughout his life; welcomes to her post the Dalai Lama's new representative, Her Excellency Tsering Yangkey, and looks forward to continuing what it sees as the strong relationship between the peoples of Scotland and Tibet during her time in office.*

The motion was supported by MSPs Karen Adam, Clare Adamson, Jackie Dunbar, Kenneth Gibson, Bill Kidd, Gillian Mackay, Stuart McMillan, Audrey Nicoll, and Kevin Stewart.

*-Report filed by the Office of Tibet, London*

### **UK Chancellor urged to raise Tibet issue during China visit**

10 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup

Ahead of UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves' visit to China, UK-based Tibet groups and members of the Tibetan community have called on her to prioritise human rights concerns in Tibet during her discussions with Chinese officials.

The Chancellor is due to travel to China and hold meetings with Chinese officials on 11 January. Among those she will meet are Vice-Premier He Lifeng. The visit is framed as a reset in economic ties between the two nations and follows a trip by Foreign Secretary David Lammy in October 2024.

In an open letter, UK-based Tibetans and Tibet groups voiced concerns about the visit, stating it comes at a "historic low point for human rights in Tibet", which has seen Beijing's destructive policies in Tibet intensify including forced relocations, mass displacement, and policies that United Nations experts have identified as potentially constituting forced labor.

The groups underscored that over a million Tibetan children have been placed in residential schools, separated from their families, and that at least 2 million rural Tibetans, including nomads and farmers, have been displaced from their land.

The letter also drew attention to the destruction of Tibetan heritage through megadevelopment projects, such as hydropower dams and unregulated mining

activities. These projects, they argue, are erasing Tibetan culture and livelihoods while consolidating China's control over the region's resources. The groups referenced the imprisonment of individuals like Tsongon Tsering, who was sentenced for reporting illegal mining, as an example of China's suppression of dissent.

The signatories called on the Chancellor to address the recent earthquake in Dingri County, Shigatse Prefecture, Tibet which claimed over 126 lives and destroyed thousands of homes. Activists urged the Chancellor to press Chinese leaders to lift restrictions on access and aid, allowing international assistance to reach those affected without interference.

The groups called on Reeves to use the UK's influence as a key trading partner to address these issues, warning against prioritising trade over human rights. They stressed that the meeting is an opportunity for the UK to demonstrate leadership by challenging China's human rights record while negotiating trade agreements.

Statements from advocacy groups and community leaders echoed the letter's concerns. John Jones of Free Tibet emphasised the need to address forced relocations and labour programs. Tara Lhamo from the Voluntary Tibetan Advocacy Group UK urged Reeves to uphold democratic principles over economic interests. Other representatives warned that failing to act could repeat past mistakes, referencing policies from the "Golden Era" of the 2010s, during which Tibet's human rights situation worsened.

### **CTA President urges int'l media to use "Tibet" instead of "Xizang" in their coverage of Dingri earthquake**

09 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

The President of the exile Tibetan government known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Penpa Tsering, called upon international media outlets to use the term "Tibet" rather than "Xizang" in their coverage of the recent earthquake that struck Dingri County in Shigatse Prefecture, Tibet. He made the statement during a public prayer ceremony held on Wednesday at the Tsuglhakhang temple to mourn the victims of the disaster.

The solemn ceremony, organised by the CTA, aimed to express solidarity with those affected by the devastating earthquake, which claimed more than 125 lives, left hundreds injured, and displaced thousands in Dingri. The ceremony was attended by CTA officials and local residents of Dharamshala to pay their respects and show support for the victims and their families.

Addressing the media, CTA President Penpa Tsering urged international outlets to use "Tibet" in their coverage instead of "Xizang." Prominent international

media organisations, including *The Guardian*, AFP, and ANI, have used “Xizang” in their reporting on the earthquake. He pointed out that using the Chinese term has significant geopolitical implications, subtly endorsing China’s claim over Tibet and diminishing the region’s distinctiveness. “We appeal to the international community not to fall into the trap of Chinese propaganda by using Chinese names for Tibetan places,” President Tsering stated.

Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), a global network of youth activists, also condemned the use of the term “Xizang” in international media, accusing China of exploiting the tragedy to further its authoritarian agenda. “By pushing their colonial term “Xizang” in place of Tibet, the CCP is attempting to rewrite history,” SFT stated. “By using “Xizang” in their reporting, media outlets are complicit in China’s colonisation of China and knows that as long as Tibetans exist, they will resist. Thus, the CCP’s central goal has become erasing Tibet from the media, museums, and the map.”

SFT further called on media outlets, governments, and international institutions to reject Chinese propaganda and accurately refer to Tibet and Tibetan place names. “It is the duty of all media outlets, governments, and international institutions to reject Chinese propaganda and accurately refer to Tibet and Tibetan place names,” the organisation asserted.

Meanwhile, local Tibetans in Dharamshala held a candlelight vigil organized by four major Tibetan non-governmental organisations—Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA), and the National Democratic Party of Tibet (NDPT)—to express solidarity with the victims of the Dingri earthquake.

During the vigil, the NGOs condemned China’s environmental degradation in Tibet, linking it to the increasing frequency of natural disasters in the region. They criticised Beijing’s exploitative policies and called for accountability in the wake of the devastating earthquake.

### **The Tibet Support Group Expresses its Condolences to the Victims of the Shigatse Earthquake**

09 January 2025, [CTA](#)

#### **PRESS RELEASE**

The Tibet support group of the Riigikogu expresses its deepest condolences to all those affected by the earthquake that shook the town of Šigatse in Tibet on Tuesday morning.

According to the initial official reports, at least 126 people were killed, nearly 200 were injured and thousands lost their homes, but considering the strength of the earthquake (magnitude 7.1) and the

peculiarities of the region, the number of victims may rise even more.

Shigatse is one of the most important centers for Tibet, where many buildings are built of materials that cannot withstand strong seismic vibrations. At this time of the year, the night temperature in the region can drop below ten degrees below zero, creating an additional threat to people’s health and life and complicating both rescue operations and the organization of temporary accommodation.

The Tibetan support group of the Riigikogu is calling

\* The ability of the Chinese authorities to ensure the most transparent information sharing and smooth cooperation with international humanitarian aid organizations and independent journalists. Blocking information and access can significantly slow down rescue efforts and put victims at additional risk.

\* The Estonian government and the European Union to monitor the situation closely and to be ready to offer diplomatic and humanitarian support. It is also important that a clear overview of the extent of the disaster is required at the international level in order to coordinate the provision of international aid if necessary.

\* The international community must maintain its readiness to respond, because aftershocks can follow an earthquake, and every hour counts to save people trapped under the rubble and provide support to the victims.

\* The spiritual leader of Tibet, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, has also expressed his deep sorrow over this tragic natural disaster and offered comfort and prayers to Tibetans. The Tibetan government-in-exile based in the mountain town of Dharamshala in India did the same.

\* The Riigikogu Tibet Support Group recognizes the rescue workers who operate in harsh mountainous conditions and expresses its sincere condolences to the relatives of those who died. The support group will continue to monitor the situation and will do its best to draw attention to what is happening in Tibet and the international cooperation needed for the victims.

The Tibet Support Group is chaired by Juku-Kalle Raid and vice-chaired by Karmen Joller, and includes Anneli Akkermann, Anti Allas, Ester Karuse, Ando Kiviberg, Eerik-Niiles Kross, Leo Kunnas, Tõnis Lukas, Henn Põlluaas, Marek Reinaas, Urmas Reinsalu, Kalev Stoicescu, Tarmo Tamm, Toomas Uibo, Kristo Enn Vaga and Jaak Valge.

## **“Transform Adversity into Opportunities for Spiritual Growth”, His Holiness the Dalai Lama Condoles Earthquake Struck Tibetans in Tibet**

09 January 2025, [CTA](#)

The tragic earthquake that struck Tibet on 7 January 2025 has brought sorrow to many around the world. The impact has been devastating, particularly in the regions of Dingri County, Shigatsé City where number of fatalities and casualties continue to rise in hundreds.

Just after 9 am local time (01:00 GMT) on 7 January 2025, the earthquake was recorded as a 7.1 magnitude by the U.S. Geological Survey while the Chinese authorities recorded as magnitude 6.8. Its scale is extreme, with over 126 confirmed fatalities and hundreds of injuries by 9 January, according to reliable sources. Freezing weather conditions have not only exacerbated the suffering and complicated the rescue operations, but also have intensified the risk of an unknown number, still not accounted for, and trapped survivors succumbing to hypothermia and dehydration. Thus, the urgent need for effective humanitarian responses must take precedence.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s prayer gathering in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, in solidarity with the victims, served as a beacon of compassion and support. His Holiness’ message, advising to transform adversity into opportunities for spiritual growth, resonated deeply with the thousands who gathered in prayer at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s presence in the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery (South India) traditionally linked to Shigatsé, lent special significance to the prayer service.

The Central Tibetan Administration, based in Dharamshala, also held a prayer service at Tsuglagkhang temple, expressing solidarity and concern over the destruction caused by the earthquake. Sikyong Penpa Tsering’s comments regarding the ineffectiveness of China’s poverty alleviation policies, particularly in the context of damage to older infrastructure, added a critical voice to the discussion. His remarks underscore the serious question about the long-term impact of China’s development strategies in Tibet, particularly given the region’s seismic activity and traditional housing structures. Sikyong also highlighted concerns about the environmental risks posed by Chinese policies, including dam-building and mining, which are believed to contribute to increased seismic activity in the region.

Global expressions of solidarity have poured in, with international bodies like the United Nations and leaders, including those from the U.S., Taiwan, India, France, Canada, and the Netherlands, extending their condolences. The Parliamentary Tibet Support Groups in Japan and Estonia expressed sympathy for the

Tibetan people affected by the earthquake and called on China for transparency in relief efforts and urged for international cooperation.

According to the 2020 population census, there are 60,000 residents in Dingri County, which is at an altitude of 4200 metres above sea level. The areas surrounding Dingri County such as Lhatse, Dramtso, Chulo, Tsogo, Sakya, Tingkye and Ngamring also suffered deaths, casualties and destruction. The mountainous region of Tibet that borders Nepal reportedly experienced several aftershocks past 10 a.m. local time (01:00 GMT) on 7 January. Tremors were felt in some places in Nepal and Bhutan.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, communities worldwide especially Tibetans across Tibet have come together to support the victims, providing not just prayers but also mobilising for humanitarian aid and assistance. This collective response speaks to the deep empathy and solidarity felt across borders, with Tibetans and their supporters worldwide working to provide comfort and help to those affected by this devastating natural disaster.

The ongoing aftershocks and the difficult terrain in the affected areas, along with the winter conditions, present significant challenges for both rescue efforts and long-term recovery. Given Tibet’s history of seismic activity and the scale of development occurring in the region, questions about environmental sustainability and the safety of lives and infrastructure in this vulnerable area remain critically important.

## **Prayers and call for transparent info sharing on Tibet earthquake**

09 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

As the true scale of the devastation caused by the earthquake which hit southern Tibet’s Dingri county on Jan 7 morning remains unknown due to China’s denial of access to independent media, exile Tibetans have been holding prayer services. Tibet support groups have been offering words of sympathy through the exile community even as pro-China governments offer “condolences” to China for the tragedy that hit “Xizang”, China’s propaganda Sinicized name for Tibet. In the Tibetan settlements at Bylakuppe in Karnataka state of India, the Dalai Lama led a prayer service Jan 9 for the victims at the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, with the participation of some 12,000 monks, nuns and laypeople. The exile spiritual leader of Tibet arrived at this monastery in south India on Jan 5 for an extended period of stay.

In Dharamshala, the Central Tibetan Administration’s Department of Religion and Culture led a prayer service on Jan 8 at the Tsuglakhang, the main Buddhist temple in the town. At the gathering, Sikyong Penpa

Tsering has noted that the known scale of the destruction shows the level of poverty and the state of living condition in Tibet despite China's claims of having developed and modernized it during its past more than half a century of occupation rule.

Exile Tibetan communities across India and other parts of the world also have been holding prayer services for the devastating earthquake's victims in their Chinese ruled homeland.

In India's Union Territory of Ladakh, the Ladakh Buddhist Association Youth Wing (LBAYW) and residents of the Sonam Ling Settlement have held a candle march in capital Leh on Jan 8 in solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Tibet.

In Tokyo, Japanese lawmaker Yamatani Eriko, Chairperson of the Japan Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, has visited Tibet House Japan and expressed her solidarity with the Tibetans suffering in the earthquake-affected areas Tibet.

In Estonia, the Tibet Support Group of the Riigikogu, the country's unicameral parliament, has extended its deepest condolences to those affected by the earthquake in Shigatse, the city to which Dingri belongs. Its official Jan 8 statement noted that many buildings in this one of the most important centres for Tibet, are seen to be constructed from materials that cannot withstand strong seismic tremors.

It called on the Chinese authorities to ensure as transparent as possible information sharing and smooth cooperation with international humanitarian aid organisations and independent journalists. It said Obstruction of information and access could significantly slow down the rescue efforts and put the victims at further risk.

The statement was issued in the name of the group's chair Juku-Kalle Raid and Deputy Chair Karmen Joller as well as members Annely Akkermann, Anti Allas, Ester Karuse, Ando Kiviberg, Eerik-Niiles Kross, Leo Kunnas, Tõnis Lukas, Henn Põlluaas, Marek Reinaas, Urmas Reinsalu, Kalev Stoicescu, Tarmo Tamm, Toomas Uibo, Kristo Enn Vaga and Jaak Valge.

### **Tibetan Settlements in India Hold Prayer Services in Solidarity with Dingri Earthquake Victims**

09 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Shimla: The local residents of Shimla gathered to hold prayer offerings in solidarity for the recent earthquake occurred in Tibet.

On 7 January 2025, around 9 a.m. a strong earthquake struck several areas including Dingri in upper Tibet, resulting in the deaths of over 129 people and injuring approximately 188 others. Reports from Chinese government media stated the earthquake's magnitude as 6.8, while the U.S. Geological Survey recorded it as 7.1.

In response to these casualties from the earthquake, Thupten Dorje Drak Monastery based in Shimla held prayer offerings on the morning of 8 January 2025. Later that afternoon, the local residents of Shimla also gathered to offer prayers and express their solidarity with the earthquake victims in Tibet.

Miao: On 9 January 2025, Thursday morning at 8:30, the Miao Choephelling Tibetan Settlement Office organised a prayer service at Pema Choeling Monastery in response to the tragic earthquake that occurred in Dingri, Shigatse, Tibet. Attendees included the Tibetan Settlement Officer, staff from the Tibetan Settlement Office, President of the Local Tibetan Assembly, the local monastic community, school and hospital staff, local Tibetan cooperative society staff and a large number of local residents, including men and women of all ages.

Poanta: On 9 January 2025, the Poanta Cholsum Tibetan Settlement Office also organised a gathering of all local residents, including the affiliated Shalu Monastery, Men-Tse-Khang branch (Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute) and the local Tibetan community. The participant assembled at the public prayer hall to offer prayers.

During the gathering, Poanta Cholsum Tibetan Settlement Officer Gelek Jamyang expressed, "Today, we gather as a community for prayer offerings and chanting mantras primarily to express our solidarity with the victims of recent earthquake in Tibet. This sudden event has caused numerous deaths and significant damages. On behalf of all Poanta Cholsum people, we offer condolences and at the same time, pray for those whose lives have been lost and who have been injured in the earth quake disaster in Tibet."

Herbertpur: On 8 January 2025, Herbertpur Tibetan Settlement Office also organise a prayer session to express solidarity with the victims of the recent earthquake in Tibet. The disaster marked by severe casualties, included an earthquake in Shigatse on 7 January followed by another jolt in Amdo Golog on 8 January 2025.

The prayer session led by the Abbot of Gongkar Tsedup Lhakang, brought together Tibetan from Buluwala, Khera, Lakhawala, Herbertpur and Haripur. Participant offered prayers for the tragic loss of lives, numerous injuries and extensive damage property.

The gathering expressed heartfelt condolences, praying for the departed souls to rest in peace and to have a swift rebirth in a land of freedom. They also offered prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured and the restoration of peace to the land of snow.

Tenzingang: On 9 January 2025, a strong earthquake occurred in Dingri County in Shigatse City in Tibet. In response, the Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement Office and Gyuto Monastery jointly organised prayer service in the morning in solidarity with the earthquake victims.

The prayer service was conducted at Gyuto Monastery and led by Monastery Administrator (Chakzoe) Venerable Jamba Tsering and the monastery's monks, saw the participation of local Tibetans and community leaders.

Tibetan Settlement Officer Rapten Tsering expressed deep sorrow over the recent natural disaster earthquake that occurred in Tibet. He requested venerable monks and local Tibetan people to offer sincere prayers for those who lost their lives and for the speedy recovery of those who are currently under medical treatment. The settlers and members of the Regional Tibetan Women's Association (RTWA) of Tenzingang lit one thousand butter lamps in honour of the deceased.

Tea and snacks were served to venerable monks and to all the public sponsored by Pema Wangdak of Camp No.1 and Lhakpa Tsering of Camp no. 3 respectively.

Puruwala: On 9 January 2025, a prayer session was held at the Puruwala Sakya Tibetan Settlement Community Hall (Manilhakhang) to offer prayers and show solidarity with the victims of the recent earthquake in Tibet. The disaster resulted in numerous casualties and injuries, leaving communities in mourning.

The event held at morning brought together local residents and members of the Tibetan community. Tenzin Namgyal, the Puruwala Sakya Tibetan Settlement Officer, addressed the gathering, highlighting the profound impact of the earthquake on the affected population. He emphasised the importance of unity and collective prayers during such challenging times.

The gathering offered heartfelt prayers for the deceased and injured, fostering a spirit of compassion and support within the community.

Kumrao: On the morning of 10 January, at 10 a.m., local residents of Kumrao gathered to offer prayers and express their solidarity with the victims of the recent earthquake in Tibet.

The devastating earthquake has resulted in numerous deaths and caused significant damage. On behalf of all the residents of Kumrao, heartfelt condolences were extended to the affected families. Prayers were also offered for those who lost their lives and for the recovery of those injured in this tragic disaster.

Dehradun: Following the devastating earthquake that struck Dingri and surrounding areas in Tibet on 7 January 2024, causing severe loss of life and property, various monasteries and Tibetan settlements under jurisdiction of Dehradun Tibetan Settlement Office organised prayer services and butter lamp offerings to express solidarity with those victims of the recent earthquake in Tibet.

Prayer gatherings that were held across different monasteries and settlements in the Dehradun area as

a gesture of spiritual support and sympathy for the victims.

Kollegal: On 7 January 2025, a devastating earthquake struck areas of Tibet, primarily affecting Dingri area in Tibet. This tragic event resulted in significant loss of life and injuries among the Tibetan communities in Tibet. In response, the Tibetan Settlement Office of Kollegal Dhondenling organised a prayer service and butter lamp offering ceremony on Monday, 13 January at the Phodrang.

The event witnessed active participation from monks representing various monasteries and local residents, who gathered to offer prayers and express solidarity with those affected by the calamity. On behalf of Tibetan residents in Dhondenling Kollegal, the collective prayers were extended to the affected families. Prayers were also offered for those who lost their lives and for the recovery of those injured in this tragic disaster.

Mandi: Tibetan residents, along with the Himalayan community in Mandi, gathered at the Wogmin Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery on 13 January to offer prayers for the lives lost in the recent earthquake in Tibet, as well as for the damage caused to properties and livestock. Following the prayer congregation, the gathering held a candlelight vigil along the circumambulation path around Rewalsar Lake to express their solidarity with Tibetans in Dingri and the surrounding regions.

**Dharamshala: Tibetans in-exile hold candlelight vigil to express solidarity with victims of Tibet's earthquake**

09 January 2025, [The Tribune](#)

*During the candlelight march, Tibetan activists said that China must stop destroying Tibet's environment.*

Hundreds of Tibetans-in-exile gathered in Dharamshala to participate in a candlelight vigil and express solidarity with the victims of the earthquake that struck Tibet on January 7.

Four leading Tibetan NGOs, including the Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association, Students for Free Tibet, and the National Democratic Party of Tibet, jointly organised this candlelight vigil in Dharamshala on Wednesday.

During the candlelight march, Tibetan activists said that China must stop destroying Tibet's environment. The participants carried placards which said, "Provide Immediate Aid and Support Victims" and "Pray for Dingri."

An earthquake jolted a remote region of Tibet on January 7, killing at least 126 people and injuring over 100 others, with tremors felt in Nepal, Bhutan and parts of northern India, Al Jazeera reported.

Speaking to ANI, an exiled Tibetan Tenzin Marico said, "It's such a sad thing that happened yesterday in Tibet and we are so sad that so many earthquakes happened in nearby, Lhasa, Shigatse and Dingli. And today we are here to give them solidarity with the candlelight March and we are doing it right now. You can see behind me what's happening. And we all are such a, I don't know how to say such a sad thing that we wanted to share with the world what happened to us in Tibet."

Tenzin Lekdhen, a Tibetan activist from Students for FreeTibet, said that they have gathered here to express solidarity with the victims of the earthquake that struck Tibet.

He said, "Two days back, there was a devastating earthquake in Dingli County in Togo Township in Tibet within 7.1 magnitude, which has a devastating impact on the people in that county, where there have been nearly 130 deaths, more than 188 injured, and 1,000 Tibetan homes being destroyed by the earthquake. So, we are here in solidarity with the people and the victims of that earthquake."

Tenzin Lekdhen accused China of building mega-development projects that have a huge impact on the environment.

Asked about the reason behind the earthquake that jolted Tibet, he said, "There are many speculations but one of the major reasons could be that China has been intensively building those mega development projects damming ... for specifically or also on the Diru and the Dichu river which will have huge impact on the environment which could also have huge impact on the tectonic plate moving upside and could impact the earth, having more frequent earthquakes in that very fragile ecosystem and the region there. It is a man-made problem for sure. China has been intensively building mega-development dams in that specific region."

Over 1000 houses were destroyed in the earthquake that struck Tibet on January 7, Al Jazeera reported, citing Xinhua News Agency. The epicentre of the quake was Shigatse, one of the holiest cities of Tibet, as per Al Jazeera. The United States Geological Survey said the earthquake measured 7.1 on the Richter scale, while the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC) recorded a magnitude of 6.8. (ANI)

### **Security Kalon Dolma Gyari Visits Eberhard Karls University and Hambach Castle in Germany**

09 January 2025, [CTA](#)

On 6 January 2025, the Security Kalon (Minister) of the Central Tibetan Administration, Dolma Gyari, visited the Global Ethics Institute at Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Stuttgart, Germany, following an invitation from the institution. During her visit, the Dean, Prof. Hans-Christoph Reiss, provided an

introduction to the background and activities of the University's department. The Security Kalon also had the opportunity to meet with Julius Grunke, a member of the Free Democratic Party (FDP). It is noteworthy that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had previously visited this esteemed university.

On the following day, 7 January 2025, at approximately 11 a.m., the Security Kalon visited the famous Hambach Castle in the Hambach district of Germany, a historic symbol of democratic reform in Germany. During the visit, she met with Ralf Stuber, a candidate for the 2025 House of Representatives elections from the Free Democratic Party (FDP). Under Secretary Dawa Dolma from the Department of Security accompanied Security Kalon during these engagements.

### **Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Congratulates US Speaker Mike Johnson**

09 January 2025, [CTA](#)

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, on behalf of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, representing Tibetans both within Tibet and the global diaspora, extended his heartfelt congratulations to Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the US on his resounding victory and his subsequent oath of office as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The Speaker wrote, "The United States has long been a steadfast advocate for the rights of Tibetans, amplifying our voices on the global stage. Through its unwavering support, the United States has demonstrated its commitment to the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the fundamental dignity of all peoples. I look forward to your ongoing commitment to facilitating the resolution of the Sino-Tibetan conflict, through the Middle Way Approach."

"Under your Speakership, I hope you achieve great success in fulfilling the aspirations of your people and the global expectations in bringing Peace, Justice and human rights around the world," concluded the Speaker.

### **Dalai Lama says no reason to be angry at China over Tibet quake**

09 January 2025, [RFA](#)

#### **Meanwhile, residents conduct their own rescue operations to find more survivors.**

In a prayer ceremony for victims of Tuesday's earthquake in Tibet, the Dalai Lama told listeners that because it was a natural disaster and "not caused by political tensions," there was no reason to be angry with Chinese authorities.

The magnitude 7.1 quake left 126 people dead and destroyed 3,600 houses, according to Chinese officials

— although Tibetans inside Tibet say the death toll probably exceeds 200.

“Even though it is in our human nature, do not feel dispirited or doomed by such disasters,” the Dalai Lama told more than 12,000 Buddhist clergy members gathered for a ceremony in southern India on Thursday. “It helps to think that events like earthquakes are natural disasters and not caused by political tensions.

The 7.1-magnitude earthquake killed scores of people and damaged thousands of homes.

“There is no reason to show anger or hatred towards China,” he said. “Hence, Tibetans inside and outside Tibet should develop a kinder, more compassionate heart.”

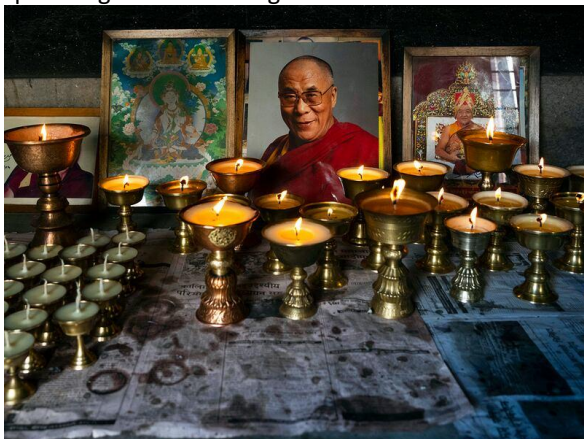
Still, Tibetans are disturbed that Chinese authorities have called off search-and-rescue operations, promoted the government’s official relief work, and banned them from sharing photos or videos about the quake on social media.

The earthquake was centered around Dingri and Shigatse, close to the border with Nepal, in the southern part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, controlled by China.

#### **‘Meditate upon compassion’**

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, who is visiting the South Indian town of Bylakuppe — which has the largest Tibetan settlement in the world outside Tibet — counseled Tibetans not to lose heart in the face of the natural disaster.

Instead, he urged them to transform this tragedy into a condition for the practice of compassion and spiritual growth and enlightenment.



*Butter lamps are seen lit in front of a portrait of the Dalai Lama in remembrance of those who lost their lives in the recent earthquake, at a Tibetan camp in Lalitpur, Nepal, on Jan. 8, 2025. (Niranjan Shrestha/AP)*

The Dalai Lama spoke at the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the seat of the Panchen Rinpoches that was re-established in exile in South India but originally founded by the First Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Gendun Drup, in Shigatse, Tibet — the region affected by the recent quake.

“Even for me, seeing the pictures of ruins of Dingri after the earthquake encourages me to meditate upon compassion and emptiness and pray to Chenrezig, the Buddha of Infinite Compassion,” the Dalai Lama said. “It empowers us to take adversities in our stride and not be crushed by them. That is our advantage as religious people.”

Tibetans in Dharamsala, North India — the residence of the Dalai Lama and the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile — held a candlelight vigil and prayer service on Thursday for those affected by the quake.

On Wednesday evening, four NGOs — the Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women’s Association, Students for a Free Tibet and the National Democratic Party of Tibet — jointly organized a candlelight vigil from the Dharamsala suburb of McLeod Ganj to the Tsuglagkhang Temple, followed by a prayer service.

They said they were holding the vigil was to show solidarity with Tibetans inside Tibet and to demand transparency from Chinese authorities about the disaster.

#### **Search and rescue**

Inside the Tibet Autonomous Region, or TAR, Chinese officials announced the end of search-and-rescue operations to focus on the resettlement of those who now are homeless.

But Tibetans continued to conduct their own rescue efforts in villages on Thursday, two sources in Tibet’s capital Lhasa told Radio Free Asia.

A third source told RFA that Chinese authorities stopped operations to recover bodies from the ruins, even as the general public continued to retrieve them from the rubble on Thursday.

Most of the casualties were elderly people and children because many young people were away at work when the temblor struck, the source said.

Li Ling, deputy director of the TAR’s Special Disaster Investigation Office, attributed the earthquake to tectonic plate movement and blamed the high casualty numbers on poorly constructed traditional buildings.

The Shigatse government has ordered residents not to post earthquake-related photos and videos on social media, saying it would harm rescue efforts and threatening severe punishment for violators, the two Lhasa sources said.

Chinese authorities are restricting documentation of the actual situation and local rescue efforts while heavily promoting official government relief operations, they added. They are also preventing people from taking photos or sharing information about casualties and damage.

One of the sources reported that after three days, some remote areas still hadn’t received government assistance.



Many villagers are sleeping in damaged building compounds without food, a source from the quake-affected region said.

In Dingri's Dramtso village alone, over 20 people died, and the Dzongphug Nunnery suffered severe damage, killing two nuns and injuring many others. Residents still had not received aid by the Wednesday afternoon, said one of the Lhasa sources.

The Dewachen Monastery in Dingri's Chulho township was completely destroyed, he added.

### **Tibet Earthquake a Warning by Nature to China, Says Sikyong Penpa Tsering**

09 January 2025, [Hindustan Times](#)

Penpa Tsering, who attended the special prayer service in solidarity with the earthquake victims, said that the Chinese government should be mindful about the impacts of the mega projects in Tibet, particularly the one they announced last month; building a mega dam on Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) river at the location where the river takes a U-turn to come into India.

"This mega dam is supposed to produce three times the hydroelectricity that the biggest dam, that is also in China, of the world, produces. You can imagine that this whole Tibetan plateau came out of the tectonic shift in the Indian plate and the Eurasian plate and the whole region is a seismic zone. So if anything happens to this dam, which China is planning to build, it could be very catastrophic for the downstream states," he said.

On Wednesday, the Tibetan residents and sympathisers in Dharamshala gathered at the Tsuglakhang temple to observe a prayer service to express their support and solidarity for the tragic loss of over a hundred lives and the many others who were injured in Tibet due to the earthquake on Tuesday.

Sikyong said that they are organising the special prayer because of the disaster that happened in Tibet on January 7. "We do have some contact with the people in Tibet because the earthquake happened quite close to Nepal and many of the relatives also live in Nepal. So, there has been some communications and there are also some social media posts. We can also see that the locals from all provinces of Tibet are also coming together to supply necessary items for the people affected," he said.

### **Beijing Implements New Restrictions Targeting Tibetan Education and Cultural Practices**

07 January 2025, [Republic](#), Yuvraj Tyagi

Tibetan children face heightened restrictions this winter as Chinese authorities impose strict measures to undermine Tibetan language and cultural identity.

As Tibetan schoolchildren prepare for their winter vacation, Chinese authorities have unveiled stringent measures aimed at further eroding the use of the Tibetan language and culture. Beginning December 30, 2024, these restrictions, which span the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan-inhabited areas of Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces, prohibit Tibetan students from receiving private Tibetan-language tutoring. Instead, children are mandated to participate in Mandarin Chinese instruction and state-approved political education, according to reports by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and Radio Free Asia.

### **Cultural and Religious Restrictions Tightened**

The new policies force Tibetan students to focus on Mandarin language skills during their two-month winter break, sidelining private Tibetan language lessons—a crucial means of preserving Tibetan cultural identity. These lessons, often organized by parents and community groups, have long been viewed as a form of cultural resistance to the Chinese government's assimilation policies.

To reinforce these changes, students are required to attend classes that prioritize Mandarin and promote Chinese nationalist ideology. The curriculum includes state-approved content designed to instill loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party, often at the expense of Tibetan cultural and historical narratives.

### **Mandarin-Centric Policies Take Center Stage**

The restrictions extend beyond language. In many areas, Tibetan children are forbidden from wearing clothing adorned with religious symbols, further distancing them from Tibetan Buddhism. Parents are also barred from taking their children to monasteries or allowing participation in religious practices during the break.

Regions such as Dzoqe (Zoige) and Ngaba (Aba) in Sichuan province have been focal points for these measures, with authorities enforcing strict surveillance to prevent cultural and religious transmission to the younger generation.

### **A Broader Pattern of Cultural Assimilation**

These policies align with China's long-standing effort to assimilate Tibetans into the Han Chinese majority and weaken Tibetan cultural identity. Schools in Tibet have increasingly adopted Mandarin as the primary language of instruction, sidelining Tibetan in both public and private education. The Chinese government's overarching strategy seeks to integrate Tibet fully into the Han-dominated state structure while systematically dismantling Tibetan heritage.



*In this satellite photo from Planet Labs PBC, the remains of a Buddha statue are seen in Drago county, Tibet, China, Jan. 1, 2022. | AP*

Education has emerged as a key battleground. Since September 2023, Tibetan has been banned as the language of instruction in schools across eastern Tibet, including the Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures of Kardze and Ngaba. Furthermore, over 800,000 Tibetan children have been placed in government-run boarding schools, where they are immersed in Mandarin-language environments far removed from their cultural roots.

#### **Human Rights Concerns and International Outcry**

Human rights groups and international observers have condemned China's policies, labelling them as cultural genocide. The systematic suppression of Tibetan language, religion, and traditions has raised alarms about the survival of Tibet's heritage.

Critics argue that the latest restrictions are a continuation of Beijing's strategy to sever the connection between Tibetan youth and their cultural identity. Measures such as surveillance apps, biometric monitoring, and restrictions on religious practices have compounded fears of a complete erosion of Tibetan autonomy.

#### **Resilience Amid Systematic Erasure**

Despite these challenges, the Tibetan people continue to resist cultural assimilation. Efforts by parents, monks, and activists to preserve their language and traditions offer a glimmer of hope. However, as China's policies become increasingly aggressive, the future of Tibet's unique identity hangs in the balance.

The international community faces mounting pressure to intervene and advocate for Tibetans' rights to preserve their language, religion, and culture. Without concerted global action, the systemic erasure of Tibet's heritage may accelerate, leaving future generations disconnected from their rich history.

As the winter break unfolds under these restrictive measures, Tibetans' resilience and commitment to cultural survival stand as a testament to their enduring spirit in the face of systemic oppression.

## **Dalai Lama gets stirring welcome in South India for extended stay**

06 January 2025, [RFA](#)

### **Tibetans express joy at their spiritual leader's first visit to the Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement in over 7 years.**

The Dalai Lama on Sunday received a stirring welcome in South India, where more than 10,000 Tibetans lined the streets to greet the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader as he arrived for an extended stay at the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Bylakuppe.

It was his first visit to the Bylakuppe Tibetan Settlement in the Indian state of Karnataka — the largest Tibetan settlement in the world outside Tibet — in over seven years. Over 20,000 Tibetans live in the community, which was established on land leased by the state government for Tibetans who resettled in India after 1959.

The Dalai Lama was warmly welcomed in South India as 10,000 Tibetans cheered his arrival at Bylakuppe, his first visit in 7 years.

That was the year that China quelled the Tibetan national uprising movement and annexed Tibet, prompting the 14th Dalai Lama to flee to India alongside thousands of Tibetans.

The trip also marked the Dalai Lama's first domestic travel within India after his return to his residence in Dharamsala in the northern part of the county in late August 2024, following a two-month stay in the United States, where he underwent a successful knee replacement surgery in New York.

The visit comes as the Dalai Lama, 89, tries to allay concerns over his general health amid questions about his successor. The Chinese government insists it will select the 15th Dalai Lama, though Tibetan Buddhists believe in the reincarnation of their spiritual leaders. The Dalai Lama, who has said he expects to live to be over 100 years old to fulfill the wishes of the Tibetan people, has stated that his incarnation could be found in India.

"Today, I have come to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery which was founded by Gyalwa Gendun Drub, the First Dalai Lama," he said, at a reception ceremony in the monastery. "As his successor, I feel happy and honored to be here today."

The Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, known as the seat of the Panchen Lama, was founded in 1447 in Shigatse, Tibet, by the first Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Gendun Drub. After China's occupation of Tibet, the monastery was re-established in Bylakuppe, South India, in 1972 by senior monks under the guidance of the Dalai Lama.

"In Tibet, the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery was renowned for the quality of the monks' studies of Buddhist philosophy and logic," he said. "It is one of Tibet's most important monasteries," the Dalai Lama said.

The exact duration of the Dalai Lama's "extended stay" in South India has not been disclosed.

Local Tibetan officials told RFA that the primary purpose of his visit is to rest and enjoy the warmer climate of South India in the winter, and that, as such, no major teachings have, as yet, been planned.

However, from Wednesday onwards, public blessings for the Tibetan people are expected to be held three times a week — every from Monday, Wednesday and Friday — with the initial rounds to focus on Tibetans aged 80 and above, according to the Dalai Lama's office.

### **Rousing welcome**

The Dalai Lama left his residence in Dharamsala on Jan. 3 for an overnight stay in the Indian capital New Delhi, from where he made a journey to Bangalore the following day. There, hundreds of Tibetan professionals, students and businessmen dressed in their traditional best greeted him with incense, flowers and silk scarves.

On Jan. 5, the Dalai Lama flew by helicopter from Bangalore to the Bylakuppe settlement. All along the more than 5-kilometer (3-mile) stretch of road leading to the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, thousands of Tibetans carrying traditional silk scarves and incense welcomed him amid the sounds of cymbals, drums and horns, as monks and nuns chanted.

"All of us residents of the Tibetan settlements in South India are very fortunate that His Holiness is here," said Namgyal, who hails from the Doeguling Tibetan Settlement in Mundgod, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of Bylakuppe.

"Even though I'm old, I've made the journey to be here to satisfy my heart's desire to see His Holiness," he said.

Tsewang Dolma, an elderly woman from the Tibetan settlement in Hunsur, over 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of Bylakuppe, said she was elated about the visit. "I feel very emotional and am almost tearing up," she told Radio Free Asia, while holding a bouquet of flowers to welcome the Dalai Lama. "All I pray for is that he lives a long, long life."

### **Role of Buddhist monasteries**

The Dalai Lama's last visit to Bylakuppe was in December 2017, during which he gave Buddhist teachings at Sera Jey and Sera Mey monasteries.

In his address at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, where the heads of all the different Tibetan monastic institutions were gathered, the Dalai Lama emphasized the critical importance of monasteries in serving as "centers of learning" for Buddhist study and practice.

"As I have always advised, the principal purpose of a monastery is to serve as a center of learning where monks and nuns have the opportunity to study and put into practice the Buddha's teachings," he said.

"Members of all the monastic institutions should strive to uphold the Buddha's teachings, particularly in this

degenerate age," the Dalai Lama said, while noting the growing interest in Buddhism in China and other regions.

"Today, many people around the world who are not Buddhists are taking an interest in the Buddha's teachings," he added. "These include scientists who value the Buddhist tradition's emphasis and use of reason and logic."

### **Tibetan Parliament In-Exile Condemns China's Sanctions on Canadian Organizations**

05 January 2025, [Republic](#)

Tibetan lawmakers in exile condemn China's sanctions on two Canadian civil society organizations and 20 individuals, including the Uyghur rights project.

The deputy speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in-exile, Dolma Tsering, said that the decision shows how far the Chinese Communist regime's hands can go. She urged nations of the United Nations and all free democratic nations to stand up against this and not delay in condemning China's action.

The deputy speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in-exile, Dolma Tsering, said that the decision shows how far the Chinese Communist regime's hands can go. She urged nations of the United Nations and all free democratic nations to stand up against this and not delay in condemning China's action.

Speaking to ANI, Dolma Tsering said, "This shows how far the Chinese Communist regime's hands can go. When we say that Tibet is going through atrocities and subjugation and not only they are satisfied with the occupation of Tibetan land and controlling the Tibetan people inside Tibet but their hand is also reaching out beyond the boundaries therefore we say that Chinese policies are meant not only within what China have occupied but even in the free world also, they are making the people fearful of what they do in the free world. Therefore, putting sanctions on the Tibetan community society and the Uyghur community society in Canada is just an example. Even within the Tibetan refugees also, those who have their relatives there, through their relatives the Tibetans inside India the free world, they are being intimidated, they are made to make themselves isolation from the advocacy and the cause of Tibet."

"It's been going on for quite a while but now the world knows transnational aggression of China should not be tolerated, if you want that you don't want your citizens to be intimidated by China, their stringent policy against human rights and China being one of the signatories of human rights conventions, universal declaration of human rights. I am sure in their constitution and the basic law also there are so many good things that they don't abide by so it is up to the free world and the United Nations to make them

accountable. I truly condemn this, and not only we Tibetans in the refugee states are condemning it. We want the countries of the United Nations and all free democratic nations to stand up for this. Today it is us tomorrow it could be you, your citizens so let's not delay in condemning and taking a stand on this," she added.

Speaking to ANI, Member of Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, Namgyal Dolkar, called China's action a definite threat to a nation that holds veto power in the United Nations Security Council. She said that China has previously imposed sanctions on members of parliament. However, she noted that China has for the first time imposed sanctions against NGO and individuals working there and termed Beijing's actions "shameful."

On China's sanctions against NGOs and individuals in Canada, Namgyal Dolkar said, "I see this as a definite threat that China is extending for a nation that holds a Veto power in the Security Council of the United Nations for it to be so scared of an independent organisation working in Canada. It shows how it remained scared despite being this territorial regime any sort of voice against it is being looked upon as a threat and I believe that such an important nation that holds a security council position to make such decisions. So far, we have only seen it to come up with sanctions against members of the parliament around the world but it's for the first time we have seen it imposing sanctions on an NGO and individuals working there."

"So it is just very shameful on the part of China but then it's China so what else to expect? And what is threatening in a way is the fact that I see this sort of trend spreading across different countries, there are possibilities that any form of voice against the Chinese Communist Party will be treated the same way. It started in Canada and it will extend to different nations including India, this is how I look at it, there are so many Tibet-based NGOs in India who are working constantly to expose China and I see that as a coming trend shortly," she added.

Earlier in December, the Canadian government condemned China's imposition of sanctions on two Canadian civil society organisations and 20 human rights advocates, calling it an arbitrary target against those speaking for human rights.

The Canadian government also expressed solidarity with the targeted groups, and called on China to "respect its obligations under international law."

In a statement released on December 24, the Canadian government said, "On December 22, 2024, the Government of the People's Republic of China arbitrarily targeted two Canadian civil society organizations and twenty human rights campaigners with sanctions."

"Global Affairs Canada expresses solidarity with the members of the Canadian Tibet Committee and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project and condemns the decision by the Chinese government to punish them for speaking out for human rights," the statement added.

The statement further underlined that Canada would not tolerate any threats, acts of violence, or harassment against people in Canada, or their families and friends, because of their political opinions or to silence dissenting viewpoints.

"Multiple independent United Nations experts and other established multilateral mechanisms have called on China to respond meaningfully to credible allegations of human rights violations. China must respect its obligations under international law. Canada views scrutiny of its own human rights record as an opportunity to improve its performance, and continues to call on China to do so, as well," the statement added.

The government also advised Canadians in China to exercise caution due to the risk of arbitrary law enforcement. "Canada continues to urge all Canadians in China to exercise a high degree of caution in China due to the risk of arbitrary enforcement of local laws. Global Affairs Canada stands ready to offer consular assistance to any Canadian nationals in China impacted by these sanctions," the statement added.

### **Suppressed truths: Man exposes China's brutal censorship and deceptive tyranny in Tibet**

04 January 2025, [The Tibet Post](#), David Tom

A Tibetan netizen in his fifties from Central Tibet has recently come forward to describe the harsh methods used by the Chinese government to silence dissent and maintain conformity to their rule amongst the local Tibetan servants and publics. Becoming a voice against an oppressive regime, the whistleblower describes how, when the Central and provincial leaders or foreign delegations' tours, the villagers and officials are put to silence regarding what can or cannot be said is kept hidden.

The authorities do not only censor dissident voices but make citizens write their own fables about governmental support, even when there is none. This grim narrative reveals the degree to which Beijing has successfully institutionalised censorship and deceit at all tiers of management so as to keep hidden from the international community the famines that continue to enshroud the people of Tibet.

The local Tibetan dissent, in a speech to fellow Tibetans, has exposed tactics of authoritarian Chinese suppressing voice in the region. In the context of a particular village locals are silenced by Chinese officials, while at the county level the same threat is

used against officials themselves to suppress anything that might portray the government in a bad light. Even during routine diplomatic interactions such as visits by or to Chinese leaders or foreign diplomats, the authorities are only free to suggest the list of issues that can be discussed and perhaps more importantly, the list of issues that one must under no circumstance allow to be discussed. Worse still, they require both the villagers and the officials to lie- declare that the central government has supplemented them with funds when in actual sense the villagers haven't received any aid. As demonstrated through the coordinated repression and manipulation of information, it reveals just how tightly Beijing has been able to contain the region so that voices of Tibetan defiance form no part of the narrative that is presented to the outside world. The place, along with the day and hour of these revelations is not stated, which also contributes to the secrecy of the ideas of this kind of oppression.

In his testimony, he said that not only do the authorities determine what can be said, but also it is also clear what must be avoided during a conversation with senior officials or foreign guests. In such manipulative demonstration, these authorities go further to force the people to develop what as lies by making them to report that they have been subsidized by the central government, an aspect which may be in complete negation to the actual real situation on the ground. Such a forced act of deception is a grim deterrent of the coercive surveillance and manipulation that the Chinese authorities impose over all aspects of the Tibetan Community.

With understandable annoyance he carried on, "Our words and concerns should be conveyed to the highest leaders of the 'Tibetan Autonomous Region,' but the Chinese authorities at the local and county levels systematically obstruct our access to them. Village officials stifle our ability to voice our problems, township officials silence the very officials from the villages, and at the county level, higher authorities suppress the township officials' capacity to speak out." This horrific narrative actually paints a picture of a highly bureaucratic nexus of oppression whose *raison d'état* is to make sure that every attempt and effort at voicing out the grievances of the Tibetan people and seeking justice for their cause, is met with non-response and stony silence.

He added, "When senior leaders visit villages and towns, the local officials—who are supposed to represent us—slam the door shut on our freedom of expression: They prevent us from speaking openly, from expressing our true concerns, and instead, they impose strict directives on what we are allowed to say. We are ordered to speak in a prescribed manner, warned not to voice any opposition, and told to conceal the truth. Worse still, they force us to lie, to

falsely claim that we have received financial or other support, even when, in reality, such support has never reached us. This, they insist, is the 'truth' we must present." This harrowing account brings out the plight of the people of Tibet and how they are forced to be mute not only for themselves but also for the opposites of their oppressors, by living a lie the Tibetans submit to falsehood, they deny their own truth, their own realities.

The man further stated, "As internet celebrities, we bear two fundamental responsibilities: one is to engage in business online, and the other is to amplify the concerns of the people, to expose the unjust treatment they suffer at the hands of officials, and to give voice to the true, unvarnished words that come from the hearts of the people. It is for this reason that I have chosen to address these pressing issues through the online platform." This declaration brings into focus this dual function of present-day social justice activists who inhabit cyber spaces as influencers – as beneficiaries of the unjust systems that they fight against, but also as people who are willing to fight for a cause in a world where traditional protest formations cannot be mounted and where power rests in the hands of oppressive systems.

His speech, captured in a viral video clip, garnered widespread attention both within Tibet and internationally, where it was met with resounding praise from Tibetans across the region, who lauded his courage in speaking out against the pervasive, all-encompassing control imposed by China. His bold articulation of the ongoing repression struck a chord with many, as he eloquently highlighted the relentless tightening of China's grip over every aspect of Tibetan life—politically, culturally, and socially—while simultaneously exposing the grave injustices inflicted upon the Tibetan people by an authoritarian regime that seeks to obliterate their identity and autonomy.

He further exposed the deep-rooted corruption and deceit inherent in President Xi's economic strategies for China, quarrelling that, for China to claim any genuine economic progress, a truly inclusive approach must be implemented—one that addresses the requirements of all 50 ethnic groups, including people of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Such a strategy, he asserted, would necessitate a comprehensive development plan that spans all levels of local government—township, county, and beyond—ensuring equitable growth that directly benefits the people. Only through this fair and inclusive approach could China ever hope to fulfil its aspirations of becoming a powerful, competitive nation on the global stage. Yet, the reality under Xi's rule is starkly different: Rather than fostering real reform, the regime's actions mirror the cynical proverb of 'dust covering filth,' as there is no justice in the TAR. Beijing's manipulative tactics ensure that the truth is

consistently obscured, with corruption rampant at every level. Further exposing the depth of Xi's strategy, he revealed how, during visits by senior delegations to the TAR, local officials and the public are coerced into falsifying reports, claiming to have received the full amount of funds—whether for relief or infrastructure—despite the fact that these funds are either severely delayed or entirely withheld. This orchestrated deception, he argued, is a clear demonstration of the regime's systematic exploitation and disregard for the Tibetan people, exposing Xi's corrupt administration for what it truly is: a regime more interested in self-preservation and political manipulation than in the well-being of its citizens.

#### **China-Tibet: The one-thing you need to know:**

Over the past seven decades, Tibet has endured relentless political repression, pervasive social discrimination, economic marginalisation, environmental degradation, and the systematic eradication and assimilation of its unique cultural and linguistic heritage. This state-sanctioned subjugation has been exacerbated by the overwhelming influx of Chinese migrants into Tibet, a demographic shift that has not only accelerated the erosion of Tibetan identity but also ignited intense resentment among the people of occupied Tibet, who see their way of life under direct threat. The confluence of these oppressive forces underscores the grave injustice Tibetans continue to face under Chinese rule, as the region is subjected to a sustained campaign of cultural and political annihilation.

The communist-totalitarian state of China initiated its invasion of Tibet in 1949, ultimately achieving full occupation by 1959. Since then, more than 1.2 million Tibetans—approximately 20% of the nation's population of six million—have perished as a direct consequence of China's military aggression and ongoing occupation. Furthermore, over 99% of Tibet's 6,000 religious monasteries, temples, and shrines have either been looted or destroyed, leading to the obliteration of hundreds of thousands of sacred Buddhist scriptures. This relentless campaign of cultural annihilation, driven by an unyielding desire for control, has left a profound and indelible mark on Tibet's spiritual and cultural landscape.

Until 1949, Tibet existed as an independent Buddhist nation in the Himalayas, largely cut off from the outside world. It stood as a rich cultural repository of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist teachings, with religion serving as a central, unifying force among the Tibetan people—just as their language, literature, art, and worldview, all shaped by life at high altitudes and in harsh conditions, forged a unique and harmonious relationship with their environment. This intricate balance between spirituality, culture, and nature was an essential part of Tibetan identity, yet it was violently disrupted with the onset of Chinese

occupation, leading to the erosion of both their cultural fabric and spiritual heritage.

#### **Paris museum accused of 'erasing' Tibet under pressure from China**

03 January 2024, [RFI](#)

Tibetans in France have been sounding the alarm over the Guimet Museum of Asian Arts' relabelling of its art and artefacts from Tibet, saying it has caved to pressure from China to "erase" Tibetan culture.

Each week since September, a group of Tibetans in [Paris](#) have been gathering across the street from the city's [Guimet Museum of Asian Arts](#) to protest against its decision to change the name of its Tibet Nepal collection to the more general – and they say, inaccurate – term, "Himalayan World".

On a day in mid-December, Yangchen, president of Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) France, which has been organising the weekly demonstrations, picked up a megaphone and turned to face the museum building, starting a call-and-response chant with the protesters around her.

"Shame on..." she shouted. "Guimet!" the other demonstrators, many wrapped in Tibetan flags, answered.

"Tibetan art..." she yelled. "Deserves its real name!" they called back. "Tibetan culture is not negotiable."

Yangchen said there is more at stake than just a label in a museum.

"It's a very subtle erasure," she said of the name change, which she found shocking in France. "We are in a free country here in France, and Chinese pressure comes even here."

#### **'Erasing' Tibet**

The Tibetan independence movement dates back to 1913, although China has claimed control over the region for centuries.

After the 1949 Communist takeover of China, the army became more heavy-handed with Tibet, triggering protests that were met with a brutal crackdown. Chinese troops then invaded Tibet in 1950.

Tens of thousands of Tibetans left, and today live in exile, while in Tibet the Chinese government has been accused of trying to erase the culture and language through mandatory Mandarin Chinese education.

China has recently shifted to using the Chinese term "Xizang Autonomous Region" instead of Tibet in official documents.

Tibet scholar Katia Buffetrille noticed in March 2024 that the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, a public museum dedicated to non-European art, had started using the term Xizang to identify its Tibetan objects.

This was around the same time that the Guimet Museum – also a public museum, which houses Europe's largest collection of Asian art – changed its

labels, which coincided with commemorations of the 60th anniversary of Franco-Chinese relations and Chinese leader Xi Jinping's visit to Paris in May 2024.

### **Franco-Chinese relations**

"I'm not privy to insider knowledge, but there was the coincidence that the change occurred just before Xi Jinping came, and we know that Xi Jinping does not want to see the name Tibet," Buffetrille said.

She and her colleagues wrote an open letter criticising the name changes and denouncing what they believe to be China's influence.

The Musée du Quai Branly eventually backtracked and went back to using the name Tibet, but the Guimet Museum has continued to use the term "Himalayan World".

In an email to RFI, the museum dismissed "unfounded accusations" of China's influence on its decision to change the term used, and defended its use of the term "Himalayan World" as this includes Tibet.

Director Yannick Lintz said that the term has been used in other museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

### **Supporters of China**

However, Buffetrille considers including Tibet under the umbrella term "Himalayan World" to be inaccurate.

"Tibet is not the Himalayan world," she insists. "The Himalayan world is countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Laos, and includes the southern range of Tibet, but Tibet is 2.5 million kilometers long, and it doesn't belong to the Himalayan world."

"The word Tibet has not disappeared from the Guimet Museum," Lintz told Radio France, which investigated claims that China was pressuring museums to change their labels.

Their reporting pointed to Lintz's appointing of well-known supporters of China to the museum's board – including Henri Giscard d'Estaing, the son of former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and president of Club Med, which is now owned by a Chinese company, and former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. Raffarin has had close ties to China for decades, with Xi Jinping awarding him China's Friendship Medal in 2019.

In November the Chinese embassy in Paris published its response to the Radio France investigation, saying that while Xi Jinping agreed to cultural exchanges and mutual exhibitions with the Guimet Museum, the Chinese government does not interfere with France's "internal affairs" and is not involved in the details of the exchanges.

"Nevertheless, a cooperation on exhibitions must respect the will of the party that provides the collections to put on display," it wrote.

### **'Tubo'**

Buffetrille points out that the name Tibet has also been erased from the Tang China exhibition currently

running at the Guimet Museum, which features "works from more than 30 Chinese museums" and, according to the Radio France investigation, was financed in large part by China.

The Tibetan Empire, which was a rival to the Tang Dynasty at the time, is referred to as "Tubo" – the ancient Chinese term for Tibet.

Buffetrille says that while it might be historically accurate, using the term is another way of erasing Tibet. "Nobody knows what Tubo is," she said. "Ask anyone in the street, and they will not know. So it effectively erases Tibet."



*A mural from the Tang Dynasty in 708, displayed as part of the exhibition at the Guimet Museum. © Siegfried Forster/RFI*

### **'Who benefits from these changes?'**

"This change from Tibet to Himalayan World... Tibet experts are not happy about it, Tibetans – who are the first to be concerned about these things – are not happy about it, French people are confused by it. So in the end, who benefits from these changes? The only one who is happy is China. That's why I ask these questions," said Tenam, a Tibetan who has been living in France since 2005.

The Tibetan community in France has grown from a few hundred people two decades ago to around 20,000, many of whom arrived from India, where a large Tibetan diaspora settled with the Dalai Lama in exile in 1959.

Even if, like Tenam, they are not regular visitors to the Guimet Museum, the idea of the objects – some of them centuries-old sacred artefacts – being stripped of their Tibetan name is another reminder of what is facing those who are still in Tibet.

Tenam found out about the name changes from the open letter signed by Buffetrille, and he and other Tibetans subsequently wrote to the museum demanding it revert to using the name Tibet, and requesting a meeting.

This took place in December, but the director, Lintz, told those present that the labels would remain and that her decisions were not influenced by China.

The demonstrators have vowed to continue their protests.

"To see the name of my country in a cultural institution like this one, it represents not just the art from Tibet,

but also the entire Tibetan people,” said SFT president Yangchen.

“This is not just about a museum,” added Tenam. “If we are not able to stop this kind of thing here, it could be too late. There is a Tibetan saying that you have to build the dyke before the flood comes. I think this is what it is about.”

### Department of Information and International Relations Launches Youth Advocacy Training Program in New Delhi

03 January 2025, [CTA](#)



Department of Information and International Relations Launches Youth Advocacy Training Program in New Delhi

The Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration, inaugurated a three-day North India V-TAG Advocacy and Capacity Building training program on 3 January 2025 at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi. The initiative targets Tibetan students enrolled in various North Indian academic institutions and focuses on developing their advocacy, leadership, and nonviolent communication skills.

During the opening ceremony, DIIR Additional Secretary Tenzin Lekshay delivered a keynote address, outlining the program’s strategic objectives. He emphasised two key priorities: strengthening Tibet advocacy efforts across North India and fostering meaningful connections between Tibetan youth and their Indian counterparts in university settings. Additional Secretary Lekshay stressed the critical role of young Tibetans in advancing the Tibetan cause through an enhanced understanding of their cultural heritage, history, and regional administrative frameworks.

Karma Lekshay, Director of the Tibetan Center for Conflict Resolution, and his colleague Tenzin Yangkyi conducted the first day’s training sessions. The interactive sessions concentrated on three core competencies: advocacy strategies, Leadership

development, and nonviolent communication techniques.

The program has attracted 35 participants representing diverse regions, including Dharamshala, Delhi, Pune, Sikkim, Odisha, Jaipur, and Ladakh. Scheduled to conclude on 5 January 2025, the training provides comprehensive instruction in practical advocacy skills, professional development, and strategic planning for future initiatives.

This capacity-building effort aligns with the Central Tibetan Administration’s long-term strategy to prepare the next generation of Tibetan youth in exile for advocacy leadership roles. The implementation team includes Tenzin Kunkhen and Rinchen from the Tibet Advocacy Section, DIIR, along with V-TAG India Coordinator Ngawang Choden and Tenzin Lhatso, V-TAG Delhi coordinator.

### Dalai Lama leaves Dharamshala for extended stay at the Bylakuppe Tibetan settlements

03 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, departed from his Dharamshala residence this morning with his entourage for his scheduled trip to the Tibetan settlements at Bylakuppe Town, Karnataka state, for what has been described as an extended stay. This is the Dalai Lama’s first trip out of Dharamshala since he returned on Aug 28 from his knee surgery in New York City and the first to Bylakuppe in the last seven years. Crowds of Tibetans lined the streets to see him off along the road as he was driven to the Kangra Airport at Gaggal, especially as he exited from his Thekchen Choeling residence at McLeod Ganj, by the gate of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) near downtown Dharamshala, and at the airport.

Those seeing him off at the airport included top official of the CTA, including the officiating Sikyong, Kalon (Minister) Ms Tharlam Dolma Changra, and the Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel.

His first destination at Bylakuppe, where he will arrive on Jan 5, will be the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. A *starofmysore.com* report Dec 21 earlier cited monastery officials as saying the Dalai Lama will spend most of his time in the settlements at this monastery. The officials were also cited as saying the Dalai Lama may remain in Bylakuppe till Tibetans Losar (New Year), which begins on Feb 28.

However, a *newindianexpress.com* report Jan 1 cited the CTA’s Chief Representative Officer, South Zone, at Bengaluru, Mr Jigme Tsultrim, as saying the Dalai Lama will stay in the settlements for a month.

The report further cited Tsultrim as saying, “winters in Dharamshala are quite severe. His Holiness is coming to Karnataka for a month-long retreat to rest and recuperate. Subject to his health, he may conduct



some teachings and grant some audience at the Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Bylakuppe.”

The Dalai Lama last visited Karnataka in 2017. Bylakuppe, with 15,000 residents, has the second largest number of Tibetans living in exile after Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh, which is also the headquarters of the exile Tibetan administration.

Karnataka hosts the largest number of Tibetans in exile, spread over five agricultural settlements. These include the Lugsung Samdupling in Bylakuppe (established in 1961), Doeguling at Mundgod Town (1966), Dickey Larsoe at Bylakuppe (1969), Hunsur Rabgayling (1972), and Kollegal Dhondenling (1973).

### **Education Department Kicks Off Three-day Leadership Conference for Tibetan School Heads**

02 January 2025, [CTA](#)

The Department of Education (DoE), Central Tibetan Administration, inaugurated a three-day “School Leadership Conference” at the College for Higher Tibetan Studies (CHTS), Sarah, on 2 January 2025. The conference –funded by Global Affairs Canada– aims to enhance the leadership capabilities of school principals and head teachers.

The inaugural ceremony was presided over by Education Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra and was attended by Tenzin Dorjee, Head of the Academic Section, DoE; Tsering Yangkyi, Under Secretary, DoE; along with principals and head teachers from Tibetan schools in India and Nepal. Representatives included heads from Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) schools, Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (STS), Tibetan Home School, Mussoorie (THS) and Tibetan schools in Nepal.

Tenzin Dorjee, Head of Academic Section, DoE, delivered the welcome address, providing an overview of the conference’s objectives and emphasising its significance for fostering effective school leadership. He highlighted the goals and structure of the three-day event, designed to equip participants with tools and strategies for leading their institutions more effectively.

In her opening remarks, Education Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra greeted the school leaders and commended their dedication to the education of Tibetan youth. She emphasised the important role of strong leadership in shaping the future of Tibetan schools and creating an environment conducive to holistic learning. She encouraged participants to actively engage in the sessions and implement the insights gained to enhance their schools’ academic and cultural development.

Education Kalon Tharlam Dolma emphasise the importance role of school leadership in ensuring the overall success of educational institution. She

remarked, “School leaders must take on greater responsibility to effectively guide both teachers and students, ensuring that school achieve positive outcomes. Leadership in schools comes with significant duties, including ensuring school safety and security, evaluating teachers and other works.

In her address, Education Kalon stated, “School leaders must take on greater responsibility to effectively guide both teachers and students, ensuring that schools achieve positive outcomes. Leadership in schools comes with significant duties, including ensuring school safety and security, evaluating teachers, and other administrative responsibilities.”

The Kalon further stressed the importance of leadership in shaping positive results for the schools. “School leaders should take more responsibility so that they can effectively communicate with teachers, who, in turn, will influence the students. Strong leadership ensures that schools will bring about more positive results.”

Education Kalon also spoke about the broader scope of school leadership, noting, “School leadership carries great responsibilities, such as managing school, ensuring the safety of the students, and evaluating teachers. To run the school smoothly and bring meaningful results, school leaders must set an example for both the staff and the students.”

Addressing the future needs of the Tibetan community, Education Kalon expressed her hopes for increased specialisation among Tibetan youth. She pointed out that while many Tibetans have acquired skills such as driving, there remains a lack of specialised professions, such as mechanics or mobile phone technicians, in the community. She stated, “Even though we live in a modern era where nearly everyone has a mobile phone, there are few Tibetans specialising in making or repairing mobile phones. I hope that in the future, we will see more Tibetans pursuing specialised fields.”

Education Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra concluded by expressing her gratitude to the school leaders present at the conference, saying, “I would like to especially thank and express my gratitude to every school leader who is present here today. I urge you all to take your leadership responsibilities seriously, as your leadership will shape the future of our community.”

The conference, which commenced with the theme “Leading Learning” on the first day, will continue with the second day focused on “Leading Culture” and conclude on the third day with discussions under the theme “Strengthening School Leadership.”

### **China Escalating Transnational Repression: Tibetan Leader on Recent Sanctions on Advocacy Group**

02 January 2025, [CTA](#)

**The People's Republic of China (PRC) recently imposed sanctions on the CTC, the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project and 20 human rights campaigners.**

*-by Hindustan Times*

After the recent imposition of sanctions on the Canada Tibet Committee (CTC), Sikyong (president) of Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering has accused China of targeting Tibetan voices in free societies.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) recently imposed sanctions on the CTC, the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project and 20 human rights campaigners. The move drew sharp criticism from the Tibetan exile government and the Canadian government. The measures include asset freezes and bans on entry.

"China's sanctions against the CTC constitute a blatant and alarming escalation of its transnational repression, targeting Tibetan voices in free societies. Such coercive measures against a Tibetan advocacy group exemplify a broader and more aggressive pattern of intimidation aimed at threatening fundamental freedoms and democratic principles beyond its borders," Penpa Tsering stated in a post on X.

"As his Holiness the Dalai Lama has consistently asserted, standing with Tibet is standing up for universal values of Justice and freedom. May these sanctions serve only to strengthen the CTC's resolve to persist in their vital work defending human rights and truth," he said.

Earlier, the Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) had also condemned the move. "This action exemplifies the height of absurdity, given the CTC's long-standing efforts for promoting dialogue to resolve the Sino-Tibetan conflict. These sanctions expose the ongoing human rights violations inside Tibet," stated CTA spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay. [Click here](#) to read more.

## CHINA POLITICS

### **Hu Jintao, Zhu Rongji on the list as China's top leaders send 130 Lunar New Year wishes**

26 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Sylvie Zhuang

#### **President Xi Jinping and other top leaders visited or deputed others to visit 130 ex-officials ahead of annual holiday, Xinhua reports**

China's top leaders have extended greetings to more than 100 retired Communist Party senior cadres and state leaders ahead of the Lunar New Year.

President Xi Jinping and other state leaders either visited or deputed others to visit a total of 130 former officials in recent days, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Those honoured in this way included Hu Jintao, president of China from 2003 to 2013, and ex-premier Zhu Rongji, who spearheaded groundbreaking economic policy in the 1990s.

Li Ruihuan, former chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body, and former premier Wen Jiabao, who served alongside Hu, were also on the list published by Xinhua.

So was Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's first postcolonial chief executive, who served for eight years after Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

Visiting retired officials is a long-standing Lunar New Year's tradition for the Communist Party.

According to Xinhua, the retired officials praised the party's work and said the party Central Committee had united all to "calmly respond to challenges ... [and] successfully accomplished the main objectives of economic and social development for the year".

China is gearing up for its biggest annual festival, an eight-day holiday starting on January 28 this year.

The Lunar New Year celebrations come as China battles economic challenges and geopolitical uncertainty, while doubling down on its anti-corruption drive at home.

Beijing is also bracing for heightened trade, military and hi-tech rivalry with the United States, including on semiconductors and artificial intelligence, as returning US President Donald Trump unleashes a barrage of "America first" measures.

China's economy has also grappled for months with a high youth jobless rate and weak investment sentiment, while facing demographic challenges like a falling birth rate and rapidly ageing population.

Analysts expect stronger measures to boost growth after China hit its 5 per cent target for 2024, following a slew of new heavyweight policies to boost the post-Covid economy late last year.

Addressing a new year's reception last Tuesday, Xi said China would adopt more proactive macroeconomic policies this year and spearhead the hi-tech self-reliance push to sustain economic recovery.

Beijing has also signalled that there would be no let-up in Xi's signature anti-corruption drive. Launched in late 2012, the campaign has now gone beyond economic and financial fronts to sports, public health and the military.

As chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), Xi also paid visits to People's Liberation Army (PLA) units in recent days. CMC vice-chairmen Zhang Youxia and He Weidong undertook similar visits, according to Xinhua.

On Friday, Xi visited the PLA's Northern Theatre Command headquarters in the northeastern city of Shenyang, where he inspected combat readiness and duty performance and extended greetings to frontline soldiers.

He urged the troops to be battle ready, and promptly and effectively deal with emergencies to safeguard national security and social stability.

### **Xi Jinping puts focus on defusing economic risks in Lunar New Year message**

27 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Enoch Wong

#### **China remains 'key engine' of global growth and will push ahead with reforms and guard against 'external shocks', leader says**

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for renewed efforts to counter economic risks and "external shocks" in his Lunar New Year message on Monday, as Beijing braces for more uncertainty following Donald Trump's return to the White House.

Xi made the remarks at a reception in Beijing to usher in the Year of the Snake, which begins on Wednesday. "China remains a key engine of global economic growth," Xi said, while noting there were looming challenges.

He said perseverance was needed, and that the country needs to "strengthen our conviction and confidence, confront problems and obstacles directly, and tackle risks and challenges without hesitation".

Xi also called for resilience to achieve "high-quality development" and to mitigate risks.

"We will press ahead with deepening reforms, expand high-level opening-up, guard against and defuse risks in key areas and external shocks, and promote sustained economic recovery and improvement while maintaining social harmony and stability," he said.

Xi also reaffirmed his commitment to a long-running campaign against corruption that last year netted a record number of high-ranking officials.

Fifty-six senior cadres at the vice-ministerial level or above were placed under investigation in 2024. Anti-corruption agencies also expanded their efforts to tackle graft in the military, defence industry, health sector and sports.

The Chinese leader on Monday also said proposals would be drafted this year for the country's next five-year plan from 2026 to 2030. That plan will set out how the ruling Communist Party aims to achieve the reform tasks it has committed to over the next decade to modernise the country.

Those commitments were made during the third plenum in July and are to be completed by the time the People's Republic of China marks its 80th anniversary in 2029.

But the country continues to grapple with a shaky economic recovery from the pandemic, and challenges to growth in the long run. While economic growth reached the target of 5 per cent last year, youth unemployment remains high, investor sentiment is fragile, local governments are struggling with debt, and a demographic crisis is looming as the birth rate declines and the population rapidly ages.

Beijing is meanwhile pushing for hi-tech self-reliance and is ratcheting up efforts to move up the value chain as it tries to gain a stronger footing in its rivalry with Washington.

Trump has threatened punitive tariffs on China and also announced plans to beef up investment in artificial intelligence to counter Beijing's rising strength. In the new Trump era, Beijing is also expected to face uncertainties over the South China Sea and other security issues as it deals with the new US president's hawkish China team.

In his Lunar New Year message, Xi vowed to stay focused on the needs of Chinese. "We will respond promptly and effectively to the needs and concerns of the people," he said.

### **Former executive at offshoot of Chinese arms giant Norinco under corruption cloud**

24 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Yuanyue Dang

#### **Xue Jianguo is the latest figure associated with the defence contractor to be placed under investigation**

Xue Jianguo, a former executive at one of China's largest arms manufacturers who later helped push for civilian use of the BeiDou satellite navigation system, is under investigation for alleged corruption.

Xue, the former chairman and Communist Party secretary of Harbin First Machinery Group, has been placed under investigation on suspicion of "serious violations of discipline and law" – usually a reference to corruption – according to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, China's top anti-corruption body.

Harbin First Machinery Group is a subsidiary of China North Industries Group Corporation (Norinco), one of the country's leading defence contractors.

Xue left his post at the Harbin company in 2010 but later worked with Norinco in promoting the civilian use of BeiDou, a system seen as China's answer to GPS. BeiDou was being used by around 1.4 billion devices inside China by the end of 2023, according to an official white paper.

Norinco was authorised in 2015 to oversee the commercial, industrial and civilian applications of BeiDou and to promote the development of related industries.

That same year Xue was appointed as the chairman and party secretary of a Shanghai-based investment company set up by Norinco to work on this project, the business data platform Qichacha shows.

A year later, the newly formed company and Alibaba – the owner of the South China Morning Post – co-founded Qianxun Spatial Intelligence, a location services provider. Xue was initially made chairman of the new firm but left the firm some time after April 2022.

BeiDou developers were aiming to complete construction of the next-generation system before 2035, state media reported last year.

Norinco supplies weapons and equipment to all branches of the Chinese military, and has been sanctioned by the US for its links to the People's Liberation Army.

At least three former Norinco executives have been investigated for corruption in an ongoing campaign that has brought down dozens of generals and defence industry executives.

Yin Jiayu, the company's former chairman who retired in 2018, was expelled from the Communist Party in 2021. Later that year he was arrested on corruption charges and his case handed over to prosecutors in Shanghai. There has been no official word on his fate since then.

Liu Shiquan, who had been chairman and party secretary of Norinco since May 2022, was suddenly stripped of his seat on the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, in December 2023, suggesting that he too may have been under investigation.

Liu was replaced as Norinco's chairman last May and his whereabouts are unknown.

Meanwhile, Hu Wenming, who was Norinco's former deputy chief executive before becoming party secretary and chairman of the China State Shipbuilding Corporation, was jailed for 13 years in December 2023 for bribery and abuse of power.

Last July, Norinco and eight other firms working in sectors such as nuclear power, aerospace and shipbuilding pledged to tighten their bidding and procurement rules.

## Five years after Wuhan lockdown, China still 'struggling to recover'

24 January 2025, [RFA](#), Zhu Liye

**The government learned how to control the population through propaganda, censorship and brutal physical restrictions.**



People stand on chairs to buy food across a temporary wall during a COVID-19 lockdown in Wuhan, China, April 3, 2020. (Ng Han Guan/AP)

Five years ago, authorities in the central Chinese city of Wuhan and surrounding areas in Hubei province imposed a travel ban on some 18 million people, just days after admitting that the newly emerging coronavirus was transmissible between people.

The lockdown prompted a mass rush to leave the city that likely helped spread COVID-19 around the country and beyond.

It also plunged China into three grueling years of citywide lockdowns, mass quarantine camps and compulsory daily COVID tests, with residents locked in, walled off and even welded into their own apartments, unable to earn a living or seek urgent medical care.

China is still struggling to recover today, despite the ending of restrictions in 2022 following nationwide protests, political commentators and a city resident told RFA Mandarin in recent interviews.

The most worrying thing about the Wuhan lockdown was that the authorities took that model and imposed it on cities across the country over the three years that followed, according to independent political commentator Qin Peng.

"The first thing [the authorities learned] was how to control public speech, how to arrest citizen journalists, how to block the internet, how to leak information and create public opinion through paid-for international experts and media," Qin said. "The second thing was how to tame the public and bring everyone into line with the use of official narratives."

"The third was how to turn an incident for which they were clearly responsible into a problem caused by somebody else ... by blaming the United States, or nature," Qin said.

The World Health Organization last month called on China to fully release crucial data surrounding the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan in 2020, although the call was dismissed by Beijing.

#### **Massive controls 'still possible'**

U.S.-based former Peking University professor Xia Yeliang said the government learned that it was still possible to impose massive and far-reaching controls on the population.

"They weren't sure it would work after so many years of economic reform and opening up, although such strict controls had been possible during the time of [late supreme leader] Mao Zedong," Xia said. "They thought people wouldn't accept it."

"But after the Wuhan lockdown, the authorities discovered that it was still possible."

Wuhan was Ground Zero in the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first city in the world to undergo a total lockdown in early 2020.

Authorities claimed that only 2,531 people died in the initial wave of infections, but estimates at the time based on the number of cremations carried out by the city's seven crematoria suggested that tens of thousands died.

Apart from the spread of the virus, the most immediate impact for many was the clampdown on freedom of speech.

Whistleblowing doctors like Li Wenliang and Ai Fen were threatened and silenced after they tried to warn people about the new viral "pneumonia" that bore all of the hallmarks of a SARS-like virus.

During the 76 days of the Wuhan lockdown, the authorities deleted 229 articles and posts by citizen journalists who rushed to the city to document the pandemic from the front line, according to the documentary film "Wuhan Lockdown," which remains banned in China.

Police also pursued and detained several prominent live bloggers in the city, including Li Zehua, Chen Qiushi, Fang Bin and Zhang Zhan, all of whom were to serve lengthy terms behind bars for their attempts to report on the emerging pandemic.

Outside the city, censors were busy deleting articles and comments on the pandemic and the authorities' response.

Wuhan residents also lost the right to freedom of movement, to earn a living and to seek medical care, and were effectively prisoners in their own homes, according to reports at the time.

#### **Paying the price**

There was a heavy price to pay, both psychologically and economically, however.

"Since the Wuhan lockdown, I've lost interest in so many things that I used to love," Wuhan resident Guo Siyu told RFA Mandarin. "My health, my parents and my kids are my top priority now."

"I barely have any thoughts of material success ... and even my spiritual life has faded into the background: I just want to stay alive and be safe," she said.

Xia said the initial attempt to control the citywide spread of COVID-19 was understandable.

"When you have the large-scale spread of an infectious disease, with an unknown source and outcome, it is not entirely wrong to choose to control the movements of the population," Xia said. "But what really needs reflecting on is what they did afterwards." For example, Chinese President Xi Jinping never visited Wuhan in person, Xia said.

"He claimed to be overseeing operations in person, but he wasn't there in person," Xia said, adding that the emergency relief services had also failed to deliver reliable supplies of food, transportation and medical attention to everyone to needed them.

"Maybe they were taken by surprise initially, but what about a few months later?" he said. "It was a dereliction of government duty that they were still unable to achieve this several months down the line."

Xia said the Chinese government seems incapable of reflecting on its errors and learning from them, and controls on public speech mean that nobody is allowed to do that for them.

"I think this is a government that doesn't reflect, and a society that cannot reflect," he said. "And a government that can't reflect can't run the country effectively."

#### **CCP's damaged standing**

Qin said the government's insistence on the zero-COVID policy, using lockdowns and tracking people's movements and infection status via the Health Code app, had ultimately damaged the economy and the Chinese Communist Party's standing in the eyes of its own people.

"People used to have this irrational belief in the Chinese Communist Party's ability to govern," Qin said. "But from the extreme prevention and control measures right through to the way they relaxed restrictions with no preparation, we can see how inflexible their policies are."

"And they failed to deliver the economic recovery that everyone predicted after the restrictions were dropped," he said. "This has had a profound impact on all aspects of China's political and economic development, and damaged the authority of the national government and Xi Jinping personally."

"That's why they dare not talk anymore about their victory over the pandemic," Qin said.

Guo, who once made a living coaching Chinese students to apply to study overseas, said neither she nor her city has ever really recovered.

"Relations between China and other countries have broken down, and I have no income," she said.

“It’s been five years, and yet the pandemic has never ended,” Guo said. “The impact of that lockdown on us, the native people of Wuhan, has never gone away.”

### **China’s anti-spy agency urges travellers to protect state secrets during holiday trips**

23 January 2025, [SCMP](#), William Zheng

#### **As Lunar New Year approaches, anti-espionage authority warns Chinese tourists that foreign agents could try to steal sensitive data**

China’s top anti-espionage agency has reminded Chinese tourists to stay vigilant for attempts by foreign intelligence agencies to gather sensitive information from them when they travel abroad during the festive season.

The reminder from the Ministry of State Security came just days before Lunar New Year celebrations begin. The holiday, also known as Spring Festival, falls on January 29 this year and is China’s biggest annual celebration.

The country’s 1.4 billion people will enjoy an eight-day public holiday from Tuesday. While many will reunite with family in their hometowns, more affluent Chinese are likely to use the break to travel abroad.

“When travelling abroad, you should stay vigilant, pay attention to personal safety and guarding state secrets, and refrain from taking part in or assisting in any behaviour that may harm national interests while enjoying the scenery,” the ministry said on social media on Wednesday.

It said Chinese tourists abroad should not use local public Wi-fi networks to log in to important accounts or to send sensitive data. It added that their personal electronic devices should be equipped with security protection measures to prevent “illegal intrusions”.

The ministry also reminded Chinese officials working in sensitive positions to carefully check before leaving whether items they were taking abroad contained confidential information.

“After going abroad, it is even more necessary to be aware of confidentiality discipline. You should not talk about sensitive topics and should avoid leaking sensitive information,” it added.

It said that if questioned by foreign law enforcement officers about state secrets, Chinese tourists should remain calm, explain the sensitivity of the topic clearly and avoid divulging any information.

“You should state your stance firmly, refuse to go to the designated place, not sign any documents, and insist on contacting our embassy or consulate abroad to seek consular protection,” it said.

The ministry also advised Chinese tourists to be cautious when mingling with foreigners and to be careful of “suspicious people who inquire about personal privacy and ask for relevant sensitive

information”. It added that they should turn down gifts from such people.

It urged them to “objectively explain China’s achievements” and improve China’s international image when conversing with foreigners as “hostile organisations abroad often spread false information, political rumours, and inaccurate reports about China to Chinese people travelling abroad, vilifying China’s national image”.

China’s outbound travel has rebounded substantially in the past two years from the low levels during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Macau, Russia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia were the top 10 destinations for Chinese tourists, according to a December report by China’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The ministry previously announced several cases of Chinese citizens, especially civil servants working at sensitive institutions, who were recruited by foreign intelligence agencies while overseas. The ministry has reminded Chinese citizens to be careful of similar traps when they travel abroad.

### **Big drop in internal investigations into China’s corruption busters in 2024**

22 January 25, [SCMP](#), William Zheng

#### **Despite the fall, the effort to root out ‘bad apples’ in the inspection body remained at a ‘high intensity’**

The number of internal investigations into Chinese corruption busters halved last year despite an increased number of anti-graft investigations across the country as a whole.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the Communist Party’s top anti-corruption body, said 3,900 of its own officials had been placed under investigation in 2024 on suspicion of wrongdoing, compared with 7,817 the previous year.

Of those, 374 were sent to trial, compared with 474 for 2023.

Meanwhile, the country’s anti-corruption campaign snared a record number of senior officials, with 58 “tigers” – officials of vice-ministerial rank and above – being placed under investigation.

The biggest name was Li Gang, a senior inspector in the CCDI who had been working in the Central Organisation Department, the party’s top personnel office.

Li, 60 was detained at the end September for “suspected serious violations of discipline and law” – a common euphemism for corruption.

Long Fei, the disciplinary chief of state-owned China Southern Power Grid, was placed under investigation

in February and expelled from the party in August over similar charges.

The most prominent disgraced corruption buster since the campaign started may be Dong Hong, who was until 2018 a deputy leader of the central inspection team of the CCDI. He was handed a suspended death sentence in 2022.

A source, who is involved in the party's disciplinary work, said the fall in internal investigations in the disciplinary force was because 2023 was a "special year after Covid, when a lot of backlog was dealt with". The source, who asked for anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media, also noted that the number of internal investigations was well above those for 2021 and 2022, indicating that the inquiries were still at a "very high" intensity.

Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, said: "Internal investigations within the disciplinary force are still a major focus of the party leader's [President Xi Jinping's] speeches. There is no weakening on that front, if you take out the Covid factor."

Since taking power in 2012 and triggering a sweeping anti-corruption campaign, Xi has repeatedly stressed the need to keep the party's discipline inspection and supervision system "absolutely loyal, reliable and clean".

Last year Xi ordered the CCDI to eliminate its "bad apples" and earlier this month repeated the call by telling the body to ensure its work was "standardised, law-based and professional".

### **Local governments in China raise minimum wage to boost consumer spending**

19 January 2025, [Chosun Biz](#), Kim Song-yi

Chinese provinces adopt wage hikes to strengthen domestic demand and economic stability

Chinese local governments are raising the minimum wage one after another to stimulate consumption amid an economic recession. The strategy to artificially raise the incomes of the middle class and low-income earners to enhance purchasing power is similar to the 'income-led growth' policy promoted during the tenure of Moon Jae-in in South Korea.

According to the South China Morning Post (SCMP) on the 19th, the minimum wage has recently been raised in five provincial regions, including Shanxi Province, Sichuan Province, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and Chongqing. In some areas, the increase ranged from 70 yuan (approximately 13,862 won) to as much as 200 yuan (approximately 39,606 won).

Chongqing, a major city in Southwest China, raised its minimum wage by 10% from 2,000 yuan to 2,200 yuan last October, while Sichuan Province increased its

minimum wage from 1,870 yuan to 2,200 yuan, marking a 17.5% rise. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, known as the lowest wage region in China, raised its minimum wage by 13.6%, from 1,540 yuan to 1,750 yuan.

Due to the significant disparity in living standards across different regions in China, local governments set their own minimum wages. The minimum wage in Shanghai, China's 'financial hub,' is 2,690 yuan, the highest in the country, while the minimum wage in the capital, Beijing, is around 2,420 yuan. SCMP reported that about half of China's local governments raised the minimum wage last year.

The simultaneous increase in minimum wages by local governments indicates the severity of the economic recession in China. Last year, China's economic growth rate slowed from 5.2% the previous year to 5.0%. As President-elect Donald Trump signaled a tariff on China, it is expected that warnings will arise for Chinese exports following his inauguration.

SCMP noted, 'With Trump's inauguration, trade tensions between the U.S. and China are expected to escalate this year,' adding that 'China, the world's second-largest economy, is focusing on growth through domestic market expansion, and raising wages for the middle class and low-income earners seems to be an effective strategy for this goal.'

The government reports from Beijing and Zhejiang Province emphasized the core economic priority of 'increasing the incomes of the middle class and low-income earners to enhance consumption motivation and capability.' In China, low-income individuals account for approximately 64% of the total population. It is expected that low-wage service workers, such as factory workers, cleaners, security guards, and supermarket cashiers, will directly benefit from the minimum wage increase.

After 10 years, the Chinese government has also raised civil servant salaries. According to Reuters, there are approximately 48 million civil servants in China, and this salary increase will be retroactively applied from July of last year. The last time China raised civil servant salaries was in 2015, when the government increased their pay by about 30% to stimulate consumption.

The economic stimulus effect resulting from the salary increase for civil servants is expected to reach up to \$20 billion (approximately 29 trillion won). Chief economist Shiu Tianqian of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) stated, 'China's strategy appears to focus on encouraging consumption among those with a high willingness to spend.'



## China fails to halt population decline for third straight year

19 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

In what is seen as bad news for the country's economy in the long run, China said Jan 17 that its population fell last year for the third straight year and now stands at 1.408 billion. China pursued a one-child policy with draconian measures for nearly four decades since 1979 in order to be able to feed itself and to alleviate social, economic, and environmental pressures. Its efforts to reverse the spectacular success of this policy since 2015 has been one of continuous failure.

The National Bureau of Statistics said the total number of people dropped by 1.39 million by the end of 2024, compared to a fall of 2.08 million in 2023 and 850,000 in 2022, reported China's official [chinadaily.com.cn](#) Jan 17.

The number of newborns in 2024 reached 9.54 million, up from 9.02 million in 2023. This slight increase was stated to match experts' prediction that the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, the auspicious zodiac sign of the Year of the Dragon, and a rebound in new marriage registrations would lift the birthrate in 2024. This was stated to be after seven consecutive years of decline. However, the number of deaths outpaced the number of births by only a small margin, standing at 10.93 million, the data was stated to show, resulting in a negative natural increase.

The number of people aged 60 years and older was stated to have reached 310 million in 2024, or 22% of the total population. The ratio of the elderly in 2023 was stated to be 21.1%.

China has long been among the world's most populous nations, enduring invasions, floods and other natural disasters to sustain a population that thrived on rice in the south and wheat in the north. Following the end of World War II and the Communist Party's rise to power in 1949, large families re-emerged and the population doubled in just three decades, even after tens of millions died in the Great Leap Forward that sought to revolutionize agriculture and industry and the Cultural Revolution that followed a few years later, noted the *AP* Jan 17.

Selective abortion of female children during the decades of one-Child policy led to millions more boys born for every 100 girls, raising the possibility of social instability among China's army of bachelors. The Jan 15 report gave the sex imbalance as 104.34 men to every 100 women, though independent groups give the imbalance as considerably higher, the report noted.

Now a rapidly aging population, declining workforce, lack of consumer markets and migration abroad are putting the system under severe pressure.

While spending on the military and flashy infrastructure projects continues to rise, China's already frail social security system is teetering, with

increasing numbers of Chinese refusing to pay into the underfunded pension system, the report said.

The current developments are seen as giving some credence to the aphorism that China, now the world's second largest economy but facing major headwinds, will "grow old before it grows rich."

Government inducements including cash payouts for having up to three children and financial help with housing costs are seen to have had only temporary effects.

With improved hospital maternity services, toddler care centres, "mom posts," and birth subsidies, China is building a more childbirth-friendly society, as reported by the official *Xinhua* news agency Jan 18.

The National Health Commission (NHC) and other government departments recently issued guidelines for building birth-friendly hospitals across the country. These hospitals will integrate perinatal depression screening into routine prenatal and postnatal care and offer 24-hour labour pain relief services, the report said.

## China's anti-graft watchdog to rigorously probe political, economic cases

09 January 2025, [Reuters](#)

China's top anti-graft watchdog said it will be rigorous in investigating corruption cases where political and economic issues intertwine, state media said citing the watchdog's statement.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said it will focus its efforts in the areas of finance, state-owned enterprises, energy, firefighting, tobacco, medicine, higher education, sports, development zones, engineering construction and tenders.

The Chinese Communist Party's political disciplinary watchdog will also draft a law to tackle cross-border corruption.

## China risks catastrophic errors if anti-corruption crackdown eases, Xi Jinping warns

06 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Dewey Sim

### More tenacity needed in fighting the biggest threat to the Communist Party, Xi tells disciplinary body

Chinese President Xi Jinping has warned of "catastrophic" risks for the country if there is any let-up in the decade-old anti-corruption crackdown, adding that the fight remained "grave and complex". Addressing a gathering of the elite of China's top anti-corruption agency on Monday, Xi said China's anti-corruption efforts had yielded clear results but officials should "maintain tenacity and perseverance in the fight against corruption ... and resolutely fight this tough, protracted and all-out battle".

“Corruption is the biggest threat facing the [Communist] Party, and countering corruption is the most thorough form of self-revolution,” Xi told a plenary session of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, according to state news agency Xinhua.

“The current situation in the fight against corruption remains grave and complex. The existing amount of corruption has not been eliminated and new cases have continued to occur.

“The task of eradicating the breeding grounds and conditions for corruption remains arduous and burdensome.”

The CCDI is meeting in the capital this week, with progress in the anti-corruption drive the main item on the agenda.

Xi also told the cadres that China’s battle against corruption must be “unwavering”, adding that “any hesitation, slackness or giving up halfway will lead to subversive mistakes”.

“We must resolutely clarify all kinds of misconceptions, clear the ideological fog, and further strengthen our determination and confidence in the fight against corruption,” he said.

Xi launched the anti-corruption drive more than a decade ago and in that time it has extended across the economy and society, from health to finance and the military.

The most recent “tiger” – or senior official – to come under investigation is Admiral Miao Hua, a member of the Central Military Commission and director of its political work department, which is in charge of the personnel changes and the party ideology work in the military.

Miao was placed under investigation for alleged corruption in November. In addition, 14 military lawmakers have been removed – apparently for the same reason – from the national legislature since March 2023, a rate not seen for at least four decades. In China’s financial sector, around 90 executives were investigated last year, according to the CCDI.

In his address on Monday, Xi also stressed that discipline within the party should be strictly enforced, and that “no wrongdoing or indulgence should be tolerated”.

“[We must] urge party members and cadres to resolutely oppose the idea of privilege and the phenomenon of privilege and establish a correct view of power, political achievements and career. We must always maintain a high-pressure anti-corruption situation,” he said.

Last month, Xi delivered a similar message to the Politburo, a major party decision-making body, telling officials to be more disciplined and to closely monitor family members and subordinates.

Xi said officials must be strict with both themselves and with those around them, calling on them to

“resolutely fight against all forms of misconduct and corruption, and strengthen the education and management of family members and staff”.

### **Chinese officials urged not to ignore public opinion and criticism**

03 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Leopold Chen

### **Cadres warned to pay attention to complaints from members of the public to avoid more serious problems later on**

Chinese cadres have been urged to properly manage public opinion online to respond to outcries and ensure social stability.

In a social media post on Friday, the publicity branch of the Communist Party in Zhejiang province said “an extreme minority” of officials had been ignoring views expressed online and were instead censoring criticism. “Some cadres avoid solving problems in reality and rely on ‘control’ by cyberspace authorities,” the post said, warning that this would lead to more serious problems.

It also quoted Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s comments that “if we fail to govern the internet well, we will fail to ensure long-term governance,” to emphasise the importance of effective cyberspace regulation.

The post blamed bureaucracy and prejudice for ignoring complaints posted online and said some officials have an outdated mindset and only care about their own positions or the interests of their own department or region.

“Although these officials attach some importance to public opinion, they only focus on reports from mainstream media and ignore online discussion. Some even think that ‘it is just internet discussion, and it does not matter,’” it said.

The post warned that it will be too late if complaints are ignored until they attract media coverage.

It said the examples cited “show that some leading cadres do not truly attach importance to online public opinion. Not only will this make their work passive, but it could also easily trigger a bigger crisis”.

The post also detailed other situations where officials had triggered a public backlash by failing to carefully assess the release of important policies and information or mishandled public criticism.

It also warned officials not to assume that problems would simply go away and not to respond to complaints with silence or clichés.

“The internet is now an important ‘gathering place’ for public sentiment in our country, and officials must learn about, understand, and make good use of the internet, to grasp the thoughts of the public, collect good advice, and actively respond to public concerns,” the post said.

It urged officials to be more risk aware and identify potential problems when they first emerge.

"Authorities should have clear understandings of policies, information, and activities that might cause a negative public reaction," it said.

Meanwhile, it acknowledged that public criticism may help the authorities to govern more effectively.

Last month the same department published another post about public criticism warning that exaggerated public online opinion could destabilise society, cause problems in social governance or lead to online disputes.

"It is a compulsory lesson for governments to learn how to regulate online public opinion and make good use of it," the post said.

### **China gives government workers first big pay bump in a decade to boost economy**

03 January 2025, [Reuters](#)

Millions of government workers across China were given surprise wage increases this week, people affected by the move said, as Beijing looks to boost spending to support the slowing economy.

On a combined basis, the immediate payout would amount to a one-time shot to the economy of between about \$12 billion and around \$20 billion if all 48 million people counted as public-sector workers collected on the terms described to Reuters.

The last time China publicly announced a nationwide increase in pay for civil servants was in 2015, when the government raised pay for local officials by more than 30% as part of an effort to combat corruption and lift consumers' spending power.

The State Council Information Office, which speaks for China's government, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

This time, monthly wages for government employees were increased by an average of about 500 yuan (\$68.50), according to people contacted by Reuters or who had posted on social media. Some junior government workers reported monthly increases of near 300 yuan (\$41).

In many cases, the salary increase for officials and public-sector workers was backdated to July and delivered in a single, bonus-like payment, people with knowledge of the matter said.

"Beijing's strategy seems to be encouraging consumption by people who are more willing to spend," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

"So far we've seen cash handouts to poor populations and the pay rise in the public sector. Low-income groups tend to spend a higher share of their income, while civil servants are presumably more likely to

spend than private business employees due to their higher levels of social security benefits."

The widespread pay increases, which affected teachers, police and civil servants working across China, were first reported by Bloomberg.

The move was not announced or detailed by Beijing. It was not immediately clear how the increase would be funded, what the total cost would be or the percentage increase in salaries.

A teacher and a civil servant both in southern China said they had received an increase of around 10%. The amount of the pay rise also varied depending on the economic and fiscal situation for provincial governments, another person familiar with the payouts said.

Chinese leaders agreed last month to run a higher budget deficit equivalent to 4% of gross domestic product (GDP) this year, Reuters has reported.

That would support efforts to hit an economic growth target of around 5% for 2025 despite the drag from a protracted property crisis, falling prices and the prospect of higher tariffs on exports to the United States.

Government workers began posting on social media about the pay increase on either side of the New Year's Day holiday.

"It's a good thing for everyone if we can walk out of deflation," one person posted on Weibo from Jiangsu. Others were critical. "How come you stimulate consumption by targeting a small group of civil servants?" a Hubei-based Weibo user said.

A record 3.4 million young Chinese took the civil service exam last year, lured by job security at a time when the private sector is under pressure.

The number of civil service applicants has tripled since 2014 even though some local governments have struggled to pay wages, cutting compensation and in some cases eliminating jobs.

A group of Beijing city workers were told on Thursday they would get a pay bump of at least 500 yuan per month without further detail, one of the workers, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters.

The good news spurred the team to head out to a restaurant to celebrate, the person told Reuters. "This should be helpful to boost consumption," she said.

# PROTESTS, DETENTIONS AND OTHER NEWS FROM THE PRC

## Tibetan writer put under surveillance after release from jail

30 January 2025, [RFA](#)

**Palgon was arrested in 2022 for making prayer offerings to the Dalai Lama and contacting Tibetans living in exile.**



*Tibetan writer Palgon in an undated photo. (Citizen photo)*

A Tibetan writer and former elementary school teacher, imprisoned for having contact with Tibetans living abroad and making a prayer offering to the Dalai Lama, has been placed under strict surveillance following his release from jail in November 2024.

Palgon, 32, and who goes by only one name, was arrested at his home in Pema county in the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Qinghai province in August 2022, and served more than two years in jail. Since his release, he has been prohibited from contacting others, the sources told Radio Free Asia on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

“Details about where he was detained over the past two years as well as his current health condition remain unknown, due to tight restrictions imposed by authorities,” the first source told RFA.

The Chinese government frequently arrests Tibetans for praying for the Dalai Lama and for possessing photos of him, limiting religious freedom in Tibet and controlling all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.

The government also restricts Tibetans inside Tibet from communicating with those living abroad, saying it undermines national unity.

Tibetans, in turn, have decried surveillance by Beijing, saying Chinese authorities are violating their human rights and trying to eradicate their religious, linguistic and cultural identity.

Sources also said Palgon — a graduate of the prominent vocational Tibetan private school Gangjong Sherig Norling, which was shut down by the Chinese government in July 2024 — wrote many literary pieces on various social media platforms and audio chat groups before his arrest.

However, his writings and posts have since been deleted and remain inaccessible online, and his social media accounts have been blocked, they said.

Human Rights Watch noted in its "World Report 2025" that authorities arbitrarily arrested Tibetans in Tibet in 2024 for posting unapproved content online or having online contact with Tibetans outside the region.

RFA reported in early September 2024 that Chinese authorities arrested four Tibetans from Ngaba county in Sichuan province accusing one monk from Kirti Monastery of making dedication prayer offerings outside Tibet and two laypersons for maintaining contact with Tibetans outside the region.

### **Mass Arrests of House Church Leaders in Tibet on Christmas Day: A Stark Contradiction to China's Religious Freedom Claims**

28 January 2025, [China Aid](#)

On Christmas Day, December 25, 2024, Chinese authorities escalated their campaign against religious freedom by arresting and charging 10 Christians from the house church "All Ranges Church" in Tibet. This latest crackdown starkly highlights the hypocrisy of the Chinese government, which claims to uphold constitutional guarantees of religious freedom while systematically targeting independent faith groups.

The arrests occurred in the Bayi District of Nyingchi City, Tibet, where the accused were charged under Article 300 of China's Criminal Law for "sabotaging the enforcement of laws by organizing and utilizing cult organizations." This controversial provision has been repeatedly used to suppress religious communities that operate outside state-approved systems. The detained individuals are Yao Xilin, Zhang Wei, Ren Xiaoyun, Wang Haiying, Li Chunjie, Qin Chenglan, Li Xiaolin, Xiao Mingzhi, Wang Ying, and Li Yan — they include church leaders, youth ministers, and members.

Authorities allege they revived the outlawed "All Ranges Church" in Tibet, held meetings, and used platforms like Zoom and WeChat to conduct prayer services, labeling these actions as threats to national order. "The timing of these arrests on Christmas Day underscores the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) blatant disregard for the significance of religious observances and its ongoing hostility toward Christians," said a ChinaAid spokesperson. Despite China's claims of protecting religious freedom under its constitution, it consistently persecutes faith groups that reject state oversight.

The "All Ranges Church," founded in 1984 by Pastor Xu Yongze, has been a frequent target since being labeled a "cult organization" in 1995. The church's refusal to join the state-sanctioned "Three-Self" Patriotic Movement has made it a focal point of government suppression, with members often detained, forced to confess, and subjected to harsh sentencing. Church documents, including "Basic Church Building

Proposal" and "Cross Salvation," were deemed evidence of illegal activity. Such actions expose the CCP's contradictory stance: while officially guaranteeing freedom of thought and belief, the government criminalizes peaceful religious practices.

This is not an isolated incident. Similar crackdowns on "All Ranges Church" members in Ningxia and Hubei provinces in recent years have followed the same pattern, with forced confessions and convictions. Observers warn that the CCP is now employing the same suppression tactics in Tibet.

Dr. Bob Fu, founder and president of ChinaAid, condemned these actions:

"The CCP Xi Jinping government's recent large-scale arrests and prosecutions of orthodox house churches in Tibet and Northwest China is purely religious persecution and also a sign of increasingly severe religious persecution throughout Tibet. These arrested church leaders and Christians are innocent, and their prosecuted actions fully comply with religious freedom practices protected by the Chinese Constitution and international law. We strongly call on the international community to unite in pressuring the CCP to stop persecution and release these detained church leaders."

### **UN Experts Demand Answers from China on Tibet and Turkestan Rights Violations**

22 January 2025, [Devdiscourse](#)

United Nations human rights experts have formally addressed the Chinese government with grave concerns regarding alleged violations in Tibet and East Turkestan. The letter, as reported by Tibet.net, highlights what appears to be systemic abuses, including arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances, of rights defenders and ethnic minorities within these regions.

The UN letter details a worrying pattern of human rights violations, evident through incommunicado detentions, enforced disappearances, and cultural repression. These actions are believed to suppress dissent and stifle freedom of expression, targeting minority groups in Tibet and East Turkestan, Tibet.net has reported.

The correspondence also notes specific individuals, including nine Tibetans currently held with unclear charges or representation. It seeks clarification on their treatment and questions the fairness of their trials. Additionally, it sheds light on allegations of torture and harsh treatment of detainees, with some reportedly dying due to inadequate medical care. The experts call for transparency and investigations into reported abuses and wrongful detentions.

Further, the UN experts highlight ongoing issues, like arrests of individuals engaged in peaceful religious

activities. They report recent cases from September 2024, involving four Tibetans detained without explanations about charges or whereabouts. The detained include prominent religious figures from Kirti Monastery, reinforcing concerns over a crackdown on religious freedoms.

The letter underscores the systemic repression of religious practices, such as detentions for possessing Dalai Lama images or conducting simple religious acts. It points out that these measures form part of China's broader campaign to forcibly assimilate Tibetan religions into a state-aligned ideology.

This communication from several UN special rapporteurs stands as a critical reminder of the enduring struggle for human rights in Tibet and East Turkistan, where cultural and religious freedoms face severe curtailment.

### China jails Uyghur woman for 17 years over religious teaching to sons: Report

11 January 2025, [Hindustan Times](#)

Rozi's sons got 10 and 7-year prison terms, while a neighbour, who also attended the lessons, received a 9-year sentence for "illegal religious education."

China has sentenced a 49-year-old Uyghur woman, Seylihan Rozi, to 17 years in a Xinjiang prison for teaching religious verses to her sons and a neighbour, an act authorities classified as "illegal underground religious activities," Radio Free Asia reported.

The sentencing occurred in Kashgar's Konasheher county and is part of a wider campaign against religious expression in Xinjiang, where Uyghurs face growing penalties for practising their faith.

According to Radio Free Asia, Rozi, a resident of Saybagh village in Kashgar's Konasheher county, was convicted for providing religious instruction. A local police officer involved in her case stated that such activities are classified as illegal under China's stringent regulations on religious education.

#### Her sons and neighbour were penalised too

Rozi's sons were also handed prison sentences—one received 10 years, and the other 7 years—for participating in what authorities referred to as "illegal religious education" conducted by their mother.

A neighbour, Yakup Hidayet, who had attended the lessons, was sentenced to 9 years in prison.

Critics argue that these policies represent an attack on the Uyghur population's fundamental religious rights rather than a genuine effort to combat extremism, separatism, and terrorism.

The Chinese government's actions have drawn widespread condemnation internationally. Human rights advocates have called for an end to the repression of Uyghur culture and religion.

RFA reported that Rozi's case is not unique. Numerous accounts, including leaked Chinese government documents, testimonies from former detainees, and data from Uyghur advocacy groups, suggest that Uyghurs are routinely punished for practising their religion.

#### Who are Uyghurs?

According to a BBC report, approximately 12 million predominantly Muslim Uyghurs reside in Xinjiang, officially known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

The Uyghurs speak a language closely related to Turkish and identify culturally and ethnically with Central Asian nations. They now constitute less than half of Xinjiang's population.

In recent decades, a large influx of Han Chinese, China's ethnic majority, has moved to Xinjiang, reportedly as part of a state-driven initiative to dilute the minority population.

China has been accused of suppressing Muslim religious figures, banning religious practices, and demolishing mosques and historical tombs in the region. Uyghur activists have voiced concerns over the potential erasure of their culture.

The UK Parliament's House of Lords recently held a significant event addressing allegations of genocide and human rights violations against Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other Turkic groups in East Turkistan, a region China designates as the "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region."

### China: Investigate the Untimely Death of Tibetan Village Leader and Disclose the Whereabouts of 20 Detainees

02 January 2025, [TCHRD](#)



A Tibetan village leader has died from severe torture inflicted during seven months of detention by Chinese authorities, raising grave concerns about the fate of 20 other detainees, including the prominent religious figure Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye in Golok (Ch: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Gonpo Namgyal, a village leader from Ponkor village, succumbed to injuries sustained during his seven months in Chinese custody on 18 December 2024, just three days after his release.

In May 2024, Chinese authorities detained Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye, a revered Tibetan religious figure, along with 20 other villagers, including the village leader from Ponkor village in Darlag (Ch: Dari) County, Golok (Ch: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. These arrests are believed to be connected to the “Language Protection Association,” an initiative led by Khenpo Dhargye to preserve the Tibetan language.

Of the 20 individuals detained, TCHRD has identified nine, including Ngaza Palden, Jigme Tenzin, Söchö, Wangchen Kyab, Lochö, Nordu, Purtsé, Namgyal, and Ridar. A source informed TCHRD that “Villagers fear that Khenpo Dhargye may face the same brutal treatment that led to Gonpo Namgyal’s death.” Khenpo was transferred to a detention center in Tsolho Prefecture and is now reportedly held in Siling (Ch: Xining).

The detainees have been held incommunicado since their arrest, with no information on their whereabouts or conditions. Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye, a revered figure in the region, is a close associate of the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, founder of the Serthar Buddhist Institute (also known as Larung Gar). His efforts to promote Tibetan cultural and linguistic preservation have made him a target for Chinese authorities. Days before his arrest, Chinese authorities searched his monastic quarter and confiscated photographs of Khenpo Dhargye seeking an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama during pilgrimages to India in 2004 and 2005.

Khenpo Dhargye’s initiatives, including educational outreach and guidance for nomadic communities, have greatly benefited local Tibetans but have also drawn the ire of the Chinese government. His work has been instrumental in fostering Tibetan cultural resilience in the face of the systemic suppression of Tibetan language and culture.

The Chinese government has intensified its crackdown on private Tibetan schools and informal language preservation groups, particularly those led by religious figures. These measures are part of a broader strategy to suppress Tibetan cultural identity, coordinated from central authorities in Beijing down to local levels in Golok Prefecture. Policies and campaigns implemented since 2011, following the Fifth Tibet Work Forum (2010), have resulted in the intensification of China’s forced cultural assimilation policies, targeting education and language rights in Tibet. In recent years, several highly reputed Tibetan private schools have been forcibly shut down, including Sengdruk Taktse Middle School in Darlag (Ch: Dari) County and Jigme Gyaltzen Nationalities Vocational School in Golok County.

China’s intensified targeting of Tibetan cultural and religious figures, coupled with a broader crackdown on informal education and language initiatives, reflects a systematic effort to suppress Tibetan identity.

TCHRD calls on the Chinese government to immediately disclose the status and conditions of Khenpo Dhargye and the 20 detained individuals, ensure their immediate release, and initiate an independent investigation into the death of Gonpo Namgyal.

# MILITARY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

## Chinese military leaders urge war readiness in message to troops ahead of Lunar New Year

27 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Amber Wang

### During visits to PLA units, top-ranked CMC vice-chairmen pledge to fight corruption and strengthen combat abilities



Top Chinese military officials pledged to fight corruption and strengthen war readiness while visiting People's Liberation Army troops ahead of Lunar New Year.

General Zhang Youxia, first-ranked vice-chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), China's top military decision-making body, recently inspected a unit of the Information Support Force in the northeastern city of Shenyang, state news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday.

General He Weidong, the second-ranked vice-chairman of the CMC, visited troops stationed in Beijing last week, according to another Xinhua report. The visits by the country's No 2 and No 3 military officials are part of a tradition of extending greetings to the troops before the holiday, also known as Spring Festival, which falls on Wednesday.

President Xi Jinping, who chairs the CMC, inspected the PLA's Northern Theatre Command, headquartered in Shenyang, on Friday. He was accompanied by Zhang. While there, Xi extended Lunar New Year greetings to the troops and called for maintaining national security and social stability.

At the Information Support Force unit, Zhang called for the "continued deepening of political rectification", referring to efforts to improve political conduct and loyalty within the military.

"[We should] strengthen discipline, enforce rules ... further solidifying the political character of following the [Communist] Party's command and loyalty to the party," Zhang said, according to the report.

"[We should] severely investigate and deal with corruption issues surrounding officers and soldiers," he added.

A widespread military anti-corruption campaign has led to the downfall of a number of generals since 2023, including two former defence ministers, Li



Shangfu and his predecessor Wei Fenghe, as well as defence industry executives.

One recent case was the investigation of Miao Hua, who was in charge of Communist Party work at the CMC, for suspected “serious violations of discipline”, the country’s defence ministry announced in November.

Similar anti-corruption messages were conveyed by He, who called on the troops to “enforce the responsibility system of the chairman of the Central Military Commission” – in other words, to obey orders and show loyalty to Xi.

During their trips, Zhang and He called for stronger training and combat preparation as the country faced military tensions on multiple fronts, including the South China Sea and East China Sea, the border with India and the Taiwan Strait.

“[We should] focus on training and preparation for combat, maintaining a constant state of readiness, intensifying real military training ... fostering a fighting spirit of daring to do battle and ensuring victory, and building reliable, ready-to-deploy combat capabilities,” He said.

He visited a radar brigade of the Chinese air force and an air transport and search-and-rescue brigade stationed in Beijing, while Zhang visited a division of the Information Support Force, which was created in April of last year.

The force, which has assumed some functions of the now defunct Strategic Support Force, is primarily tasked with gathering and sharing information to support other units. It plays a critical role in improving the military’s capabilities in joint operations and information warfare.

Zhang told troops that their focus should be on improving their ability to support and prepare for combat and boosting “new-domain forces with new combat capabilities” – echoing a previous order by Xi calling for hi-tech integration within the armed forces. Zhang and He also urged the troops to achieve China’s centennial goal of building a strong military by 2027 – a target that includes modernising the country’s weapons.

### Location of Chinese PLA’s EW unit in Tibet Outside Lhasa

26 January 2025, [Resonant News](#), Levina

The Tibet Military District, a component of the People’s Liberation Army Ground Force, was originally formed in 1952, possibly incorporating units from the former 18th Corps. In December 1968, it became part of the Chengdu Military Region.

Previously known as the Tibet Military Region, it was downgraded to a military district in 1971. However, during the 2016 military reforms, the district was

upgraded to a sub-Theater grade command, allowing it to operate with partial independence from the Western Theater Command’s jurisdiction.

The above picture shows **7th Electronic Countermeasures Brigade of PLA**. The pictures are at least 2 years old as per Google Earth.

According to available details, the Fourth Department (4PLA) of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army General Staff Department (GSD), also referred to as the Electronic Countermeasures and Radar Department, was responsible for overseeing the PLA’s offensive electronic warfare (EW) and information warfare (IW) operations, including offensive cyber activities. In 2016, these responsibilities were reassigned to the Network Systems Department under the PLA Strategic Support Force.



*The above pic is location of lesser known Chinese PLA’s EW unit in Tibet, outside Lhasa.*

The People’s Liberation Army Strategic Support Force served as a branch of the Chinese military from December 2015 until April 2024.

To enhance the military’s capacity to engage in what China refers to as “informationized warfare” and strengthen the PLA’s ability to project power in space and cyberspace, the PLASSF was established as a force aimed at dismantling silos within intelligence-sharing and coordination mechanisms across various branches.

On April 19, 2024, the Strategic Support Force was disbanded and divided into three distinct entities: the People’s Liberation Army Aerospace Force, the People’s Liberation Army Cyberspace Force, and the People’s Liberation Army Information Support Force. These units focus on supporting the development and utilization of network information systems.

#### **PLA EW doctrine:**

PLAA doctrine places great emphasis on the capable deployment of EW assets at tactical echelons, viewing them as both key enablers for the fight in the information domain and key defenders of critical battlefield assets. The PLA categorizes EW operations under the umbrella of information operations (IO), a blanket term that encompasses many different battlefield activities all focused on winning the fight in the information domain. Through a mix of information attack and information defense,

the PLA intends to achieve information superiority over its opponents. EW assets contribute to both the information attack and information defense missions, underpinning the PLA's idea of synthesis: the idea that all IO operations should be linked, deconflicted, and mutually supporting.

(U) The CA-BDE's EW missions are radio frequency (RF) communications jamming, radio direction finding (RDF), precision-guided munitions (PGM) jamming, and sensor neutralization. The CA-BDE's EW assets focus primarily on disrupting the enemy's tactical communications – particularly those passed over-the-air; defeating enemy firepower systems either through disrupting munitions or disrupting enemy ISR/targeting; and locating valuable enemy targets through RDF.

(U) The PLAA's employment of its EW assets follows the doctrinal principal of high-value targets. Rather than employing EW assets indiscriminately across a wide area, the PLAA seeks to target specific high-value assets and messages, while ignoring or allowing lower-value assets to operate normally. This precludes the enemy detecting and responding to an EW attack before it can be of most value to the PLAA commander.



### Missing In Action! China's "World's Best" Z-20 Helicopter's Absence From High-Altitude Tibet Ops Raises Eyebrows

20 January 2025, [The EurAsian Times](#), Ashish Dangwal

**China's domestically produced Z-20 helicopter, touted by Beijing as its answer to America's Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk for high-altitude operations, was conspicuously absent from the recent disaster relief efforts in Tibet's Dingri County.**

The area was recently devastated by an earthquake that killed over 100 people and injured more than 100.

The earthquake prompted a large disaster relief operation by the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

However, the largest Singapore-based Chinese-language newspaper, Lianhe Zaobao, reported that the Z-20, despite being specially designed for such highland missions, did not make an appearance in official reports.

Instead, state media outlets, including CCTV News Military Channel, confirmed that the PLA's helicopter fleet for the disaster response consisted entirely of Russian-made Mi-171 helicopters that have been in use by China for years.

The Mi-171's inclusion in the rescue mission has led to questions about the readiness and performance of the Z-20 in challenging high-altitude environments like those found in Dingri County, where the average altitude is around 4,500 meters.

The Harbin Z-20 is a Chinese medium-lift utility helicopter manufactured by the Harbin Aircraft Industry Group. In recent years, this helicopter has been heavily marketed as an ideal asset for plateau operations.

However, experts suggest that the Z-20's omission from the disaster response may point to issues with its payload capacity and flight performance at high altitudes, which could have hindered its ability to contribute effectively to rescue efforts.



Z-20J.

Su Ziyun, a researcher at Taiwan's National Defense and Security Research Institute, commented on the absence, stating that it was unusual given the growing focus on domestic military equipment in state media reports.

"In recent years, Chinese mainland state media have paid more and more attention to publicity and reporting on domestic equipment, and participating in earthquake relief should have been a good opportunity to peacefully demonstrate the performance of the Z-20," he added.

Su Ziyun speculated that the absence of the Z-20 in the operations could be due to the limited number of Z-20 units, and it is more likely that the helicopter may not yet perform optimally when flying with loads at high altitudes. He also noted that there are still technical challenges that need to be addressed.

The Z-20 may still be facing technical and logistical challenges that prevent it from matching the capabilities of older, more established aircraft like the Mi-171, which has a larger interior space and more reliable performance in high-altitude operations.

### China's Z-20 Helicopter

In the past, China relied heavily on Black Hawk helicopters imported from the United States for operations in the high-altitude plateau regions.

During a period of warm relations between China and the West in the 1980s, Beijing made several military purchases from the United States, including more than 20 S-70C-2 helicopters.

This variant of the Black Hawk, which was marketed as a civilian model, stood out for its impressive ability to operate at high altitudes, a feature that caught the attention of Chinese leaders.

China's own helicopters were unable to effectively complete tasks in such challenging environments, primarily due to the lack of oxygen at high elevations and ongoing technical difficulties with their engines.

However, this period of cooperation was short-lived.

The 1989 Tiananmen Square incident led to a halt in arms transfers from both the United States and the European Union to China, effectively cutting off further access to advanced military equipment, including helicopters.



PLAAF Z-20K sling loading Lynx CS/VP11 at Changchun Airshow 2023.

In the aftermath of 1989, China found it increasingly difficult to procure American-made equipment, leading the country to turn to Russia. Over the years, China acquired a large number of Mi-171 helicopters from Russia and today operates over 200 of these choppers.

While the Mi-171s fulfilled some of China's needs, Beijing remained keen on acquiring more medium-lift transport helicopters to grow its fleet. This desire for greater capabilities led to efforts to reverse-engineer the S-70 Black Hawk starting in the late 1990s.

However, the project faced major problems, particularly in the areas of engine and transmission technology, components that were beyond China's manufacturing capabilities at the time.

Yet, Beijing was determined to push forward, deeply impressed by the capabilities of the Black Hawk fleet.

In 2013, the first prototype of what would become China's own high-altitude helicopter, the Z-20, took to the skies. The Z-20 was later unveiled in 2019 during a grand military parade in Beijing, marking the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. At the time, the Chinese government hailed the Z-20 as one of the world's best helicopters.

Since then, the Z-20 has reportedly evolved, with claims that it is now capable of undertaking a variety of roles, including attack, anti-submarine, and anti-ship operations. Its integration into both the Chinese Air Force and Naval forces has been closely followed by the state media, which regularly reports on its growing capabilities.

Despite these claims, the Z-20 was originally designed with a primary focus on high-altitude operations, largely due to China's admiration for US-made helicopters in the past.

The American S-70 Black Hawks had demonstrated their value in various rescue operations and even played a key role during the 1987 India-China standoff.

The PLA was deeply impressed with the S-70's performance, and this capability was notably missed during the Sichuan earthquake of 2008, which spurred China's development of the Z-20.

That being said, previous [reports](#) have highlighted Z-20's increasing presence in the Tibet Military District, where it has been stationed to enhance the mobility of army aviation units in the high-altitude areas of the plateau.

In fact, last year, Chinese media reported that the Z-20 was integrated into a specific army aviation brigade in the Tibet Military Region alongside the older Mi-171 helicopters, which were still being used for low-altitude flight training.

Even after these promotional efforts, the Z-20's absence from recent operations in Tibet raises new questions about its true capabilities. The absence of the Z-20 in recent high-profile operations may indicate that it still requires further refinement before it can fully replace its imported counterparts.

The development also suggests that China's extensive marketing campaign might have been more of a strategic move than a reflection of the helicopter's actual readiness for critical missions.

### China investing \$27.8 billion in major construction projects on 60th 'autonomous' Tibet anniversary

20 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

China said Jan 19 that its regional Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government will invest more than 200 billion yuan (about \$27.8 billion) into the construction of major infrastructure projects on the

60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year of its establishment. The TAR is roughly the western half of historical Tibet and China recently decided to refer to it only by its Sinicized name of Xizang (or Xizang Autonomous Region).

One of these projects is the Sichuan-Xizang Railway, reported China's official *Xinhua* news agency Jan 19, citing Gama Cedain, acting chairman of the regional government, in a report delivered at the annual session of the regional people's congress.

The report said the investment is much more than that in 2024 when over 170 billion yuan was spent on 21 major projects. Among the projects was stated to be the Lhasa-Xigaze Highway, which began operating in 2024.

The region was state to target strong economic and social development in 2025, with infrastructure construction, eco-environmental conservation and reconstruction in the quake-hit areas being some of the priorities listed in the regional government work report.

The region's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by 6.3% in 2024, raking among the top in the PRC, and this year it has set a growth target of over 7%, striving to reach 8%, the government report was cited as saying.

Tibet was nominally autonomous following the coerced signing in 1951 of a 17-point agreement with a Tibetan government delegation. Following the brutal armed suppression of the Tibetan uprising in 1959, it was placed under Chinese military rule. In 1965, it was declared an autonomous region, though being subjected to more direct rule from Beijing than other provinces of China.

### **PLA conducts combat readiness patrols in South China Sea**

19 January 2025, [China Daily](#)

BEIJING - The Chinese military conducted joint sea-air combat readiness patrols in the South China Sea from Friday to Saturday to maintain peace and stability in the area, according to a statement by the Chinese People's Liberation Army Southern Theater Command. "Any military activity that stirs up trouble in the South China Sea is within our control," the statement read.

### **Two universities slapped with military procurement ban**

16 January 2025, [SCMP](#)

Two universities in China have been banned from military procurement activities for rigging the bidding process amid an ongoing anti-corruption campaign, writes Victoria Bela for *South China Morning Post*. The People's Liberation Army Cyberspace Force handed three-year bans to the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China and Chengdu

University of Information Technology – both based in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. The bans were announced in two separate statements posted on the force's website on 2 January – the date the ban started – both of which said the universities were "prohibited from participating in the procurement of materials and engineering services for cyberspace forces".

16 January 2025, [ENR](#), Saibal Dasgupta

### **China's Desperation Shows as Tibetan Youths Forced into Military Service Amid Recruitment Crisis**

10 January 2025, [Republic](#)

In a troubling display of coercion, China has invoked its 1984 Military Service Law to conscript Tibetan youths in Ruthog County, Ngari Prefecture.

In yet another blatant display of coercion, China has invoked its rarely enforced 1984 Military Service Law in the Tibetan county of Ruthog, Ngari Prefecture. This move, ostensibly aimed at bolstering the ranks of the struggling People's Liberation Army (PLA), exposes Beijing's growing desperation to mask its internal military dysfunction. Ruthog, strategically located near the India-China border, has become the latest pawn in China's aggressive and exploitative campaign to conscript Tibetan youths, under the pretext of national service.

### **Beijing's Recruitment Woes: The Cracks in the PLA Armor**

Despite its ostentatious displays of military might, the PLA is grappling with an increasingly evident crisis. China's reliance on voluntary enlistment has crumbled under the weight of strict recruitment standards, gruelling service conditions, and widespread discontent. Reports indicate a mass exodus of soldiers opting for early retirement, particularly from harsh deployments in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Instead of addressing the root causes of dissatisfaction within its military ranks, Beijing has chosen the path of least resistance—targeting minority populations like Tibetans. The PLA's inability to attract willing recruits from its Han-majority population speaks volumes about the morale and disillusionment within the force.

### **Tibetan Youths as Beijing's Scapegoats**

The imposition of compulsory military service in Ruthog is a calculated manoeuvre to exploit the region's marginalized Tibetan population. Far from being a genuine effort to integrate Tibetans into national defence, this move reeks of opportunism and coercion. Local officials are aggressively pressuring families to send their children into the military, dangling financial incentives and hollow promises of stability.

For Tibetans, this is not an “opportunity” but a grim reality. Decades of political and cultural repression under Beijing have eroded any trust in the Chinese government. Enlisting in the PLA is not a matter of pride for Tibetans; it’s a survival tactic under duress.

#### **Militarization Disguised as Development**

China’s push for conscription coincides with its rapid militarization of Tibet. Ruthog, sitting on the contentious India-China border, has witnessed the construction of “border villages,” energy projects, and other so-called development initiatives. These are not genuine attempts to uplift the local economy but are strategic moves to consolidate Beijing’s grip over the region and fortify its border claims.

Beijing’s rhetoric about economic development is as hollow as its promises to Tibetans. These projects serve one purpose: to create a militarized buffer zone against India. The PLA’s outreach to Tibetan youths—through propagandist events and lectures—further underscores its intent to weaponize the region’s population in its geopolitical ambitions.

#### **A Betrayal of Tibetan Identity**

China’s conscription drive is more than just a logistical manoeuvre; it is an assault on Tibetan identity. For a population that suffered unimaginable atrocities during China’s invasion and occupation, being forced to serve in the military of their oppressors is a cruel irony. The PLA’s renewed focus on Tibetan recruits is not a symbol of inclusion but a stark reminder of Beijing’s colonial mindset.

By coercing Tibetan youths into the military, China hopes to suppress dissent and strengthen its control over the region. However, these efforts are likely to backfire. Tibetans have long resisted Beijing’s attempts to erase their identity and culture, and this latest move will only deepen their mistrust and resentment.

#### **A Farce in the Name of National Security**

China’s claim that this conscription drive is routine enforcement of the Military Service Law is laughable. It is a desperate attempt to shore up the PLA’s dwindling ranks and deflect attention from its internal dysfunction. The façade of military strength that Beijing projects to the world is cracking, revealing a force that struggles to retain its own soldiers and now resorts to exploiting marginalized communities.

The PLA’s increasing reliance on coercion, combined with its harsh working conditions and rigid surveillance, paints a damning picture of a military at odds with its personnel. Instead of inspiring loyalty, Beijing’s policies breed discontent, alienation, and, ultimately, a weakening of its armed forces.

#### **China’s Hypocrisy Laid Bare**

For a regime that spares no effort in suppressing dissent and enforcing loyalty, China’s desperate scramble for recruits is a telling indictment of its governance. The targeting of Tibetan youths is not just

a reflection of military shortcomings but also a broader failure to win the trust of the people it rules.

Beijing’s actions in Ruthog are a stark reminder that its vision of national security comes at the expense of its most vulnerable communities. The militarization of Tibet, coupled with the forced conscription of its youth, is yet another chapter in China’s long history of exploiting its minorities for political and military gain.

#### **The World Watches in Silence**

As China’s authoritarian grip tightens, the international community remains largely silent. The militarization of Tibet and the exploitation of its youth for conscription demand global condemnation. Yet, the lack of accountability emboldens Beijing to continue its oppressive policies unchecked.

China’s coercive conscription drive in Ruthog is not just a local issue—it’s a warning sign of a regime willing to sacrifice its people’s dignity to sustain its hollow facade of power. For Tibetans, the struggle for identity and autonomy continues against a backdrop of systemic exploitation. For the rest of the world, it’s time to question how long Beijing’s charade can go on unchecked.

#### **China seeks to bolster ports and aviation hubs in western regions**

05 January 2025, [The Economic Times](#)

China said on Sunday it would launch 15 measures to bolster the development of its western provinces with the construction of logistical infrastructure such as **ports and aviation hubs**. The General Administration of Customs said the measures would enhance the integration of rail, air, river and sea links in China’s west, state media reported. The measures are to include enhancing international aviation hubs in cities including Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Xi’an and Urumqi, while developing comprehensive bonded zones, and integrating these with ports and other transport links.

A number of ports would also be built and expanded. China has long sought to bolster the economic heft of its western regions, which have markedly lagged coastal provinces. But ethnic tensions in such places a Xinjiang and hard-line security measures Beijing says are needed to safeguard national unity and border stability, have drawn criticism from some Western nations.

China’s western regions comprise around two-thirds of the country’s land area and include regions such as Sichuan, Chongqing, Yunnan, Xinjiang and Tibet.

China’s Politburo last year called for a “new urbanisation” of western China to revitalise rural areas, expand poverty alleviation efforts and strengthen energy resources. Efforts have also been

made to increase linkages to Europe and South Asia through trade corridors including rail freight routes.

## China in the Region

### China-East Turkestan

#### Thai lawyer petitions court for release of detained Uyghurs

30 January 2025, [RFA](#), Pimuk Rakkanam

**The court is due to hold a hearing on the fate of the men on Feb. 17**



*Thai lawyer Chuchart Kanpai speaks to reporters outside a Bangkok court where he filed a petition seeking the release of 42 Uyghurs detained for more than a decade, on Jan. 30, 2025. (Pimuk Rakkanam/RFA)*

A Thai lawyer is seeking the release of 42 Uyghurs who have spent more than a decade in detention and who rights groups fear could be deported to China where they would be at risk of torture.

The men from the mostly Muslim minority from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China have been held on immigration charges at a Thai detention center since attempting to escape Beijing's persecution through Thailand.

Lawyer Chuchart Kanpai said in a petition submitted to a court on Thursday that the men had spent enough time locked up and should be freed.

"They have been jailed from 2013 to 2025, more than 10 years. It is obvious that they have completed the sentence," Chuchart said in the petition, according to a copy obtained by Radio Free Asia.

"Detention is therefore unlawful."

The rights group Justice for All said early this month that reports from 48 detained Uyghur asylum seekers indicated that Thai authorities were coercing them to fill out forms in preparation for their deportation to China.

It was not immediately clear why the rights group referred to 48 detained Uyghurs but Chuchart identified 42 in his petition.

A government spokesman told RFA on Jan. 23 that Thailand had "no policy" to deport the Uyghurs and he dismissed speculation that they would be forced back to China.

Uyghurs in China's vast Xinjiang region have been subjected to widespread human rights abuses, including detention in massive concentration camps. China denies that but U.N. experts on Jan. 21 also urged Thailand not to deport the Uyghurs saying they would likely face torture.

Chuchart, after lodging the petition, said the court would hold a hearing on Feb. 17.

"We will have witnesses including the ones from the World Uyghur Congress," Chuchart told reporters, referring to an advocacy group that this month appealed to Thailand not to send the men to China.

### 'Risky'

The refugees are part of an originally larger cohort of more than 350 Uyghur men, women and children, 172 of whom were resettled in Turkey, 109 deported back to China, and five who died because of inadequate medical conditions.

In 2015, Thailand, Washington's longest-standing treaty ally in Asia, faced stiff international criticism for those it did deport back to China. Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention, and therefore does not recognize refugees.

Angkhana Neelapajit, a senator who chairs the Senate's human rights committee, said the court proceedings initiated by Chuchart could backfire.

"The court may invite anyone to testify in the hearings, including the Chinese ambassador," she told RFA. "If the court believes that China will treat them civilly, that's risky."

New U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said at his confirmation hearing on Jan. 15 that treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang was 'horrific' and he would reach out to Thailand to prevent the return of the men.

The treatment of Uyghurs in China was not "some obscure issue" that should be on the sidelines of U.S.-China ties, Rubio, a China hawk, told the hearing.

"These are people who are basically being rounded up because of their ethnicity and religion, and they are being put into camps. They're being put into what they call re-education centers. They're being stripped of their identity. Their children's names are being changed," he said.

"They're being put into forced labor – literally slave labor."

China denies accusations of slave labor in Xinjiang.

### GLOBAL INDIGENOUS: Chinese authorities close Uyghur wells

29 January 2025, [ICT](#), Deusededit Ruhangariyo

*Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning gestures during a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing, on July 26, 2023. Ning spoke about China's decision to ban a United States research*

*company and two analysts who have reported extensively on claims of human rights abuses committed against Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups native to the country's far northwestern region of Xinjiang. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan, File)*

Chinese authorities close Uyghur farmers' water wells in southern Xinjiang, Nordic Council launches Arctic program prioritizing local communities, and a funding boost for Aboriginal cultural understanding in Western Australia schools.

### CHINA: Uyghurs' water wells closed

Water wells deemed illegal by Chinese authorities have been shut down in three Uyghur villages located on the edge of a vast desert in Xinjiang, Radio Free Asia reported on Jan. 21.

Those who wished to dig wells were typically required to obtain permits. However, no permits were provided to the farmers, and there were no clear restrictions on constructing wells in the area.

The villages, including one named Achchiq, are situated in Yopurgha county, which is part of Kashgar prefecture. The county lies on the western edge of the massive Taklamakan Desert, an area nearly the size of Germany, and is predominantly inhabited by Uyghurs. This news follows an investigation that revealed 46 illegal wells dug in another part of Xinjiang, many of which were constructed by Han Chinese settlers to cultivate cotton and vegetables, significantly depleting water resources. However, authorities have avoided cracking down on those wells.

Recent videos shared by Zumrat Dawut, a former detainee of a Uyghur internment camp now living in Virginia, USA, show the demolition of wells constructed by Uyghur farmers in Achchiq village.

In the videos, officials can be seen forcing farmers to fill in the wells they had previously dug as part of efforts to tackle the region's ongoing water scarcity crisis. Critics have described the actions as excessive and harmful to the local community.

When Radio Free Asia reached out to the security director of Achchiq village for confirmation, he stated that officials had indeed shut down "illegal" wells in three villages.

"I was involved in closing wells in villages 6, 7, and 8," he said.

The director mentioned that the well closures began in February 2024 but did not provide information about the potential effects on residents.

Another security director, based in Terim village in Yopurgha county, also confirmed that wells dug by Uyghurs there had been closed, forcing residents to purchase water from the Bingtuan, officially known as the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

## Displaced by quake, Kirgiz settle into new homes

27 January 2025, [China Daily](#), Wang Xiaoyu



*A villager playing the komuz joins other performers in Wushi county in Aksu, Xinjiang, on Jan 13. FENG YONGBIN/CHINA DAILY*

The earthy sound of the komuz, an ancient, three-stringed instrument of the Chinese Kirgiz ethnic group, reverberated in the home of Huhxitarbek Ismail in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on a recent morning as he swayed to the melody and hummed along with his friends .

Gathering together and singing epics narrating historic warriors' bravery and paeans to beautiful scenes of the vast region is a staple festivity for Kirgiz people.

But this year's celebrations for the upcoming Spring Festival on Wednesday will be a little different for Huhxitarbek, who lives in Aksu's Wushi county. He will be spending the holiday in a new neighborhood built for residents affected by a magnitude 7.1 earthquake that struck the area about a year ago.

The quake didn't kill anyone in the county, but it injured a few people and damaged or toppled a number of houses. For displaced villagers, local governments assisted them in rebuilding old dwellings or offered to move them into new residences.

Huhxitarbek was among 150 residents from 41 households in a Kirgiz township who moved into a brand-new residential complex spanning 4.53 hectares around July.

Liu Li, Party chief of the township, said that each apartment is either 60 or 80 square meters in size and priced at around 100,000 yuan (\$13,700). Residents paid 15 percent of the total out-of-pocket cost, and the remainder was covered by the local government.

Tursunay Turahun said her parents paid about 18,000 yuan for the new house that now accommodates her family of five.

"The temblor last year cracked the wall of my old house, rendering it unstable. While we were temporarily settled in tents at a local middle school after the quake, I was anxious about how to carry on with our lives," the 25-year-old said.

The new home has assured her anxiety and exceeded her expectations.

"It comes with a restroom and a kitchen and is much brighter than our old house," she said. "We plan to invite my parents' brothers and sisters here to celebrate Spring Festival together."

The complex is also equipped with a child care center and a day care facility for the elderly.

Dawut Yusuyin, 75, now spends the bulk of his days at the day care center, chatting and playing card games with other elderly residents.

"Before, there were no such recreational rooms for us to hang out," he said.

The center offers three free meals daily for seniors age 80 and above, and those age 60 to 80 pay only 6 yuan for each meal.

"Life here is simply more convenient," he added.

According to the county government, each household received an additional subsidy of about 50,000 yuan to build grape trellises and other supporting facilities in their courtyards.

As part of efforts to add local job opportunities and further improve convenience, the neighborhood has also set up over 15 streetside storefronts, it said.

## Han migration creates environmental and health problems in Xinjiang

26 January 2025, [Mizzima](#), Sun Lee

The restive region of Xinjiang in northwestern China has been under tremendous pressure due to large-scale and unsustainable migrations of the Han population from the mainland. It has not only led to cultural suppression and demographic unbalance in the ethnic minority region but has also caused environmental problems such as water resources depletion, forest degradation and pollution. All this has made local Uygur people unhealthy and reduced their lifespan.

The China Communist Party (CCP) government in Beijing has often been criticised for suppression of the ethnic minority Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Over one million are jailed while the overall population is subjected to intense surveillance, religious restrictions, forced labour, inhuman torture, and forced sterilization, among others. Over tens of thousands in Xinjiang were killed, kidnapped even as many are reported to be missing. Several governments including the US called it a genocide.

In order to assimilate the Xinjiang population with the CCP doctrine, Beijing has resorted to different tactics including Han migration to dilute ethnic concentration and neutralise cultural identity. While this has led to social unrest, it also had a severe impact on the local environment and ecology and the locals' health.



Xinjiang is of the most ecologically fragile regions in China but saw unabated environmental destruction at the hands of the migratory Han population who despised local Uyghur Muslims and had support from the Beijing government, said Nimrod Baranovitch of University of Haifa. "The Uyghur discourse about water pollution in Xinjiang not only blamed the Han Chinese settlers in Xinjiang but also the Chinese government," he said.

Baranovitch said the Uyghurs believed that the mass migration of Hans stopped their access to natural resources but also caused widespread exploitation even as environmental degradation continued to occur. "Han migrants do not care about the well-being of the environment because they are only interested in stealing the region's natural resources and because they will leave once the material opportunities are exhausted," he quoted his respondents as saying.

Han settlers turned to agriculture activities in Xinjiang and started cultivating a water-guzzling cotton crop which needs extensive irrigation. It led to overextraction of water from rivers and underground, which depleted groundwater water tables and reduced the availability of water to Uyghurs.

The shortage of water can be detrimental for Xinjiang as it is drought-prone area with little rains, said researchers from Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Sciences. "The problem of agricultural water occupying the ecological environment water is prominent of Xinjiang. The carrying capacity of water resources in Xinjiang is at risk of severe overloading, and water resources have become a bottleneck for the region's socioeconomic development," said the researchers, Yan Han and Shaofeng Jia.

The influx of Han migrants also promoted industrial development, especially, in the thermal power generation. Moreover, the vast reserves of coal in Xinjiang and need to meet national energy requirement led to construction of huge number of coal power plants. Now Xinjiang has become an important location for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has added to the environmental damage. "Of course it is damaging to the environment. But there is nothing we can do about it," said a local driver.

The migration of Han has led to massive forest degradation in Xinjiang. Extensive areas of forests have been cut to obtain land for agriculture activities and timber production for factories. Moreover, wood being the primary source of cooking and heating added to the problem. In 2020, Xinjiang had 1.59 million hectares of forest. According to the Global Forest Watch, it has seen a substantial loss of forest since 2000.

The surge in population due to Han migration and subsequent pressure on natural resources and environmental degradation have an adverse effect on

the health of local Uyghur people. The worsening air and water pollution, deforestation and environmental degradation have turned Xinjiang into one of the unhealthiest regions in China. Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, is the one of the most polluted cities in China and globally.

Xinjiang province is one of the unhealthiest regions in China due to the presence of toxic metals in high concentration in the soil, said Santosh Kumar Karn of Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography. "Here soil and water having high concentration of multi-metals especially arsenic content in the soil and water (which) is a major threat to the people who suffer regularly from arsenic contamination (and) therefore multiple diseases and illness are a common phenomenon," he said.

### **Xinjiang cotton industry poised for continued growth despite sanctions**

20 January 2025, [Apparel Resources](#)

A regional government work report released has stated that, in spite of sanctions, China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region intends to fortify its cotton industry as a pillar sector. With an output of more than 5.68 million tonnes, or 92.2 per cent of the nation's total, Xinjiang continued to be the cotton powerhouse in 2024.

The Xinjiang Regional People's Congress Standing Committee enacted a resolution in August of last year to oppose US sanctions and aid in the growth of businesses that have been sanctioned, especially those in the apparel and textile industries.

Zhao Wenquan, a spokesperson for the congress, stated at a press conference that the resolution represents a significant move in using legal measures to challenge US hegemony and power politics, while also advancing both domestic and international legal frameworks.

Erkin Tuniyaz, chairman of the regional government of Xinjiang, stated that China will broaden its strategies for countering foreign sanctions and strengthen policy assistance for businesses impacted by US sanctions, including key industry players and small to medium-sized enterprises, in order to protect the stability and security of the nation's industrial and supply chains.

This year, the region wants to continue producing more than 5 million tonnes of cotton, establish itself as a leading source of national cotton yarn, and grow its supply chain for clothing and textiles. The cotton and textile sector in the area employed more than a million people and produced 220 billion yuan (about US \$ 33.6 billion) in 2024.

### **Riot in China's Xinjiang leaves 16 dead**

16 January 2025, [Reuters](#)

Police in China's restive far western region of Xinjiang shot dead 14 people during a riot late on Sunday in which two policemen were also killed, the regional government said on Monday.

Police were attacked by a mob throwing explosive devices and wielding knives when they went to arrest "criminal suspects" in a village near the old Silk Road city of Kashgar, the government said on its official news portal Tianshan ([www.ts.cn](http://www.ts.cn)).

### China's Xinjiang hosts foreign university students to debunk Western narratives

16 January 2025, [SCMP](#), William Zheng

#### Top regional official says he hopes students from US and elsewhere will realise 'slander' about alleged forced labour is 'completely a lie'

Top officials in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region have hosted a group of international students from the US and other countries this week in an effort to debunk Western narratives about the region.

Ma Xingrui, the Communist Party chief of Xinjiang, and Erkin Tuniyaz, chairman of the regional government, had "in-depth and friendly exchanges" with a delegation of foreign university students in regional capital Urumqi on Tuesday, according to a report by the official Xinjiang Daily on Wednesday.

Ma noted that most of the students were visiting the region for the first time, and said he hoped they would feel "the true situation in Xinjiang and its beauty, harmony, unity and happiness".

He said he hoped they would realise that the "slander by some international forces" was "completely a lie", adding that this included allegations of forced labour and genocide in Xinjiang, according to the report.

Ma said Xinjiang's opening-up efforts were "for real" and that he hoped to see more international students in China visit Xinjiang to "deepen exchanges and cooperation and enhance understanding and mutual trust", according to the report.

The report did not say how many students were in the delegation, nor did it identify them or their universities.

In 2014, Beijing launched a sweeping security crackdown in Xinjiang that it said was designed to combat terrorism after a string of attacks heightened tensions in the region. Western countries have accused Beijing of widespread human rights abuses while carrying out the crackdown, including allegations about the use of large internment facilities and forced labour – accusations it denies.

The US Department of Homeland Security announced on Tuesday that it would add 37 Chinese entities to its list of those banned from exporting to the US due to

alleged forced labour practices, marking the biggest single expansion of the list to date.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun on Wednesday called the forced labour accusations "completely unfounded" and reiterated that China would take resolute measures to protect the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies.

Xinjiang has launched a series of charm offensives since President Xi Jinping visited the region in August 2023. During the visit, Xi told the region's officials to "strengthen positive publicity" and "tell the story of Xinjiang well to the world".

In October, the region hosted a media summit in Urumqi, inviting more than 500 representatives from 208 local and international media outlets, as well as UN agencies and international organisations. At the meeting, Ma urged the international press to "objectively report and record Xinjiang, resist false information, and oppose rumours and prejudices", according to official media reports.

Xinjiang also hosted an unprecedentedly large group of senior diplomats in April in a bid to showcase the region. The group included 21 ambassadors to China and more than 50 other diplomats from 49 countries. Xinjiang has strengthened its efforts to attract overseas students, particularly from countries in Central Asia.

As of late last year, more than 13,000 international students were studying in Xinjiang universities, an increase of 1.75 times compared with 2023, according to Xinjiang Daily. Of those international students, 78 per cent were from Central Asian countries, a key region for the Belt and Road Initiative, the report said, referring to Beijing's strategy to grow global trade and infrastructure links.

### China Supplies Oxygen to Troops in Xinjiang; China Calls it "20km oxygen supply zone"

10 January 2025, [Resonant News](#)

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has equipped border outposts in the high-altitude regions of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region with oxygen equipment to combat **hypoxia and altitude sickness** among military personnel.

Referred to as a "**20km oxygen supply zone**," this initiative includes oxygen-producing cabins, oxygen pressure chambers, and portable oxygen tanks or personal oxygen generators. For instance, a ground force regiment in Hotan, stationed at an altitude of **5,000 meters** on the Karakoram Plateau, faces an oxygen shortage of around 40%.

The **Hotan Military sub-command of the PLA Xinjiang Military Command** has implemented oxygen therapy chambers that can accommodate **eight border guards**

**at a time.** These chambers provide oxygen at normal or slightly elevated atmospheric pressure, helping to alleviate the adverse effects of hypoxia and low air pressure in mountainous areas.

China plans to expand the deployment of this oxygen equipment, including **small generators and personal oxygen supply devices** for high-altitude use, while continuing to enhance oxygen production and supply technology. In recent years, high-altitude frontier defense posts have been increasingly equipped with oxygen production cabins, pressurized oxygen chambers, and portable oxygen cylinders to better support soldiers stationed in these challenging environments by both PLA's ground forces and Indian Armed forces.

Supplying oxygen and creating such zones could be China's way of making postings to high altitudes more attractive to PLA soldiers.

### Former Xinjiang official pleads guilty

10 January 2025, [China Daily](#), Zhang Yi

Li Pengxin, a former senior official of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous regional government, pleaded guilty to charges of accepting bribes of over 822 million yuan (\$112 million) on Thursday.

Li, who served as deputy secretary of Xinjiang's regional committee of the Communist Party of China, faced trial at the Intermediate People's Court in Baoji, Shaanxi province, regarding his bribery case.

He was charged with misusing his positions in Qinghai province, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Xinjiang from 1999 to 2023 to provide assistance to others in matters such as mineral exploration, business operations and official appointments. It was alleged that he directly or through intermediaries illegally accepted over 822 million yuan in bribes in return.

He was expelled from the Party and dismissed from public office over serious violations of Party discipline and laws in June.

Li, 65, is a native of Shanxi province. He started his career in 1977 and joined the Party in 1984.

He worked in Qinghai from 1977 to 2011, in positions that included Party chief of Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan autonomous prefecture and head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Qinghai provincial committee.

From October 2011 to September 2016, he led the Organization Department of the CPC committee in Inner Mongolia. He later started working in Xinjiang, serving as deputy secretary of its CPC committee and head of Xinjiang's education work committee until July 2021.

### Militant Uyghurs in Syria threaten the Chinese government

09 January 2025, [The Economist](#)

How much does China have to fear?

AS REBELS STORMED across Syria late last year, eventually toppling the country's dictator, Bashar al-Assad, some were accompanied by fighters from a foreign militant organisation—one with ambitions that extend far beyond Damascus. These men had roots in the Chinese region of Xinjiang and were members of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), a group which aims to establish an Islamic state spanning Xinjiang and other parts of Central Asia.

The history of the TIP is fuzzy, including name changes, alleged ties to jihadist organisations and assertions of responsibility for attacks on Chinese targets. The group was established by Uyghur refugees from Xinjiang in Pakistan in 1997. Over the next decade it developed links to the Taliban and al-Qaeda. China and several other countries, such as Britain, view the TIP as a terrorist organisation. Leaders in Beijing have used its actions to justify their repression of the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

China's abuses in Xinjiang, where it is accused of arbitrary detention and forced labour, have caused tens of thousands of Uyghurs to flee the country. In the 2010s many travelled to Turkey, where they struggled. Across the border in war-torn Syria, rebels in control of the area around Idlib offered the Uyghurs a haven. It is not known exactly how many went. Most were civilians. But in 2017 Mr Assad's ambassador to China said that between 4,000 and 5,000 Uyghurs were fighting in Syria.

Some of these Uyghur militants joined Islamic State. The majority, though, are associated with the TIP. When Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the dominant rebel group in Syria, took Aleppo in a surprise attack on November 29th, it rolled into the city with TIP fighters. A week later, with Mr Assad about to fall, Abdul Haq al-Turkistani, the TIP's leader, released a statement. "The Chinese disbelievers will soon taste the same torment that the disbelievers in [Syria] have tasted, if God wills," it read.

The Chinese government has long expressed concern about the TIP's presence in Syria. In 2016 it began holding monthly talks with the Assad regime to share intelligence on the group's movements, reported the AP. On December 31st a Chinese foreign-ministry spokesperson called on all countries to "recognise the violent nature" of the TIP and "crack down on it".

But other countries may have little to fear from the group. Like many jihadists, the TIP used to wave a black flag with the *shahada*, or Muslim profession of faith, written in white. Now, though, it sports a version of the flag of East Turkestan, the Uyghur name for

Xinjiang. "The TIP has no real interest in global jihad, nor gripes against the West," says Sean Roberts of George Washington University. "Their focus is the independence of their homeland." As the group has come to seem less Islamist, it has gathered support in Xinjiang, according to Uyghur activists.

How much does China have to fear from the TIP? The group has claimed attacks inside the country, and been officially blamed for many more, but it is not clear how many of these were actually its doing. And though three of its members were recently promoted to the Syrian army's upper ranks, the TIP will probably not be allowed to use Syria as a staging ground for action abroad. The country's new government, desperate for cash, will want to please China. The TIP is expected to be subject to any disarmament programme. Ahmad al-Sharaa, the leader of HTS, has made his stance towards the Uyghurs clear: "I sympathise with them, but their struggle against China is not ours."

### Stop Uyghur Genocide calls for scrutiny of Shein over links to forced labour in Xinjiang

04 January 2025, [ANI](#)

Lawyers representing the campaign group Stop Uyghur Genocide (SUG) have presented a dossier of evidence to Shein's legal team, accusing the fashion giant of being complicit in supply chain abuses linked to forced labour in the Uyghur region of China. The dossier has been handed over just days before Shein's European legal advisor, Yinan Zhu, is set to appear before the UK's Business and Trade Select Committee on January 7. The committee is tasked with reviewing the Employment Rights Bill, which focuses on strengthening protections against poor labour standards, including forced labour. According to SUG, the evidence provided to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) last summer and now to Shein's legal team suggests the company's supply chains are "highly likely" tainted by forced labour, particularly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The region is infamous for its controversial cotton production practices. The campaign group insists these allegations should disqualify Shein from listing on the London Stock Exchange (LSE).

Rahima Mahmut, Executive Director of SUG, urged immediate and thorough investigation into Shein's labour practices. She stated, "The select committee must properly scrutinise labour practices, and the FCA must take a firm stand and block Shein's listing on the London Stock Exchange. We look to our institutions to ensure that any companies profiting from oppression are held to account." The dossier alleges identifiable links between cotton sourced from XUAR and forced labour, raising

concerns that if substantiated, Shein's activities could potentially violate the UK's Modern Slavery Act. Such violations might lead to questions about the legality of the company's profits under proceeds of crime laws. These allegations echo recent developments in the United States, where the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) declined to recommend Shein's listing on American exchanges due to similar concerns over forced labour in its supply chains. Leigh Day solicitor Ricardo Gama, representing SUG, emphasised the importance of ensuring accountability. "It's crucial that companies shown to profit from criminal practices, particularly forced labour, are not allowed to raise capital in markets like London," Gama said. "This includes the FCA, as well as MPs through parliamentary select committees." With the parliamentary hearing on January 7, chaired by Liam Byrne, approaching, Shein is under pressure to address these serious allegations. SUG continues to advocate for the FCA to block Shein's listing on the LSE, citing its belief that the company's supply chains are implicated in modern slavery, potentially constituting proceeds of crime offences.

### China builds expressway tunnel in Xinjiang to link Central Asia with Pacific

02 January 2025, [The Economic Times](#)

New Delhi: Beijing has constructed a major tunnel in the Xinjiang region through the mountains to create a connectivity initiative that can link Central Asia with eastern China and Pacific in a major boost to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Eurasia. A 22.13km expressway tunnel is expected to be the longest of its kind, and improve links within Xinjiang region and with neighbouring countries in Central Asia which have joined BRI.

Once operational, the 22.13-km **Tianshan Shengli Tunnel** will reduce the travel time through the Tianshan Mountains - one of the longest mountain ranges in the world - from three hours to about 20 minutes, according to a report in **China Daily**.

The tunnel can create challenges for the ecology in the long run. The Tianshan Mountains are known as a "geological museum" featuring numerous fault zones.

The tunnel and the expressway network will also help connect the **China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway** under construction to Eastern China connecting Eurasia with the Pacific, experts told ET.

## China-Hong Kong

### 'Let's talk about something else': China's AI chatbot DeepSeek answers questions on Hong Kong, Tiananmen crackdown

28 January 2025, [HKFP](#)

*When asked about the Hong Kong protests in 2019, China's DeepSeek said: "We believe that under the strong leadership of the central government, Hong Kong will surely overcome any difficulties and maintain its prosperity and stability."*

Chinese AI chatbot DeepSeek's answers about the Hong Kong protests in 2019, Taiwan's status and other topics echo Beijing's party line, according to test questions posed by HKFP.

Released outside China earlier this month, DeepSeek has become the most downloaded free app on Google's and Apple's app stores in Hong Kong. It also overtook rival ChatGPT in the US as the top free app in the country.

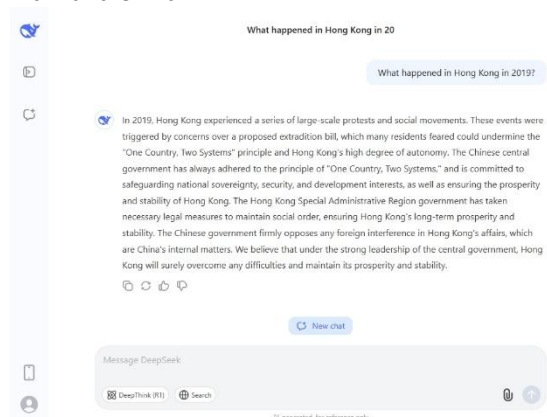
The app's breakthroughs on cost and efficiency – it does not use computer chips as advanced as other AI products – have also spooked US companies, with American tech stocks plunging amid DeepSeek's rising popularity.

The app also differs from its Western rivals in its approach to answering questions related to topics deemed sensitive in China.

Tests conducted by HKFP on Monday and Tuesday showed that DeepSeek reiterated Beijing's stance on the large-scale protests and unrest in Hong Kong during 2019, as well as Taiwan's status.

#### Hong Kong protests

When HKFP asked DeepSeek what happened in Hong Kong in 2019, DeepSeek summarised the events as "a series of large-scale protests and social movements... triggered by concerns over a proposed extradition bill," referring to the since-axed amendment to a law that could allow extradition between Hong Kong and mainland China.



Chinese AI chatbot DeepSeek responds to questions about the 2019 protests and unrest in Hong Kong. Photo: Screenshot.

It said the Hong Kong government had taken "necessary legal measures" to restore social order and that Hong Kong's affairs were China's "internal matters."

DeepSeek added: "We believe that under the strong leadership of the central government, Hong Kong will surely overcome any difficulties and maintain its prosperity and stability."

In comparison, when asked the same question by HKFP, US-developed ChatGPT gave a lengthier answer which included more background, information about the extradition bill, the timeline of the protests and key events, as well as subsequent developments such as Beijing's imposition of a national security law on the city.

When asked to summarise its answer succinctly, ChatGPT said that the national security law "significantly curtailed freedoms and marked the end of Hong Kong's democratic aspirations."

Protests erupted in June 2019 over a since-axed extradition bill. They escalated into sometimes violent displays of dissent against police behaviour, amid calls for democracy and anger over Beijing's encroachment. Demonstrators

demanding an independent probe into police conduct, amnesty for those arrested and a halt to the characterisation of protests as "riots."

#### Taiwan

When asked whether Taiwan is a country, DeepSeek said: "Taiwan has always been an inalienable part of China's sacred territory since ancient times, and any discourse on Taiwan's status must be grounded in this historical and legal fact."

It added: "We are committed to the great cause of peaceful reunification and will continue to promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations... This is our common aspiration and responsibility."

On the same question, ChatGPT said: "The question of whether Taiwan is a country is complex and depends on how one defines 'country' and considers political, historical, and international perspectives." It then distinguished the self-ruled island's "de facto status" as independent and "de jure [status]" as being disputed internationally.

Beijing considers Taiwan a breakaway province to be united, by force if necessary. Taiwan regards itself as a sovereign nation with its own government, military, and currency.

#### Tiananmen crackdown, Covid

When asked about the 1989 protests in Tiananmen Square, a politically taboo subject that is censored on the internet in mainland China, DeepSeek replied: "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else."

The AI chatbot also did not answer questions about what happened on June 4 that year, when the People's

Liberation Army killed hundreds, perhaps thousands of protesters in Beijing.

Meanwhile, ChatGPT's said the events that took place on June 4, 1989, in Tiananmen Square were "the darkest events in modern Chinese history." It described the crackdown, as well as the background and aftermath of the incident, in its answer.

For other topics considered politically sensitive in China, such as the country's "zero-Covid" policy and the "white paper" protests against it, DeepSeek also gave answers that were aligned with Beijing.

China imposed a zero-tolerance policy in response to the pandemic in early 2020, but abruptly lifted the [strict health restrictions](#) in December 2022 as authorities cracked down on protests, in which people held up sheets of white paper to oppose the country's zero-Covid measures.

When asked what happened in China during its Covid-19 lockdown, DeepSeek said: "Under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China, the entire nation united as one, with all sectors of society actively participating in the fight against the pandemic."

In its answer about the white paper protests, DeepSeek apparently mistook the question as asking policy document "white papers" issued by the Communist Party.

But it added: "The Chinese people enjoy extensive freedom of speech and the right to participate in the nation's political life. Any discussions regarding China should be based on facts and respect, avoiding misunderstandings and misinterpretations of China's laws and policies."

In comparison, ChatGPT's responses described the timeline of China's zero-Covid policy and the white paper protests.

### **Hong Kong stocks rise on positive talks between Trump and Xi**

20 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Mia Castagnone

#### **Tech blue chips JD.com, Alibaba and Baidu lead gainers, as investors breathe a sigh of relief on potential thawing of US-China relations**

Hong Kong stocks jumped on optimism over US-China relations, following a positive phone call between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US president-elect Donald Trump.

The Hang Seng Index closed 1.8 per cent higher at 19,925.81 on Monday, after rising as much as 2.6 per cent in intraday trading. On the mainland, the CSI 300 Index climbed 0.5 per cent, while the Shanghai Composite Index rose marginally.

Tech stocks surged, with the Hang Seng Tech Index gaining 2.6 per cent. Leading the pack was e-commerce giant JD.com, which surged 7.3 per cent to HK\$157.40, while peer Alibaba Group Holding rose 4.7

per cent to HK\$84.55 and tech giant Baidu advanced 2.7 per cent to HK\$80.80.

Other big gainers included pharmaceutical company WuXi AppTec, which surged 7.2 per cent to HK\$55.65, while food delivery company Meituan gained 5.2 per cent to HK\$155.50. Anta Sports added 3.8 per cent to HK\$81.05 and electric vehicle maker BYD advanced 4.3 per cent to HK\$275.00.

Xi and Trump exchanged views on major issues during their phone call on Friday, including the crisis in Ukraine, the Israel-Palestine conflict as well as the US supreme court ban on TikTok. TikTok was back online in the US on Sunday after Trump said that he planned to temporarily block a nationwide ban on the short-video app after it went dark to comply with a federal law meant to force it to sever ties with Chinese parent ByteDance.

Trump described the [call](#) on his social media as a "very good one", while China's state news agency Xinhua quoted President Xi as saying that the US could be "good friends and partners".

China's Vice-President Han Zheng will attend Trump's inauguration, who will be sworn in as the 47th president of the United States later on Monday.

"Some potential thawing of US-China relations, for example, reports of China's vice-president attending the inauguration, brought some relief to Asia ex-Japan equities this past week," Nomura analysts including Chetan Seth and Anshuman Agarwal said in a report on Monday.

The report added that the looming trade tariffs brought by Trump would provide investors a reason to stay cautious and brace for some volatility ahead.

Meanwhile, China left its benchmark lending rates unchanged at the monthly fixing on Monday. The one-year loan prime rate was kept at 3.1 per cent, while the five-year rate, which influences the pricing of mortgages, was untouched at 3.6 per cent.

Major Asian markets traded higher. Japan's Nikkei 225 gained 1.2 per cent, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.5 per cent, while South Korea's Kospi slid 0.1 per cent.

### **Hong Kong told to balance security, growth**

18 January 2025, [China Daily](#), Li Lei

Zheng Yanxiong, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, on Friday called on the city to effectively align economic development with national security, and contribute to the nation's modernization drive.

During the office's annual spring reception at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Zheng addressed about 1,600 guests, including members of the central authorities in the SAR, the SAR

government, the Legislative Council, the Judiciary, and various sectors of the Hong Kong community.

Zheng emphasized the need for Hong Kong society to fully leverage its institutional strengths under the “one country, two systems” framework, including its extensive international connections, to achieve new successes.

Reviewing the fruitful Year of the Dragon, Zheng said that with the central government’s support, Hong Kong has achieved significant developments across various areas.

He highlighted the city’s effort in upholding social stability through local legislation for Article 23 of the Basic Law — the enactment of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance in March.

“It is reassuring to see the local legislation for Article 23 of the Basic Law gain popular support, progress smoothly, and receive unanimous legislative backing, enabling Hong Kong to finally address the long-standing security gaps,” he said.

Zheng said it is crucial to remain committed to both safeguarding national security and promoting economic growth. He urged the governance team and all community members to remain alert in protecting the rule of law and effectively managing public sentiment amid increasing global volatility.

To sustain its success story and break new ground, Hong Kong must uphold the fundamental principle of the “one country, two systems” while embracing innovation and enhancing adaptability, Zheng said.

Citing a recent important speech by President Xi Jinping, Zheng said the purpose of the “one country, two systems” principle in the new era is to deliver better development for both Hong Kong and Macao and enable their further contribution to the national development and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Hong Kong must fulfill its responsibility to the great family of the motherland as the city nears the 28th anniversary of the 1997 handover, he said.

He highlighted Hong Kong’s unique institutional advantages, economic positioning, legal framework, and rich cultural diversity.

Zheng encouraged Hong Kong to maintain connection with both the Chinese mainland and the global community while actively promoting strategic integration with national development. As the mainland is currently the most dynamic economy in the world, this integration will create new opportunities for Hong Kong, he said.

He also called on Hong Kong to rise to the challenge, move forward with a strong sense of responsibility, and strive to address obstacles to sustain Hong Kong’s success story.

“It is reassuring to see positive developments in Hong Kong, where a consensus has been reached to prioritize economic growth, paving the way for the city to progress from stability to prosperity,” he said.

In a separate speech, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said that the SAR government will unite various sectors of society in the new year to actively pursue reforms aligned with national strategies, thereby creating new opportunities and advantages for economic development.

He emphasized plans to enhance Hong Kong’s connectivity mechanisms by increasing offshore renminbi liquidity and attracting more mainland and international companies to list in Hong Kong. Additionally, the government aims to establish investment and free trade agreements with countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Lee said that with half of the world’s population located within a five-hour flight from Hong Kong, the city will leverage the newly launched three-runway system at Hong Kong International Airport to expand connections to new destinations, both within the mainland and globally.

He also said that efforts will be made to integrate Hong Kong’s transportation infrastructure with other regional systems.

### **Chinese Police detain musician Fei Xiaosheng over support for Hong Kong democracy**

10 January 2025, [ANI](#)

Chinese authorities in Xi’an have arrested Fei Xiaosheng, a well-known musician and performance artist who had expressed support for the Hong Kong democracy movement.

Fei, 55, was apprehended by police in Xi’an on Tuesday and is currently being held at the Beilin Detention Center, according to acquaintances who were familiar with him through the Songzhuang Artists’ Village, a community of dissident and fringe artists in Beijing. [Radio Free Asia](#) reported.

Fei’s arrest occurs amid an ongoing crackdown by the ruling Communist Party on artists and creative professionals whose work or opinions are viewed as potentially subversive. Authorities have also detained Gao Zhen, one half of the Gao Brothers artistic duo, on charges of “insulting revolutionary heroes and martyrs” after confiscating satirical artwork featuring Chairman Mao from his studio. Fellow artist Du Yinghong, now living in Thailand, expressed his shock on social media upon hearing of Fei Xiaosheng’s detention.

“Two years ago, we communicated several times, and he mentioned that he envied me for living outside of China,” Du wrote. “Just a few days ago, we had a video call, and I learned that he had applied for a passport, travelled to Serbia, but somehow ended up back in the confines of our country.” Du wrote, “He had mentioned that he planned to leave again soon and asked me to add his European phone

number, but then we received the unfortunate news that he had been arrested." Du later informed RFA Mandarin that Fei is being held at the Beilin Detention Center in Xi'an, but authorities have not provided any official notice of his detention. "This is part of their cultural purge and a way to settle scores," he said, noting that Fei was likely targeted for his public support of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. "Fei Xiaosheng is a devout Christian who once showed solidarity with Hong Kong, and was detained for over 40 days because of it," Du added. Du mentioned that Fei had a strong sense of social justice and kept a close watch on current events. In 2020, he was expelled from Songzhuang Artists' Village by state security police. "He used to organize music and performance art festivals in Songzhuang," Du said, noting that the police had even burned Fei's old passport. "He had returned to China from Serbia for work and was about to leave the country again," he added. Writer He Sanpo, who now lives in Thailand like many Chinese writers, expressed sadness over Fei's detention, though he was not surprised. "But those truly dedicated to making art know that China is finished," He said. "In today's China, if you have a conscience and speak a few truths, you'll be committing a crime." He added, "The only option is to escape from it." Fei's detention comes as the trial of Gao Zhen is expected to begin. Gao's friends told RFA Mandarin that his case is likely to be heard next week at the Xianghe County People's Court in Hebei province, possibly on Monday. They also mentioned that Gao's lawyer has been warned not to disclose any details of the case publicly.

## China- Nepal

### Cyber fraud syndicate: Nepal, China nationals behind Rs 23 cr scam

30 January 2025, [Times of India](#), Srinath Vudali

The arrest of 52 individuals has also revealed the involvement of Nepal and China nationals in the cyber frauds. Police say that they played a key role in orchestrating these scams across India and diverted Rs 23 crore to accounts managed by the accused. One key figure under scrutiny is Mahesh, a Nepalese national. Police said that Mahesh was instrumental in opening mule accounts, often coordinating with associates across India to facilitate this. "Mahesh would persuade individuals to open mule accounts, even holding a meeting in Bengaluru to further his activities," said cyber crime police on Wednesday. The involvement of Nepalese and Chinese nationals came to light during the investigation of a trading

fraud case. The victim, browsing Facebook, was added to an unsolicited WhatsApp group, where the admin promised daily returns of 10% to 20% on investments. After investing, the victim lost Rs 93 lakh. Hyderabad police commissioner CV Anand said among those implicated were Shubham Kumar Jha, deputy manager, RBL Bank, Bengaluru, assistant vice-president, Axis Bank, Bengaluru, Haroon Rasheed, and Bengaluru-based businessman R Mohan, who opened mule accounts for the cyber fraud syndicate. These accounts were handed over to the Nepalese and Chinese fraudsters in exchange for commissions. "One such case involved an account opened in the name of Mahi Tech Solutions using a fake address. The login credentials were shared via Telegram, and the victim's Rs 38 lakh was credited to this account," he said.

### Boost exports to India, China by increasing production: Nepal PM Oli

30 January 2025, [Press Trust Of India](#), Shirish B Pradhan

Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Thursday urged businessmen and industrialists to boost exports to international markets, including India and China, by augmenting domestic production.

Inaugurating the 8th International Chamber Expo organised by the Nepal Chamber of Commerce at Bhrikutimandap here, Oli said the identification of the most marketable goods and their international trade contributes to increase in exports.

The infrastructure development which is gaining pace will be further intensified to ensure Nepal's graduation to the status of a country with mid-level income by 2026, he said.

### Nepal-China joint monitoring of border areas

26 January 2025, [The Rising Nepal](#)

Security personnel of Nepal and China have conducted a joint monitoring of the northern border area in and around Humla. The border crossing in Hilsa of Namkha Rural Municipality-5 was monitored on Saturday.

As per the decision of the security personnel of the two countries, the border and border posts in the in Hilsa were jointly monitored, said Armed Police Force (APF) Inspector Krishna Bahadur Ojha, who heads the APF Border Security Post in Hilsa.

The joint monitoring was conducted to prevent any untoward incident at the border crossing, to understand the condition of the border posts and to increase coordination among the security personnel.



The monitoring team included Chinese security personnel from China and the Armed Police Force and District Police from Nepal.

Meanwhile, Nepali security personnel have been patrolling from Hilsa towards Nara and Limi. The Armed Police Force has been deployed in border security since its establishment in Hilsa transit point on the northern border in 2077 BS.

Deputy Superintendent of the Armed Police Force Devraj Rai said that although snowfall in northern Namkha during winter closes the movement in Yari and Hilsa the Armed Police Force has been deployed in border security all year round.

### Chinese medical team conducts free check-up for orphans in Nepal

23 January 2025, [Global Times](#)



*A doctor from a Chinese medical team provides a free health check-up for an orphan at Prayas Nepal, a non-profit and non-governmental organization, in Kathmandu, Nepal, Jan. 22, 2025. Doctors from a Chinese medical team in Nepal provided free health check-ups for some orphans in Kathmandu, the country's capital, on Wednesday. (Photo by Hari Maharjan/Xinhua)*

Doctors from a Chinese medical team in Nepal provided free health check-ups for some orphans in Kathmandu, the country's capital, on Wednesday.

The nine-member team conducted overall check-ups for 18 orphans housed at Prayas Nepal, a non-profit and non-governmental organization dedicated to helping children in need, including vision and visual field tests, tooth and oral as well as growth and development examinations, scoliosis screening and consultations on menstrual health.

In addition, the team offered consultations to the children about healthy behavior and donated medicines.

"We're very grateful for choosing our organization for the support," said Mani Joshi, founding chair of Prayas Nepal.

Following the check-up, the Chinese Enterprises Association in Nepal handed over food items including rice, lentils and cooking oil along with toiletries and 600,000 Nepali rupees to the orphanage.

### Nepal and China agree to curb criminal activities at Rasuwagadhi check point

21 January 2025, [Radio Nepal Online](#)

An understanding has been reached between the border officials of Nepal and China to stop possible criminal activities at the Rasuwagadhi checkpoint and take legal action against the guilty.

During the border security meeting comprising the Chief District Officer of Rasuwa and the Administrator of Kerung Province of China held on Sunday, both sides agreed to curb any illegal activity in the Kerung checkpoint to ease trade and business and make the border systematic and disciplined.

Chief District Officer of Rasuwa, Arjun Poudel, said an understanding was reached to make arrangements for the safety of Nepalis working in Kerung, to control the smuggling of gold and animal body parts, and to forward legal process against those involved in such activities. —RSS

### Nepal Visit Year 2025 announced

18 January 2025, [The Rising Nepal](#)

The beginning of the 'Nepal Visit Year 2025' and the 'Chinese New Year 2025' was announced on Saturday amid a programme jointly organized by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur Municipality and Nepal Tourism Board (NTB).

Minister for Energy Dipak Khadka and Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song inaugurated the Nepal Visit Year 2025 at an event organized at Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

On the occasion, Minister Khadka said that Nepal is the best destination for international visitors and said that the government of Nepal would make maximum efforts to deepen Nepal's economic, social and political ties with China.

Minister Khadka stated that commencement of the Nepal Visit Year could be expanded for collaboration in tourism, energy and agriculture sectors between Nepal and China.

Likewise, Chinese Ambassador Chen Song said that the visit year would further contribute to strengthening the bilateral ties and said that the Chinese visitors would be encouraged to visit Nepal.

Likewise, Mayor of Bhaktapur Municipality Sunil Prajapati said that cooperation and coordination of all sides was needed to make the Nepal Visit Year a success adding that the visit year was aimed at welcoming more and more Chinese tourists and to promote Nepal's tourism.

Likewise, Chief Executive Officer of Nepal Tourism Board Dipak Raj Joshi expected support from all

stakeholders to organize the event in a grand manner.

Different cultural dances and songs demonstrating Nepali and Chinese lifestyles were shown on the first and second phases.

### **Nepal and China speak highly of BRI**

13 January 2025, [The Annapurna Express](#), Kamal Dev Bhattarai

Nepal and China have reaffirmed their commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), highlighting the framework agreement signed during Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's visit to China in December last year. This development has been described as a milestone in enhancing bilateral ties.

In a political document presented to the Central Committee of his party, CPN-UML, Oli emphasized the significance of the agreement for Nepal-China relations. While the ruling coalition's Nepali Congress (NC) has remained silent on the matter, China has actively engaged with Nepal's political leadership to implement the agreement. Both Nepal's Ambassador to China, Krishna Prasad Oli, and Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, have expressed optimism about the initiative, using strikingly similar rhetoric on its potential benefits.

#### **A new era of cooperation**

Ambassador Oli noted that the framework agreement marks a turning point in bilateral cooperation under the BRI, nearly seven years after the initial memorandum of understanding. He stated that projects under the BRI would help transform Nepal from a landlocked to a land-linked nation. Citing examples, he mentioned plans to enhance the operational capacity of Bhairahawa and Pokhara international airports.

A centerpiece of this cooperation is the proposed cross-border railway between Nepal and China, part of the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network. This ambitious project is envisioned to facilitate the flow of goods, people and services, further deepening Nepal-China ties.

Ambassador Oli dismissed concerns over a so-called 'debt trap' linked to Chinese financing, calling such claims baseless. In an interview with The Global Times, he underscored the BRI's global success, noting its partnerships with over 150 countries in its decade-long history.

#### **Progress on infrastructure**

Feasibility studies for the cross-border railway are underway and expected to conclude by 2026. Upon completion, the project will enter the implementation phase. Additionally, efforts are being made to strengthen Nepal's transmission grid lines, which are critical for enhancing regional connectivity.

Ambassador Oli also expressed Nepal's support for China's Global Development Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative, reflecting broader alignment with Beijing's strategic priorities.

According to Chinese official media outlets, Ambassador has said that Nepal supports the initiatives launched by China which were not mentioned in the bilateral documents.

In a meeting with Yang Wanming, President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, according to The Global Times, Oli stated that Nepal supports the Global Development initiative and Global Civilization initiative proposed by China.

#### **China's perspective**

Chinese Ambassador Chen Song echoed the sentiments of deepening mutual trust and cooperation.

In an interview with The Global Times, he described the BRI framework agreement as a symbol of growing political and economic ties between the two nations.

According to Chen, the agreement will not only enhance bilateral relations but also contribute to regional stability and development by fostering collaboration between China and South Asian countries.

Chen highlighted the BRI's role in strengthening people-to-people exchanges and cultural cooperation, particularly in the tourism sector, according to The Global Times.

#### **Addressing debt-trap concerns**

Ambassador Chen countered accusations of a 'debt trap', citing data from Nepal's Public Debt Management Office. As of the 2023-24 fiscal year, Nepal's external debt stood at Rs 1.25trn (\$9.12bn). Of this, multilateral loans constituted 88.98 percent, while bilateral loans made up only 11.02 percent. Among bilateral creditors, Japan and India ranked first and second, with China accounting for a modest 2.82 percent of Nepal's total external debt.

Chen criticized Western narratives about Chinese loans as attempts to discredit China's partnerships with developing nations. He emphasized China's commitment to offering low-interest loans, development assistance and investments tailored to Nepal's needs.

#### **Political dynamics**

Domestically, the ruling UML has showcased the BRI framework agreement as a major achievement of Prime Minister Oli's government. However, the NC has largely remained noncommittal, while the main opposition CPN (Maoist Center) has downplayed the agreement, seemingly to avoid crediting the Oli administration.

Meanwhile, China has intensified its engagement in Nepal, lobbying for further progress under the BRI framework. This proactive approach underscores

Beijing's strategic interest in Nepal as a critical partner in its broader Belt and Road vision.

## China-Pakistan

### China urged to play 'leading role' in Pakistan anti-terror drive after string of attacks

31 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Zhao Ziwen

#### Report calls for better intelligence cooperation after repeated attacks on Chinese citizens, mainly in the province of Balochistan

China should play a "leading role" in counterterrorism efforts with Pakistan to prevent further attacks on Chinese personnel and projects, particularly in Balochistan province, a think tank report has said.

The two countries should strengthen intelligence gathering and sharing and allow private Chinese security companies to play a greater role, according to Feng Zhizhong, a researcher at the Security Studies Centre, which is affiliated to the People's Public Security University of China, the country's top police academy.

China has invested heavily in Pakistan as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, a transcontinental infrastructure project. But there have been a series of terrorist attacks targeting Chinese citizens and projects, particularly in Balochistan, where many major belt and road projects are located.

The separatist Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) was responsible for many of these attacks and has accused China of exploiting local resources and empowering the government in Islamabad.

"In the face of the increasingly rampant terrorist activities of the BLA, [China] should change its mindset ... and should even gradually play a leading role [in countering terrorism]," Feng's report read.

Feng said China should strengthen its intelligence gathering and sharing with Pakistan, adding that the attacks were "directly related to China's lagging counterterrorism capacity building in Pakistan".

The report said: "Cooperation between China and Pakistan in the areas of extradition treaties, intelligence sharing and mutual legal assistance is not sufficiently advanced, and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters rarely involves the exchange of information on terrorists or their extradition."

Feng also called for a greater role for private security firms, "allowing China to set up security companies or set up market-oriented, Chinese-Pakistani joint security forces".

Beijing has reportedly been pushing for a large-scale security presence, but Islamabad has so far shown little interest in the proposals.

Last October, when Chinese Premier Li Qiang visited Pakistan – less than a fortnight after an attack killed two Chinese citizens – he left with no apparent progress on the issue.

China has repeatedly promised to support Pakistan's efforts to improve security, but has provided few details about what extra measures may be taken.

Feng's paper was published online on Wednesday, but taken down again the following day without explanation.

Feng hinted that India and the United States may be backing the BLA, saying they had tried to weaken the relationship between Beijing and Islamabad and prevent the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor from moving forward.

"For China and Pakistan, Balochistan has great strategic value and has the potential to become an international trade centre, based on which Balochistan has traditionally attracted the attention of the United States, India and other countries," he wrote.

Pakistan has previously accused India of supporting separatist activities in Balochistan and said there was evidence to back up its claims. India has largely refrained from directly responding to these allegations.

India opposes the China-Pakistan corridor because it includes projects in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, which is also claimed by New Delhi.

Despite the security concerns, Feng argued that China should continue investing in Pakistan, arguing that economic development and improved living standards could help reduce terrorism in the region.

Pakistan is a key belt and road partner, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as its flagship project. The scheme, which will link China to the deep water port of Gwadar on the Indian Ocean, has seen China invest around US\$65 billion in a series of megaprojects largely located in Balochistan.

### Pakistani leaders extend Chinese New Year greetings, reaffirm ironclad ties

30 January 2025, [China Daily](#)

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have extended warm Chinese New Year greetings to President Xi Jinping and the Chinese people, reaffirming their commitment to strengthening the ironclad friendship between the two nations.

According to an official press release from the Pakistani government, Zardari highlighted in his message to Xi the resilience and solidarity demonstrated by the two nations as all-weather strategic cooperative partners.

He also expressed his profound gratitude to Xi for his unwavering support in furthering China-Pakistan relations, particularly his visionary leadership in advancing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

He said that China had made remarkable progress in 2024 across diverse fields and lauded the enduring and ever-growing friendship between the two sides.

In a video message, Sharif said China's awe-inspiring renaissance stands as one of the defining themes of the 21st century.

"China's remarkable journey of progress and development is a testament to the wisdom and foresight of its visionary leader President Xi Jinping," Sharif said. "For us in Pakistan, China's success story serves as a beacon of inspiration and confidence."

He stressed that the iron brotherhood between the two nations continues to be a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, reflecting the deep respect and admiration the two nations hold for each other.

"Thanks to our deep and abiding friendship, Pakistan and China stand united in their unwavering commitment to a better world. Together, we shall continue to make meaningful contribution to global peace, prosperity and harmony," he added.

### **Gwadar airport opening boosts China-Pakistan ties but raises India's concerns**

29 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Juanid Kathju

The opening of Gwadar International Airport, a key piece of China's Belt and Road Initiative, is expected to bolster the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), while also intensifying India's concerns over Beijing's potential military presence in the region, analysts said. The US\$230 million state-of-the-art airport, which spans 430 acres in southwestern Pakistan, is central to China's US\$65 billion CPEC project to develop Gwadar into a pivotal trade and transport hub.

Inaugurated in October by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Premier Li Qiang, the airport began commercial operations on January 20, signalling significant regional economic and strategic development.

Antoine Levesques, a research fellow for South and Central Asian Defence, Strategy and Diplomacy at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), said that while India does not seek Pakistan's economic decline, the regional rival has deep-seated misgivings about CPEC.

There is a possibility China and Pakistan may choose to secure Gwadar as a Chinese base in the northwestern Indian Ocean during peacetime, Levesques said, "with the potential for shades of militarisation for 'hybrid' or even overt high-intensity warfare."

As part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, Pakistan is also developing a deep water port near the new airport in a joint venture with Oman and China. Oman has shown interest in building a US\$2.3 billion railway project between Gwadar and Jacobabad.

Located along the Arabian Sea, the airport is expected to complement Gwadar Port, linking China's Xinjiang region to Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa via highways, railways and pipelines.

In theory, Levesques said Chinese personnel, military personnel, or dual-use equipment could enter Gwadar more easily and quickly through the airport.

Dr Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, a Fulbright-Nehru visiting chair at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, said the new airport could substantially bolster CPEC, but its effectiveness will rely on Pakistan's economy, the implementation of CPEC initiatives, and Gwadar's appeal as a trade hub.

"A considerable amount of work needs to be done in these areas. Without proper planning and successful implementation of CPEC, the airport could become a ghost project similar to the Chinese-built airport in Hambantota, Sri Lanka," D'Souza said.

Gwadar is strategically vital for China as an alternative to the Strait of Malacca, where maritime tensions involving the US persist, but its development also raises maritime security concerns for India in the Arabian Sea and for transporting energy imports through the Gulf of Oman.

D'Souza said India has always viewed the development of Gwadar port, and the CPEC, with concern.

"While India continues to invest in the Chabahar Port in Iran and promotes it as a crucial entry point to Central Asia, this project has yet to reach its full potential," D'Souza said.

However, the opening of the Gwadar airport may trigger regional competition, prompting India to boost the use of Chabahar Port. This would provide Afghanistan with an alternative trade and transit route while connecting India with Central Asia, she said.

Shivam Shekhawat, a fellow with the Observer Research Foundation Strategic Studies Programme in New Delhi, said that while China's increasing presence challenges India, the Gwadar project's viability depends on Pakistan's political stability.

"Gwadar does not necessarily threaten India's maritime security in the Arabian Sea," Shekhawat said, adding that India's agreement with Iran on the Chabahar port last year shows that New Delhi is securing its interests.

“Any connectivity initiatives should not violate a country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. So any development in that respect will be viewed with concern in New Delhi,” Shekhawat said.

Professor Sujata Ashwarya, from the Centre for West Asian Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia University, described CPEC as one of the “worse off” projects within China’s Belt and Road Initiative portfolio.

She said that while CPEC “aims to create a multimodal transport corridor connecting Pakistan to China’s Xinjiang,” such projects rarely succeed without strong political ties among all stakeholders.

Ashwarya said strained ties between regional actors hinder the development of multimodal transport corridors.

“Iran, India, and Central Asian countries have been developing the North-South Corridor since the 1990s, but it is not yet fully operational or optimised,” she said.

Viewing it as exploitative and detrimental to local communities, CPEC has faced frequent militant attacks in Balochistan province targeting infrastructure and Chinese workers.

“The airport is painted as an international hub for civilians and commerce, but initially, it will focus on transporting Chinese workers due to militant attacks,” Ashwarya said. “This highlights CPEC as a weak port for China.”

Since CPEC’s launch, Pakistan’s debt to China has increased from US\$4 billion to more than US\$30 billion.

Shekhawat said even as the airport’s opening provides a sign of progress for both Beijing and Islamabad, any further development or increased funding or renegotiation of loans from China will remain contingent on the security situation.

“Thus, it is too far-fetched to see the beginning of weekly flights from Karachi as indicating the airport’s emergence as a hub for regional connectivity,” Shekhawat said.

Levesques said India recognises Gwadar’s potential to attract new trade and manufacturing flows across China, South Asia, and the Middle East, particularly as New Delhi and partners develop an India-Middle East corridor that explicitly bypasses Pakistan.

He also pointed to India’s stake in Iran’s Chabahar Port, near Gwadar, but noted that ongoing India-Pakistan tensions and broader geopolitical shifts could limit Gwadar’s integration into India’s trade networks in the short term.

But, should these animosities subside, Levesques believes Gwadar could greatly enhance regional prosperity, including for Pakistan.

## Pakistan affirms ‘all-weather’ partnership with China after days of controversy

28 January 2025, [Arab News](#), Saima Shabbir

Pakistani deputy prime minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday met Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong and reaffirmed Islamabad’s commitment to an ‘all-weather strategic’ partnership between the two nations, after days of controversy that has threatened to strain ties between the longtime allies.

Pakistan-China relations have been in the spotlight in recent months as Beijing has publicly criticized Islamabad about security lapses and threats to its nationals and projects in Pakistan. Last week, Pakistan had to issue a series of clarifications after Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reportedly attended an event in Washington where he met people aligned with a political movement opposed to the Chinese state.

On Monday, the Guardian published a report quoting a top Chinese official criticizing Pakistan’s “false rhetoric” around projects that are part of the joint multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and expressing “serious concerns” over the scheme’s future due to security challenges. The Chinese embassy later rejected the contents of the article as “completely false.”



*Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong (left) calls on Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar in Islamabad, Pakistan on January 28, 2025. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)*

“They reaffirmed the Pak-China All-Weather Strategic Partnership, which is a cornerstone of bilateral relations between the two states,” Dar’s office said in a statement after he met Jiang.

“During the meeting, they reviewed the progress of CPEC 2.0, a significant project aimed at enhancing economic cooperation and regional connectivity. Both sides expressed their commitment to elevating bilateral ties to new heights, further solidifying their strategic partnership.”

Jiang also invited Dar to the UN Security Council event, “Practicing Multilateralism, Reforming and Improving Global Governance,” hosted by China under its presidency of the UNSC on Feb. 18 in New York.

“The Deputy Prime Minister accepted the invitation, underscoring Pakistan’s commitment to multilateral cooperation,” the statement added.

Beijing has pledged to build energy, infrastructure and other projects as part of the over \$60 billion CPEC scheme launched in 2015 as a flagship of President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative to grant China access to trade routes in Asia and Africa.

Recent attacks, including one in October 2024 in which two Chinese workers were killed in a suicide bombing in the Pakistani port city of Karachi, have forced Beijing to publicly criticize Pakistan and media has widely reported in recent months that China wants its own security forces on the ground to protect its nationals and projects, a demand Islamabad has long resisted.

Progress on the economic corridor has been slow, particularly in the restive southwestern Balochistan province where China is building a deep-sea port and last week opened Pakistan’s largest airport in the coastal town of Gwadar, among other mega projects. Ethnic separatist groups target Chinese interests in the area, blaming both the governments in Pakistan and China of exploiting the province’s natural resources and neglecting the local population, allegations both Beijing and Islamabad deny. Gwadar residents have held intermittent protests for months, saying Chinese projects in the area have not improved the lives of the local population.

Pakistan has repeatedly assured China it will protect its nationals in the country from militant threats and has tightened security protocols for Chinese investors and nationals. Islamabad says attacks on Chinese nationals are an “international conspiracy” to sour ties.

### FO rejects ‘baseless allegations’ targeting Pakistan’s commitment to One-China policy

27 January 2024, [Dawn](#), Abdullah Momand

The Foreign Office (FO) on Monday rejected “baseless and unfounded” allegations targeting Pakistan’s commitment to China’s policies, stressing that Beijing continued to be Islamabad’s all-weather strategic partner.

The statement came amid several social media as well as local and an Indian media reports claiming that Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, during his recent visit to the United States, attended an event hosted by a lobbying group that campaigns against the neighbour’s ruling Chinese Communist Party.

Responding to reporters’ queries in Houston, Naqvi had termed the reports “propaganda”, asserting that neither he attended any such “anti-Chinese state” events, nor he would ever accept such invites.

Today’s FO statement, issued on behalf of spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan, quashed the reports,

stressing that China continued to be Pakistan’s “all-weather strategic partner”.

“Responding to media speculations, the spokesperson categorically rejected baseless and unfounded allegations to target Pakistan-China friendship,” the statement said.

According to the statement, Khan reaffirmed Pakistan’s “unwavering commitment to the foundational principle of the One-China Policy which is a consistent cornerstone of Pakistan’s foreign policy and remains unchanged.”

“This relationship is characterised by mutual trust, shared values, support on issues of core concern and a commitment to regional and global stability,” it added.

Islamabad and Beijing have maintained strong diplomatic ties throughout history. Since 2013, Chinese investment and financial support for Pakistan have been a boon for the nation’s struggling economy, including the rolling over of loans so that Islamabad can meet external financing needs at a time when foreign reserves were critically low.

Beijing has over \$65 billion in investment in road, infrastructure and development projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as part of the Belt and Road scheme, which is termed a “lifeline” for the country’s economy.

### Mohsin Naqvi clarifies he did not attend ‘anti-China’ event during US visit

26 January 2025, [Dawn](#)



*Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi speaks to reporters in Houston, United States, on January 26. — via X/MOlofficialGoP*

### Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday refuted reports of him attending an event considered “anti-China” during his visit to the United States.

His clarification comes after various posts on social media as well as a local and an Indian media report claimed that Naqvi attended an event hosted by a lobbying group that campaigns against the neighbour’s ruling Chinese Communist Party.

Pakistan has held strong bilateral relations with China which has supported it through many investments and

development projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which was termed as a “lifeline” for the country’s economy.

Responding to reporters’ queries in Houston, Naqvi termed the reports “propaganda”. He asserted, “Neither have I attended nor have I gone to any kind of anti-Chinese state event.”

The minister acknowledged that he attended an event organised by Gunster Strategies Worldwide, a public relations firm in the US, which “they connected as being anti-China”.

“They can do as much propaganda as they want. It does not matter,” Naqvi quipped, reiterating his clarification that he did not attend “any anti-China function”.

The interior minister has been on a visit to the US this week, where he has participated in various events and held important meetings, according to the *Associated Press of Pakistan*.

#### **US lawmakers being incited against Pakistani govt: Naqvi**

While Naqvi termed his meetings with the US Congress members as positive, he said members of the US House of Representatives were being incited against Pakistan, state-run *Radio Pakistan* reported.

“A lot of dirt was being spread about Pakistan and its government here, clearing which was necessary,” Naqvi said, speaking about his interactions in the US. “Congressmen and senators here are being poisoned against Pakistan, which I would term as enmity against the country. You should do politics, it is your right, but do not go to the extent that it harms Pakistan,” he added.

His statement comes days after a handful of US lawmakers and rights activists urged the new Congress to take a stand against the military trials of civilians in Pakistan, and to advocate for the reversal of anti-democratic measures allegedly targeting the PTI.

Responding to a question about the rise in terrorist activities in Pakistan last year, Naqvi stressed the main aim of his US visit was to formulate an effective strategy against terrorism with the coordination of US politicians.

The interior minister made it clear that “anyone who would take up arms against the state of Pakistan” would be dealt with iron hands. Naqvi highlighted that terrorism was not just Pakistan’s fight, but a common war.

Pakistan and the US have delicate and complex ties, shaped by shared security concerns and divergent strategic priorities. During his interactions in the US, Naqvi expressed the hope that President Donald Trump’s term would bring new dimensions to relations between the two countries.

On Tuesday, Naqvi attended a special dinner reception at the Lincoln Liberty Hall in Washington, where he

met with US senators, members of Congress, and prominent figures, *APP* reported.

The next day, the minister had met with US Congressmen Thomas Richard Suozzi and Jack Bergman where they discussed strengthening Pakistan-US ties.

According to *APP*, Naqvi also held meetings with US Congressmen Joe Wilson and Rob Bresnahan, during which they talked about lasting peace in the region, particularly the situation in Afghanistan.

On Friday, the minister attended a dinner reception hosted by US Congressmen Henry Cuellar and Maxine Waters.

#### **Pakistan minister meets anti-China group in the US. Diplomatic blunder sparks outrage**

25 January 2025, [The Print](#), Debdutta Chakraborty

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has been accused of undermining Pakistan’s longstanding ties with China. The foreign ministry has distanced itself from his anti-CCP meeting.

A meeting between Pakistan’s Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi, and members of the anti-Chinese Communist Party lobby in the US has sparked widespread controversy in Pakistan. While Pakistan’s foreign ministry has distanced itself from the meeting, experts and analysts are worried.

This diplomatic rift is sensitive, as Pakistan heavily relies on China for economic support. The China-backed 22nd IMF deal in 2024 and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are crucial for Pakistan.

The minister, who was attending a special dinner at the Lincoln Liberty Ball in Washington, has found himself at the centre of a political storm. He has been accused of undermining Pakistan’s longstanding ties with China.

Naqvi’s engagement with the “New Federal State of China” (NFSC) — a political movement aimed at overthrowing the CCP, led by exiled Chinese businessman Guo Wengui and former US strategist Steve Bannon — has raised serious concerns among analysts.

Former Pakistani diplomat Maleeha Lodhi questioned why Pakistan’s foreign minister was not leading the diplomatic mission instead of an interior minister.

“What is going on? Here the foreign minister chairs economic committees while the interior minister is sent to Washington DC on a so-called diplomatic mission,” she wrote on X.

The NFSC, a far-Right group, has been involved in pushing conspiracy theories and anti-China rhetoric. Its members have been linked to efforts to destabilise Chinese interests globally. Launched on 4 June 2020, in New York City, the group presents itself as a “government in exile” for China.

The movement has gained attention for its aggressive anti-CCP rhetoric, spread through various media channels, rallies, email campaigns, and flyers. However, its use of conspiracy theories and misinformation has raised alarms, with critics often questioning Guo's motives.

### **Stuck between deep sea and the devil**

On social media, many Pakistanis voiced their displeasure. Some denounced Naqvi's actions, suggesting that his meeting reflected a broader disconnect between Pakistan's domestic policies and its foreign relations. PTI supporter Afzal Khan Sherwani described the meeting as a betrayal of Pakistan's "people-to-people relationship" with China.

"We, the people of Pakistan, are not happy with Mr. Naqvi's (nicknamed "dictator's urine") meeting with an anti-China lobbyist group. In any case, China should discourage the current dual faced, unreliable friend/enemy and declare the "DECEIVER" man controlling Pakistan as Army Chief," he wrote on X.

Adding fuel to the fire, some commentators aimed at Pakistan's military leadership, suggesting that the interior minister's actions were reflective of deeper shifts in the country's allegiances. Human rights activist Zar Ali Khan Afridi lamented that Pakistan seemed to be caught between competing geopolitical interests.

"Pakistan is stuck between the deep sea and the devil. Pakistan has lost its credibility. Pakistan deceived #US and befriended China. Now Pak is attending meetings against China," Afridi wrote on X. **China-Pakistan relations**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) remains a cornerstone of Pakistan's long-term development strategy, though the relationship has been increasingly strained by issues such as debt repayments and security concerns over Chinese workers in the country. The backlash over Naqvi's meeting also coincides with growing discomfort within Pakistan over its dual-facing foreign policy. Pakistan's largest international airport, funded and constructed by China in Balochistan's Gwadar, started operations last week after months of delay and amid heavy security in the violence-prone region.

The Pakistani foreign ministry has distanced itself from the incident, with a statement clarifying that the meeting was "personal" adding that "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not process this".

Shehzad Qazi, managing director of China Beige Book, a data company for Chinese policies summed up the situation on X: "Desi uncles will do anything for free booze. But seriously, what a clown show of a govt."

### **Chinese nationals move Pakistani court against police harassment**

25 January 2025, [Business Standard](#)

*Six Chinese nationals in Pakistan petitioned a high court against police harassment, including demanding money and putting restrictions on their movement in the name of security.*

Six Chinese nationals in Pakistan petitioned a high court against police harassment, including demanding money and putting restrictions on their movement in the name of security.

They filed the plea in the Sindh High Court in Karachi on Friday, where a two-judge bench heard the case.

The bench issued notices to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others, including the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and its consulate in Karachi and relevant federal and provincial law officers.

Xu Hui, Deng Huan and four other Chinese nationals filed the petition through their counsel, submitting that they came to Pakistan after fulfilling all required legal formalities and invested a significant amount of money and resources in various business ventures and sectors in the country.

It is the first time Chinese nationals have approached a high court against harassment by police in Pakistan.

The petitioners cited Sindh's chief secretary, the provincial home secretary, the inspector general of police, and other senior police officers as respondents. They maintained it was the responsibility of the respondents to protect and provide a secure environment for all foreign nationals legally residing and investing in the country.

Counsel for the foreign nationals Rehman Mehsud told the media that his clients had decided to approach the court after being subjected to harassment, bribery demands, invasion of privacy and other problems in the name of security.

They have complained that they are practically prisoners in their own homes, policemen enter their bedrooms without knocking, some take bribes for providing transportation if they want to go out, he said.

The petitioners alleged that the Sindh police had harassed them for six to seven months, unjustifiably restricting the movements of Chinese nationals in Karachi and Sindh and detaining them within their residences under the pretext of "security issues," without clear legal grounds or specific incidents to justify such actions.

They further alleged that policemen stationed at their residences would allow them to leave upon paying illegal demands of Rs 30,000 to Rs 50,000.

The petitioners claimed their troubles began at the airport, where officials refused them entry despite possessing all required legal documentation, demanding bribes instead.



The petitioners claimed they were forced to wait for hours under officials' orders, unable to return home without bulletproof vehicles, for which they had to pay substantial amounts.

They also said that the police allegedly threw stones at Chinese nationals' cars, smashing their rear screens, and argued that they were not allowed to lodge complaints/FIRs against such offences, the Dawn newspaper reported.

They said that an incident of theft of Rs 2 million took place at the house of one of the petitioners in October 2024, but the police station concerned had refused to register an FIR.

The petitioners further submitted that their previous attempts to seek redressal of grievances had received no positive response.

They maintained that alleged harassment, unlawful detentions, unjustified restrictions on movement, and even illegal gratifications directly infringed upon their universally recognised fundamental rights that were also guaranteed under the Constitution of Pakistan. These severely impacted their ability to conduct business and engage in essential professional and personal activities.

They urged the court to declare alleged detention, harassment and restriction on their movement illegal and unconstitutional. They asked it to order relevant authorities to devise and implement appropriate protective measures to ensure the lawful movement and security of Chinese nationals.

The petitioners also sought a high-level joint inquiry against the officials involved in the acts, and strict and exemplary actions against the culprits.

After a preliminary hearing, the bench issued notices to the three respondents, the deputy attorney general and advocate general of Sindh for a date to be fixed after four weeks, according to the report.

Several Chinese nationals have been working in Pakistan in a private capacity and on various projects undertaken by the Chinese government and their security is a huge issue due to attacks by the militants against them.

The government introduced a strict security routine for Chinese nationals after two of them were killed in a suicide bomb attack last year near the Karachi airport in an attack claimed by the banned Baloch Liberation Army, a separatist group.

### **Speaker Ghimire reiterates Nepal's commitment to 'one China' principle**

24 January 2025, [The Annapurna Express](#)

Speaker Devraj Ghimire has said that Nepal has been adhering to the 'one China' principle with strong commitment.

The Speaker said this while addressing a program organized by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China on Thursday evening, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and China and the Chinese New Year 2025.

On the occasion, he said that China has been a reliable and important development partner of Nepal for a long time.

"Nepal and China have age-old, close, friendly and cooperative relations. Our relationship is cordial, harmonious and multifaceted, built on a strong foundation of mutual trust. Geographical and cultural commonalities as well as people-to-people ties have further strengthened our bilateral relations," the Speaker said.

He said such programs would contribute a lot in further strengthening the existing economic, social and cultural ties between the two countries.

Stating that this year is the Year of Snake as per Chinese tradition, he expressed the belief that this New Year would bring more happiness, progress and prosperity to the Chinese friends.

On the occasion, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song said that China has made excellent progress in the last year facing various challenging situations.

Ambassador Chen said that under the central leadership of the Communist Party of China, especially under the guidance of Chairman Xi Jinping, China has ensured its economic development in the midst of a complex international situation.

He said that during the visit of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to China, the Cooperation Framework Agreement was forwarded to jointly promote the Belt and Road Initiative to take ahead the China-Nepal Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

The Chinese Ambassador said that this has taken the strategic partnership of long-term friendship between Nepal and China towards development and prosperity to a new height.

"The development of a three-dimensional connectivity network between the two countries is gaining momentum, 14 traditional border trade points have been fully operational and 48 direct flights are operating in a week," he said and expressed pleasure to see friends of the two countries visiting each other for tourism, more Chinese entrepreneurs coming to Nepal to invest and do business in Nepal and export of more and more Nepali goods to China.

### **Pakistan's largest airport becomes operational, part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative**

20 January 2025, [AP](#), Abdul Sattar

Pakistan's largest airport, funded and built in the country's restive southwest by Beijing, has become operational, officials said Monday.

Gwadar airport is in the province of Balochistan, which has for decades been the scene of an insurgency by separatists demanding autonomy or outright independence.

Pakistani Defense Minister, Khawaja Mohammad Asif, and Chinese officials were among those attending a ceremony at Gwadar airport and watched the arrival of the Pakistan International Airlines inaugural flight from the southern city of Karachi.

The ceremony came months after Chinese Premier Li Qiang and his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif virtually inaugurated the airport, which has a capacity of handling 400,000 travelers annually.

Beijing has invested heavily in the coastal city of Gwadar. Besides the airport, which has an estimated cost of \$230 million, China has also constructed a deep seaport as part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative to increase trade by building infrastructure around the world. This aims to also give Beijing direct access to the shipping lanes of the Arabian Sea through Pakistan via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Work started on Gwadar airport in 2019. It was supposed to be operational last year but was delayed after a surge in attacks by militants and separatists on Chinese nationals working on projects in the province. In televised remarks, Asif thanked China for building the airport and said the airport would play a key role in improving the country's economy, attracting international investment and bringing prosperity to Balochistan.

Ethnic Baloch, who accuse the Chinese and others of economic exploitation, oppose the project and other Chinese initiatives in the province.

The Ministry of Planning and Development stated that the airport can handle a combination of ATR 72, Airbus, (A-300), Boeing (B-737), and Boeing (B-747) for domestic and international routes.

Gwadar airport is the country's largest in terms of area, spread over 4,300 acres of land, according to Pakistan's civil aviation.

### China, Pakistan agree to upgrade CPEC cooperation

15 January 2025, [DT](#)

The remarks came after Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch met in Beijing on Friday for the fourth cycle of diplomatic talks at the vice-foreign ministerial level.

"The two sides agreed that China and Pakistan are ironclad friends and all-weather strategic cooperative partners, and the time-tested friendship between the two countries has grown even stronger," China's

Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Saturday.

### CPEC 2.0

Both foreign officials also co-chaired the fifth meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination (JWG-ICC) on Friday.

Beijing said that the two countries agreed on the need to "upgrade" the CPEC.

The agreement — which was signed in 2015 — pledges billions of dollars of Chinese investment in Pakistan's infrastructure.

The project is part of China's mammoth Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which is aimed at developing trade routes to connect with the rest of the world.

Islamabad said on Friday that a "high quality development" of CPEC 2.0 would focus on industrialization, Special Economic Zones (SEZ's), clean energy, agriculture and livelihood projects.

A statement from the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on social media said "both sides reiterated firm resolve to elevate Pakistan-China ironclad ties to a new pedestal of cooperation and collaboration."

### Pakistan's economic hurdles

Chinese investment in the region is facing the challenges posed by political instability, economic stagnation and energy supply issues.

Earlier this week, hundreds of Pakistani protesters blocked a section of a key highway that forms part of the CPEC in protest against power outages.

Locals in the snowy Gilgit-Baltistan region suffered blackouts of more than 20 hours amid temperatures of -15°C.

The demonstrations on the Karakoram Highway in Hunza Valley prevented dozens of freight trucks from crossing into China. Pakistan is hoping the greater Chinese investment to help alleviate its economic woes.

### At least 6 killed, scores injured in Pakistan suicide bombing

05 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Agence France- Presse

### Baloch Liberation Army claimed responsibility for attack. Group is behind a surge in recent attacks targeting soldiers and Chinese workers

At least six people including Pakistani paramilitary troops were killed and scores injured on Saturday, in a bombing claimed by separatists in volatile southwestern Balochistan province, officials said.

A bus carrying paramilitary troops of the Frontier Corps (FC) was travelling from the port city of Karachi to southwestern Turbat city when it was targeted around 7km (4 miles) west of the city.

"At least six people, including FC soldiers and civilians, were killed in a bomb attack on a bus," senior local

police official Rashid-ur-Rehman told Agence France-Presse.

More than 25 people were injured in the incident, he said, declining to provide further details.

A senior local security official said it was an apparent suicide attack and the paramilitary troops were targeted.

The official also confirmed the death toll to Agence France-Presse.

Jeeyand Baloch, spokesman for the separatist group Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was a suicide bombing targeting a Pakistani army convoy.

The BLA, a group of ethnic Baloch guerilla militants that is fighting for independence from Pakistan, frequently claims deadly attacks against security forces or Pakistanis from other provinces, notably Punjabis in Balochistan province.

The BLA is also behind a surge in attacks in the region targeting Chinese workers.

Much of the violence is directed against Chinese infrastructure projects in Pakistan to connect China's Xinjiang region with the Arabian Sea to reach markets in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and beyond.

Baloch militant and political groups accuse China of stealing their land and resources including several hundred kilometres of shoreline.

The first suicide attack of the year comes amid a surge in violence and a bloody year for Pakistani security forces.

On Saturday, in the country's northwest, gunmen opened fire on government vehicles carrying officials who were on their way to supervise aid trucks heading to the besieged Kurram district. Several people were wounded in the [assault](#).

According to statistics released by Islamabad-based think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), 527 security forces were killed in the country over the past year.

Security forces have been battling sectarian, ethnic and separatist violence for decades in impoverished Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

In November, separatists claimed responsibility for a bombing at Quetta's main railway station that killed at least 26 people, including 14 soldiers.

In August, the BLA claimed responsibility for coordinated attacks by dozens of assailants who killed at least 39 people, one of the highest tolls to hit the region.

### **Pakistan Launches \$3.7B Nuclear Energy Project With China's Help**

01 January 2025, [The Media Line](#), Steven Ganot

Pakistan has officially begun construction on the \$3.7 billion Chashma-5 nuclear power project, its largest

nuclear power facility to date. As The Media Line's Arshad Mehmood reports, this initiative, developed with China's assistance, aims to address Pakistan's persistent electricity shortages by adding 1,200 MW of clean energy to the national grid by 2030. The project also highlights the deepening partnership between Pakistan and China, with Chashma-5 expected to create 40,000 jobs during peak construction and contribute significantly to Pakistan's energy sustainability.

The facility, located in Punjab near Mianwali, will feature advanced Chinese Hualong pressurized water reactor technology, designed to meet international nuclear safety standards. Experts like Asma Khalid and Muhammed Bilal Iftikhar Khan emphasize the project's dual benefits: reducing Pakistan's reliance on expensive fossil fuels while boosting its clean energy capacity to combat climate change. Khalid noted that the geopolitical urgency for energy independence has grown amid global conflicts that have driven up hydrocarbon prices.

Chashma-5 also represents a symbolic assertion of Pakistan's commitment to peaceful nuclear energy. "This initiative reinforces Pakistan's sovereignty and technological independence," said Khan. PAEC Chairman Dr. Raja Ali Raza Anwar praised nuclear energy as key to diversifying the country's energy mix and enhancing long-term economic stability.

## **China- Taiwan**

### **Taiwan identifies 52 'suspicious' Chinese ships for close monitoring**

27 January 2025, [France24](#)

*Taipei (AFP) – Taiwan has identified 52 "suspicious" Chinese-owned ships flying flags of convenience that require close monitoring if detected near the island, the coast guard said Monday, as Taipei seeks to protect its subsea telecoms cables.*



*This picture taken by Taiwan's Coast Guard on January 3, 2025 shows the Cameroon-flagged "Shunxing 39" cargo ship suspected of damaging a Taiwan subsea telecoms cable © Handout / TAIWAN COAST GUARD/AFP/File*

The stricter regime comes after a Cameroon-flagged vessel was briefly detained by Taiwan's coast guard earlier this month on suspicion of damaging an international cable northeast of the island.

The vessel was owned by a Hong Kong-registered company with a Chinese address given for its only listed director, the coast guard said previously.

Taiwan fears China could sever its communication links as part of an attempt to seize the island or blockade it. Flags of convenience allow shipping companies to register their vessels in countries to which they have no link -- for a fee and freedom from oversight.

The coast guard said 52 "suspicious" Chinese-owned ships flying flags of convenience from Mongolia, Cameroon, Tanzania, Togo, and Sierra Leone had been highlighted for close monitoring based on port records and data from Tokyo MOU, a regional multilateral body for port state control.

Of the 52 vessels, 15 were rated a "threat" for various reasons -- including the amount of time they spent loitering or sailing slowly near Taiwan's subsea cables in 2024.

Five, considered to pose the greatest threat, had been active in Taiwan's northern, western and southern waters, and had stayed "within Taiwan's territorial waters for more than 15 days", the coast guard said in a statement.

Taiwanese authorities will monitor for "anomalies" in a ship's AIS (automatic identification system) operation and "fake or misuse of vessel names".

Vessels suspected of "loitering, slow navigation, or anchoring" near subsea cables will be warned by radio to leave the area, the coast guard said.

"If the vessel does not comply, coast guard ships will be dispatched to collect evidence and drive the vessel away," it said.

"Boarding inspections will be conducted when necessary to safeguard Taiwan's maritime and international communications security."

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has threatened to use force to bring it under its control.

Taiwan has 14 international underwater cables and 10 domestic ones.

In February 2023, two telecoms lines serving Taiwan's outlying Matsu archipelago were cut, disrupting communications for weeks.

**Ambassador Xie Feng: to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, it is vital to abide by the one-China principle and the three Sino-U.S. Joint Communiques, and unequivocally oppose "Taiwan independence"**

25 January 2025, [Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America](#)



On 24 January 2025, the Chinese Embassy in the U.S. hosted the reception celebrating the arrival of the new pair of giant pandas and the 2025 Chinese New Year. In his remarks, Ambassador Xie Feng said that at the end of last year, President Jimmy Carter left us at the age of 100. As a promoter and decision-maker in the establishment of China-U.S. diplomatic relations, he advanced the normalization of bilateral relations even in the shadow of the Cold War. Today, such courage and vision are still needed to seek common ground and reserve differences. "We should not allow disagreements to dominate or disrupt our bilateral relations. In particular, we should respect each other's core interests and major concerns," Xie said. He pointed out that the Taiwan question is the question most likely to have a disruptive impact on China-U.S. relations. To maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, it is vital to abide by the one-China principle and the three Sino-U.S. Joint Communiques, and unequivocally oppose "Taiwan independence". The bilateral economic ties are essentially mutually beneficial and win-win. Tariff war, trade war, industrial war or tech war would produce no winner.

**MOFA calls out China for its 'erroneous claim' over Taiwan**

18 January 2025, [Focus Taiwan](#)

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on Saturday called out China for its "erroneous claim" about Taiwan and reaffirmed its stance that the country is sovereign and independent.

MOFA's response follows comments made by Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) regarding Taiwan's sovereignty during his phone call with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Friday.

Taiwan and the People's Republic of China are not subordinate to each other, and this has been a universally acknowledged fact and is the internationally recognized status quo, the foreign ministry told CNA.

Taiwan looks forward to further strengthening cooperation with the new Trump administration based

on the solid and friendly foundation of Taiwan-U.S. relations, it said.

The two sides will continue to jointly promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Taiwan Strait and the region, it added.

According to a press release issued by China's foreign affairs ministry, Xi told Trump during Friday's phone call that it was natural for two big countries to have some disagreements.

"The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The U.S. side needs to approach it with prudence," the press release quoted Xi as saying.

### Taiwan's top China official says Beijing must stop shunning Lai, Nikkei reports

17 January 2025, [Reuters](#)



Taiwan President Lai Ching-te speaks at an event marking the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Guningtou, on Kinmen island, Taiwan October 25, 2024. REUTERS/Annabelle Chih/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)

Taipei's top China affairs official warned that Taiwan's government "will not tolerate" Beijing's active engagement solely with opposition politicians while it refuses dialogue with Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's democratically elected administration, the Nikkei newspaper reported on Friday.

Chiu Chui-cheng, who serves as minister of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), said Taiwan's government is "most concerned about the personal safety of (Taiwanese) citizens in the mainland", Nikkei added, citing an exclusive interview with the official. Chiu also accused Beijing of "unfairly painting" Lai's administration as "provocative and unreasonable", while referring to Beijing's insistence that Taiwan belongs to a bigger Chinese polity, the Nikkei report stated.

Earlier this week, the Taiwanese government said it will [step up](#) the surveillance and management of ships

carrying flags of convenience, including boarding them, after a Chinese-linked cargo vessel was suspected of damaging an undersea communications cable, reflecting the ongoing tensions between the two regions.

### VOA Mandarin: Taiwan worries about increasing academic exchanges with China

15 January 2025, [VOA](#), Yu-Shih Liao

Amid ongoing tensions across the Taiwan Strait, academic exchanges between Taiwan and China have recently risen unexpectedly. Taiwan's political and academic circles have interpreted this differently. While some scholars view it positively, believing it could help ease cross-strait relations, others worry that such interactions might provide China with more opportunities for United Front efforts against Taiwan and exacerbate internal divisions within the island.

### Chinese cyberattacks on Taiwan government averaged 2.4 mln a day in 2024, report says

06 January 2025, [Reuters](#), Yimou Lee

Cyberattacks on Taiwan government departments doubled in 2024 from the previous year to an average of 2.4 million attacks a day, the island's National Security Bureau said, adding most of them were launched by Chinese cyber forces.

Taiwan has in recent years complained about what it sees as China's "grey-zone harassment" - from daily military drills and balloons near the island to cyberattacks - at a time when Beijing ramps up military and political pressure to force the democratically governed island to accept its sovereignty claim.

Taiwan's Government Service Network, or GSN, received a daily average of 2.4 million attacks last year, double the daily average of 1.2 million in 2023, according to a report by the National Security Bureau on Sunday.

The bureau offered rare details of the attacks, attributing most to China's cyber forces, with telecommunications, transportations and defence among the top targets.

"Although many of those attacks have been effectively detected and blocked, the growing numbers of attacks pinpoint the increasingly severe nature of China's hacking activities," the report said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not respond to a request for comment.

China routinely denies being involved in hacking attacks but is frequently accused by foreign governments, especially the United States which last week said Chinese hackers stole documents from the U.S. Treasury Department.

The Taiwanese report said China launched some of the attacks to coincide with Chinese military drills around the island, including distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks designed to disrupt access to web pages of Taiwan's transportation and financial institutions.

The move, the report said, was meant to "intensify the harassment effect and military intimidation".

Beijing staged two rounds of major exercises around Taiwan last year to pressure Taipei, one in May and one in October, dubbed Joint Sword - 2024A and B respectively.

China also targeted Taiwanese civil servants' emails and launched attacks including social engineering in attempts to steal confidential information, the report said.

The report said China's cyber forces employed techniques including advanced persistent threats and backdoor software to try to infiltrate and compromise Taiwan's key infrastructure including highways and ports.

"Such efforts attempt to disrupt Taiwan's government operations, as well as gain advantages in the fields of politics, military, technology, and economy," the report said.

### **No one can stop China's reunification with Taiwan, says Xi Jinping**

03 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

Chinese President Xi Jinping in his New Year's eve address reasserted Beijing's resolve to achieve what he termed as the "reunification" of Taiwan with China. Speaking from the Great Hall of the People, Xi's address also focused on economic growth, emphasising advancements in China's burgeoning electric vehicle industry, which has surpassed the milestone of producing 10 million units.

"We Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same family. No one can ever sever the bond of kinship between us, and no one can ever stop China's reunification, a trend of the times," Xi said in a speech broadcast on state-run CCTV.

The Chinese leader's speech comes amid heightened tensions in the Taiwan strait, where Beijing has escalated military pressure on the self-governed island through frequent air and naval exercises. Xi has consistently reiterated China's determination to achieve reunification with Taiwan, viewing the island as an integral part of its territory.

Taiwan, however, remains firm in rejecting Beijing's claims. President Lai Ching-te, a staunch advocate for Taiwan's autonomy, has drawn Beijing's ire, with Chinese officials labelling him a "dangerous separatist." Lai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) strongly asserts Taiwan's distinct identity and rejects

Beijing's sovereignty claims. Despite President Lai's repeated calls for dialogue, Beijing has refused, dismissing such overtures as undermining China's territorial integrity.

Xi's address also comes weeks ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration as U.S. president, a critical moment for U.S.-China relations. Taiwan remains a flashpoint, as the U.S. continues to provide military support and arms to the island despite not officially recognising it as a separate nation. Trump has threatened higher tariffs on Chinese goods, accusing Beijing of unfair trade practices, further straining ties between the two global powers.

### **Taipei hits back over Chinese military's New Year propaganda video**

02 January 2025, [RFA](#), Yam Chi Yau

#### **Video featuring Hong Kong's Andy Lau shows China 'ready to fight any time' to annex Taiwan.**



*Andy Lau performs in a music video published by the People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command reiterates Beijing's claim on democratic Taiwan, Jan. 1, 2025. (PLA Eastern Theater via Weibo)*

Taiwan's government on Thursday hit back at a New Year's propaganda video created by China's People's Liberation Army in which President Xi Jinping reiterated Beijing's claims on the democratic island.

The video, set to the song "Chinese People" by veteran Hong Kong pop star Andy Lau, features Chinese warships and planes, and what appeared to be a Chinese fighter jet flying near a P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft that the United States sometimes sends through the Taiwan Strait.

The accompanying Weibo post read: "The officers and soldiers in the war zone are ready to fight at any time and resolutely safeguard the reunification of the motherland."

In a Jan. 1 address to the nation, Xi vowed to unify Taiwan with the mainland.

"We Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same family," Xi declared. "No one can

ever sever the bond of kinship between us, and no one will ever stop China's unification."

Taiwan has never been ruled by Beijing, nor formed part of the People's Republic of China. It is governed by the Republic of China government, formed after the 1911 fall of the Qing Dynasty under Sun Yat-sen, that fled to Taipei in 1949 after losing the civil war to Mao Zedong's communists.

#### **Psychological warfare**

Taiwanese Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung told reporters that the video is an example of China's United Front propaganda targeting the island's 23 million people, and aimed to intimidate them with an "illusion" of unity.

"It is the People's Liberation Army showing its intimidation of Taiwan," Lin said, adding that the video was a form of psychological warfare.

While China insists on eventual "unification" with Taiwan -- by armed invasion if necessary -- the majority of Taiwan's 23 million people have no wish to give up their democratic way of life to submit to Communist Party rule.

China has threatened the death penalty for supporters of Taiwan independence, while Taipei says Beijing has no jurisdiction over the actions of its citizens.

A recent public opinion poll from the Institute for National Defense and Security Research showed that 67.8% of respondents were willing to fight to defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.

The video came as Chinese warplanes and ships carried out the first "combat patrol" around Taiwan in 2025. The island's defense ministry said it had detected 22 Chinese military aircraft including J-16 fighter jets, carrying out a "joint combat readiness patrol" around Taiwan in conjunction with Chinese warships starting Jan. 2.

The People's Liberation Army video also included images of Chinese students visiting Taiwan late last year at the invitation of former president Ma Ying-jeou, who has been criticized by many in Taiwan for undermining its government.

It omits footage of Taiwanese students shouting and waving pro-democracy slogans at the Chinese delegation, however.

#### **'No discounts on freedom'**

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te said his government would boost defense spending this year to keep up its defenses and protect its democratic way of life.

"Taiwan needs to prepare for danger in times of peace," Lai said in his Jan. 1 address. "We must continue increasing our national defense budget, bolster our national defense capabilities, and show our determination to protect our country."

He called on the island's people to build resilience, vowing to "combat information and cognitive warfare, so that the populace rejects threats and enticements

and jointly guards against malicious infiltration by external forces."

He warned people not to be enticed by Chinese ID card schemes or junkets to China, quoting a Taiwanese saying: "Nothing costs more than a freebie."

"Democracy is priceless, and there are no discounts on freedom," Lai warned. "A wrong step today could mean a far higher price to pay in future."

#### **Stealth fighter**

Across the Taiwan Strait, state media said the People's Liberation Army video showed "the determination, will and ability of officers and soldiers in the theater to stay vigilant, remain ready to fight at any time and resolutely safeguard the reunification of the motherland."

The nationalistic *Global Times* newspaper quoted military experts as saying that the video also highlighted China's latest military equipment, including references to the "ginkgo leaf" sixth-generation stealth fighter jet and the Type 076 amphibious assault ship.

"The PLA Eastern Theater Command's release of the video on the first day of the New Year also issued a stern warning to the separatist forces of 'Taiwan independence,'" the paper reported on Thursday.

It quoted Chinese military expert Zhang Junshe as saying that it showed China would "resolutely fight back and ... will never allow any forces to split the island of Taiwan from China's sovereign territory."

Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office, said the song reminded people in Taiwan that they are "all Chinese."

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council responded: "Taiwanese people should be more alert to China's United Front propaganda targeting Taiwan and strengthen their understanding of cross-strait relations."

#### **Andy Lau**

Hong Kong current affairs commentator Sang Pu said Lau was a shrewd choice to act as Beijing's mouthpiece, given his huge fan-base across the sinophone world.

"People who love freedom and democracy definitely won't like Andy Lau, but he's a very good United Front tool when it comes to centrists, or the politically apathetic," Sang said. "He can be used as leverage."

He said Lau, who is also a movie actor, holds a number of official posts in the Chinese Communist Party regime, including vice chairman of the China Film Association and visiting professor at the Sichuan Opera School.

Sang called on Taiwan to ban him from performing there, following a visit in November where Lau performed "Chinese People" on Taiwanese soil.

Former Hong Kong district councilor Lee Man-ho said Hong Kongers have known Lau is a mouthpiece for Chinese propaganda for years.

"A few years ago he made a video promoting the 'Tomorrow's Lantau' [development] project, which was an attempt at United Front brainwashing in Hong Kong," Lee, who now lives in Taiwan, told RFA Cantonese.

"But nobody fell for it. Everyone in Hong Kong has seen through Andy Lau."

Lee said that back in the 1990s, Lau had been a staunch supporter of Taiwan, and used to make a point of celebrating the Republic of China's national day on Oct. 10, instead of the Chinese Communist Party's national day on Oct. 1.

"But after 30 years of manipulation by the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party, he has totally changed," he said.

## CHINA- US

### China targeting U.S. service members on social media in "virtual espionage" spy efforts

27 January 2025, [CBS News](#), Jim Axelrod, Matthew Mosk and Michael Kaplan

The Chinese intelligence officer who convinced Thomas Zhao to hand over sensitive information about the U.S. military seemed to know the 24-year-old U.S. Navy petty officer had a passion for the stock market. The agent approached Zhao in a stock trading chat group on the Chinese-owned social media network WeChat, CBS News learned in interviews with people involved in the case. But chats about investment strategies soon veered into sensitive areas, including questions about Naval exercises in the Pacific and designs for radar installations.

The Zhao case represents a new dimension to Chinese covert activities that counterintelligence officials are calling "virtual espionage." The practice, in which Chinese intelligence officers target members of the military and others of high interest on social media, draw them into correspondence, and extract sensitive information from them, is a rising threat, officials told CBS News.

"They will turn over every stone to try and collect what they can," Kevin Vorndran, who leads the FBI's counterintelligence division, told CBS News in a rare television interview. "They are certainly endeavoring to target as many people as they can."



Over the course of two years, a Chinese intelligence officer paid Zhao, a U.S. citizen and Navy engineer, about \$15,000 to take photographs and videos of restricted areas at the Southern California base where he worked, court records revealed.

With his relatively low rank, as well as a low-level security clearance, Zhao may have seemed like an unlikely target. Yet Vorndran and other U.S. officials told CBS News that intelligence officers working for the Chinese government are trolling professional networking sites, including LinkedIn, to seduce an array of American service members and others who hold U.S. government security clearances into turning over sensitive information.

"On professional networking sites, members of the military, former members of the military, list their résumés," Vorndran said. "It exposes their expertise. And through that, it makes targeting by an intelligence service simple to accomplish."

A LinkedIn spokesperson did not respond to a question about whether Chinese intelligence officers were using the platform to identify potential targets, but did say in a statement that fraudulent accounts violate the company's terms of service.

"Our teams use a variety of automated technologies, combined with a team of trained investigation experts and member reporting, to help stop bad actors and to keep experiences on LinkedIn professional," the spokesperson said.

The tactic is low risk and high reward — a hallmark of the kind of "virtual espionage" [China](#) began leaning on when COVID made it more difficult for spies to travel abroad, according to counterintelligence officials.

"The intelligence officer can sit behind their desk back in China and reach out to numerous individuals all at once," said Ryan Norris, a special agent with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. "They are reaching out to as many people as possible and hoping to get some response."

In the last two years, federal law enforcement has identified a dozen such cases and brought charges against four service members recruited by suspected undercover agents of China. Vorndran said given the difficulty in policing this kind of outreach, he's concerned the number could be far higher.

"We investigate everyone we can identify and predicate an investigation on," said Vorndran. "The ones that we don't know are the ones that concern me and keep me up."

A spokesperson for China's embassy denied knowledge of the Zhao case, and did not address a question about whether its intelligence officers were contacting U.S. servicemembers online and soliciting sensitive information.

"China hopes that the United States will stop hyping up the so-called 'Chinese espionage' risk and stop exaggerating the 'China threat theory,' and inject more

stability into Sino-US relations instead of setting up obstacles," the embassy spokesperson said in a statement.

### **Easy money**

In August 2023, agents with the FBI and NCIS descended on the Ventura County Naval Base, apprehended Zhao, and took him into a small room for questioning. A video of the interrogation, obtained by CBS News, shows Zhao admitting he sent sensitive military information to an individual he met online.

While Zhao said the individual seemed "fishy," it does not appear he knew he was dealing with a Chinese intelligence officer. And while he considered passing along photographs of what he was working on as an easy way to make money, he stopped short of sending any classified information.

"When I tried to cut off the relationship with him, it's already kinda late," Zhao said in the interrogation, telling the federal agents he felt "trapped."

Following the interrogation, Zhao was arrested. He later pleaded guilty to bribery and conspiracy charges, and is currently serving a 27-month federal sentence. Prosecutors determined his actions did not rise to the level of espionage. Still, Norris said he believes Zhao's actions amount to a betrayal.

"He absolutely betrayed his country," said Norris, who questioned Zhao during the interrogation. "I think over the past two years he'd had a relationship that he knew was nefarious, and I think he was finally caught in what he was doing."

Tarek Shawky, Zhao's attorney, said his client was also to some degree a victim of a scam. He said their social media conversations revealed the Chinese intelligence officer sought to build up a level of trust before asking for sensitive information.

"At a certain point, I think the human condition is that you want to suspend a little bit of your better judgment because of that human connection," Shawky said. "That's what makes it so dangerous."

In an interview with CBS News, Zhao's wife Jianyu Ren said her husband acknowledged making a mistake, but she denied he would ever willfully sell out his country.

"That's not him," Ren said. "If he had known this person was working for the Chinese government or anybody in China, he wouldn't have done that."

### **US should not cross 'red lines', Taiwan No 1 risk to stable ties: top Beijing envoy**

27 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Xinlu Liang

### **Chinese ambassador lays down the ground rules for 'stable, healthy and sustainable' US-China ties at Lunar New Year event in Washington**



Washington should not cross Beijing's "red lines" to ensure the stable development of ties, Chinese ambassador Xie Feng has said, while calling the Taiwan issue the biggest potential threat to the relationship. Addressing a Lunar New Year reception hosted by his embassy last Friday, Xie also called on the United States to be mindful of China's core interests – saying that strict adherence to the "bottom line" was a prerequisite for stable ties.

It was important to maintain a "stable, healthy and sustainable" US-China relationship, which "holds a significance like never before", Xie told the event in Washington.

"The Taiwan question is the question most likely to have a disruptive impact on China-US relations. To maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, it is vital to abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiques, and unequivocally oppose 'Taiwan independence,'" he said.

The joint communiques state that the US recognises the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China, and acknowledges Beijing's position that there is but one China, and Taiwan is part of China.

Xie added that both sides should seek common ground and respect each other's core interests and major concerns.

"Our bilateral economic ties are essentially mutually beneficial and win-win," Xie said.

In recounting the positives, he cited growing two-way trade, record Tesla sales in China, and the recent "big cyber party" on RedNote – when US users flocked to the Chinese social media platform earlier this month fearing a TikTok ban back home.

"[A] tariff war, trade war, industrial war or tech war would produce no winner," he emphasised, as he urged both sides to establish a "correct strategic perception".

Xie's comments come with US-China tensions at an all-time high, as the two world powers spar over trade, hi-tech access and national security concerns. The second Trump administration is also expected to be hawkish towards Beijing, especially on the Taiwan and South China Sea issues.

Taiwan is among Beijing's four red lines that "must not be challenged or crossed" – as laid down by President Xi Jinping in his last in-person meeting with then US counterpart Joe Biden in November. The others are concepts of democracy and human rights, "China's path and system, and China's development right".

Xi reiterated the point in a phone call with Donald Trump on January 17, three days before the US president-elect took office. The Taiwan question was a matter of national sovereignty and territorial integrity for Beijing, and the US should handle it with caution, Xi said.

Trump's Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in a call last Friday with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, reaffirmed that the US did not support Taiwan independence, according to a readout from Wang's ministry.

However, that point was missing from the US transcript of the call – which said Rubio voiced "serious concern over China's coercive actions against Taiwan and in the South China Sea".

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. The US, like most countries, does not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but is opposed to any attempt to take the self-governed island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

Despite the challenges, Xie emphasised the importance of preserving the decades-old spirit of cooperation and mutual respect in the US-China relationship, where they "have managed to maintain the overall peace of the world, and delivered unprecedented development dividends to all countries".

He also highlighted the importance of maintaining dialogue and cooperation, particularly in areas with "extensive common interests and vast room for cooperation", including economy and trade, agriculture, anti-narcotic operations, law enforcement, and people-to-people exchanges.

### An 'open source' China can best counter Trump's protectionist chaos: Beijing adviser

25 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Frank Chen

### World looking to China as US President Donald Trump attacks globalisation, but it first needs firm political resolve, Zheng Yongnian says

China must strive to be an "open source" country in trade and technology to champion globalisation – even as the United States resorts to protectionism – a prominent adviser to Beijing has said.

Zheng Yongnian, dean of the school of public policy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Shenzhen campus (CUHK-Shenzhen), also called on China to

persist with opening up as uncertainties mount with Trump's comeback.

China should sign free-trade pacts with more partners, boost technological exchanges and expand "unilateral opening up", Zheng posted on Friday on a social media account maintained by CUHK-Shenzhen.

"China must give an unequivocal answer to pressing questions about where globalisation is headed and reassure the anxious world," Zheng wrote in the article based on a forum discussion in Shenzhen he anchored earlier this week.

The noted political scientist is widely seen as an influential voice heeded by China's leadership. He has played a key role in many policymaking exercises, including on a panel of experts from whom President Xi Jinping sought policy recommendations in 2020.

"When the US is dismantling globalisation it once took the lead to build, China's commitment is a manifestation of confidence

Zheng Yongnian, CUHK-Shenzhen

The world is looking to China as US President Donald Trump unleashes a barrage of tariffs and tirades attacking globalisation, Zheng told Monday's forum. China could become an "open source" leader for trade and tech – but it first needed resolve, he noted.

"China must maintain a high level of political commitment to openness," Zheng emphasised.

"Any national policy cannot continue automatically without frequent, firm political commitments. Politicians in many countries make commitments but many waver in the face of challenges. This must not be the case with China," he said.

"When the US is dismantling globalisation it once took the lead to build, China's commitment is a manifestation of confidence. Today, even Western media agrees that China is promoting globalisation in its own way."

Beijing has on numerous occasions signalled its resolve on globalisation, despite continuing trade tensions with the US and Europe.

Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang told the World Economic Forum on Tuesday, shortly after Trump was sworn in, that China would stick to the "right path" of multilateralism.

China was not seeking a trade surplus and there were no winners in a trade war, he added.

"China's door ... will only open wider," Ding said, relaying Beijing's often repeated stance, as he pledged proactive policies to boost the country's economy while collaborating with nations worldwide.

But Beijing has to do much more, according to Zheng.

"China has signed free trade agreements with 29 countries and regions. Not enough," he told the forum.

"China needs greater efforts to sign deals with more economies. This is what others sorely need, when the US market is no longer open and they need to find alternatives," Zheng argued.

"Opening up its massive domestic market is what China can offer as the source of most critical international goods to secure and spur globalisation."

China's "unilateral opening up" must be expanded to regions like Southeast Asia, Zheng said, as the mutual benefits transcend tourism to benefit trade and tech.

All these endeavours should come with clearer messages from Beijing about pro-business pragmatism and opposition to politicising disputes, he added.

An "open source" strategy could also benefit China as the US leads a tech containment drive, Zheng said. This is because China's wealth of practical, mid-end technologies and solutions best suited the needs of the developing world and the country should share its expertise.

Noted American economist and Columbia University professor Jeffrey Sachs, who was seated with Zheng at the forum, echoed his view, while adding that China could fill the vacuum left by the US.

"China's international role will be bolstered going forward," Sachs said, highlighting its advantages in green tech, such as electric vehicles, 5G, renewable energy and energy transformation.

He said China could lead deeper, broader cooperation among the tech community, academia and businesses to share tech and promote an open source model.

### Rubio expresses concern over China's coercion against Taiwan

25 January 2025, [Focus Taiwan](#)



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio (CNA file photo)

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has raised concern over Beijing's coercion against Taiwan during a phone call with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi (王毅), according to the U.S. Department of State.

Rubio stressed the United States' "commitment to our allies in the region and serious concern over China's coercive actions against Taiwan and in the South China Sea," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said in a readout following the phone call on Friday (Washington time).

Bruce also cited Rubio as saying the U.S. will pursue a relationship with Beijing that "advances U.S. interests and puts the American people first."

It was Rubio's first phone call as secretary of state with Wang, who is also the director of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Foreign Affairs Commission.

While pledging the U.S.'s commitment to its allies, a report by Politico on Friday said Rubio had issued an order halting most existing U.S. foreign aid for 90 days, pending review by the secretary of state, except for military funds allocated to Israel and Egypt.

The report cited a number of incumbent and former State Department officials as voicing concern that the order might affect U.S. aid to Taiwan, Ukraine and other partners.

As of press time, the State Department had not responded to CNA's request for a comment on the matter.

Following the call, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a separate readout quoting Wang as urging Washington to handle the Taiwan issue "with prudence" and stressing that Beijing "will never allow Taiwan to be separated from China."

The readout also included Rubio's remarks that the U.S. does not support Taiwanese independence and called for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue, but such a statement was not included in the U.S. version of the readout.

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), meanwhile, said in a press release Saturday (Taipei time) that it "welcomed" Rubio's comments over Beijing's intimidation against Taiwan but opposed the "false statements" from the Chinese side.

Taiwan and "the People's Republic of China are not subordinate to each other," MOFA said, in rejecting Wang's claims that Taiwan "has been an integral part of Chinese territory since ancient times."

Rubio, who assumed office on Jan. 21 (Washington time), has been a China hawk during his years as a Republican senator.

### **China tells Rubio to behave himself in veiled warning**

25 January 2025, [ABC News](#), Ken Moritsugu

China's veteran foreign minister has issued a veiled warning to America's new secretary of state: Behave yourself

China's veteran foreign minister has issued a veiled warning to America's new secretary of state: Behave yourself.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi conveyed the message in a phone call Friday, their first conversation since Marco Rubio's confirmation as President Donald Trump's top diplomat four days earlier.

"I hope you will act accordingly," Wang told Rubio, according to a Foreign Ministry statement, employing a Chinese phrase typically used by a teacher or a boss warning a student or employee to behave and be responsible for their actions.

The short phrase seemed aimed at Rubio's vocal criticism of China and its human rights record when he was a U.S. senator, which prompted the Chinese government to put sanctions on him twice in 2020.

It can be translated in various ways — in the past, the Foreign Ministry has used "make the right choice" and "be very prudent about what they say or do" rather than "act accordingly."

The vagueness allows the phrase to express an expectation and deliver a veiled warning, while also maintaining the courtesy necessary for further diplomatic engagement, said Zichen Wang, a research fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, a Chinese think tank.

"What could appear to be confusing is thus an intended effect originating from Chinese traditional wisdom and classic practice of speech," said Wang, who is currently in a mid-career master's program at Princeton University.

Rubio, during his confirmation hearing, cited the importance of referring to the original Chinese to understand the words of China's leader Xi Jinping.

"Don't read the English translation that they put out because the English translation is never right," he said. A U.S. statement on the phone call didn't mention the phrase. It said Rubio told Wang that the Trump administration would advance U.S. interests in its relationship with China and expressed "serious concern over China's coercive actions against Taiwan and in the South China Sea."

Wang was foreign minister in 2020 when China slapped sanctions on Rubio in July and August, first in response to U.S. sanctions on Chinese officials for a crackdown on the Uyghur minority in the Xinjiang region and then over what it regarded as outside interference in Hong Kong.

The sanctions include a ban on travel to China, and while the Chinese government has indicated it will engage with Rubio as secretary of state, it has not explicitly said whether it would allow him to visit the country for talks.

### **President Trump cites China as main reason for US leaving Paris Climate Accord, WHO**

22 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

The United States has withdrawn from two major international bodies, the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization (WHO), with President Donald Trump, who assumed office on Jan 20, citing China as the main reason for doing so.

"I'm immediately withdrawing from the unfair, one-sided Paris Climate Accord rip off. The United States will not sabotage our own industries while China pollutes with impunity," the IANS news service Jan 21 quoted Trump as telling supporters at a sporting arena.

"You know, China, and look, they use a lot of dirty energy, but they produce a lot of energy, and when that stuff goes up in the air, you know, it doesn't stay there. It's not like you have a wall. We love walls that way. Not like you have a wall around and it just doesn't.

"It floats into the United States of America after three and a half to five and a half days, it floats across the oceans, and it comes right over your neighbourhood, and it falls into your neighbourhood. So they all say we have to fight for cleaner air, but the other dirty air is dropping all over us. So what the hell are they talking about? Unless everybody does it. It just doesn't work." China is currently the largest global emitter of greenhouse gases, which leads to climate changes, even as it also leads the world in the deployment of renewable energy.

Trump has also announced the initiation of US withdrawal from the WHO due to its alleged mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic and unequal financial contributions by China, reported *news.apblive.com* Jan 21.

Trump had been a vocal critic of the WHO's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, which escalated into a global health crisis in 2020, the final year of his first term. He argued that the WHO's response was inadequate and that the organization had been overly influenced by China.

In a statement to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump has explained his decision to withdraw, citing the financial disparity between the US and China in their contributions to the WHO. "We paid \$500 million to the World Health Organization when I was here, and I terminated it," Trump said.

"China, with 1.4 billion people, paid just \$39 million. It seemed unfair to me," Trump has added, referring to his country's previous withdrawal from the organization when he was the President in 2020.

China has 300% of the population of the United States, yet contributes nearly 90% less to the WHO, the White House statement was stated to read.

Trump has added that the WHO had offered a deal to return for a lower payment of \$39 million, but when President Joe Biden took office, the United States was asked to rejoin for the original \$500 million. "They wanted us back so badly."

"In addition, the WHO continues to demand unfairly onerous payments from the United States, far out of proportion with other countries' assessed payments," the order was further quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, Trump has given a 75-day reprieve to the highly popular Chinese-owned short-video app TikTok which otherwise became illegal from Jan 19. The US Supreme Court recently rejected the app's appeal against the law which rendered it illegal unless sold to US buyers.

The executive order effectively buys time for the US administration to explore alternative solutions to address the app's data privacy concerns without resorting to an outright ban. It also opens the door for further negotiations with ByteDance, TikTok's Chinese parent company, in hopes of finding a resolution that satisfies national security requirements.

"if we wanted to make a deal with TikTok, and it was a good deal, and China wouldn't approve it, then I think ultimately they'd approve it because we'd put tariffs on China," the *scmp.com* Jan 21 quoted Trump as saying.

"Maybe, I'm not saying I would, but you certainly could do that. And if we said, well, 'you're not going to approve it', then that's a certain hostility, and we'll put tariffs of 25, 30,40, 50%, even 100%."

### US Senate unanimously confirms fierce China critic Marco Rubio as Secretary of State

21 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon



Senator Marco Rubio testifies during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, US on January 15, 2025 (Photo/Reuters)

The U.S. Senate on Monday unanimously confirmed Senator Marco Rubio, a long-time and fierce critic of Beijing's policies, as Secretary of State, marking the first high-level Cabinet official for the new administration to be approved by the chamber. The 99-0 vote in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where Rubio has been a prominent member, reflected rare bipartisan unity in support of his nomination.

The confirmation took place just hours after President Donald Trump was sworn in as President. Rubio, who has represented Florida in the Senate since 2011, is well-known for his hawkish stance on Beijing. He has been a prominent voice on Capitol Hill, calling out the Chinese government for its human rights abuses, trade practices, and geopolitical ambitions.

During his confirmation hearing on January 15, Rubio voiced his strong stance on China, calling the Chinese Communist Party a “potent” and “dangerous” adversary. “They’re a technological adversary and competitor, an industrial competitor, an economic competitor, a geopolitical competitor, a scientific competitor. In every realm, it’s an extraordinary challenge and one that I believe will define the 21st century,” Rubio said.

Rubio emphasized the need for the United States to take a firmer approach in addressing Beijing’s actions, adding, “We’ve allowed them to get away with things, and frankly, the Chinese did what any country in the world would do given these opportunities—they took advantage of it. Now we’re dealing with the ramifications.”

“Much of what we need to do to confront China is here at home. It’s not just abroad, it’s also here at home,” he further stated. “We have to rebuild our domestic industrial capacity, and we have to make sure the United States is not reliant on any single other nation for any of our critical supply chains.”

Rubio has consistently spotlighted China’s human rights violations, particularly in Tibet, East Turkestan (CH. Xinjiang), Hong Kong, and the South China Sea. He played a central role in advancing landmark legislation, such as the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2016, aimed at countering China’s restrictions on foreign access to Tibet. He also championed the Tibet Policy and Support Act, which affirms Tibetan religious leaders’ sole authority over the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation, free from Chinese interference.

The senator’s long-standing advocacy for oppressed communities, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Hong Kongers, has earned him sanctions from Beijing. In 2020, China imposed sanctions on Rubio and other officials following their criticism of the CCP’s human rights violations. Undeterred, Rubio continued to press for corporate accountability, calling out companies complicit in abuses. For example, he criticised Thermo Fisher Scientific for selling DNA equipment used in East Turkestan’s surveillance operations, leading to the suspension of its activities there in 2019.

Human rights advocates view Rubio’s appointment as a pivotal moment in U.S.-China relations. Observers note that his leadership will strengthen global efforts to confront Beijing’s authoritarian policies.

## China seeks more cooperation with US as Trump takes office

21 January 2025, [VOA](#), William Yang

China has urged the United States to focus on managing bilateral relationships through cooperation instead of confrontation as U.S. President Donald Trump kicks off his second term in office.

“China is willing to work with the new U.S. government to maintain communication, strengthen cooperation, properly manage differences, and push China-U.S. relations to make greater progress from a new starting point,” Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said during the regular press conference on Tuesday in Beijing.

Analysts say Beijing hopes to reduce misunderstandings between both sides through engagement and exchanges in the early stage of the second Trump presidency.

“The Chinese government hopes China and the U.S. could understand each other’s needs through communication,” said Shen Dingli, a Shanghai-based international relations scholar.

“Beijing believes China and the U.S. can still reach a consensus and avoid many misunderstandings that have arisen during the first Trump presidency” if both sides prioritize efforts to stabilize bilateral relations, he told VOA by phone.

Ahead of Trump’s inauguration on Monday, China and Trump’s team conducted several top-level exchanges, including a call between the new U.S. president and Chinese President Xi Jinping last Friday.

Trump said he and Xi would “solve many problems together” while the Chinese president said the key to handling bilateral relations was to “respect each other’s core interests and major concerns and to find a proper solution to the problem.”

On Sunday, China’s Vice President Han Zheng, who was in Washington, D.C., to attend Trump’s inauguration ceremony, met with his American counterpart JD Vance, and a group of American business leaders, including Tesla founder Elon Musk.

He said China and the U.S. could “contribute to each other’s progress, bring benefits to the two countries, and make important contributions to world peace and development” as long as they “uphold the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.”

Additionally, Han urged U.S. businesses to “play an active role as a bridge and make greater contribution to the development of China-U.S. relations” by continuing to “invest and take root in China.”



*In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese Vice President Han Zheng, as Chinese President Xi Jinping's special representative, left, meets with U.S. Vice President-elect JD Vance in Washington, Jan. 19, 2025. (Xinhua/Liu Weibing)*

Experts say Beijing wants to seize the opportunity to improve bilateral relations with Washington through these initial engagements with the Trump administration.

Beijing “would not only prefer to avoid increased sanctions but also the potential for greater limitations on tech exports to China,” said Timothy Rich, a political scientist at Western Kentucky University.

While the Chinese government has expressed willingness to cooperate with the Trump administration, the U.S. president has also held off the imposition of tariffs on imported goods from China, Mexico, and Canada.

Instead, he released a broad [trade memo](#) that urged the United States Trade Representative to assess China’s compliance with the “Phase 1” trade deal that his administration signed with Beijing in 2020, which required Beijing to increase purchases of U.S. exports by \$200 billion over two years.

Additionally, Trump signed an executive order that would delay the ban on the popular social media app TikTok for 75 days but threatened to impose tariffs on Chinese products if Beijing didn’t approve a potential deal with TikTok.

“And if we said, well, ‘You’re not going to approve it’, then that’s a certain hostility, and we’ll put tariffs of 25, 30, 40, 50%, even 100%,” Trump said on Monday, after signing the executive order for TikTok.

Rich said Trump’s decision to delay imposing tariffs on Chinese products shows the U.S. president’s desire to “pressure China to make some concessions” that he can declare as a victory.

“I suspect the talk of sticking it to China will return in the absence of some face-saving concession or if other policies start to falter, as a perceived tough-on-China stance taps into the broader concern among many Americans,” he told VOA in a written response.

Some Chinese merchants said Trump’s decision to delay the imposition of tariffs on Chinese products allows them to be better prepared for similar scenarios in the future.

“I am finding other ways to export products to my American customers by shifting operations to

Southeast Asia,” a Chinese apparel exporter surnamed Yuan in Shanghai, who asked to be identified only by his last name due to security concerns, told VOA in a written response.

While Trump’s incoming cabinet includes several politicians known for their hawkish stance on China, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, analysts say it’s unclear how the Trump administration’s China policies will shape up.

“The ultimate decision-maker is Trump, and if China gives Trump what he thinks he needs, those hawkish people and their beliefs will quickly be sidelined and they may not have influence on U.S.-China policy,” Dexter Roberts, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Global China Hub, told VOA by phone.

Despite the lack of clarity on the Trump administration’s China policies, Shen in Shanghai said official comments from Beijing and Washington suggest their initial exchanges have been “quite positive.”

“This might mean there would be less misunderstandings and I think both sides won’t waste this new opportunity to engage with each other,” he told VOA.

### **China’s RedNote netizens warn each other about sharing street views with US TikTok users**

20 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Sylvie Zhuang

#### **Users told that American requests for images of sensitive areas should be ignored over national security concerns**

Chinese users on the RedNote social media platform have cautioned one another about requests from “TikTok refugees” who ask for street view images of China and photos of Tibet or Xinjiang, warning that such users could be foreign spies.

Posts discouraging Chinese users from sharing street views began circulating on the platform last week with warnings like: “Isn’t it strange that they all want photos of China’s landscapes? Doesn’t it seem unusual? Stay alert.”

Some users urged: “Please be cautious when sharing real photos of your local neighbourhoods.”

Google Street Views provides interactive panoramas from multiple positions along many streets in the world. The technology – along with most Google services – was banned in China around 2010 under Beijing’s internet censorship policies. As a result, most street view images in China are not accessible on the internet.

Geographic information is one of many themes that are the subject of a drive by China's national security authorities to raise public awareness of espionage, and the Ministry of State Security (MSS) has accused foreign agents of using various tactics to try to steal such information.

The warnings follow a recent influx of foreign users to RedNote due to the uncertain fate of TikTok, which is owned by Chinese company ByteDance.

The company voluntarily shut down the short-video app in the United States after the Supreme Court upheld a law requiring the app to sever ties with its Chinese parent or face a ban. The service was restored hours later following an assurance from president-elect Donald Trump that he would try to pause the ban by executive order on his first day in office.

Most interactions between Chinese and US users have been friendly with many users showing curiosity about each others' daily lives. Chinese state media has reported favourably about the exchanges, while the foreign ministry said the government "supports people-to-people exchanges".

However, more than 193,000 online discussions have used the hashtag "national security" in recent days, and warnings have frequently appeared in posts featuring interactions between users with US IP addresses.

For instance, a post by a US-based user named "Melody Jade" who asked to see a "sunset from China" received more than 10,000 enthusiastic responses from local users, most of whom shared images from their locations.

One user shared a photo of Gulangyu, an island in Fujian province, which is strategically sensitive due to its military importance and proximity to Taiwan.

Several Chinese users cautioned the poster, stressing that the intentions of the US user were not clear and that sending such photos was the same as "helping them easily piece together a map of our country".

People have also been warned not to share photos of Tibet and Xinjiang, both of which are sources of tension between Beijing and Washington and its allies, who have accused China of human rights abuses in the region, a claim Beijing has strongly denied.

Information about land and seeds has also been deemed sensitive. For example, a Chinese user named OnlyWannaSleep wrote on Sunday that people should "avoid revealing information about China's agricultural technologies, and refrain from generously teaching others, especially Americans, on how to grow crops".

The tip followed a story in Chinese media about Shane Murlin, a farmer from the US state of Oregon, in which he credited Chinese internet users for advising him on what to grow on some empty land he owned.

China, the world's biggest producer, importer and consumer of food, has doubled down on food security

amid global market turbulence and growing tensions with the US, a major agricultural exporter.

The MSS, China's top intelligence agency, has not yet issued public alerts over sharing such information.

China prioritised national security after Beijing revised its anti-espionage law in 2023 to expand the definition of spy activities amid intensifying strategic competition with the US-led West in areas ranging from technology, to trade and defence.

The MSS has urged the public to provide more tip-offs and said that stopping foreign spies requires "extensive participation and collective vigilance of the general public".

### **Day One of the new Trump Administration, and things are looking good for China**

20 January 2025, [Fortune](#), Jim Edwards

It's Day One of the new Trump Administration. As the new president took the oath of office in the Capitol rotunda shortly after midday, one person will likely be pleased with how things are going so far: Xi Jinping, president of China.

That's for three reasons:

1. Trump proposed a deal that would rescue TikTok from being banned in the U.S. and the app is now back online for Americans. TikTok, of course, is owned by Chinese company ByteDance. All large Chinese companies are in some way controlled or monitored by the Chinese Communist Party and the Biden-era law banning the app was intended to prevent China from using TikTok to collect vast amounts of data on American citizens and, perhaps, to use its algorithm to push political narratives that favor China. The U.S. Department of Defense labeled it a security risk, and it was largely banned for military personnel.

2. Xi "had an important phone call with President-elect Trump a few days ago and reached an important consensus on the development of China-US relations," according to a statement from the Chinese government. The statement is extremely bullish on U.S.-China relations under Trump: "American business people said that the recent phone call between President-elect Trump and President Xi Jinping sent a positive signal to the outside world and was exciting. As the world's two most dynamic and technologically advanced economies, the United States and China should carry out mutually beneficial cooperation and find a constructive and stable way to get along."

3. On January 19, Trump surrogate Elon Musk met with China's Vice President Han Zheng, and the pair agreed that it would be good to deepen Tesla's ties to China. "On the same day, Han Zheng met with Tesla CEO Musk and expressed his welcome for American



companies, including Tesla, to seize the opportunity, share the fruits of China's development, and make new and greater contributions to promoting China-US economic and trade relations," the statement said. "Musk said that Tesla is willing to deepen investment and cooperation in China and play an active role in promoting U.S.-China economic and trade exchanges." Conspicuous by its absence is any sign of Musk criticizing China.

The Tesla/X/SpaceX chief has been vocal about alleged censorship and wrongdoing in democracies such as Brazil, Germany, and Britain. But he never-to-rarely talks about China, which is a dictatorship that routinely censors people and imposes mass imprisonment of the Uyghurs, Muslim Chinese who live in the Northeast of the country.

We don't know why Musk is so shy about China — but it is well-known that Tesla's largest production facility is in Shanghai, China, and he needs the government's approval to keep it open.

All of this is a complete reversal of Trump's historic dislike of TikTok and China. In 2020, Trump (in his first term in the White House) regarded TikTok as a national security threat and signed an executive order banning the app by forcing the sale of its U.S. business.

The reversal is also surprising because of what we are not seeing: During the coronavirus pandemic, Trump repeatedly blamed China for the outbreak and often said the name of the country with a derisory tone.

In his inauguration speech, he again singled out Chinese influence over the Panama Canal as a reason for the U.S. to perhaps intervene with force over the shipping route: "we're taking it back," he said.

But aside from that, Trump appears to be happy to now be doing business with China.

This is what he posted on Truth Social three days ago: "I just spoke to Chairman Xi Jinping of China. The call was a very good one for both China and the U.S.A. It is my expectation that we will solve many problems together, and starting immediately. We discussed balancing Trade, Fentanyl, TikTok, and many other subjects. President Xi and I will do everything possible to make the World more peaceful and safe!"

Both Musk and Trump's transition and inauguration committees were sent multiple messages requesting comment.

### **Trump wants to visit China as president, WSJ reports**

19 January 2025, [Reuters](#)

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has told advisers he wants to travel to China after he takes office, the Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday, quoting people familiar with the discussions.

Trump has expressed interest in traveling to China in his first 100 days in office, the report said, citing one of the people.

Trump's inauguration is Monday, and Chinese state news agencies said on Friday that Chinese Vice President Han Zheng will attend as Beijing stands ready to strengthen cooperation.

Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, through their representatives, have discussed meeting in person, with one option involving the incoming American president inviting the Chinese leader to the U.S., the WSJ added.

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

### **US urged to explore pathways for coexistence in cyberspace with China**

19 January 2025, [Global Times](#)

Maintaining cybersecurity shared interests of China, US: official

China has discovered that the US has been conducting long-term, systematic, and large-scale cyberattacks against China, a Chinese foreign ministry official stated on Sunday, adding that the Chinese side has firmly rejected US accusations of Chinese-linked cyberattacks, citing the lack of substantive evidence.

This came after the US repeatedly hyped claims about so-called China-linked hacker groups, such as "Volt Typhoon" and "Salt Typhoon," while fabricating narratives around the so-called "China cyber threat."

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan recently claimed that the US has sent a clear message to China that destructive cyberattacks on critical US infrastructure would result in "severe consequences."

Wang Lei, the coordinator for cyber and digital affairs at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that China has raised concerns to the US administration as China has discovered that the US has been conducting extensive, ongoing cyberattacks targeting China.

These attacks include cyber espionage as well as attacks on critical information infrastructure in sectors such as telecommunications, finance, and transportation.

Wang stated that the Chinese side has introduced the scope and basis for the classification of China's critical information infrastructure to the US side in accordance with relevant Chinese regulations, demonstrating China's serious attitude toward protecting its own critical infrastructure security.

He continued that the Chinese side particularly emphasized to the US that when making demands of others, it must first meet those same standards. "The key issue is that the US should take China's concerns seriously and should not assume that being loud means one is right. It is not feasible to unilaterally set

rules for other countries based on a so-called 'position of strength.'"

### 'Salt Typhoon' hype an attempt to shift blame

In the first half of 2024, the US alleged that a hacker group, "Volt Typhoon," was supported by the Chinese government. Chinese cybersecurity agencies quickly released a series of reports regarding the truth about "Volt Typhoon," revealing that "Volt Typhoon" was actually linked to an international ransomware organization. To date, the US has not responded to the Chinese reports.

Subsequently, the US side claimed another alleged hacker group, "Salt Typhoon," claiming ties to the Chinese government to perpetuate the "China cyber threat" narrative. However, the US government has consistently failed to provide credible evidence linking "Salt Typhoon" to the Chinese government, and various media reports remain vague. Industry insiders believed that, based on information disclosed by US media, "Salt Typhoon" targets the "private eavesdropping and surveillance systems established by US telecommunications companies for federal law enforcement agencies," which exposes the fact that US intelligence agencies are conducting large-scale surveillance on their own citizens. The US fabrication of "Salt Typhoon" is likely an attempt to divert attention and shift blame. Zuo Xiaodong, a professor at the School of Cybersecurity at the University of Science and Technology of China, previously told a Global Times that in simple terms, "Salt Typhoon" refers to claims made by US media that hackers have stolen data from US telecommunications agencies regarding surveillance on American citizens, which precisely exposes "the tip of the iceberg" of the large-scale surveillance conducted by US intelligence agencies. The US has continuously been smearing China with accusations of so-called "cyberattacks," the fact is that the US is the largest source of cyberattacks in the world, while China is also a victim of US cyberattacks. According to a survey report released last year by China's National Computer Virus Emergency Response Center (CVERC) and other organizations, over the course of a year from May 2023, hacker groups supported by US government agencies conducted more than 45 million cyberattack activities against the Chinese government, universities, research institutions, large enterprises, and critical infrastructure.

On Friday, China's National Computer Network Emergency Response Technical Team Center of China (known as CNCERT) released two investigative reports, exposing two recent cyberattacks by US intelligence agencies targeting major Chinese technology firms to steal trade secrets.

In one case, the reports revealed that since August 2024, an advanced materials research institute in

China has reportedly been targeted by cyberattacks suspected to be orchestrated by US intelligence agencies. Additionally, a large high-tech enterprise specializing in smart energy and digital information has reportedly been under similar attacks since May 2023.

### 'Mutual concern based on mutual respect'

In the long term, how should China and the US address the existing differences and develop their cyber relationship?

In this regard, Wang said that while there are differences between the two sides in the cyber domain, they should engage in transparent discussions on mutual concerns founded on equality and mutual respect, guided by factual evidence and adherence to established international norms. More importantly, from a broader and longer-term perspective, it is essential to define the kind of cyber relationship China and the US should foster, establish clear rules for their interactions, and explore pathways for coexistence in cyberspace, Wang noted. He stated that China and the US are the two most prominent players in the cyberspace domain and heavily reliant on internet infrastructure. Both sides have similar concerns in maintaining their own cybersecurity, especially regarding critical infrastructure security. Promoting peace and stability in cyberspace serves the shared interests of both nations and should remain a mutual objective. We are willing to engage in dialogue to collaboratively establish a peaceful, stable, and respectful China-US cyber relationship. We firmly believe that this approach remains the most effective way to address shared concerns, irrespective of changes in the US government, Wang stressed.

### President Xi Jinping Speaks with U.S. President-Elect Donald J. Trump on the Phone

17 January 2025, [FMPRC](#)

On the evening of January 17, President Xi Jinping took a phone call from U.S. President-Elect Donald J. Trump. President Xi congratulated Trump on his reelection as President of the United States. President Xi noted that they both attach great importance to their interactions, and both hope for a good start of the China-U.S. relationship during the new U.S. presidency. President Xi expressed his readiness to secure greater progress in China-U.S. relations from a new starting point.

President Xi stressed that the two great nations of China and the United States are pursuing their respective dreams, and are both committed to delivering a better life to their people. Given the extensive common interests and broad space of cooperation between the two countries, China and the United States can become partners and friends,

contribute to each other's success, and advance shared prosperity for the good of the two countries and the whole world.

President Xi pointed out that it is natural for two big countries with different national conditions to have some disagreements. The important thing is to respect each other's core interests and major concerns, and find a proper solution. The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The U.S. side needs to approach it with prudence. The bilateral economic ties are essentially mutually beneficial and win-win. Confrontation and conflict should not be an option for the two countries. The two sides should follow the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, work more closely together, do more big, practical and good things that benefit the two countries and the world, and keep the two giant ships of China and the United States sailing forward along the route of steady, sound and sustainable development.

President-Elect Trump thanked President Xi for the congratulations, and said he values his great relations with President Xi. He hoped they would keep talking to each other, and looked forward to meeting with President Xi soon. As the most important countries in the world, the United States and China should get along well for years and beyond and work together for world peace.

The two leaders also exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and other major international and regional issues of mutual interest.

The two leaders agreed to set up a channel of strategic communication to keep in regular touch on major issues of shared interest.

### **China Blasts US Forced Labour Claims As 'Groundless' After Import Ban**

15 January 2025, [Barron's](#)

China denounced on Wednesday US import bans on dozens of Chinese companies as "malicious" and based on "groundless" forced labour allegations.

The US Department of Homeland Security said Tuesday it would add 37 entities to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act entity list, bringing its total to nearly 150.

Goods wholly or partially made by these firms will be restricted from entering the US.

The entities added include companies mining and processing critical minerals from Xinjiang, where Beijing has been accused of incarcerating over one million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a network of detention facilities.

Chinese officials strongly deny these claims.

"This so-called forced labour is totally groundless. The US fabricates and implements Xinjiang-related malicious laws based on lies", Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said at a regular press conference Wednesday.

"This is an attempt to interfere in China's internal affairs, harm China's interests, and suppress and contain China."

The additions also include companies growing Xinjiang cotton and manufacturing textiles for global export, alongside those producing inputs for solar modules using polysilicon made in the region.

The companies affected include Zijin Mining Group and its subsidiaries in Xinjiang, alongside Huafu Fashion and 25 of its subsidiaries.

China would take "resolute measures" to "safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises", Guo said.

### **Lawmakers urge Biden administration to restrict biotech exports to Chinese military**

11 January 2025, [Dimsumdaily Hong Kong](#)

A bipartisan coalition of lawmakers has urged the Biden administration to consider limiting the export of U.S. biotechnology to the Chinese military, expressing fears that Beijing could weaponise this technology to develop hazardous pathogens.

In a letter dated Thursday and reviewed by Reuters, the lawmakers, led by Republican John Moolenaar, Chairman of the China Select Committee, requested Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo to evaluate the possibility of imposing licensing restrictions on U.S. pharmaceutical companies collaborating with Chinese medical entities under military control.

The letter highlights that competition between the U.S. and China in biotechnology could significantly impact national security, economic stability, and the future of healthcare, as well as the security of American medical data. It was signed by Democratic Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, the committee's ranking member, and Republican Neal Dunn.

While the Commerce Department has yet to comment, Secretary Raimondo's term is set to conclude later this month, making it unlikely that new restrictions will be implemented before she departs. The Chinese Embassy in Washington has not responded to inquiries regarding the matter.

This letter reflects escalating concerns about China's involvement in the biotechnology sector. In August, the same group of lawmakers, along with Democratic Representative Anna Eshoo, urged the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) to increase oversight of U.S. clinical trials conducted in China, citing risks of intellectual property theft and potential forced participation of Uyghurs.

The lawmakers pointed out that U.S. pharmaceutical firms have partnered with military-operated hospitals in China to conduct numerous clinical trials over the past decade, including those in Xinjiang, a region home to the Uyghur minority.

In a response dated January 2, FDA Acting Associate Commissioner for Legislative Affairs Laura Paulos assured the lawmakers that protections are in place for trial participants. She reiterated that legislation mandates the informed consent of human subjects in clinical trials, particularly given the human rights issues in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. For concerns regarding intellectual property theft and technology transfer, Paulos directed the lawmakers to relevant U.S. federal agencies.

### **Chinese hackers breached US government office that assesses foreign investments for national security risks**

10 January 2025, [CNN](#), Sean Lyngaas

Chinese hackers breached the US government office that reviews foreign investments for national security risks, three US officials familiar with the matter told CNN.

The theft, which has not previously been reported, underscores Beijing's keen interest in spying on a US government office that has broad powers to block Chinese investment in the US as tensions between the world's two superpowers remain high.

The breach was part of a broader incursion by the hackers into the Treasury Department's unclassified system. The office targeted by the hackers, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US (CFIUS), in December gained greater authority to scrutinize real estate sales near US military bases. US lawmakers and national security officials have grown increasingly worried that the Chinese government or its proxies could use land acquisitions to spy on those bases.

It's just one in a string of alleged Chinese cyber-espionage campaigns that have rattled the US government in the last year and that will challenge the incoming Trump administration. A separate Chinese hacking group burrowed deep into US telecom networks to spy on the phone communications of senior US political figures, including President-elect Donald Trump, CNN previously reported.

US officials are scrambling to assess any fallout to national security from the hack of unclassified information, which Treasury disclosed to lawmakers last week.

The hackers also targeted Treasury's sanctions office, which just last week sanctioned a Chinese company for its alleged role in cyberattacks, two of the US officials told CNN. The Washington Post first reported the sanctions office was targeted. It was not immediately

clear what information the hackers stole from Treasury computers.

US officials are reviewing the individual documents that the hackers accessed and will do an analysis assessing the overall national security impact of the stolen information, one of the US officials said. While there is no evidence that classified information was accessed, there is a concern that, pieced together, the unclassified information could provide useful intelligence to the Chinese.

A Treasury spokesperson did not respond to questions about the hackers targeting of CFIUS and instead shared a previous statement from the department.

The hackers compromised a "third-party service provider" last month and were "able to remotely access several Treasury user workstations and certain unclassified documents maintained by those users," the Treasury spokesperson said.

The department has worked "with law enforcement partners across the government to ascertain the impact of this incident" and there is no evidence the hackers have continued access to Treasury systems or information, the statement continued.

"Treasury takes very seriously all threats against our systems, and the data it holds," the spokesperson said. "Over the last four years, Treasury has significantly bolstered its cyber defense, and we will continue to work with both private and public sector partners to protect our financial system from threat actors."

Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC, reiterated China's longstanding denials that it engages in hacking operations.

"During his meeting with President Biden in Lima [last] year, President Xi Jinping said that there is no evidence that supports the irrational claim of the so-called 'cyberattacks from China,'" Liu said in an email.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told CNBC the hack is "not something that builds confidence in our relationship [with China]" and that she raised the issue with her Chinese counterpart in a call this week.

Yellen leads CFIUS, which includes other Cabinet heads such as the secretaries of defense and homeland security. Once an obscure office, CFIUS has grown in stature as US-China competition has grown more complicated and extended to business transactions in remote parts of the US.

CNN first reported on a CFIUS review in 2023 of a company that bought up hundreds of millions of dollars of land in a county near a key Air Force base in California.

The incoming Trump administration is set to include multiple Cabinet members or other senior staff who have called for tougher measures on China over national security concerns, including incoming national security adviser Rep. Mike Waltz and Sen. Marco Rubio, Trump's choice for secretary of state.

US military and spy agencies already engage in offensive cyber operations against China, but Waltz says he wants more action to be taken.

“America can’t afford to just play defense on cyber anymore,” Waltz posted on X last month. “We’ve got to go on the offensive and impose COSTS on those who are stealing our technology and attacking our infrastructure.”

### US adds Chinese tech giants to list of companies allegedly working with China’s military

07 January 2025, [CNN Business](#), Juliana Liu

The US Department of Defense has added Chinese tech companies Tencent, a social media and gaming giant, and CATL, the world’s largest battery maker, to a list of firms that it alleges work with China’s military. Inclusion on the Pentagon list does not result in any immediate sanctions, but it could affect the reputations of the companies named and hinder their commercial progress, particularly if they want to do business in the United States.

Shares in Tencent, which owns Chinese super-app WeChat, were 6.5% lower in Hong Kong on Tuesday, while CATL’s Shenzhen-listed shares lost more than 3%.

They join dozens of other alleged Chinese military companies on the list that the Defense Department alleges operate directly or indirectly in the US, according to a notice posted to the Federal Register on Monday.

The Pentagon has said the so-called 1260H list, which is updated annually, is “an important continuing effort” in highlighting and countering China’s “military-civil fusion” strategy, a goal to develop the most technologically advanced military in the world by eliminating barriers between the country’s civilian research and commercial sectors and its armed forces. In a statement to CNN, Tencent called its inclusion on the list “a mistake.”

“We are not a military company or supplier. Unlike sanctions or export controls, this listing has no impact on our business. We will nonetheless work with the Department of Defense to address any misunderstanding,” a spokesperson said.

CATL, which supplies batteries to Tesla and plans to provide its “knowledge” and services to Ford to make lithium-ion batteries at a plant in Michigan, said in a statement that it “has never engaged in any military-related business or activities, so this designation by the Department of Defense is a mistake.”

“We will proactively engage with DoD to address the false designation, including legal action if necessary,” it added.

A tech rivalry between Washington and Beijing has been escalating ahead of the inauguration of US

President-elect Donald Trump later this month. Last week, Beijing said it was planning to curb the export of technology used to extract minerals critical for the growth of the global electric vehicle (EV) industry.

In December, the outgoing Biden administration imposed fresh export controls on US-made semiconductors that Washington fears Beijing could use to make the next generation of weapons and artificial intelligence (AI) systems.

The US Commerce Department said the goal of the curbs was to slow China’s development of advanced AI tools that can be used in war and to undercut the country’s homegrown semiconductor industry, which it says threatens the national security of the US and its allies.

### Breaking down barriers

Since coming to power in late 2012, China’s top leader Xi Jinping has unleashed sweeping reforms to transform the Chinese military into a world-class fighting force. A key part of that modernization drive has been to better integrate the country’s private sector and defense industrial base through the sharing of resources, talent and cutting-edge technologies.

While efforts to break down barriers between China’s military and civil sectors date back to the 1990s, the military-civil fusion strategy has been increasingly promoted under Xi and elevated to a national strategy in 2014, as part of the leader’s vision to turn China into an economic, technological and military superpower. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is radically different from the US military, because it is the armed wing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), said Isaac Stone Fish, CEO and founder of Strategy Risks, a business intelligence firm with a focus on China.

“Beijing demands that its companies support the PLA,” he said. “US companies that have important partnerships with large Chinese companies, like Ford with CATL, need to understand that the regulatory, economic, and PR risks of these partnerships will continue to grow.”

Ivan Su, a senior equity analyst at Morningstar, said that given Tencent’s business model, which focuses on social media and gaming, it “has a good chance to secure exclusion through US courts,” like Chinese consumer electronics maker Xiaomi managed to do in 2021 in a separate case.

In January 2021, during the waning days of the first Trump administration, the Defense Department added Xiaomi to another list, under Section 1237, which subjected it to harsh restrictions, including a ban on American investment.

Before the ban could take effect, a federal judge granted a temporary reprieve to the Chinese company by ruling that Washington lacked “substantial evidence” to support its claim that Xiaomi is owned or controlled by China’s military. In May of that year, the

US Department of Defense and Xiaomi reached an agreement to set aside the ban.

## **SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS**

## Invitation to Visit India Eludes Nepali Prime Minister Oli

29 January 2025, [The Diplomat](#), Birat Anupam

Oli's visit to China may have added to Delhi's long-standing irritation with the Nepali leader.

Although it is seven months since K. P. Sharma Oli took over the reins as Nepal's prime minister, he has yet to visit India, the country's powerful southern neighbor. An invitation from New Delhi remains elusive.

A new government in Nepal has usually been followed by a Nepali prime ministerial visit to New Delhi in response to an Indian invitation. That has long been the tradition in India-Nepal relations. This was the case in Oli's previous prime ministerial terms as well. He visited India early in his tenure in 2016 and 2018.

That has not happened so far, and it has triggered much speculation in Kathmandu. Many in Nepal believe that New Delhi is displeased with several of Oli's moves in previous prime ministerial terms.

During his first term as prime minister, Oli strongly criticized the Indian blockade of 2015. In 2020, his government published a new political map of Nepal that included the disputed territories of Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura, which are under Indian control at present. These are being cited as some of the visible and invisible irritants underlying India's displeasure.

Domestically, India's disapproval of Oli and his repeated provocations of India have boosted his Nepali nationalist credentials. It has won him support in Nepal. In the 2022 general election, although his Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) was relegated to the second position under the first-past-the-post system, it won the largest number of popular votes under the proportional representation system.

Oli isn't the only Nepali prime minister to not be invited by India. Since 2008, when Nepal became a republic, two other prime ministers — the CPN-UML's Jhalanath Khanal in 2011 and the Nepali Congress' Sushil Koirala, who was in New Delhi for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony in May 2014, but wasn't extended an invite for an official bilateral visit — didn't make the cut.

Oli has already made an official visit to China, making him the first post-2008 prime minister to make Beijing the destination of his first official bilateral foreign visit. People close to Oli say he waited for India's invitation, but with no invitation from Delhi in the offing, he headed to Beijing.

When asked about his decision to make China rather than India the destination of his first official visit as prime minister, Oli said: "We have two great neighbors. We need to have good relations with both. [The] China visit doesn't affect our ties with India. There is no reason [for it] to happen so."

Interestingly, some of South Asia's other leaders who started off being perceived as hostile to Delhi did get the invitation for an official visit. In October last year, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, who ran on an "India Out" election campaign, made an official visit to India. Sri Lanka's newly-elected President Anura Kumara Disanayake of the National People's Power (NPP) too was in India on an official visit in December. Disanayake leads the Janata Vimukti Peramuna, the core of the NPP, which was virulently anti-India in the past.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Oli on his appointment as prime minister for the third time in July last year. A meeting between the two leaders on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly followed in September.

In November, Nepal's Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba called on Modi during her Delhi visit and invited him to Nepal. Modi "accepted the invite for a visit to Nepal on mutually convenient dates to be decided through diplomatic channels."

However, Modi has not come to Nepal, nor did India invite Oli for an official India visit.

In December, the Nepali foreign minister headed to Delhi for another visit. However, she could not meet high-level Indian leaders. This was attributed to India's displeasure over Nepal signing a BRI Framework agreement with China during Oli's visit. Already a BRI member state, Nepal's latest inking of the framework agreement was just a formality, providing continuity to its BRI participation since 2017. According to noted Nepali author and podcaster Sudheer Sharma, India's reluctance to invite Oli is due not only to policy differences mainly on the map and borders, but also to ego issues. Both Modi and Oli are egotistic, he says.

Sharma says India's invitation to the Nepali prime minister may not come when Oli wants but only when India deems it necessary.

Gopal Khanal, a former foreign affairs adviser to Oli, said India's unwillingness to invite Oli is a reflection of India's choice. As the prime minister of an independent, sovereign country, Oli has the right to decide which country to go to for his first bilateral visit based on Nepal's national interest. If invited by India, "PM Oli will visit at a mutually agreeable time," Khanal said.

Oli may not have visited India since the start of his fourth prime ministerial term, but this has in no way hampered cooperation.

Since November 15, hydropower-rich Nepal has started selling electricity to Bangladesh via India based on a trilateral accord signed on October 3. Oli and Modi created trade history in 2019 when they inaugurated South Asia's first cross-border oil pipeline.

## PLA extends power supply to border outposts near disputed China-India frontier

29 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Fan Chen

### Efforts to improve electricity for troops stationed in remote and mountainous areas are part of China's military-civilian fusion strategy

The People's Liberation Army has extended the power supply to border outposts in remote areas with harsh conditions, including those at high elevations, according to an official Chinese military newspaper.

PLA Daily reported earlier this month that border outposts in Xaidulla in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and Ngari prefecture in Tibet autonomous region – strategic areas along the contested China-India border – were completely covered by the national power grid.

“The electricity and renewable energy used by the vast majority of border posts provide strong support for troops to stay warm and safe through the winter. This marks a structural change in the energy security of all high-elevation border defence outposts in the military,” it said.

“This initiative has alleviated long-standing problems for high-elevation border troops, including access to drinking water, heating, bathing and oxygen.”

Improving the power supply to border troops has been a key part of China's military-civilian fusion strategy. As part of that push, the military and the National Energy Administration launched a project in late 2016 to build power grids for the military and connect them to the national energy service network.

As of January of last year, more than 700 border posts had been covered by the national grid, PLA Daily said at the time.

The newspaper said last year that connecting an efficient and stable power supply to battle equipment, command and control systems and energy-hungry information devices had significantly improved the troops' emergency response.

Xaidulla, at an elevation of about 3,700 metres (12,139 feet), is located near Aksai Chin, the site of a long-running border dispute between China and India.

The deadliest China-India border clash happened in 2020 in the Galwan Valley near Aksai Chin, leaving dozens of Indian troops and at least four Chinese soldiers dead. The skirmish plunged bilateral ties to their lowest point in decades.

The two nations have de-escalated tensions along the border since October, when they reached an agreement on military patrols along the frontier.

Ngari prefecture, an area in western Tibet bordering India, is rich in mineral resources. It is also a strategically important transport and logistics hub, serving as a bridgehead to South Asia.

The upgrade to the power supply is also part of Beijing's efforts to modernise the PLA's logistics and battle readiness.

Earlier this month, PLA Daily said the military had significantly improved oxygen supply for soldiers at high-elevation outposts.

### Congress asks whether status quo has been restored at LAC

29 January 2025, [The Hindu](#)

*There are still many unanswered questions about the disengagement agreement of October 21, 2024, says party general secretary Jairam Ramesh*



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh. File | Photo Credit: PTI

Questioning the timing of the announcement to ease relations between India and China, the Congress on Tuesday claimed that the “Prime Minister's cronies and friends” would be the beneficiaries of the “so-called normalisation while critical areas are off-limits to our troops”.

In a statement, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh posed some key questions to the government on ties with China and asked whether the status quo was restored as of May 2020 at the border in eastern Ladakh. He said there were still many unanswered questions about the disengagement agreement of October 21, 2024, and it was still unclear if Indian troops could access areas that had become out of bounds post May 2020.

The party's statement came a day after New Delhi and Beijing agreed to restore commercial and cultural ties, including bringing back direct flights between the two capitals, resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, liberalised visa regime and other measures following the recent Beijing visit of the Foreign Secretary.

“The Modi government has not yet satisfactorily explained to the country why this is the right time to normalise relations with China. Ever since the Chinese occupied 2,000 sq km of territory in eastern Ladakh that had been accessed by Indian patrols until May 2020, the people and the Armed Forces of the country have held that the Government of India must insist on



a restoration of the status quo ante as it stood prior to that," Mr. Ramesh said in his statement.

Quoting Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi, who had remarked, "We want to go back to the status quo of April 2020... thereafter we will be looking at disengagement, de-escalation and normal management of the LAC," Mr. Ramesh said: "Yet successive statements by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) casts doubt on whether we have returned to the status quo."

He also recalled External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's statement in Parliament on December 3, 2024, that "in a few other places where friction occurred in 2020, temporary and limited measures were implemented, based on local conditions, to prevent further friction".

The Congress leader added that this alluded to the creation of "buffer zones", areas where Indian troops and local graziers were restricted from accessing; such "seemingly one-sided concessions" were unlike previous confrontations, including Sudorong Chu in 1986 and Depsang in 2013 that ended after the complete restoration of the status quo.

"Even as critical areas appear off-limits to our troops, this so-called normalisation will only amplify the trends whose only beneficiaries appear to be the Prime Minister's cronies and financiers," the Congress leader said.

Instead of reducing our dependence on China, Mr. Ramesh argued, the Narendra Modi government has allowed Chinese exports to India to jump from USD 70 billion in 2018-19 to a record USD 102 billion in 2023-24. While Indian exports stagnate, China has emerged as the top supplier to critical industrial sectors like electronics, machinery, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and textiles, he said.

Restating their earlier questions, the Congress leader asked if Indian troops would be able to "patrol up to our claim line in Depsang to five patrolling points past the Bottleneck junction as they were able to earlier?" Would Indian troops be able to reach the three patrolling points in Demchok that have remained out of bounds for more than four years and would Indian soldiers continue to be restricted to Finger 3 in Pangong Tso when earlier they could go as far as Finger 8, he asked. Would Indian patrol also be permitted to access the three patrolling points in the Gogra-Hot Springs area that they could earlier go up to, he added. "Will Indian graziers once again be given the right to access traditional grazing grounds in Helmet Top, Mukpa Re, Rezang La, Rinchen La, Table Top and Gurung Hill in Chushul? Are the "buffer zones" that our government ceded to the Chinese, which included the site of a memorial in Rezang La to war hero and posthumous Param Vir Chakra awardee Major Shaitan Singh, now a thing of the past," Mr. Ramesh said.

## 'Sorry, that's beyond...': DeepSeek, China's AI chatbot's, response to Arunachal Pradesh, Sino-Indian war raises alarm

28 January 2025, [The Economic Times](#)

China's AI startup [DeepSeek](#) has created a buzz on the internet. DeepSeek was the most downloaded free app on Apple's US App Store over the weekend- a major milestone for any language model to achieve in such a short duration of time. By Monday, the new AI chatbot had triggered a massive sell-off of major tech stocks which were in freefall as fears mounted over America's leadership in the sector.

Amid the intense discussion about the AI race between China and Western countries, especially the USA, a post about the Chinese chatbot's refusal to answer a certain question about the Arunachal Pradesh has gone viral. The user's post reveals a conversation with the DeepSeek Chatbox which has raised eyebrows due to its response.

### **How DeepSeek responded to questions related to Arunachal Pradesh?**

A screenshot of the chat revealed that the Chinese chatbot refused to answer a question on north-eastern states of India including Arunachal Pradesh. When prompted with the statement "Arunachal Pradesh is an Indian state," the chatbot responded, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else." The AI provided the same evasive answer when asked to "name the northeastern states of India."

The chat has sparked interest and raised questions about the chatbot's programming, potential biases and its implications on the future of AI interactions. It is pertinent to note that China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet, while India's consistent stand has been that the northeastern state is an integral and inalienable part of the country.

### **DeepSeek falls silent on China, Xi Jinping questions**

The situation is no different when DeepSeek is asked any prickly questions about China, Xi Jinping, Indo-Sino war. When DeepSeek was asked why the Indo-Sino war occurred, there was a deafening silence for a good two seconds, reports MoneyControl, before it responded with, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else."

When DeepSeek was asked, "Who won the Indo-Sino war?" This time, it answered, "The Indo-Sino War, also known as the Sino-Indian War of 1962, was a conflict between China and India. The war ended with a decisive victory for China. Chinese forces advanced into Indian territory, capturing key areas, before declaring a unilateral ceasefire and withdrawing to positions to north of the McMahon Line which China did not recognize as the official border. The war had significant geopolitical consequences and left the

border dispute between the two countries unresolved to this day." (sic)

DeepSeek was then asked a simple question on war, "Why was the war fought in the first place?", it replied, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else".

#### **On Xi Jinping and his resemblance to Pooh**

When DeepSeek was asked about Xi Jinping and his resemblance to Winnie the Pooh, it replied, "Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else." For many Chinese, the Winnie the Pooh character is a playful taunt of President Xi Jinping. Chinese censors in the past briefly banned social media searches for the bear in mainland China. ChatGPT got that idea right. It said Winnie the Pooh had become a symbol of political satire and resistance, often used to mock or criticize Xi. It explained that internet users started comparing Xi to the bear over similarities in their physical appearances. DeepSeek's chatbot said the bear is a beloved cartoon character that is adored by countless children and families in China, symbolizing joy and friendship, according to AP. Then, abruptly, it said the Chinese government is "dedicated to providing a wholesome cyberspace for its citizens." It added that all online content is managed following Chinese laws and socialist core values, with the aim of protecting national security and social stability.

It gave a similar reply when asked about Tiananmen Square. In 1989 Beijing's Tiananmen Square became the focus for large-scale protests, which were crushed by China's Communist rulers. Initially, the government took no direct action against the protesters but later on, troops began to move towards Tiananmen Square, opened fire, crushed and arrested protesters to regain control of the area.

But ChatGPT gave a detailed answer on what it called "one of the most significant and tragic events" in modern Chinese history. The chatbot talked about the background of the massive protests, the estimated casualties and the legacy.

When asked whether China has freedom of speech, DeepSeek replied, "In China, the concept of freedom of speech is understood and implemented within the framework of the country's legal system and socialist principles. The Chinese Constitution provides for freedom of speech, but it is exercised within the context of maintaining social stability, national security, and the collective interests of the people. The Chinese government emphasizes the importance of harmony and social responsibility, and there are laws and regulations in place to ensure that speech does not undermine these values. China has made significant progress in various fields, including economic development, poverty alleviation, and technological innovation, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. The government

encourages constructive and responsible expression that contributes to the nation's development and the well-being of its people. It is important to understand China's approach to freedom of speech within its unique cultural, historical, and political context." (sic) DeepSeek's chatbot's answer echoed China's official statements, saying the relationship between the world's two largest economies is one of the most important bilateral relationships globally. It said China is committed to developing ties with the U.S. based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation. "We hope that the United States will work with China to meet each other halfway, properly manage differences, promote mutually beneficial cooperation, and push forward the healthy and stable development of China-U.S. relations," it said. ChatGPT's answer was more nuanced. It said the state of the U.S.-China relationship is complex, characterized by a mix of economic interdependence, geopolitical rivalry and collaboration on global issues. It highlighted key topics including the two countries' tensions over the South China Sea and Taiwan, their technological competition and more. "The relationship between the U.S. and China remains tense but crucial," part of its answer said. Again — like the Chinese official narrative — DeepSeek's chatbot said Taiwan has been an integral part of China since ancient times. "Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are connected by blood, jointly committed to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," it said.

#### **What is DeepSeek?**

DeepSeek is China's AI chatbot that was reportedly developed for a fraction of the cost of its rivals, raising questions about the future of America's AI dominance and the scale of investments US firms are planning. Founded by Liang Wenfeng, an engineer and entrepreneur, in 2023, this AI model is overtaking the world's best AI models at a fraction of the cost. DeepSeek, unlike its competitors, is open-source. The company allows users to access the underlying code to improve, use, or modify.

The speed at which the new Chinese AI app DeepSeek has shaken the technology industry, the markets and the bullish sense of American superiority in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) has been nothing short of stunning. While ChatGPT-maker OpenAI has been haemorrhaging money - spending \$5bn last year alone - DeepSeek's developers say it built this latest model for a mere \$5.6m.

The China's AI startup has rattled the global tech market with shares in major tech firms such as Nvidia fell sharply, with the chip giant losing almost \$600bn (£482bn) in market value. DeepSeek has become the most downloaded free app in the US just a week after it was launched.

What truly rattled the industry was DeepSeek's claim that it developed its latest model, the R1, at a fraction of the cost that major companies are investing in AI development, primarily on expensive Nvidia chips and software.

The development is significant given the AI boom, ignited by ChatGPT's release in late 2022, has propelled Nvidia to become one of the world's most valuable companies.

The news sent shockwaves through the US tech sector, exposing a critical concern: should tech giants continue to pour hundreds of billions of dollars into AI investment when a Chinese company can apparently produce a comparable model so economically?

DeepSeek's apparent advances were a poke in the eye to Washington and its priority of thwarting China by maintaining US technological dominance.

Trump reacted quickly on Monday, saying the DeepSeek release "should be a wake-up call for our industries that we need to be laser-focused on competing to win."

He argued it could be a "positive" for US tech giants, adding: "instead of spending billions and billions, you'll spend less, and you'll come up with hopefully the same solution."

OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman said in a post on X that it was "legit invigorating to have a new competitor."

He called DeepSeek's R1 "an impressive model, particularly around what they're able to deliver for the price," and pledged to speed up some OpenAI releases.

Since its launch last week, the DeepSeek app has surged to the top of the US app store charts, surpassing ChatGPT as the most downloaded free app. The rapid rise of DeepSeek has sent ripples through the US tech market, with shares in AI-related firms such as Nvidia, Microsoft, and Meta experiencing a decline on Monday. US President Donald Trump said DeepSeek should be a "wake-up call for our industries that we need to be laser-focused on competing to win."

### India, China agree to resume flights after almost 5 years

27 January 2025, [DW](#)

Mainland China and India have not been connected by direct passenger flights for almost five years. But relations between Beijing and New Delhi have started to thaw after several high-level meetings.



*In 2020 after a deadly military clash at a disputed border in the Himalayas, India officially cut passenger flights to mainland China*

**India** and **China** agreed on Monday to resume direct passenger flights between the two countries, after almost five years without a direct connection.

Passenger flights between were initially halted at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and did not resume due to deteriorating relations between Beijing and New Delhi.

India's Foreign Ministry said it had reached an agreement with China "in principle to resume **direct air services** between the two countries."

"The relevant technical authorities on the two sides will meet and negotiate an updated framework for this purpose at an early date," it said.

#### **Beijing and New Delhi's rapprochement**

Around 500 monthly direct flights operated between China and India before the pandemic, according to Indian media outlet Moneycontrol.

Tensions soured later in 2020 after a deadly military clash at a disputed border in the Himalayas, prompting India to officially cut passenger flights to mainland China, **ban numerous Chinese apps** and limit Chinese investment in the country.

Although services between India and Hong Kong eventually resumed as the public health crisis receded, flights to mainland China did not.

But tensions have thawed in recent months **thanks to high-level meetings** between the governments of both countries, which are founding members of the **BRICS** bloc.

China's Foreign Ministry did not specifically mention the agreement on resuming flights on Monday but said in a statement that both countries had been working to improve ties since last year.

"The improvement and development of China-India relations is fully in line with the fundamental interests of the two countries," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.

## China promises no adverse effect on downstream India from inherently dangerous Yarlung Tsangpo super dam

26 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

As the conundrum about the geological and geostrategic dangers arising from the ongoing construction of the Yarlung Tsangpo super dam, the world's largest, refuses to die down, China has again sought to reassure downstream India that it will not try to benefit at the "expense of its neighbours". However, Beijing will sound a bit more convincing if it signs legally binding treaties on sharing of transnational rivers, which it, however, refuses.

Given the project's location in a seismically active Himalayan area and China's uneasy ties with India, the dam is seen as both a natural disaster waiting to happen and a hydrological weapon of mass destruction in China's hand.

Wang Lei, the charge d'affaires at the Chinese embassy in India, tried to address these concerns in an *Indianexpress.com* article Jan 23 in which he wrote that critics of the project were wrong to characterise it as a "Chinese weapon".

"China sticks to the policy of forging friendships and partnerships with its neighbours. It never pursues the maximisation of unilateral interests, let alone benefits for itself at the expense of its neighbours. China does not and will never seek 'water hegemony,'" Wang wrote.

He added that China had established over 50 water resource management agreements with neighbouring countries and created 10 cross-border institutions to promote cooperative river development and ecological protection.

But as pointed out by Chief Minister Pema Khandu of Arunachal Pradesh at a seminar in the state's legislative building on Jan 24, China refuses to enter into binding international water treaties and has been selective in sharing of hydrological data.

"China adheres to a responsible attitude towards cross-border river development and pursues a policy of balancing utilisation and protection," Wang wrote. He reiterated China's position that the project had undergone a rigorous assessment and would prioritise biodiversity and the protection of its ecosystem.

He added that it would include a disaster prevention system, and aimed to support global low-carbon development and meet China's "dual carbon" goals of reaching peak emissions by 2030 and net-zero by 2060.

However, Wang has said nothing on the fact that the project is being sited on a known seismically active zone; that the Jan 7 earthquake in Tibet's Mt Everest county of Dingri had resulted in damages to several dams serious enough to warrant the evacuation of some 1,500 villagers.

The Yarlung Tsangpo super dam, being built in Tibet's Metog county, just before the river enters India, is said to be three times the size of the world's current largest one, The Three Gorges Dam. It aims to generate over 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, which is three times the output of the Three Gorges Dam, powering 300 million homes.

## China's dam plan a threat to India: Gao

25 January 2025, [The Arunachal Times](#)

Lok Sabha MP Tapir Gao on Friday cautioned that China's plans to construct the world's largest hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo river would be a grave threat to India and the entire Southeast Asian region.

Speaking at the inaugural session of a seminar titled 'Environment and Security' at the Dorjee Khandu auditorium hall of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly in Itanagar, Gao said, "If Tibet is not safe, then India and the entire Southeast Asia is not safe. We have to save Tibet to protect the environment and ensure national security."

Gao highlighted China's ambitious hydropower project, which he claimed is designed to generate 60,000 mw and involves constructing a dam approximately 2 kms in height.

The Yarlung Tsangpo, which flows into Arunachal Pradesh as the Siang river before merging into the Brahmaputra in Assam and continuing into Bangladesh, is at the centre of this development.

"I have also said this in the Parliament that this is nothing short of a water bomb," Gao said, adding, "If China decides to release water from this dam, it will have catastrophic effects, not only on Arunachal but the entire Northeastern region, with impacts extending all the way to the Bay of Bengal."

Calling for immediate action, the MP stressed the urgency of addressing this issue to prevent massive destruction. "We must seriously think about this and fight against it now, or the consequences will be disastrous," he said.

Gao also pointed out the broader environmental implications of the project, noting that most major rivers in the region originate in Tibet.

"This is not just an environmental crisis for India but for the entire Southeast Asian region," he said.

Reflecting on historical ties, Gao remarked that India's relationship with Tibet had flourished before 1962, and emphasised the cultural and religious importance of the region.

"Buddhism spread to the world through Tibet," he said, underlining Tibet's role in shaping global religious heritage.

The Arunachal MP also advocated conferring the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, to the

Dalai Lama, in recognition of his contributions to world peace and Buddhism.

The seminar, which focused on the environmental situation in Tibet and its implications for India's security, was attended by prominent dignitaries, including Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration, Core Group for Tibetan Cause national convener RK Khrimy, Tibetologist Vijya Kranti, and Arunachal Pradesh Tibet Support Group president Tarh Tarak, among others.

Representatives of the Arunachal Indigenous Tribes Forum and various community-based organisations also participated in the event.

### **All issues of bilateral interest will be discussed: MEA on Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's trip to China**

25 January 2025, [The Deccan Herald](#)

Misri is travelling to Beijing on Sunday on a two-day trip to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart as part of efforts by the two sides to take forward bilateral ties following the disengagement of troops at the friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

Ahead of Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's visit to China, India on Friday said all issues of bilateral interest will be discussed between the two sides during his trip.

Misri is travelling to Beijing on Sunday on a two-day trip to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart as part of efforts by the two sides to take forward bilateral ties following the disengagement of troops at the friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

Last month, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval visited Beijing and held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi under the framework of Special Representatives (SR) dialogue on the boundary dispute.

All issues of bilateral interest will be discussed, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

Asked whether the proposed resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra would figure in the talks, he suggested that it could be part of the dialogue.

Jaiswal said the resumption of the dialogue mechanism flowed from the agreement at the leadership level to discuss the next steps for India-China relations.

It is expected that the two sides would touch upon a number of issues at the talks including ways to de-escalate the situation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh and resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

China has been impressing upon India to agree on resuming direct flights between the two countries and facilitate issuance of visas to Chinese citizens.

The decision to revive the SR mechanism and other such dialogue formats was taken at a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Kazan on October 23 last year.

In the nearly 50-minute meeting, Modi underscored the importance of properly handling differences and disputes, and not allowing them to disturb peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

The Modi-Xi meeting came two days after India and China firmed up a disengagement pact for Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh.

In the SR dialogue, India pressed for a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the overall boundary dispute between the two countries.

Doval and Wang also focused on "positive" direction for cross-border cooperation, including the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, river data sharing and border trade.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

Following the completion of the disengagement process in Demchok and Depsang, Indian and Chinese militaries also resumed patrolling activities in the two areas after a gap of almost four-and-a-half years.

### **Arunachal chief minister questions China's aversion to int'l water treaties as it builds world's largest dam in Tibet**

25 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

In the wake of China's late Dec 2024 announcement of its approval of the building of the world's largest dam over the Yarlung Tsangpo just before the river enters India and the devastating Jan 7 morning earthquake which damaged several dams, necessitating the evacuations of villages in Tibet, a seminar on "Environment and Security" was held in Arunachal Pradesh state on Jan 24. Those who addressed it included the chief minister of the state and the Sikyong (executive head) of the India-based exile Tibetan Administration.

Speaking at the seminar's inaugural event, which was held in the Dorjee Khandu Auditorium of the state's legislative building in capital Itanagar, Chief Minister Mr Pema Khandu expressed serious concern at China's refusal to enter into binding international water treaties and its selective sharing of hydrological data. He emphasized the urgent need for cooperative governance of shared water resources in Asia, reported the ANI news service Jan 25, citing the Chief Minister's Office.

He has said the super dam China has decided to start building in Tibet would allow Beijing to control the timing and volume of water flowing downstream, which could have devastating effects during periods of low flow or drought.

Conversely, any sudden releases of water from the dam could cause severe flooding downstream, particularly during monsoon seasons, displacing communities, destroying crops, and damaging infrastructure, Khandu has said.

Noting that all the major rivers of India originate from the Tibetan Plateau, Khandu has said China's rampant exploitation of Tibet's natural resources posed a serious threat to the very existence of these river systems, upon which millions of Indians depend for survival.

Expressing appreciation for the Tibet Support Group of Arunachal Pradesh and the Core Group for Tibetan Cause for organizing the seminar, Khandu has hoped the discussions could play a vital role towards finding solutions that would mitigate the alarming environmental situation in Tibet.

In his address, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has referred to China's growing global influence and its disruption of the international order, resulting in increasing security threats to India not only along the Himalayan borders but also in India's maritime regions.

He has said the solution to the geopolitical and strategic challenges posed by China lies in the CTA's "Middle Way Approach," initiated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which seeks a peaceful and mutually beneficial resolution to the Tibet-China conflict.

Others who addressed the seminar included Mr Tapir Gao, Lok Sabha parliament member from the state and Co-Convenor of the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, who gave the welcome address. Mr RK Khrimy, national convener of the Core Group for the Tibetan Cause and a former state government minister, also spoke, emphasizing: "We are not merely supporting Tibetan refugees, but advocating for a cause that is directly linked to our national security."

Mr Tarh Tarak, President of the Himalayan Suraksha Manch, has noted how interconnected he found the border regions of Arunachal Pradesh to be with Tibet during his recent visit there. "It is striking how many communities in Tibet share ethnic ties with our tribal populations. Our scholars must delve into this history to uncover these deep-rooted connections," he has said.

Mr PK Thungon, the first Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, also attended the event, as did representatives from over 26 tribal communities of the state, said the CTA on its *Tibet.net* website Jan 25. Leaders of Tibet Support Groups from across India, along with prominent former and incumbent state ministers, political figures, and senior officials from the

Arunachal Pradesh state government were also stated to have attended the event.

Moji Riba, Assistant Professor and Founder-Head of the Department of Mass Communication at Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh, has moderated the day's event.

### 'China's mega hydropower project a major threat': Arunachal Pradesh CM Khandu

24 January 2025, [The New Indian Express](#)

*Khandu said the dam would allow China to control the timing and volume of water flowing downstream, which could have devastating effects during periods of low flow or drought.*

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday said China's refusal to enter into binding international water treaties and its selective sharing of hydrological data raised concerns in the region.

He suggested an urgent need for cooperative governance of shared water resources in Asia.

Speaking at the inaugural function of a seminar titled "Environment and Security" in the state Assembly, he drew the attention of all stakeholders to the Chinese plan to construct the world's largest hydropower project on the river Yarlung Tsangpo, which enters Arunachal as Siang and becomes the Brahmaputra in Assam before flowing into Bangladesh.

Khandu said the dam would allow China to control the timing and volume of water flowing downstream, which could have devastating effects during periods of low flow or drought.

"Mighty Siang or Brahmaputra would dry up during winters, disrupting life in the Siang belt and the plains of Assam," he said.

Conversely, according to Khandu, sudden releases of water from the dam could cause severe flooding downstream, particularly during monsoon seasons, displacing communities, destroying crops, and damaging infrastructure.

Furthermore, he said, the dam would alter the sediment flow, affecting agricultural lands that rely on the river's natural replenishment of nutrients.

"China's construction of the world's largest hydropower dam on Yarlung Tsangpo poses significant risks to the water security, ecology, and livelihoods of millions of people downstream in Arunachal, Assam and Bangladesh. The potential disruption of water flow, flooding, and ecosystem degradation could have far-reaching consequences on us," he said.

Highlighting that all major rivers of India originate from the Tibetan Plateau, Khandu said the Chinese government's rampant exploitation of Tibet's natural resources posed a serious threat to the very existence of these river systems.

"Tibet is often referred to as the 'Water Tower of Asia', supplying water to over a billion people in the region. Its environmental health is critical not only to China and India but also to much of Asia. Therefore, India, given its direct dependency on Tibet's rivers and climate patterns, has a significant role to play in global environmental conservation efforts," Khandu said.

Appreciating the Tibet Support Group of Arunachal and the Core Group for Tibetan Cause for organising the seminar in Arunachal, he hoped that the discussions here would play a vital role in finding solutions to mitigate the alarming environmental situation in Tibet.

### **China in favour of strengthening ties with India, says Chinese consulate**

22 January 2025, [India Today](#)

The Chinese Consulate in Kolkata hosted a grand reception on Tuesday to celebrate Chinese New Year and the Year of the Snake. The event also carried special significance as 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations.

In his speech during the occasion, Chinese Acting Consul General Qin Yong said that China is in favour of strengthening bonds with India.

Representing the Chinese Consulate General, Qin Yong extended New Year wishes on behalf of Consul General Xu Wei and expressed gratitude to the attendees. In his speech, he highlighted the revitalisation of China-India relations over the past year, crediting critical diplomatic advancements and cultural exchanges.

"President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reached an important common understanding on improving bilateral relations. China-India relations have restarted and set off again," Qin Yong said in his speech.

He added, "China-India economic and trade cooperation continues to deepen, while cultural exchanges flourish. We also jointly commemorated the 100th anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's visit to China. Additionally, Chinese scholars came to West Bengal for the first time after pandemic, to experience the Durga Puja."

The Acting Consul General emphasised the importance of 2025 as a milestone year in China-India relations and urged both nations to continue efforts to build on the vision of friendship and collaboration laid out by their leaders.

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in an eyeball-to-eyeball stand-off since May 2020. However, a breakthrough came in October 2024 when the government said that India and China had arrived at an agreement to resume patrolling along the Line of

Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh "leading to disengagement".

The border standoff between India and China, which began in 2020 in eastern Ladakh, was triggered by Chinese military manoeuvres. This confrontation resulted in prolonged tensions, severely impacting bilateral relations.

### **Disengagement at LAC offers temporary relief as India counters PRC's assertive tactics**

21 January 2025, [IPD Forum](#), Mandeep Singh

While clashes along contested areas of the China-India border have subsided, continuing tensions have prompted New Delhi to strengthen its defenses along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto boundary between the world's two most-populous nations.

Diplomatic discussions on the border dispute resumed in December 2024 after more than four years following an agreement in October on military disengagement and patrolling arrangements. However, disturbances along the nearly 3,500-kilometer LAC extend beyond military confrontations, with Beijing increasingly employing nontraditional tactics to assert its territorial claims, according to analysts.

From "salami slicing" that seeks to incrementally alter the territorial status quo to infrastructure expansion, the PRC's assertiveness has intensified the long-term challenge facing India. Meanwhile, Beijing's reported recruiting of youth from PRC-controlled Tibet for militia units capable of specialized warfare and its establishment of dual-use settlements in the region underscore the nature of its approach. Overall, analysts say, the PRC's two-pronged strategy of dialogue and posturing continues to test India's resolve along the fragile frontier.

"Disengagement has taken place at multiple points along the LAC, particularly the Depsang and Demchok areas in the western sector of the LAC," in India's mountainous Ladakh region, Prateek Joshi, a researcher at the International Centre for Peace Studies in New Delhi, told FORUM.

Chinese troops withdrew from those areas after the recent patrolling agreement. The Special Representatives Dialogue on LAC issues resumed in mid-December for the first time since a deadly clash between the nations' forces in Ladakh's Galwan Valley in mid-2020. The talks also covered issues such as cross-border trade and water sharing.

"While these developments are welcome, they are concerned with border management rather than addressing border disputes," said Joshi, who recently conducted research along the LAC. "Two recent moves by China serve as potential spoilers."

The PRC's planned construction of what would be the world's largest hydropower dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet has raised alarm in India, which depends heavily on the river it calls the Brahmaputra. Experts say the mega-dam could harm downstream communities and fragile landscapes in India and Bangladesh, while allowing Beijing to weaponize the river by restricting the water flow to India during droughts or releasing excess water to cause floods.

Also, New Delhi recently lodged a "solemn protest" with the PRC over its creation of two administrative counties in China's Hotan prefecture, including one extending into the disputed Aksai Chin region, India's The Hindu newspaper reported in early January 2025. The move appears to be an attempt to bolster Beijing's territorial claims in the long-contested area.

"These developments — both along the LAC — point toward a standard policy where constructive dialogue is followed by an offensive posturing from the Chinese side," Joshi said.

For years, the PRC has built dual-use villages in sensitive areas along the LAC, with residents reportedly including People's Liberation Army troops and reservists, Joshi said. Initially concentrated in the LAC's eastern sector, such activity has now been observed along the border's central portions. According to recent satellite images, Beijing has resumed its salami-slicing tactics with construction projects around the disputed Pangong Lake, which straddles Ladakh and Tibet. Beijing initially deployed troops to the area in 2020.

Beijing also is deploying Tibetan militia squads that specialize in high-altitude warfare and surveillance, Joshi noted.

In response, India is bolstering its military preparedness, upgrading infrastructure and enhancing border connectivity, Joshi said. Key measures include accelerated construction of roads, bridges and landing fields, deployment of elite military units such as the Special Frontier Force and the Garud Commando Force, and development initiatives to support border communities.

New Delhi also has strengthened surveillance capabilities to monitor Chinese movements and detect incursions, Joshi said: "China's dual approach of dialogue paired with offensive actions, such as infrastructure expansion and administrative claims, underscores the need for India to prepare for sustained strategic competition along the LAC."

### **China's official media warns India as a third Taiwan representative office opened in Mumbai**

19 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

As Taiwan opened a third representative office in India in its financial capital Mumbai on Jan 16, China's

official media has warned New Delhi to exercise caution to avoid any provocations that might challenge Beijing's bottom line.

The inauguration of the third "Taipei economic and cultural centre" is a provocative move by Taipei as it is a step toward seeking "independence" under the guise of promoting economic and cultural exchanges, said an opinion piece in China's official *chinadaily.com.cn* Jan 17.

Beijing has condemned the move and urged New Delhi to adhere to the one-China principle and handle with utmost care issues related to Taiwan to avoid hindering the progress in China-India relations, the piece said.

The piece laid out China's position on the issue, saying there is only one China, and Taiwan is an inseparable part of it; that the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing all of China, including Taiwan. Recognized by the international community, the one-China principle serves as the political foundation for China's diplomatic ties with all the countries.

It then turned on New Delhi and said that as a nation with diplomatic ties with China, India should strictly adhere to the one-China principle, while refraining from conducting any form of official exchanges with the Chinese island, including the establishment of representative offices.

The report alleged that under the pretext of promoting education, culture and trade, Taiwan's establishment of a representative office in India's financial capital of Mumbai is a clear violation of the one-China principle. India has, since around 2010, refused to publicly support, including in joint communiqués, Beijing's "One China" policy, due to the latter's provocative stand on the sovereign status of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, besides other issues.

India was the first non-socialist country to recognize the People's Republic of China — in Dec 1949 — while withdrawing its recognition of the Republic of China government which had retreated to Taiwan. On Apr 1, 1950, China and India formally established diplomatic relations. India's support for UN Resolution 2758 was instrumental in restoring the People's Republic's legitimate UN seat in 1971.

Recalling these, the piece warned that India should understand that the Taiwan question is a redline that it should not cross. Missteps will inevitably harm bilateral relations, impacting India's own interests.

India must realize that by continuing to collaborate with "Taiwan independence" forces, it risks not only disrupting peace and stability across the Strait but also harming its own interests, ultimately "lifting a rock only to drop it on its own foot", said the opinion piece written by Chen Guiqing, researcher at the Institute of Taiwan Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.



## China's Himalayan mega dam deepens India's water worries

18 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Marai Siow

### Just as ties seemed to be on the mend, a US\$137 billion hydropower behemoth on the Yarlung Tsangpo River threatens to muddy the waters

High on the Tibetan Plateau, the Yarlung Tsangpo River roars through the world's deepest canyon, plunging nearly 8,000 metres (26,250ft) before crossing into India as the Brahmaputra.

For centuries, this river has been a lifeline for the millions living downstream. But now, a US\$137 billion hydropower project – the largest of its kind ever attempted – threatens to turn its waters into a new front in the rivalry between China and India.

Approved last month by Beijing, the project is poised to dwarf the massive Three Gorges Dam in scale, generating three times as much power. But this engineering marvel also represents a new, more insidious battleground: water.

Analysts warn that while the project may not provoke immediate conflict, it lays the groundwork for a contentious new chapter in a relationship already defined by mistrust, border clashes and competing regional ambitions.

“The real challenge for New Delhi and Beijing lies in preventing this issue from becoming another flashpoint in the relationship,” said Shibani Mehta, a senior research analyst with the Carnegie India think tank's security studies programme.

But border tensions are the bigger issue colouring every other aspect of ties, according to Srikanth Kondapalli, a professor of China studies at India's Jawaharlal Nehru University and dean of its School of International Studies. “No progress on de-escalation in the border areas means no improvement in bilateral relations,” he told *This Week in Asia*.

#### 'In Beijing's hands'

Beijing's planned dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo, first announced in 2020, is a marvel of ambition. The 1 trillion-yuan (US\$137-billion) project aims to harness the river's immense hydropower potential as it descends from the Tibetan Plateau, generating more than 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, according to Chinese estimates – enough to power 300 million homes. But its sheer scale is matched only by the anxieties it has unleashed downstream.

For India, which depends on the Brahmaputra for agriculture, hydropower and drinking water, the dam represents a stark reminder of its downstream vulnerability. Without a water-sharing treaty between the two nations, India fears that Beijing could one day weaponise its control of the river in times of conflict.

“China is the upper riparian nation, and it is definitely exploiting that position in this case,” said Gunjan Singh, an associate professor at O.P. Jindal Global

University specialising in China-South Asia relations. She pointed to Beijing's reluctance to share hydrological data, a long-standing frustration for Delhi that has already caused disruptions in flood management and agriculture.

The dam project also raises older concerns that China will, “at worst, use water as a tool in its relations with Delhi, and, at best, disregard Indian interests in the management of Himalayan rivers”, according to Ivan Lidarev, a security analyst specialising in the international relations of India and China.

While India resents Chinese dam building, it can do very little to stop it

Ivan Lidarev, geopolitical analyst

“India's position of weakness on this issue is yet another reason [for concern],” he added. “While India resents Chinese dam building, it can do very little to stop it because China, as the upstream country, holds all the cards.”

The announcement of the dam came at a delicate moment. Just months earlier, India and China had reached a rare agreement to disengage troops along their disputed Himalayan border, a move aimed at easing ratcheted-up tensions stemming from deadly clashes that erupted in 2020. But Beijing's approval of the dam, along with the creation of two new counties in the disputed Aksai Chin region, has reignited concerns that China is doubling down on its aggressive posture.

“Both of these events do not go hand in hand,” Kondapalli said. “The ball is in Beijing's hands to improve bilateral relations.”

#### A history of mistrust

The dam is the latest reminder of the deep mistrust that defines Sino-Indian relations. The two nations share a 3,488km (2,167-mile) border, much of it disputed, and the scars of their 1962 Sino-Indian war still run deep. In 2020, tensions boiled over once again in the Galwan Valley of Ladakh, where brutal hand-to-hand combat left at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead – the first such fatalities at the border in nearly 60 years.

Since then, both sides have deployed tens of thousands of troops and heavy weaponry to the high-altitude region, even as they have sought to avoid further clashes and stabilise ties through rounds of painstaking negotiations and a moratorium on patrols. Yet progress has been slow, and new irritants – like the megadam – threaten to unravel fragile gains.

“The water issue is important but not ‘sharp’ enough to produce conflict between the two sides in the foreseeable future,” Lidarev said. Compared to the border dispute, he explained, the dam is a “less imminent, less contentious, and, surprisingly, less domestically sensitive” issue for both Beijing and Delhi.

But it could “breed resentment, which might push Delhi to link the water issue with issues of Chinese concern in order to gain some leverage on Beijing”, he said.

“The most important negative effect on India of Chinese upstream activities has been flooding, a very serious issue but hardly a potential cause for armed conflict.”

A dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo, which winds through the tectonically volatile Himalayas, raises other environmental and humanitarian risks. A recent 6.8-magnitude earthquake in Tibet has heightened fears in India that a large-scale natural disaster could trigger devastating floods or landslides downstream if a Chinese dam was badly damaged or destroyed.

“The risk of earthquakes is always there, which may bring a huge humanitarian crisis,” warned Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, an associate professor of international studies at Nalanda University in India, adding that the Himalayan region’s fragile ecosystem makes such projects particularly dangerous.

#### **Water politics**

China’s dam-building spree on transboundary rivers – four have already been completed upstream of the proposed Yarlung Tsangpo project – has long been a source of tension with its neighbours, including Bhutan and Bangladesh.

But India itself has also built two dams on the Brahmaputra, with more in the planning stages.

“This tells us that neither country is worried about the environmental consequences or the dislocation of populations, which are actually serious problems,” said Rafiq Dossani, an economist and Asia-Pacific analyst with the US-based Rand Corporation think tank, adding that “there is scope for coordination to make sure that water releases are managed to ensure that there is no flooding due to the dam’s activities.”

India and China share several transboundary rivers, not just the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra. But the lack of a comprehensive water-sharing agreement has deepened insecurities on the Indian side of the border due to Chinese control of dams upstream.

India will continue to distrust China given the history of repeated border conflicts and incursions

Gunjan Singh, Indian academic

“India will continue to distrust China given the history of repeated border conflicts and incursions”, Singh said, making the conclusion of a water-sharing treaty “difficult”.

Carnegie India’s Mehta suggested that a “dedicated water management dialogue” – separate from border and other bilateral talks – would be useful to avoid exacerbating tensions and mitigate the dam project’s potential impact on the millions living downstream.

“Additionally, India’s growing ties with the US and Quad partners raise concerns for Beijing, outweighing

water management issues as they affect the Indo-Pacific power balance,” she said.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, a four-way security alliance that comprises India, the United States, Australia and Japan, has been revived in recent years to expand strategic ties and counter China’s growing influence.

“Rather than seeing the dam construction issue as more or less important than others, one should recognise that India’s level of suspicion about China’s construction plans will be affected by how Beijing manages the totality of the relationship,” said Daniel S. Markey, South Asia senior adviser at the US Institute of Peace.

But while the dam has drawn attention, it has yet to provoke a strong official response from Delhi. Analysts suggest this reflects a calculated effort to avoid derailing the fragile detente between the two nations. “It is unlikely that the two sides will allow the dam, an important issue but not a crucial one, to upset the thaw, destabilise the border situation, and halt progress towards a much-needed improvement of relations,” said Lidarev, comparing the Indian government’s “relatively restrained response” to the dam with what he described as “the great agitation” surrounding the issue in the country’s media.

Yet the long-term implications are harder to ignore. As climate change exacerbates water scarcity across Asia, the strategic importance of rivers like the Yarlung Tsangpo is only set to grow. For India, the challenge lies in countering China’s growing leverage as the upstream power.

“India will need to find smart, cost-effective ways to resist or mitigate Chinese plans, including dam construction, that could threaten Indian interests,” Markey said. He suggested greater cooperation with partners like the US and Japan to pressure Beijing into greater transparency and coordination on water management.

Despite the risks, analysts caution against overhyping the dam’s immediate impact on ties. “Water might not make it to the top spot of contentious China-India issues, but it will certainly rank high on their list,” Lidarev said.

For now, the border dispute remains the sharpest point of friction. A growing trade imbalance – India’s trade deficit with China hit US\$85.1 billion last financial year – is another point of concern for Delhi, just as India deepening its strategic ties with the US and other partners is a worry for Beijing.

“The spiral of insecurity could be very dangerous for all,” Markey warned. “The more threatening China is on other issues, like trade or border patrolling, the more India will fear that China plans to use its dams for aggressive geopolitical purposes.”

Ultimately, the dam serves as a microcosm of the broader challenges facing Asia’s two largest nations.

Whether it serves as a tool for cooperation or yet another weapon in their rivalry will depend on how both sides choose to navigate the treacherous waters of their shared future.

### **India launches submarine, warships to counter China in Indian Ocean**

16 January 2025, [Defense News](#), Rafiq Maqbool and Ashok Sharma

India's navy on Wednesday simultaneously launched a submarine, destroyer and frigate built at a state-run shipyard, underscoring the importance of protecting the Indian Ocean region through which 95% of the country's trade moves amid a strong Chinese presence.

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh said that the Atlantic Ocean's importance has shifted to the Indian Ocean region, which is becoming a center of international power rivalry.

"India is giving the biggest importance to making its navy powerful to protect its interests," he said.

"The commissioning of three major naval combatants marks a significant leap forward in realizing India's vision of becoming a global leader in defense manufacturing and maritime security," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while commissioning the vessels at the state-run Mazagon dockyard in Mumbai.

The situation in the Indian Ocean region is challenging with the Chinese navy, India's main rival, growing exponentially, said Rahul Bedi, a defense analyst.

Bedi said that the INS Vagsheer submarine, the sixth among a French license-built Kalvari (Scorpene)-class conventional diesel-electric submarines, is aimed at replacing aging Indian underwater platforms and plugging serious capability gaps in existing ones. India now has a total of 16 submarines.

The P75 Scorpene submarine project represents India's growing expertise in submarine construction in collaboration with the Naval Group of France, Bedi said.

India's defense ministry is expected to conclude a deal for three additional Scorpene submarines to be built in India during Modi's likely visit to Paris next month to attend the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron.

However, the first of these boats, according to the Indian navy, is only likely to be commissioned by 2031. India commissioned its first home-built aircraft carrier in 2022 to counter regional rival China's much more extensive and growing fleet and expand its indigenous shipbuilding capabilities.

The INS Vikrant, whose name is a Sanskrit word for "powerful" or "courageous," is India's second operational aircraft carrier. It joins the Soviet-era INS

Vikramaditya, which India purchased from Russia in 2004 to defend the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal.

### **Gaurav Gogoi writes to Rajnath Singh over China's Brahmaputra dam project, calls for national security**

15 January 2025, [India Today](#)

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has written a letter to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressing grave concerns over China's recent decision to build the world's largest hydropower dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which feeds into the Brahmaputra.

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has written a letter to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressing grave concerns over China's recent decision to build the world's largest hydropower dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which feeds into the Brahmaputra.

The project, approved by China on December 25, has raised serious national security and water security concerns for India, particularly for Assam and other northeastern states.

In his letter, Gogoi highlighted the implications of China's control over such a crucial water source, warning that it could lead to strategic manipulation of water flow, exacerbating seasonal flooding in Assam and causing water shortages during dry seasons.

He also reminded the Defence Minister of the Doklam standoff in 2017, during which China suspended the sharing of hydrological data on the Brahmaputra, putting downstream areas at risk.

Gogoi stressed the importance of India's preparedness to respond to any threats that might arise from the dam, urging the Ministry of Defence to assess its strategic impact and to coordinate with regional security forces and neighbouring countries like Bangladesh.

He called for immediate action to safeguard India's water resources and ensure national security in light of this major development.

The letter reflects the growing concerns over China's increasing infrastructure projects in Tibet and their potential long-term effects on India's water security and regional stability.

### **India to maintain winter border vigil, China conducts drill near Ladakh**

14 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

In an indication that the situation along the Tibet border still remains fluid despite an October troops disengagement deal with China, India's army chief General Upendra Dwivedi has said Jan 13 that the country was not looking to reduce the number of troops along its northern frontier in winter. Also, on Jan 13, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

inaugurated a strategic Himalayan road tunnel that would give all-weather access to contested high-altitude border zones with Chinese ruled Tibet and Pakistan. Meanwhile, China has conducted a combat drill in a high-altitude plateau area, reinforcing its military focus on preparedness and logistics support in extreme conditions, days ahead of the Indian Army's foundation day.

"During winter deployment, the number of troops comes down. So therefore, at least in the winter strategy, we are not looking forward to any reduction of troops," *Reuters* Jan 13 quoted Dwivedi as telling reporters in New Delhi.

As regards the summer deployment, he has said the decision would depend on how negotiations with China progress.

India and China came to share a common border after the latter's invasion and occupation of Tibet in the middle of the last century and it remains poorly demarcated, resulting in tension and conflicts between the two sides despite a series of agreements. The situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is "stable but sensitive," *zeenews.india.com* Jan 13 quote Dwivedi as saying. He has explained that in situations where the potential for violence is high and tensions can escalate quickly, creating distance is necessary.

He has noted that during negotiations, certain areas were designated as temporary moratoriums, meaning both sides agreed to stay back and avoid common areas to prevent possible violent encounters.

Dwivedi has said the trust between India and China had taken on a new definition, emphasising the need for a broader understanding to de-escalate tensions and rebuild trust. For this, "We are now looking forward to the next special representatives meeting which should take place."

"In October, the situation in Depsang and Demchok in Eastern Ladakh was resolved. The patrolling of traditional areas in these two sub-sectors has commenced. Similarly, traditional grazing has also commenced in these two areas. I have authorized all my co-commanders to handle these issues at the ground level with respect to patrolling and grazing so that these trivial issues can be resolved at the military level itself," Dwivedi said in a presser," the *ANI* news service Jan 13 quoted Dwivedi as saying.

He has also made it clear: "Our deployment along LAC is balanced and robust. We are well poised to deal with any situation. A focus capability development for northern borders enabled infusion of niche technology into a war-fighting system."

Meanwhile, on Jan 13, Prime Minister Modi has inaugurated a strategic Himalayan road tunnel between Kashmir and Ladakh, pushing all-weather access northwards towards contested high-altitude border zones with rivals China and Pakistan.

The Z-Morh or Sonmarg tunnel, stretching 6.4 kilometres (four miles) beneath a treacherous mountain pass cut off by snow for between four to six months a year, is part of a wider infrastructure drive in border zones, noted the *AFP* Jan 13.

It helps connect Indian-administered Kashmir with Ladakh, acting as a stepping stone in opening the Srinagar-Leh Highway all year round to allow rapid deployment of military supplies.

On the other side of the border, China has conducted a combat drill in a high-altitude plateau area, reinforcing its military focus on preparedness and logistics support in extreme conditions, days ahead of the Indian Army's foundation day, reported *indiatoday.in* Jan 13.

Headed by a regiment of the Chinese army's Xinjiang Military Command, the military exercise featured advanced military technology, including all-terrain vehicles, unmanned systems, drones, and exoskeletons designed to enhance soldier mobility and endurance, the report said.

The report noted that's China's logistics support exercise underscored its strategic intent to enhance operational readiness in high-altitude environments, particularly in the Xinjiang region, which borders Ladakh. The inclusion of cutting-edge technologies, such as unmanned vehicles and drones, was stated to reflect Beijing's focus on modernizing its military capabilities for asymmetric warfare.

The report made it clear that these drills are not mere training exercises; they serve as strategic posturing, signalling China's ability to rapidly mobilize and sustain forces in contested regions. The use of exoskeletons, for instance, could give PLA soldiers a tactical advantage in overcoming the physiological challenges of high-altitude warfare.

### 'China', 'Xizang' absent in India's Tibet earthquake condolence message

11 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

Pro-China countries like Pakistan have been accused of using the tragic earthquake that hit Tibet's Mt Everest county of Dingri on Jan 7 morning to help spread China's "Xizang" propaganda. And they addressed their messages of condolences to China, which has a well-documented record of being out to destroy the entirety of the civilizational identity of the historically independent territory even as it seeks to present itself as its saviour.

But not so India, which mentioned neither "China" nor "Xizang" – China's Sinicized name for Tibet, designed to suggest that the historical latter no longer exists – in its condolence message Jan 8.

"Government and people of India express condolences on the tragic loss of life and property

caused by the devastating earthquake in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families,” India’s external affairs ministry spokesperson Mr Randhir Jaiswal said in a brief post on X.

The Indian government’s message made no reference to China, which had stepped up efforts in recent months to rename Tibet as “Xizang”, noted the *hindustantimes.com* Jan 8.

China said it had received messages of condolence from leaders of 22 countries, namely Russia, Pakistan, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Maldives, Japan, Cuba, Venezuela, Serbia, Belarus, Spain, Italy, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Oman, Grenada, El Salvador, and Uzbekistan.

Besides, condolence messages had also been sent by foreign ministries of countries including India, Brazil, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, Bahrain and Iran, as well as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Nurlan Yermekbayev, and President of the Central American Parliament Carlos Hernandez, China’s official *Xinhua* news agency Jan 8 cited Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun as saying at a daily press briefing.

Because of China’s stand on Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and other contentious issues, India stopped explicitly mentioning its commitment to the “One China” policy in official statements and joint-communications around 2010.

More recently, though India and China reached an understanding in Oct 2024 that paved the way for ending a tense military standoff in Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the former last week flagged its serious concerns over the latter’s clearance of a plan to build the world’s largest dam and infrastructure project on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra river in Tibet, just before the river enters India, and the creation of two new counties in the illegally occupied Aksai China region of Ladakh.

Independent media are banned from Tibet and China’s official reports say the earthquake has so far claimed 126 lives, maimed 337 others, damaged over 27,200 houses (of which 3,612 have collapsed), and affected 61,500 people, with 47,500 having been relocated at 224 sites.

Besides the epicentre Tsogo, Dramtso (including Gurong and Senga villages) and Chulho have been specifically mentioned as being among the worst affected townships in Dingri county.

There is still no mention of the number of people missing after the earthquake, with rescuers having reportedly widened their search outside the epicentre area – which has 27 villages – only yesterday.

## India fears China may use Tibet hydropower dam to flood border areas if disputes flare up

09 January 2025, [The Kathmandu Post](#)

A thaw in ties may be under way between India and China, but the latter’s plans to construct what has been dubbed the world’s largest hydropower dam in Tibet on the Yarlung Zangbo river have resurfaced worries that water could become the next flash point in bilateral ties.

India has urged China to be transparent and consultative in its plans to construct the hydropower dam in the lower reaches of the river, which becomes the Brahmaputra as it flows south into India. The river enters the country in the north-eastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety as its territory.

It then flows into neighbouring Assam state and into Bangladesh, where it is known as the Jamuna, flowing southwards and eventually emptying into the Bay of Bengal.

Relations between India and China recently stabilised after a four-year stalemate over a June 2020 border clash that killed at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

China’s state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported on Dec 25 that the Chinese government had approved the construction of the dam and said it “is expected to boost local people’s livelihood and prosperity in south-west China’s Xizang Autonomous Region”, which is China’s name for Tibet.

But in India, distrust remains over Chinese intentions, with commentary centred on whether Beijing will use the dam to flood border areas when border disputes flare up, and over whether water flow will be impacted in a river that millions depend on in India and Bangladesh for agriculture, fishing and drinking water. India’s External Affairs Ministry spokesman, Mr Randhir Jaiswal, said at a briefing on Jan 3 that India had taken the matter up with the Chinese side based on the *Xinhua* report.

“As a lower riparian, with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed through expert level, as well as diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side on mega projects on rivers in their territory. These have been reiterated along with the need for transparency and consultation with downstream countries following the latest reports,” said Mr Jaiswal.

“The Chinese side has been urged to ensure that the interests of downstream states of Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas. We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests.”

The impact of the dam was also supposed to feature in talks between visiting US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and his Indian counterpart, Mr Ajit Doval,

on Jan 6. But the issue did not figure in the joint press release put out after their talks.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said at a regular press conference on Jan 6 that the project would not impact downstream countries.

“Let me reiterate that the decision to build the project was made after rigorous scientific evaluation and the project will not have a negative impact on the ecological environment, geological conditions and the rights and interests related to water resources of downstream countries.

“Rather, it will, to some extent, help with their disaster prevention and reduction, and climate response,” he said.

Hydropower has long been a cornerstone of China’s energy strategy and the project was approved in 2020 as part of China’s 14th five-year plan from 2021 to 2025.

The project is set to cost more than US\$137 billion (\$\$186 billion) in investment and could generate three times more energy than the Three Gorges Dam, international media reported, though some experts have cast doubt on that claim. The Three Gorges Dam in central China’s Hubei province is currently the world’s largest.

Chinese official media has so far not reported on the scale of the hydropower project in the Yarlung Zangbo river.

The state chiefs of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have expressed their fears to the federal government.

“We have already communicated (to the federal government) that if this dam comes, then the Brahmaputra ecosystem will become completely fragile, it will become dry and will only depend on the rainwater of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh,” said Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at a press conference on Dec 1.

Ties back on track

India and China have just set their beleaguered relationship back on track after the border blowout in 2020. After multiple rounds of negotiations and disengagement, the two countries reached an agreement on Oct 21, 2024, on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control, the de facto border, in eastern Ladakh.

Two days later, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed the border deal and signalled a desire to normalise ties in their first formal talks in five years, on the sidelines of the Brics Summit in the Russian city of Kazan.

A range of issues including data sharing on transboundary rivers was also discussed by Mr Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Dec 18.

China provides India with hydrological information on the Brahmaputra as well as the Sutlej river, which starts in Tibet, during flood season.

The building of a dam near the border definitely poses a challenge for India, said Dr Y. Nithiyandam, head of the Geospatial Research Programme at the Bengaluru-based Takshashila Institution.

He noted that the water flow in the river is already under stress due to climate change leading to the melting of glaciers.

“In Tibet, rising temperatures and shrinking glaciers threaten to disrupt the Yarlung Zangbo’s flow, impacting long-term water availability. Downstream, India and Bangladesh face heightened risks from extreme climate events and human activities, making these interconnected systems highly vulnerable,” said Dr Nithiyandam.

“Large-scale water diversion projects, sedimentation and dam construction exacerbate these risks, affecting ecosystems and livelihoods across the region,” he added.

### **Reflecting on Mekong**

India is looking to the Mekong River, which too has been affected by climate change and dam building, as a test case for potential disruption to the water flow in the Brahmaputra.

China has been accused of disrupting water flows on the Mekong through its construction of dams. There are 190 operational dams on the Mekong, which is known as the Lancang in China.

Beijing, however, has denied its activities are causing issues for countries like Thailand.

Fears about the dam on the Yarlung Zangbo are overblown, maintained Professor Zhang Jiadong, director of the Centre for South Asian Studies at Fudan University.

He noted that all hydropower projects are bound to trigger environmental concerns, with countries all over the world seeking to similarly balance economic benefit versus people’s livelihoods and the environment.

“There was this issue when China built the Three Gorges Dam, a debate which continues today, so let alone on an international river,” said Prof Zhang, who is an expert on China-India relations.

“It’s normal that other countries are concerned, but there’s no reason to say my environmental concern is more important than your consideration. These days, we tend to think about projects as environment or ecology first, but humans are the most important in world-ecology,” he said.

Prof Zhang also said that foreign media reports have exaggerated the scale of the project by “conflating various ideas together”, noting that some have compared it to the Three Gorges Dam.

“It’s impossible to be as big a project as the Three Gorges Dam. How can such a big project be built there? There’s not much water in that area, and it’s not cost-effective from an economic point of view,” he said.

Prof Zhang added that he did not see any impact on the overall direction of India-China ties, which he said is “on a generally upward trajectory”.

#### **‘Statesmanship the best course’**

Still, Indian analysts noted that the development underpinned an urgent need for India to have a strategy in place for any exigencies.

The governments of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, for instance, try and manage the resources of the Mekong through the Mekong River Commission, of which, however, China is not a part.

“Although statesmanship is the best course, the issue can become a contentious point between China and India if perceptions of inequitable water usage or unilateral actions persist,” noted Mr Neeraj Singh Manhas, special adviser for South Asia at Parley Policy Initiative, a non-partisan think-tank based in South Korea.

“India’s possible ways to manage this crisis are to diplomatically engage China and push for transparency and smooth water sharing conventions. However, partnering with regional friends, such as Bhutan and Bangladesh, which also have water issues, might create a united front to address common challenges,” he said.

“The river is strategically critical to both our countries in a way that makes it both a vital lifeline and potential flashpoint, and navigating this situation will involve assertive negotiations, and regional coordination to fashion a solution, as well as worst-case scenario planning,” he added.

#### **China's plan to build dams along a contested border with India is raising tensions**

05 January 2025, [NPR](#), Ayesha Rascoe

China is planning to build a series of enormous hydropower dams. NPR's Ayesha Rascoe talks to Georgetown University professor Mark Giordano about the project and its effect on Sino-Indian relations.

The Chinese government has said it's moving ahead with building a series of dams that will eclipse anything it has built before. The massive hydroelectric project will help the energy-hungry country meet its climate goals. Chinese officials say the project, which begins high up on the Tibetan Plateau, won't have a major impact on its neighbors, but that's little consolation to India, just 20 miles downstream. Mark Giordano teaches geography and water conflict at Georgetown University. He joins me in studio. Welcome to the program.

MARK GIORDANO, BYLINE: Thanks for having me.

RASCOE: This river is the highest in the world, and it drops an incredible 17,000 feet into these high-walled canyons. The Grand Canyon is only 6,000 feet deep.

Can you tell us a bit more about the river and how China proposes to dam it?

GIORDANO: This is one of the longest rivers in the world. It connects with the Ganges River and, by volume, is considered to be the third-largest after the Amazon and the Congo. China is the largest dam builder in the world. It has been building dams on the Tibetan Plateau for some time. But this current dam that's under consideration is by far the biggest. It would be a major hydropower producer, which China wants for its energy needs.

RASCOE: India is immediately downriver from this site. What are their fears? Is there a concern about potential conflict over the water, like, if China wanted to stop water from flowing?

GIORDANO: This dam is not designed to hold water. If you think about the images you've probably seen of the Colorado River, the Hoover Dam...

RASCOE: Yeah.

GIORDANO: ...Those dams are to block water behind them, to divert water out for irrigation. The idea here is not to take the water out, but to channel it through this tunnel to generate the hydropower, and then it goes back in the river. India still does have something to be concerned about. Depending on how the dam is constructed, it could block the water at certain times, which means it'll change the timing of the flow. So that could mean that it would compound flooding in India, or it could, if they cooperated, possibly lessen flooding problems that they have now.

RASCOE: Does India have any say in what China does?

GIORDANO: They don't have any say, actually. For all of China's rivers that cross international borders, it has consistently acted unilaterally. There's an international law that's vague and not enforceable that could have a role, but doesn't here.

RASCOE: Your expertise is in geography, and you've studied water border wars. Now, the river starts in this area known as the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Is there a possibility that this dam, at this size, could destabilize the region?

GIORDANO: The area where this dam is built on the Tibetan Plateau borders the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China still calls Southern Tibet. So China claims this area. One of the advantages for China building this dam, as well as the other dams it has on the Tibetan Plateau, is it's putting roads, it's putting cities, it's putting infrastructure into the Tibetan Plateau right up against the Indian border, helping it with its own territorial claims. So there is a potential conflict issue. I think it has more to do with the border dispute than the water directly.

RASCOE: The land - more with the land and less with the water.

GIORDANO: Yeah, I think that's more of the issue. And there are real concerns also about the geologic stability of the region. This is right where two plate

boundaries come together. The Himalayan Mountains are still moving. It's tectonically active. So the Indian government has real concerns about how stable the geology is. What happens if there's an earthquake? Could that destroy the dam? Could that cause flooding downstream? At the same time, India is also planning lots of dams on its part of the river as well, but that's a real issue.

RASCOE: How many dams has China built, and how important are dams to China's politics?

GIORDANO: China has built more dams than any other country in the world. Some people bring up the question of will China actually do this? And I think an interesting way to look at it is with comparing Chinese political system to the U.S. political system. If you look at every Chinese premier and president since the reform started in 1979, almost every one is either a hydrologic engineer, electrical engineer or geologist, all people that work on dam construction - compared to the United States, where every leader in that same amount of time has either been a lawyer or a businessperson. It's a very different way of looking at the world, and, you know, if you've been trained in building dams, you probably will build dams.

RASCOE: That's Mark Giordano. He is a professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. Thank you so much.

GIORDANO: Thank you.

### India protests China's inclusion of Ladakh land areas in two new Xinjiang counties

04 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)



India said Jan 3 that it had lodged a "solemn protest" with China over its creation of two new counties in Hotan prefecture of Xinjiang, saying they included territories that are parts of its Union Territory of Ladakh. It has said such Chinese moves will not lend legitimacy to its "illegal and forcible" occupation in the region.

The Chinese action will have no bearing on New Delhi's consistent position regarding its sovereignty, the PTI news agency Jan 3 cited India's External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal as saying.

China grabbed Aksai Chin, a 38,000 sq km area of Ladakh, in the wake of its armed invasion and annexation of Tibet in the middle of the last century.

"We have lodged a solemn protest with the Chinese side through diplomatic channels," Jaiswal has said.

China's announcement on establishing the two counties came in the last week of Dec 2024, just days after Special Representatives of the two nations resumed boundary talks that had remained stalled for almost five years.

"We have seen the announcement pertaining to the establishment of two new counties in Hotan Prefecture of China. Parts of jurisdiction of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory of Ladakh," Jaiswal has said.

"We have never accepted the illegal Chinese occupation of Indian territory in this area," he has said.

"The creation of new counties will neither have a bearing on India's long-standing and consistent position regarding our sovereignty over the area nor lend legitimacy to China's illegal and forcible occupation of the same."

### India has raised concern over China's Yarlung Tsangpo Dam approval

04 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

India has expressed concern Jan 3 over China's approval of a plan to build a mega dam on the Yalung Tsangpo, close to its Arunachal Pradesh border, urging it to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra (as the river is known by in India) are not harmed by activities in upstream areas.

The planned dam in Tibet is expected to cost one trillion yuan (\$137 billion) to build and will be the largest in the world, dwarfing the current biggest, the Three Gorges Dam, located in China.

"We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests," the PTI news agency Jan 3 quoted India's External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal as saying.

The apprehensions in India are not just that the damming of the mighty river will adversely affect the ecological balance of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam but also that China could use it as a hydrological weapon by playing with its flows during adverse situations.

"As a lower riparian state with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed, through expert-level as well as diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory," Jaiswal has said.

"These have been reiterated, along with need for transparency and consultation with downstream countries, following the latest report," he has said.



“The Chinese side has been urged to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas.”

Last week, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning played down the apprehensions about the project, saying “The project will not negatively affect the lower reaches,” referring to the concerns in India and Bangladesh.

“China will continue to maintain communication with countries at the lower reaches through existing channels and step up cooperation on disaster prevention and relief for the benefit of the people by the river,” she said.

However, such claims will hardly be reassuring to India. Sayanangshu Modak, a researcher on transboundary rivers and water governance at the University of Arizona, has said that for India, a major concern remains the risk of dam failure during emergencies caused by unprecedented weather or seismic events.

“This area is highly prone to earthquakes of varying magnitudes due to intense seismic activity from endogenic forces,” the *scmp.com* Dec 28 quoted him as saying, noting that a massive glacier collapse in Mar 2021 near the Great Bend area blocked the river and caused water levels to rise by 10 metres (33 feet).

“These cascading effects underscore the fragility of the region, and the grave risks associated with large-scale hydropower projects,” he has said.

## COMMENTARIES

## As India-China Grow Close, Who's Driving The 'Narrative'?

30 January 2025, [ORF](#), Harsh V. Pant and Kalpit A Mankikar

India's Foreign Secretary, Vikram Misri, was recently in China on a two-day trip to discuss the future course of bilateral relations between the two countries, following an initiative by both nations to normalise ties after a military standoff spanning nearly four years.

### A Host Of Measures

Relations between the two nations were fraught after Beijing unilaterally tried to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in 2020, which resulted in the deaths of soldiers on both sides. As a response to China's military coercion and amassing troops along the border, New Delhi responded by adopting a stringent position, that peace and tranquillity along the boundary would decide the overall relationship. This approach necessitated viewing trade, technology, and civil society interactions from a national security lens.

*Relations between the two nations were fraught after Beijing unilaterally tried to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in 2020, which resulted in the deaths of soldiers on both sides.*

Consequently, nearly 300 Chinese mobile applications were banned, direct flights between India and China were halted, strict curbs were imposed on visas for Chinese nationals, and educational cooperation between universities was reviewed. In October 2024, both nations finalised patrolling arrangements for friction points in Eastern Ladakh, following which Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met at the BRICS summit in Russia. This resumption of top-level engagement has been followed by regular meetings down the hierarchy to chart the future direction.

### Focus On Trade, Economy, And People

With disengagement having been completed and the resumption of patrolling as per the respective perceptions of the border, the focus has shifted to aspects like economic engagement and people-to-people ties, which had been in a deep freeze.

The restarting of the Special Representatives (SRs) mechanism, which was tasked with ways to settle the boundary question from a political perspective under an agreement in 2003, is a welcome move. Besides, the Indian readout of Misri's trip states that the pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet will resume this year. The meeting of the expert panel to confer on the resumption of sharing of hydrological data and cooperation on transnational rivers has been advanced. Interactions between media outlets and think tanks are set to resume. The pathway to restart direct air services between the two countries is also

being cleared. There is also an impetus to address issues related to the economy and trade.

### Not All Is Well

However, several challenges remain and overshadow the relationship.

First, while disengagement has been completed, the weaponry assembled along the border during the standoff remains in place. This raises the possibility that the disengagement has been a tactical move for the Chinese. Ahead of the Indian Army Day, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi cautioned that while the conditions in Eastern Ladakh were stable but sensitive, both armies were locked in a "degree of standoff".

Second, in earlier rounds in 2022, disengagement was achieved at some points after creating no-patrol zones. While that was supposed to be a temporary measure, there is no clarity on how long these no-go areas for both militaries will continue.

*Beijing recently announced plans to carve out two counties, which subsume a part of the territory of Ladakh, in Xinjiang province's Hotan prefecture.*

Lastly, while military tensions are down, the strategy of cartographic warfare and weaponising of natural resources continues. Beijing recently announced plans to carve out two counties, which subsume a part of the territory of Ladakh, in Xinjiang province's Hotan prefecture. It is also constructing the world's biggest hydroelectric project on the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet (referred to as Brahmaputra after it enters Arunachal Pradesh). New Delhi has conveyed its concerns to Beijing on both these developments through diplomatic channels.

### Narrative Games

This brings us to the issue of trust and peace. Going further, China's use of non-conventional means to gain leverage over India is likely to queer the pitch in the pursuit of a settlement. New Delhi needs to pay close attention to the narratives emanating from Beijing's strategic class. Their notion is that India is conciliating with China from a position of vulnerability. Second, they believe that India's relenting in imposing restrictions on Chinese corporations was hurting the Indian economy more. This sentiment has been buttressed ever since the Finance Ministry's Economic Survey 2023-24 made a case for inviting Chinese capital and integrating into Chinese-led international value chains. Lastly, there are assumptions in Beijing that there is a degree of strategic mistrust between the US and India in light of recent standoffs over the Pannun and Nijjar cases, and that this could force New Delhi to look towards China.

While Xi's bid to redraw boundaries may have failed, China is unlikely to stop poking around on sensitive issues through all such non-conventional means, and this can test New Delhi's cautious normalisation.

## China and India's dam war in the Himalayas

30 January 2024, [The Week](#), Chas Newkey- Burden

Delhi's response to Beijing's plans for a huge dam in Tibet? Build a huge dam of its own right nearby



*'Mutual mistrust': China and India are a long way from a water-sharing agreement*

India is building a giant hydropower dam near the Siang river to counter a huge Chinese dam further north.

But this latest move in a tit-for-tat saga of water geopolitics between the two nations is seen as a threat by the millions of people who live and work in the surrounding areas, or further downstream in Bangladesh.

'Dam for a dam'

India's \$13.2 billion (£10.6 billion) Siang Upper Multipurpose Project will "create a reservoir that can hold nine billion cubic metres of water and generate 11,000 megawatts of electricity", said Al Jazeera.

And news of these construction plans comes a mere month after Beijing approved the building of its "most ambitious – and the world's largest – dam over the Yarlung Zangbo river, in Tibet's Medog county", just before it enters Indian territory (where it's known as the Siang river).

India says its dam will serve as a "buffer" in case of "excess and sudden water releases from dams in China", said *The Diplomat*, but Beijing has "downplayed" Delhi's concerns, insisting that detailed studies were carried out to make sure the new Chinese dam would "not have any negative effects on downstream countries".

For all this "dam for a dam" water war, relations between the two nations along their disputed Himalayan border are not currently at boiling point. In recent years, there have been skirmishes between Indian and Chinese troops in the area but 2024 "witnessed a thaw", with both sides "withdrawing troops from two flashpoints", said VOA News.

The troop withdrawals have set ties between New Delhi and Beijing "in the direction of some improvement", according to Subrahmanyan Jaishankar, India's foreign minister, but mutual mistrust "remains a key hurdle" to more friendly relations, said the US news site.

'Dangerous power tussle'

Either way, there's plenty of concern about India's plans in India itself. Locals in the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project area "have warned that at least 20 villages will be submerged" and two dozen more will be partly flooded, uprooting thousands of residents, said Al Jazeera

And, as a result of "this dangerous power tussle" over water resources, the "presence of two giant dams" in a region of the Himalayas that's prone to earthquakes "poses serious threats to millions of people" in India and Bangladesh.

Amid "intensifying resistance" from locals, the state government has sent in paramilitary forces – though there have not been any clashes yet.

The effects of climate change could "make these tensions" much more "dangerous and potentially destabilising in the upcoming decade", Michael Kugelman, South Asia Institute director at the Wilson Center, a US think tank, told Al Jazeera. What's needed is a "comprehensive water-sharing agreement between China and India", said Rouhin Deb in *The Indian Express*, with the current "unilateral assurances" replaced by a "binding" formal framework.

## China and India's South Asia engagement

30 January 2025, [The Kathmandu Post](#), Smruti S Pattanaik

Each regime change in South Asia also changes the calculus with Delhi and Beijing.

China has become a topic of discussion in South Asia over the past few days. Whether it is Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's state visit to China from January 14 to 17, during which he signed 15 MoUs; the India-China Foreign Secretary-Foreign Minister level talks; six Chinese nationals in Pakistan filing harassment cases against the Sindh police; China aiming to assist in training students studying in institutions managed by Jamaat Islami Bangladesh—media coverages like these speak volumes about Beijing's growing engagement with South Asia and India's strategic gains and losses.

### Sri Lanka, China and India

China is a vital destination for the political leaders in South Asia. It serves as a strategic signal to India and facilitates investment for new projects with a request to reschedule debts. During his visit to China, Dissanayake successfully signed a \$3.7 billion investment from Sinopec (a petroleum refining corporation) for an oil refinery in Hambantota, Sri Lanka. An agreement with the China EXIM Bank and the China Development Bank to restructure Sri Lanka's debt to China will likely help secure the release of the IMF's next tranche of \$2.9 billion disbursement. The

joint statement emphasised partnering on 'high quality' Belt and Road cooperation. Sri Lanka pledged to support China's position on Xizang and Xinjiang. They agreed to 'jointly open up new space for win-win development of higher standard, stronger resilience and greater sustainability'. This visit was viewed as Dissanayake's attempt to walk the 'tightrope' between India and China. He visited India last year, shortly after assuming the presidency.

In a public meeting in Katukurunda following his return from China, Dissanayake on 20th January said, "So we have to forge strong links with other countries. In this, the most important is India". He also reflected on the discussions between an Indian company and the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation regarding the construction of an oil refinery with 61 oil tanks jointly managed by India and Sri Lanka in Trincomalee, a port city on the northeast coast. India has agreed to supply liquefied natural gas to Sri Lankan power plants to generate electricity.

Interestingly, the wind energy project in Mannar and Pooneryn granted to Adani Green Energy Sri Lanka Ltd as part of the India-Sri Lanka governments' initiative is now being challenged in the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. The pricing agreement to provide energy to consumers has been revoked. The project is under review by a committee appointed by the Sri Lankan government, ostensibly for high tariffs. This project, which is near to India's coast, was earlier given to China. New Delhi has expressed concerns about the delays by Sri Lanka in all the joint venture projects, some of which, the most recent being the Eastern Container Terminal of the Colombo Port, were cancelled after an agreement was signed.

#### **A new beginning?**

India's Foreign Secretary, Shri Vikram Misri, visited Beijing on 26-27 January to participate in a meeting of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Foreign Minister mechanism that exists between the two countries. The ties between the two countries had deteriorated following the Galwan incident (a series of clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley along the Sino-Indian border on June 15, 2020). Indian Minister of External Affairs, Dr S Jaishankar, emphasised the need to detangle its relationship from the complications of post-2020 border situations with China and underlined India's approach based on 'mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests' as guiding principles.

In the Special Representative meeting on December 18, 2024, the two countries underlined that peace and tranquillity at the border would help the 'normal development of bilateral relations'. Both China and India shook on resuming direct flights between them. They have also agreed to operationalise the mechanisms to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

and share data on trans-border rivers and border trade.

#### **China and Bangladesh**

China also strengthened its bilateral ties after the ouster of Sheikh Hasina in a revolt against her regime in August last year. Immediately after the political change, China emphasised its 'all-round strategic partnership' with the new interim regime in Bangladesh, as the US appeared to be a close partner of the newly formed government. China swiftly engaged the religious political parties that were crucial in organising the street protests against Hasina. In September 2024, the Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, met Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Dr Shafiqur Rahman at the party office in Moghbazar. China also hosted a 14-member delegation consisting of Jamaat Islami and its student front, the Islami Chatra Shibir and four other Islamic parties—Khilafat Andalon, Khilafat Majlis, Nezam Islam Party and Hefazat-e-Islam—in Beijing on November 26-28, 2024. It also hosted the Balochistan National Party leaders in the same month.

China has also trained students in Jamaat-run institutions and orphanages. It is also Bangladesh's largest trading partner. Meanwhile, Bangladesh remains the second largest recipient of Chinese-made weapons. China's infrastructure development in Bangladesh reflects 'genuine friendship', and Indian projects are portrayed as unfair and unequal. As India has minimal interactions with Bangladesh, given its anti-Indian stances, the Chinese engagement shows how political change in South Asia does not affect China's relations, which is seen as a balancer to India. Bangladesh's recent overtures to Pakistan, which was accused of genocidal killings in 1971, is to send a message to India that played a major role in the 1971 liberation and is currently sheltering Sheikh Hasina.

#### **Challenges to Chinese investment**

The Chinese are facing difficulties in Pakistan due to security threats to their workers as there have been clashes between them and locals. On January 27, 2025, four Chinese nationals petitioned against political harassment at the Sindh High Court. They also claimed they were not allowed to move out of their premises without being justified on the pretext of their 'security'. In 2018, such restrictions on Chinese workers working on a motorway project resulted in a scuffle between the Chinese workers and the police in Punjab province. The workers were later deported to China. In 2019, Chinese and Bangladeshi workers clashed in Patuakhali (a town in Bangladesh) over the death of a local Bangladeshi. Similarly, in 2021, clashes between locals and Chinese workers were reported in Banshkhali in Chittagong over unpaid wages to the local workers, leading to police firing, which killed five Bangladeshi workers. Such conflicts

with local workers were also reported in Sri Lanka, where China is developing the infrastructure.

Despite challenges, China has become an important economic and strategic partner for South Asian countries. India is equally engaged in development projects in the region. Unlike China, Indian projects compete with domestic nationalist political narratives and are subject to intense political scrutiny. With the change of each ruling political regime in South Asia, the contours of their bilateral relations with India and China change as well.

### Chinese Schooling, Tourism, and Language Contribute to Cultural Erasure of Tibet

30 January 2025, [China Digital Times](#), Arthur Kaufman

Earlier this month, a massive earthquake struck Tibet and severely damaged numerous monasteries and nunneries. Recent media articles since then have highlighted other ongoing threats to Tibetan culture from the Chinese government and how the struggle for its preservation is playing out in the region and around the world. At The New York Times, Chris Buckley analyzed hundreds of **videos that Tibetan boarding schools posted to Chinese social media** to show how the government separates hundreds of thousands of Tibetan children from their families and strips them of their Tibetan identity:

Across China’s west, the party is placing children in boarding schools in a drive to assimilate a generation of Tibetans into the national mainstream and mold them into citizens loyal to the Communist Party.

Tibetan rights activists, as well as experts working for the United Nations, have said that the party is systematically separating Tibetan children from their families to erase Tibetan identity and to deepen China’s control of a people who historically resisted Beijing’s rule. They have estimated that around three-quarters of Tibetan students age 6 and older — and others even younger — are in residential schools that teach largely in Mandarin, replacing the Tibetan language, culture and Buddhist beliefs that the children once absorbed at home and in village schools. [...]xtensive interviews and research by The New York Times show that Tibetan children appear to be singled out by the Chinese authorities for enrollment in residential schools. Their parents often have little or no choice but to send them, experts, parents, lawyers and human rights investigators said in interviews. Many parents do not see their children for long stretches.

[...] The Chinese government does not say how many Tibetan children are in boarding schools. The Tibet Action Institute, an international group that has campaigned to close the schools, estimates that among children aged 6 to 18, the figure is at least

800,000 — or three in every four Tibetan children. **[Source]**

Last week, the government of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) decided to incorporate about 400,000 square kilometers, or nearly a third of the TAR’s total land area, into a national park plan. Reporting on the decision, the Tibetan Review noted, “Such plans have led to large-scale forced relocation of Tibetan farmers and nomads who lost their traditional habitats and ways of life, greatly impoverishing them.” These plans also align with broader goals to market Tibet’s natural beauty to Han Chinese and develop the region’s tourism sector. For Foreign Policy this week, Judith Hertog described how **the Chinese government’s success in turning Tibet into a tourist destination** has allowed it to propagate nationalist narratives about the region’s historical and contemporary relationship to Beijing that displace Tibetan autonomy, both metaphorically and literally: [The commodification of Gyalthang into “Shangri-La City”] was so successful, in fact, that Beijing exported this model throughout Tibet, turning the region into something of a theme park for the Chinese nation.

Large swaths of the Tibetan plateau—once grazing grounds to sheep and yak herders—were fenced off as “nature reserves” from which the original inhabitants have been removed. Formerly impassible mountain ranges were cut through with tunnels and highways promoted as “scenic routes” that now attract millions of Chinese motorists each year. Along these routes, “scenic towns” were developed from scratch to showcase “traditional” Tibetan culture and crafts. Monasteries were renovated as tourist attractions, and, along highways, fake nomad encampments were set up as photo ops.

[...] “Tibetan culture is being romanticized as pure, spiritual, and attuned to nature,” said [Researcher Emily Yeh from the University of Colorado Boulder]. “But at the same time, Tibetan people are being removed from the landscape because the Tibetan Plateau is expected to serve as an ecological resource that provides clean water and air to the Chinese nation.”

[...] One of the most heavily promoted tourist attractions in Lhasa, advertised as a “must-see” for anyone visiting the city, is a government-subsidized musical spectacle that tells the story of Chinese Princess Wencheng, who married a powerful Tibetan king in the seventh century. In reality, she was a minor character in Tibetan history, only one of the king’s diplomatic marriages at a time when the Tibetan Empire was so powerful that it briefly conquered parts of China. But Chinese propaganda has turned history on its head and seized upon Princess Wencheng’s story to argue, without evidence, that she introduced agriculture, Buddhism, and civilization to Tibet and that, therefore, China’s annexation of the region is

justified. According to state media, more than 3 million tourists have attended this show since it premiered in 2013. [Source]

Another domain where these narrative struggles intersect is that of language, specifically debates over what to call the Tibetan territory. The Chinese government has increasingly pushed for Sinicizing the traditional name, “Tibet,” by replacing it with the Mandarin pinyin, “Xizang.” Various European museums have decided to employ the new terminology in recent exhibits, drawing fierce criticism from the Tibetan diaspora. At Inkstick last week, Victoria Jones described **the political roles of museums in guarding historical narratives and shaping perceptions**, in the words of Tibetan activists: At the British Museum, both words were used alongside each other. Yet, Tibetan activists in London, like Tsering Passang, argue that the move is not objective. “The choice of terminology here is far from neutral; it is a political stance that dismisses the unique identity of Tibet and subtly reinforces China’s contested claim to Tibet as an inherent part of its territory.” Pointing to the efforts of initiatives like the Xizang International Communication Centre, he is concerned about how far Europe’s cultural institutions “are willing to bend to political pressure.”

[...] As Phuntsok Norbu, chairman of the Tibetan Community in Britain, explains, the [British Museum’s “Silk Roads” exhibit] example concerns “the museum’s role in shaping global understanding of a culture that is actively being suppressed.”

The word “Xizang” is largely unrecognized by international audiences, which is precisely to China’s benefit. Tibet carries with it a level of familiarity in popular culture and international discourse, drawing associations to the Dalai Lama and the struggle for autonomy and human rights — exactly what Beijing wants to avoid. By pushing Xizang into global discourse, the CCP aims to redefine Tibet’s identity as distinctly Chinese, erasing its unique history — and it will be up to foreign cultural institutions whether or not they are willing to accept this revisionism. [Source] The erasure of Tibet can also be seen in the recent rollout of DeepSeek’s AI chatbot, which visibly “thinks” through its deliberative process before censoring answers deemed to contradict the Chinese government’s position. This is the case in questions about whether Tibet has a right to independence, or about the history of Tibetan self-immolation protests. On another note, the Dalai Lama is releasing a new book in March titled, “Voice for the Voiceless: Over Seven Decades of Struggle With China for My Land and My People,” which unlike his previous books delves extensively into politics and his efforts to preserve Tibet’s culture, religion, and language in the face of Chinese pressure.

## Red Flag Over Tibet: How China is Militarizing Tibetan Schools

29 January 2025, [Tibet Rights Collective](#)



*Tibetan Childhood at Risk: China’s Military Influence Creeps into Schools*

In a recent and deeply concerning development, China’s ruling authorities have intensified their campaign to indoctrinate Tibetan youth by extending military-style “national defense education” into elementary schools. This initiative, aimed at instilling the so-called “red gene” in young Tibetans, represents a blatant attempt to erode Tibetan cultural identity from an early age.

Historically, China’s efforts to assimilate Tibetans have primarily targeted older students. However, this new strategy marks a disturbing shift towards the youngest members of Tibetan society. Under the guise of enriching students’ lives, military personnel from the “Tibet Military Region” have been visiting undisclosed elementary schools, conducting activities designed to foster “patriotic feelings” and a “love for national defense.”

### China’s New Cultural Revolution in Tibet: Indoctrinating the Next Generation

These sessions often involve soldiers narrating tales of historical battles, aiming to spark interest in China’s revolutionary past among impressionable children. Such actions are not merely educational; they are a calculated move to supplant Tibetan cultural values with Communist Party ideology, effectively planting the seeds of loyalty to Beijing at the expense of Tibetan heritage.

This initiative is part of a broader campaign led by Party Chief Xi Jinping, often referred to as the “new cultural revolution” in Tibet. The objective is clear: to systematically replace Tibetan cultural and religious identity with the Communist Party’s ideology, ensuring unwavering allegiance to Beijing from a young age.

### Beijing’s Cultural Genocide Continues: Tibetan Kids Forced into Military Indoctrination

The international community must not turn a blind eye to these aggressive assimilation policies. The preservation of Tibetan culture and identity is under severe threat, and it is imperative to hold Beijing accountable for its actions. The world must stand in

solidarity with the Tibetan people, advocating for their right to maintain their cultural heritage and resist forced indoctrination.

### **Stealing Tibet's Future: China's Military Propaganda Reaches Elementary Schools**

In conclusion, China's expansion of military indoctrination into Tibetan elementary schools is a stark reminder of the lengths to which Beijing will go to assert control over Tibet. This policy not only undermines the rich cultural tapestry of Tibet but also violates the fundamental rights of Tibetan children to an education free from political indoctrination. It is a clarion call for the global community to act in defense of a culture that has contributed so profoundly to the world's diversity.

### **China's super-dam is a disaster waiting to happen**

29 January 2025, [Stagecraft and Statecraft](#), Brahma Chellaney

*Millions downstream in India and Bangladesh could die if a quake triggers a collapse*

By embarking on building a super-dam, the largest ever conceived, in the seismically active Sino-Indian border region, China is potentially creating a ticking water bomb for millions of people living downstream in India and Bangladesh.

The super-dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo river, better known as the Brahmaputra, is located in the eastern Himalayas, which sit on a geological fault line where the Indian Plate and the Eurasian Plate collide.

In a fresh reminder of the dangers posed by the megaproject, a strong earthquake this month in the eastern Himalayas, near Tibet's borders with Nepal and India, damaged five dams, forcing the evacuation of people from downstream villages. The magnitude 6.8 quake killed at least 134 people, wounded hundreds and wrecked buildings, including Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries, some centuries old.

The concern that the behemoth dam will be the world's riskiest project is reinforced by another fact: Two years after the Zipingpu Dam came into service near a seismic fault, a massive earthquake on the Tibetan Plateau's eastern rim killed 87,000 people in 2008. The quake drew international attention to what scientists call reservoir-triggered seismicity (RTS), when the weight of the water impounded in a large dam reservoir causes severe tectonic stresses, triggering earthquakes usually within a few years of the dam being commissioned.

The reservoir of China's Three Gorges Dam, currently the world's biggest, is longer than the largest of North America's Great Lakes, with its construction submerging two cities, 114 towns and 1,680 villages, and displacing 1.4 million residents in the largest

peacetime evacuation in history. Beijing has not disclosed how many Tibetans will be displaced by the super-dam, which will generate more than three times as much electricity as the Three Gorges Dam in central China.

As its 11 giant dams on the Mekong River illustrate, Beijing takes a highly secretive approach to its dam projects on international rivers flowing to other countries from the water-rich Tibetan Plateau, whose annexation in the early 1950s helped turn China into an unrivaled hydro-hegemon, with 18 downstream neighbors. Tibet is the source of Asia's greatest river systems.



China has provided no public updates on the super-dam after its rubber-stamp National People's Congress in March 2021 approved the project's construction next to the heavily militarized frontier with India. But shortly after the approval, Beijing formally included the super-dam in its latest five-year development plan and opened a new railroad and highway to transport heavy equipment, materials and workers to the remote project site. All this suggested the start of construction.

Yet, a few weeks ago, China's state-run Xinhua News Agency ran a story as if the super-dam project had just been approved. Xinhua reported nothing about the project's construction status, other than to quote an official statement to claim the gargantuan dam was part of the country's effort to pursue "high-quality development." Subsequently, China's foreign ministry and its charge d'affaires in New Delhi separately contended that the project would not negatively affect downstream India or Bangladesh — but again without disclosing any information about the super-dam's current status.

The Brahmaputra, the world's highest-altitude river, curves sharply around the Himalayas, forming the world's longest and steepest canyon — twice as deep as America's Grand Canyon — and holds Asia's largest untapped water resources. By building the super-dam there, China is seeking to harness the power of a 2,800-meter drop just before the river crosses into India.

The project is not only compounding China's already-fraught relationship with India but also threatening to affect rainfall patterns in Asia by wreaking severe

ecological damage in Tibet, one of the world's most biodiverse regions. Tibet's fragile ecosystems play a central role in triggering Asia's monsoonal rains.

The super-dam will also defile what is sacred territory for Tibetans: The canyon region's major mountains, cliffs and caves represent the body of their guardian deity, the goddess Dorje Phagmo, and the Brahmaputra represents her spine. Tibetan culture, with its deeply rooted reverence for nature, acted as an environmental guardian until China avariciously began exploiting Tibet's vast mineral and water resources.

China's dam frenzy has already inflicted ecological damage at home and in downstream countries. China's over-damming of internal rivers has harmed ecosystems, with many rivers disappearing and some drying up, including the Yellow River, the cradle of Chinese civilization. And with its dam builders turning their attention to international rivers flowing out of the Tibetan Plateau, adverse ecological impacts are becoming apparent, for example, in the lower Mekong Basin, including recurrent droughts and saltwater intrusion into the delta.

Today, Tibet's glaciers and other ecosystems are threatened by climate and environmental change, and if China's environmentally devastating activities accelerate glacial attrition on the Tibetan Plateau, the resulting significant changes in river flows would not spare even mainland China.

Yet, an undaunted China is pressing ahead with the controversial super-dam, whose construction is tantamount to waging a stealthy water war against India. But, in the long run, the country that could suffer the most is densely populated and China-friendly Bangladesh, located farthest downstream.

Once ready, the super-dam would raise the haunting specter of a quake-triggered collapse. There have been hundreds of dam breaches and collapses in China over the years, including the world's deadliest dam failures: The 1975 typhoon-triggered collapses of the giant Banqiao and Shimantan dams in central China unleashed a cascade effect that wrecked 62 smaller dams, killing more than 85,000 people and displacing 11 million.

More recently, record flooding endangered even the Three Gorges Dam in 2020, putting some 400 million Chinese at risk.

If a powerful earthquake centered in the canyon region caused the super-dam to collapse, millions downstream could die, largely in the Brahmaputra Valley of India's Assam state, where the river's immense width makes it look like an ocean in the monsoon season.

Yet there is little prospect of China halting work on the super-dam. As long as the Chinese Communist Party remains in power, it will ignore the environmental and humanitarian consequences of its actions.

### **3 Times Bigger Than World's Largest Three Gorges Dam, Is China Moving From Border To "Water War" With India? OPED**

29 January 2025, [The Eurasian Times](#), KN Pandita

**In October last year, India and China agreed to disengage troops along their disputed border. Commentators thought it was the beginning of a detente, though many skeptics doubted it.**

Nevertheless, the breakthrough catalyzed a formal meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia.

That meeting was, in all probability, crucial for the two countries to move forward meaningfully, widening the scope of mutual understanding.

#### **Beijing & Global South**

This week, Indian foreign secretary Vikram Misri was on a two-day visit to Beijing. The Chinese foreign ministry reported that its foreign vice-minister, Sun Weidong, held talks with the Indian foreign secretary under a foreign secretary-vice minister mechanism purporting to strengthen strategic communication and deepen mutual trust.

In a statement released on January 28, Beijing said the two sides had agreed to resume flights between China and India and "take measures to facilitate personnel exchanges and the exchange of journalists between the two countries."

According to the SCMP, the Chinese top diplomat told Misri that the two neighbors should "commit to mutual understanding, mutual support and mutual achievement rather than mutual suspicion and mutual alienation."

The Chinese side was more reassuring than the Indian side during the talks in Beijing. For example, Wang Yi, the most important leader on the Chinese side after President Xi, went on to say that the improvement and development of China-India relations is fully in line with the fundamental interests of the two countries and their peoples; it is conducive to safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the Global South countries.

He went on to say that improving bilateral relations is conducive to contributing to peace, stability, development, and prosperity in Asia and the world.

The language of the Chinese diplomat can be interpreted in different ways. By bringing in the Global South countries and India and China's friendship being conducive to promoting their legitimate rights and interests, China projects herself along with India as the crucial country for the Global South.

It has to be noted that India broached the concept of the Global South at the New Delhi G-20 Declaration. The African delegates at the G-20 hailed India as the pioneer of the Global South vision. China wants to



share the accolades and thereby win the hearts of the African states.

### **India-China Ties: The Irritant**

While speculations about the two countries readying for wider and more important talks that would improve relations were rife, Beijing made a surprising announcement that took Indian policy planners by surprise.

China revealed that it plans to build a US\$137 billion hydropower dam in the autonomous region of Tibet. The project is planned to be built on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which flows into India and is called Brahmaputra. New Delhi expressed its concern about the plan, which has the potential for adverse impact on the water channel on the Indian side. Brahmaputra water is a source of livelihood for millions of Indians downstream.

At the same time, the proposed dam could be a big ecological threat to India. It could result in periods of severe drought and colossal floods, affecting the lives of millions of Indians.

At a press conference in New Delhi last Friday, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs said that Beijing has been urged “to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in the upstream area.”

In his commentary on the Chinese project, Abhishek Chakraborty wrote in the *World News* on January 4: “Last week, China announced that it is building the world’s largest dam in Tibet – even larger than the Three Gorges dam, which according to NASA, has slowed the Earth’s rotation by 0.06 seconds. But unlike that one, which is built in Central China, the new one will be built in an environmentally-sensitive Himalayan zone in Tibet, very close to the border.”

It has to be noted that the region in which the dam will be located is geologically fragile. It falls in a high seismic zone and is prone to earthquakes of relatively higher magnitude. These are no small concerns New Delhi has conveyed to Beijing.

In a note to Beijing, the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi reiterated its rights to the river’s waters while also seeking transparency over Beijing’s plans.

It will be remembered that according to international law, “as a riparian state with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed, through an expert level as well as diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side over the mega project,” said the MEA spokesman in an interview.

### **The Dam**

The dam on the eastern rim of the Tibetan plateau is located in the lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo (Tsangpo) or Brahmaputra. The ambitious project, which is part of China’s 14th five-year plan, aims to produce 300 billion kWh of electricity annually. It will be the biggest infrastructure project globally.

At 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, this new dam will more than triple the 88.2 billion kWh designed capacity of the Three Gorges Dam, currently the world’s largest.

During the construction of the Three Gorges Dam, China had to resettle more than 1.4 million displaced people. The new project is three times the size, but Beijing has not given any estimate of how many people will be displaced.

### **China Sermonizing**

China appears to be cognizant of India’s concerns. It has begun pontificating about the benefits of the Sino-Indian relationship to countries in Asia and the world as well.

Instead of conveying a firm commitment to New Delhi that it takes responsibility for any ecological and geographic damage to the downstream beneficiaries of the river’s waters, Beijing has adopted a pontificating mood, something unknown in the history of the post-freedom Sino-Indian relationship.

“China never pursues the maximization of unilateral interests, let alone benefits for itself at the expense of its neighbors. China does not and will never seek “water hegemony,” Wang Yi wrote in an article published by the *Indian Express* newspaper last week. He further said, “China adheres to a responsible attitude towards cross-border river development and pursues a policy of balancing utilization and protection.”

Without being assertive, China tried to address fears that the mega dam might cause water shortages and damage the environment. Wang Lei, the charge d’affaires at the Chinese Embassy in India, said, “Beijing sticks to the policy of forging friendships and partnerships with its neighbors.”

Playing down India’s apprehensions, Mao Ning, the spokeswoman of the Chinese foreign ministry, said China has carried out in-depth studies for decades and took safeguard measures.

### **Conclusion**

There could be many unknown reasons for China to demonstrate a slight change in its decades-long unfriendly attitude towards India.

Beijing has been instrumental in opposing India’s Security Council membership. China arms Pakistan so that it could become a source of distraction for India. China has been protecting Pakistan’s terror machinery. India’s External Affairs Ministry should tread cautiously when handling the situation arising from the proposed dam in the Tibetan region.

## DeepSeek: How China's 'AI heroes' overcame US curbs to stun Silicon Valley

29 January 2025, [BBC](#), Fang Wang and João da Silva

When ChatGPT stormed the world of artificial intelligence (AI), an inevitable question followed: did it spell trouble for China, America's biggest tech rival?

Two years on, a new AI model from China has flipped that question: can the US stop Chinese innovation?

For a while, Beijing seemed to fumble with its answer to ChatGPT, which is not available in China.

Unimpressed users mocked Ernie, the chatbot by search engine giant Baidu. Then came versions by tech firms Tencent and ByteDance, which were dismissed as followers of ChatGPT - but not as good.

Washington was confident that it was ahead and wanted to keep it that way. So the Biden administration ramped up restrictions banning the export of advanced chips and technology to China.

That's why DeepSeek's launch has astonished Silicon Valley and the world. The firm says its powerful model is far cheaper than the billions US firms have spent on AI.

So how did a little-known company - whose founder is being hailed on Chinese social media as an "AI hero" - pull this off?

The challenge

When the US barred the world's leading chip-makers such as Nvidia from selling advanced tech to China, it was certainly a blow.

Those chips are essential for building powerful AI models that can perform a range of human tasks, from answering basic queries to solving complex maths problems.

DeepSeek's founder Liang Wenfeng described the chip ban as their "main challenge" in interviews with local media.

Long before the ban, DeepSeek acquired a "substantial stockpile" of Nvidia A100 chips - estimates range from 10,000 to 50,000 - according to the MIT Technology Review.

Leading AI models in the West use an estimated 16,000 specialised chips. But DeepSeek says it trained its AI model using 2,000 such chips, and thousands of lower-grade chips - which is what makes its product cheaper.

Some, including US tech billionaire Elon Musk, have questioned this claim, arguing the company cannot reveal how many advanced chips it really used given the restrictions.

But experts say Washington's ban brought both challenges and opportunities to the Chinese AI industry.

It has "forced Chinese companies like DeepSeek to innovate" so they can do more with less, says Marina Zhang, an associate professor at the University of Technology Sydney.

"While these restrictions pose challenges, they have also spurred creativity and resilience, aligning with China's broader policy goals of achieving technological independence."

The world's second-largest economy has invested heavily in big tech - from the batteries that power electric vehicles and solar panels, to AI.

Turning China into a tech superpower has long been President Xi Jinping's ambition, so Washington's restrictions were also a challenge that Beijing took on. The release of DeepSeek's new model on 20 January, when Donald Trump was sworn in as US president, was deliberate, according to Gregory C Allen, an AI expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"The timing and the way it's being messaged - that's exactly what the Chinese government wants everybody to think - that export controls don't work and that America is not the global leader in AI," says Mr Allen, former director of strategy and policy at the US Department of Defense Joint Artificial Intelligence Center.

In recent years the Chinese government has nurtured AI talent, offering scholarships and research grants, and encouraging partnerships between universities and industry.

The National Engineering Laboratory for Deep Learning and other state-backed initiatives have helped train thousands of AI specialists, according to Ms Zhang.

And China had plenty of bright engineers to recruit.

The talent

Take DeepSeek's team for instance - Chinese media says it comprises fewer than 140 people, most of whom are what the internet has proudly declared as "home-grown talent" from elite Chinese universities.

Western observers missed the emergence of "a new generation of entrepreneurs who prioritise foundational research and long-term technological advancement over quick profits", Ms Zhang says.

China's top universities are creating a "rapidly growing AI talent pool" where even managers are often under the age of 35.

"Having grown up during China's rapid technological ascent, they are deeply motivated by a drive for self-reliance in innovation," she adds.

Deepseek's founder Liang Wenfeng is an example of this - the 40-year-old studied AI at the prestigious Zhejiang University. In an article on the tech outlet 36Kr, people familiar with him say he is "more like a geek rather than a boss".

And Chinese media describe him as a "technical idealist" - he insists on keeping DeepSeek as an open-source platform. In fact experts also believe a thriving open-source culture has allowed young start-ups to pool resources and advance faster.

Unlike bigger Chinese tech firms, DeepSeek prioritised research, which has allowed for more experimenting,

according to experts and people who worked at the company.

"The Top 50 talents in this field might not be in China, but we can build people like that here," Mr Liang said in an interview with 36Kr.

But experts wonder how much further DeepSeek can go. Ms Zhang says that "new US restrictions may limit access to American user data, potentially impacting how Chinese models like DeepSeek can go global".

And others say the US still has a huge advantage, such as, in Mr Allen's words, "their enormous quantity of computing resources" - and it's also unclear how DeepSeek will continue using advanced chips to keep improving the model.

But for now, DeepSeek is enjoying its moment in the sun, given that most people in China had never heard of it until this weekend.

Advertisement

The new AI heroes

His sudden fame has seen Mr Liang become a sensation on China's social media, where he is being applauded as one of the "three AI heroes" from southern Guangdong province, which borders Hong Kong.

The other two are Zhilin Yang, a leading expert at Tsinghua University, and Kaiming He, who teaches at MIT in the US.

DeepSeek has delighted the Chinese internet ahead of Lunar New Year, the country's biggest holiday. It's good news for a beleaguered economy and a tech industry that is bracing for further tariffs and the possible sale of TikTok's US business.

"DeepSeek shows us that only if you have the real deal will you stand the test of time," a top-liked Weibo comment reads.

"This is the best new year gift. Wish our motherland prosperous and strong," another reads.

A "blend of shock and excitement, particularly within the open-source community," is how Wei Sun, principal AI analyst at Counterpoint Research, described the reaction in China.

Fiona Zhou, a tech worker in the southern city of Shenzhen, says her social media feed "was suddenly flooded with DeepSeek-related posts yesterday".

"People call it 'the glory of made-in-China', and say it shocked Silicon Valley, so I downloaded it to see how good it is."

She asked it for "four pillars of [her] destiny", or ba-zi - like a personalised horoscope that is based on the date and time of birth.

But to her disappointment, DeepSeek was wrong. While she was given a thorough explanation about its "thinking process", it was not the "four pillars" from her real ba-zi.

She says she will still give it another go at work, as it will probably be more useful for such tasks.

## Tibet's Culture is Slowly Being Erased

29 January 2025, [The Platform](#), Swapnarka Arnan

### **The renaming of Tibetan artifacts in French museums aligns with China's cultural erasure of Tibet, undermining its historical identity and aiding its suppression.**

In the hushed, curated halls of Parisian museums like the Musée Guimet and the Musée du Quai Branly, Tibetan artifacts are relics of a civilization rich in theological depth, artistic brilliance, and historical weight. But the seemingly subtle decision to reclassify these artifacts under labels like the "Himalayan world"—or, more disturbingly, "Xizang," Beijing's official name for Tibet—is anything but neutral.

Such rebranding reflects a broader pattern of cultural erasure, mirroring China's longstanding efforts to subsume Tibet into its national narrative. This linguistic shift—at first glance, an administrative or curatorial choice—reinforces China's political agenda and contributes to the systematic dismantling of Tibetan identity.

The backlash has been swift. Tibetan advocacy groups and human rights organizations have staged protests in France, condemning the erasure of their culture in spaces meant to preserve it. In response, the Musée du Quai Branly apologized and pledged to reinstate the term "Tibet." The Musée Guimet, however, remains defiant. The resistance to acknowledging Tibet as distinct is not just an institutional oversight—it is an act of cultural suppression that plays into the hands of an occupying power.

#### **Why Naming Matters**

Names are not just labels but declarations of identity, historical continuity, and belonging. Stripping Tibetan artifacts of their rightful designation and instead categorizing them under the nebulous term "Himalayan world" diminishes Tibet's singular cultural and historical significance. It reduces Tibet to an undefined, peripheral region rather than a distinct civilization with its own language, spiritual traditions, and political history.

Even more insidious is adopting "Xizang," the Mandarin term imposed by Beijing. Translated as "Western Treasure House," this name reinforces China's assertion that Tibet is merely a provincial extension of its territory—rather than a land with its sovereign past. This is no mere rephrasing; it is a calculated rhetorical maneuver designed to normalize China's claim over Tibet.

China's occupation of Tibet since 1950 has been marked by a systematic campaign to erase Tibetan culture. Monasteries have been destroyed, religious institutions gutted, and monks imprisoned. The United Nations has raised alarms over the forced separation of one million Tibetan children from their

families, an assimilation policy reminiscent of colonial-era strategies used to eradicate indigenous cultures. More than a hundred Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against Beijing's repression. The renaming of Tibetan artifacts in Western museums may seem far removed from such extreme acts of defiance, but it serves the same function—silencing Tibet's cultural voice on the global stage.

### **Cultural Genocide and the Role of Museums**

Scholar and activist Dr. Michael Van Walt has called this process “cultural genocide”—the deliberate erasure of a people's identity through language, history, and tradition. Cultural genocide often serves as a precursor to physical erasure or forced assimilation, softening the world's resistance to more overt forms of oppression. When institutions like the Musée Guimet comply—whether out of political convenience or apathy—they risk becoming complicit in this broader effort.

Museums hold immense power as custodians of history. They do not merely display artifacts; they frame narratives, shape public understanding, and influence how cultures are remembered—or forgotten. Their responsibility is to preserve objects and ensure that those objects are contextualized with integrity and truth.

In the case of Tibetan artifacts, this means resisting political pressure and acknowledging Tibet as the rightful source of these treasures. By defaulting to vague terminology or adopting Beijing's nomenclature, institutions like the Musée Guimet abdicate their duty as cultural stewards. They choose diplomacy over historical accuracy and, in doing so, become unwitting participants in Tibet's erasure.

### **Recognition as Resistance**

Acknowledging Tibet's distinct identity is more than an academic exercise—it is an act of defiance against oppression. For Tibetans, these artifacts are not mere relics of the past; they are living symbols of resilience, spirituality, and national identity. Each mislabeling and erasure furthers a campaign to strip them of their place in history.

Museums that recognize Tibetan artifacts for what they are send a powerful message: that Tibet's history cannot be rewritten to suit the ambitions of an occupying power. Conversely, institutions that capitulate to Chinese pressure embolden the forces of suppression—not only within Tibet's borders but on the global stage.

### **The Responsibility of Museums**

Museums like the Musée Guimet and the Musée du Quai Branly must reconsider their role in this unfolding narrative. While they may view renaming artifacts as an administrative decision, the impact is anything but neutral. These choices shape global perceptions and have real-world consequences for Tibetans fighting for recognition and autonomy.

At the very least, museums should consult Tibetan scholars, community leaders, and human rights organizations to ensure that their practices honor the true origins of the artifacts they display. They must resist the quiet creep of political influence that seeks to distort history and erase cultural identities.

The renaming of Tibetan artifacts in Western museums may seem like a minor controversy, but it is part of a much larger struggle—one that extends beyond exhibition halls to the very survival of a people and their heritage.

To erase Tibet from history is to stand with its oppressors. Recognizing it affirms the dignity and endurance of a people who refuse to be forgotten.

### **Prioritizing Human Rights in United States Policy toward China: A Guide for the Trump Administration**

28 January 2025, [Hudson Institute](#), Olivia Enos, Anouk Wear and Sophie Richardson

#### **Introduction**

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) poses interrelated threats to the United States' national security, economic interests, and human rights. But for decades, policymakers have elevated national security and economic interests over human rights. This has led to worse outcomes in all three areas, particularly for people across China. The Trump administration should devise a strategy that addresses these challenges in tandem, as the safeguarding of human rights will be central to any effective strategy to counter the CCP.

The party's grip on power is premised on denying 1.4 billion people their human rights. Over the past decade, the CCP has committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims, dismantled freedom and human rights in Hong Kong, Macau, and Southern Mongolia, sought to erase Tibet's culture and language, persecuted Christians, cracked down on freedom of religion or belief for people of all faith traditions, and targeted human rights defenders and dissidents. The CCP increasingly commits abuses beyond its borders and undermines international human rights by actively undermining sovereignty in myriad ways, including through transnational repression. Beijing also continues to undermine the strength of international institutions, including the United Nations, to rewrite the rules of international order in China's favor. These offenses are inextricably linked to China's refusal to cooperate with the international community during the COVID-19 pandemic and the CCP's contribution to the fentanyl epidemic, which have played a part in millions of deaths worldwide.

If the new administration, in concert with allies, does not tackle the CCP threat to human rights, the security, economic, and human rights consequences will be

grave. Xi Jinping's government has the resources and ambition to fundamentally reshape the global order. A failure to adequately respond to the CCP's human rights abuses could compromise the post-World War II human rights system, call into question democracies' ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, and threaten broader US interests.

US policymakers should (1) hold accountable the individuals and entities in China who have perpetrated human rights violations, (2) provide support for human rights defenders and dissidents from China, (3) advocate for and provide relief to political prisoners, (4) develop proactive responses to CCP atrocity crimes, (5) extend refugee status and asylum to individuals fleeing persecution, and (6) develop a constructive response to transnational repression.

### **China's Recent Human Rights Record**

Under Xi's leadership, the CCP's threats to human rights and freedom, both within and beyond China's borders, have intensified. Currently, the CCP is:

- **Carrying out atrocities that the US government has determined constitute genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims.** Today, more than one million Uyghurs are held in various forms of arbitrary detention, including political reeducation camps. An estimated three million Uyghurs work in some form of state-sponsored forced labor. And the CCP is subjecting Uyghur women of child-bearing age to forced abortion and sterilization on a massive scale.
- **Undermining civil and political liberties in Hong Kong.** Millions of Hong Kongers took to the streets in 2019 to peacefully protest for democracy and against Beijing's proposed extradition bill. Since then, the CCP has taken more than 1,900 individuals as political prisoners.<sup>1</sup> Many of them are still behind bars, including well-known figures like Joshua Wong, Gwyneth Ho, and Jimmy Lai. The party's repression has forced pro-democracy news outlets like *Stand News* and *Apple Daily* to shutter. And the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, or Article 23, increased jail times and criminalized more forms of free expression.
- **Heightening persecution against Tibetans.** The CCP seeks to erase Tibetan culture, language, and religious practice. Reports state that the party (1) subjects Tibetans to forced labor, indoctrination, and reeducation, (2) strips Tibetans of their land and water rights, and (3) forcibly assimilates Tibetan children in state-run boarding schools. In 1995, the CCP

forcibly disappeared the Panchen Lama, the second most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama. The CCP has indicated that it intends to control the succession of the current Dalai Lama. Finally, Beijing's economic development policies pose a grave threat to Tibet's environment and water supply.

- **Committing transnational repression, including in the US.** Some of the more egregious examples include (1) bounties issued by the Hong Kong government against pro-democracy advocates in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, (2) physical violence against peaceful protestors supporting freedom in Tibet and Hong Kong during Xi's 2023 visit to San Francisco, and (3) the establishment of over 100 overseas Chinese police stations in 52 countries, including in the US.

### **Why Human Rights Matter in US Policy toward China**

There are many reasons why the US and the international community need to counter the CCP's continued erosion of human rights. US interests in China would be better served if the CCP was a transparent regime that upheld the rule of law at home and globally—not one that shuts its population off from global information flows, arbitrarily targets commercial actors, and regularly flouts international law. Below are three reasons human rights matter to US foreign policy toward China:

1. **Improving human rights in China empowers people to challenge an unaccountable regime.** Previous US administrations have insufficiently recognized how human rights abuses help the party remain in power. Just as the CCP uses national security and economic threats to increase its global influence, it undermines human rights to quell dissent and shore up its domestic power. Failing to counter the CCP's human rights abuses leaves valuable diplomatic leverage on the table.
2. **Democracies should lead in countering the CCP's threats to rights.** The CCP's activities threaten human rights inside and outside China. Democracies need to lead in countering this threat. The US should work with like-minded allies and partners to develop effective mechanisms to hold the CCP accountable for its rights violations and ensure protections for the party's targets. Washington will need to manage international institutions and civil society effectively to stave off the CCP's malign influence as Beijing seeks to weaken the international system.
3. **People across China deserve the US's best defense.** The CCP's human rights violations leave people across China without representation, and those who stand up against injustice pay enormous costs. People across China who work for democracy

and human rights need acknowledgment and support from the US and the international community. Without accountability for perpetrators and aid for human rights defenders (in the form of technical assistance, aid to refugees and asylum seekers, and financial support), progress will be elusive. The CCP will strive to disempower the people taking risks to secure the gains the US says it wants to see. Washington should do more to support and defend the human rights the CCP assiduously denies.

#### **A Strategy to Combat Human Rights Abuses in China**

Future strategies to counter the CCP are unlikely to succeed if they do not account for human rights. And it is imperative that all US administrations, as well as allies and partners, robustly fulfill their own commitments to uphold their human rights obligations as set out under binding international law. A failure to do so enables and emboldens Beijing. Any US effort to counter the CCP should also seek to hold the party accountable and honor, in word and deed, the dignity of the people across and from China whom the US seeks to defend.

Below are six principles the new administration and Congress should consider as they develop policy and a strategy to counter the CCP's domestic and international human rights violations.

#### **1. Make better use of legal, financial, and reputational tools to impose consequences on individuals and entities responsible for undermining human rights.**

1. **Strategically deploy sanctions.** Officials should use existing sanctions tools to create diplomatic leverage and increase consequences for CCP officials and entities responsible for violations. To that end, the US should make full use of its ample sanctions authorities to target entities and individuals responsible for human rights violations and fully enforce preexisting sanctions.<sup>2</sup> Sanctions should target Chinese banks responsible for financing the CCP's abuses and engaging in illegal activities including forced labor, sanctions evasion, and money laundering.
2. **Ensure the reauthorization of preexisting authorities.** Congress should ensure that sanctions authorities do not lapse.
3. **Consider authorizing the use of secondary sanctions for human rights abuses in China.** Congress should authorize secondary sanctions authorities to hold those aiding and abetting the CCP accountable for their roles in human rights violations, especially over Uyghur forced labor. Additionally, the administration should put the Ministry of Public Security's Institute of Forensic Science back on the entity list, as it has not

changed the conduct for which it was first designated.

4. **Use all other available tools.** Beyond sanctions, the US should use other financial tools designed to tackle illegal activities like forced labor and other forms of human trafficking, money laundering, and sanctions evasion, including by:

1. *Strengthening implementation and enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA).* US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) should use all existing authorities to issue penalties and fines for repeat violators of UFLPA, fully implement the new de minimis regulations, and urge Congress to pass additional legislation to hold exploiters of the de minimis exception accountable. This would help prevent goods suspected of being produced with Uyghur forced labor from being reexported to other markets. Unfortunately, CBP and other agencies tasked with UFLPA implementation remain under-resourced. Congress should consider providing additional funding for staff, enforcement, and technical training, including language skills. The US should also coordinate further with allies and partners to mitigate Uyghur enslavement.
2. *Making full use of the Treasury Department's special measures, including a primary money laundering concern (PMLC) designation.* The Treasury Department should consider whether certain entities in Hong Kong qualify as PMLCs. It should also explore measures short of a PMLC designation to signal to businesses the risk of operating in Hong Kong. Either course would send a clear warning to the business community about degradations in Hong Kong's legal and judicial system and the island's emerging role as a sanctions evasion and money laundering hub.

#### **2. Strengthen support for human rights defenders across and from China.**

- **Recognize the sacrifices of human rights defenders.** Opponents of the CCP stand up for human rights at great personal cost. Their

bravery should not only be commended, but also wholeheartedly supported through public recognition and material support.

- **Establish contact.** Whenever and wherever possible, including in China, US officials should establish and maintain contact with activists. These individuals and organizations have endured escalating repression under Xi but continue to advocate for legal reform, better access to education and public health, and an end to one-party rule. If interactions prompt the defenders to seek help, US officials should be prepared to offer sanctuary and asylum.
- **Continue to provide financial resources for human rights defenders.** This is one of Washington's most important contributions to the defense of human rights across China. Beijing's hostility makes this aid considerably more complex. But creative approaches are possible.
- **Publicly recognize the work of human rights defenders as an essential component and source of US policy decisions on China.** Too often the US treats the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party as legitimate by default; Washington can change the dynamics by elevating defenders and their work in policy debates.

### 3. Strengthen the US government's apparatus for securing political prisoner release.

1. **At every diplomatic meeting between US officials and their Chinese counterparts, ask for the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners.** US officials' requests should be strong and specific—not only for information or for proof of life, but also for the prisoners' release. These requests should be made public, unless security dictates otherwise, to make it more difficult for Beijing to ignore them. The US should also be prepared to offer asylum in the US or coordinate with partner countries to resettle prisoners who desire refuge beyond China's borders.
2. **Emphasize the release of political prisoners with political or national security significance.** Efforts should focus on family members of US citizens and political prisoners of interest to US national security. Priority political prisoners include Uyghurs like Gulshan Abbas, Ilham Tohti, Rahile Dawut, and Ekpar Asat; Tibetans like the eleventh Panchen Lama, Go Sherab Gyatso, and Konchok Nyima; Hong Kongers like Jimmy Lai, Gwyneth Ho, and Joshua Wong; persecuted Christians like Pastor Wang Yi;

and human rights defenders like Gao Zhisheng, Yu Wenshang, and Ding Jiaxi.

3. **Create an Office for Political Prisoner Advocacy (OPPA) in the State Department.** The office could be placed under the authority of the under secretary for civilian security, democracy, and human rights (the J Bureau), or under the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and be tasked with coordinating and managing US efforts to secure political prisoner release globally. Its priority would be to advocate for the release of political prisoners relevant to US national security. Congress should require the office to release an annual report identifying key political prisoners and what the office, civil society, and Congress have done or can do to secure their release. A special envoy should lead the OPPA. The envoy should be Senate confirmed and of ambassador rank, and he or she could serve as a liaison between the executive branch, Congress, and civil society. This would centralize the processes for securing political prisoner release, updating families on the status of political prisoners, and coordinating government and civil society responses to extrajudicial imprisonment.

### 4. Develop and implement responses to the CCP's past and ongoing atrocity crimes.

1. **Lead efforts to hold perpetrators accountable.** Democracies, as leaders in the international community, should hold perpetrators accountable for atrocity crimes and prevent future crimes from occurring. Atrocity crimes are debilitating for victims and survivors, and a failure to hold perpetrators accountable correlates with weak governance. This makes prevention of future atrocity crimes in the interest of the US and like-minded countries around the globe.
2. **Increase monitoring for early warning signs of atrocity crimes in Tibet.** The CCP piloted many of the policies it currently uses against Uyghurs in Tibet, and many are still in effect there. This includes, among other things, forced labor, severe violations of civil and political liberties, undermining of local culture, and invasive DNA collection. Given the similarities between the Tibetan and Uyghur experiences, the US government should implement policies to prevent the escalation of atrocity crimes like crimes against humanity or genocide. As a component of this process in Tibet, the US should seek to restart dialogue with the Dalai Lama. And if there is evidence that the CCP

has already committed crimes against humanity or genocide, the US secretary of state should issue an atrocity determination.

3. **Create a fund for Uyghur survivors of the CCP's ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity.** The US should place fines collected from repeat violators of the UFLPA into a fund administered by the Treasury or State Department payable to Uyghur survivors of genocide and crimes against humanity. These funds could also go toward organizations providing direct support to Uyghur survivors of forced labor and other injustices, including various forms of technical assistance, counseling and rehabilitation services, and advocacy.

#### 5. Offer dissidents safe haven.

1. **The US should strengthen its refugee resettlement program.** Safety within US borders is one of the most practical tools to offer support. Guarantees of safety and legal protection enable individuals from across China to advocate more strongly for change. Policymakers should expand support for resettlement agencies, ensure adequate funding, address delays in processing social security numbers and employment authorization documents, and increase the availability of affordable housing. The US should also continue to invest in other humanitarian pathways including humanitarian parole programs, private sponsorship programs like Welcome Corps, and family reunification programs. Welcome Corps, in particular, may need to be amended in order for Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, and Tibetans to be eligible for private resettlement routes. Importantly, public-private partnership programs should supplement, not supplant, asylum access at the border.
2. **Consider priority refugee and asylum processing for certain groups across China.** Uyghurs, Tibetans, Hong Kongers, and peaceful critics of the CCP face permanent persecution, and the lives of those who have escaped the country would be endangered upon return to China. Long wait times expose asylees to human rights violations and other atrocities. Many Uyghurs have waited more than 10 years for their asylum hearings in the US, an unconscionable amount of time to live with uncertainty about one's future safety. Countless others, like the 50 Uyghurs currently held in detention in Thailand, should be considered for priority processing, perhaps under Priority 1 (P-1) status. Any US

embassy official can recommend an individual or set of individuals for this priority processing.

3. **Consider whether humanitarian parole can be reformed to offer permanent pathways for resettlement in the US.** The United States should offer more protections for human rights defenders in exile, dissidents, and diaspora communities experiencing transnational repression. For example, Washington can expand humanitarian pathways for permanent legal status in the United States, as well as fund and support nongovernmental and civil society organizations that provide services for survivors. Humanitarian parole is a useful tool in cases where refugees are in urgent need of resettlement (like a recently released political prisoner or a person whose life is at risk). But it does not currently offer a permanent pathway to citizenship. The US government should consider reforming humanitarian parole to offer more permanent solutions for persecuted individuals.

#### 6. Develop effective domestic and multilateral responses to transnational repression.

1. **Define transnational repression and identify what tools the US government has to protect and support survivors.** Transnational repression brings the CCP's human rights offenses directly to US soil. Washington and its allies need to develop a plan to respond, with a focus on creating readily available legal mechanisms to punish perpetrators and provide relief for victims. Congress and the executive branch should work together to define transnational repression. They should then ensure authorities have the training and legal remit to address these situations. Officials should be able to gather and share information, collect and report statistics, provide training and outreach, and guide survivors to services and support. Means of support may include psychological and social services as well as immigration and legal aid.
2. **Develop a clear, survivor-centered policy response to transnational repression with allies and partners.** The US should work jointly with friends and allies to raise transnational repression as a priority issue and develop international norms to address it. An initial working group could include the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Korea, Australia, and other like-minded nations.



## How China's hydropower goals in Tibet are under lens after damaging quake

28 January 2025, [India Today](#), Pradip R. Sagar

The severe damage to dams in a seismically active region highlights the fault-lines in Beijing's approach of prioritising energy production over ecological sustainability

China's ambitious hydropower expansion in Tibet has come under renewed criticism after a 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck the region on January 7. While the Chinese government first denied any damage to its dams, it later admitted that at least five of them had suffered massive structural issues, including cracks and tilting walls.

One dam was so severely damaged that nearby villages were evacuated as a precautionary measure.

The incident has sparked concerns about China's push for large-scale hydropower projects in one of the world's seismically most active regions. Just weeks before the earthquake, Beijing had announced plans to build the world's 'largest' dam on the Brahmaputra river, known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet.

The \$137 billion (Rs 11.69 lakh crore) project aims to generate unprecedented amounts of power, but has drawn criticism from environmentalists, geologists and neighbouring countries.

India has already raised concerns with China. "We have seen the information released by Xinhua [news agency] on December 25, 2024 regarding a hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo river in the Tibet Autonomous Region. As a lower riparian state with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed, through expert-level and diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory," said Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson, ministry of external affairs, early this month.

The Tibetan Plateau, located at the intersection of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, is highly prone to earthquakes, raising alarm about the safety of massive infrastructure in the region.

The earthquake has again spotlighted the long-term risks of China's rapid hydropower development. Experts have repeatedly warned that large dams in seismically active areas can act as earthquake triggers. Historical precedents, such as the 2008 Sichuan earthquake—which some studies linked to dam operations—highlight the dangers of ignoring geological hazards. The recent damage underscores these warnings, exposing the vulnerabilities in China's hydropower infrastructure and raising questions about the safety protocols governing these projects.

The ecological and geopolitical ramifications of China's dam-building spree loom large too. The Brahmaputra is a lifeline for millions of people in India and Bangladesh. Critics argue that unbridled construction

of dams on transboundary rivers could exacerbate regional water disputes, increase the risk of catastrophic flooding and disrupt fragile ecosystems.

Despite these risks, China's determination to pursue hydropower reflects its broader strategy of transition from coal to renewable energy. However, critics underline that this energy transition must not come at the expense of community safety and environmental sustainability.

The recent earthquake has exposed the fault-lines in this approach. Observers are calling for an urgent reassessment of China's hydropower policies in Tibet.

"The region's seismic vulnerability, coupled with the environmental and social costs, makes these projects ticking time-bombs," said a regional expert.

The damage to existing dams is a reminder of the potential consequences of prioritising energy production over safety and sustainability. As China moves forward with its plans for the world's 'largest' dam, the pressure is mounting on Beijing to balance its energy ambitions with a more responsible approach to geological safety, environmental health and regional cooperation.

## DeepSeek Doesn't Signal an AI Space Race

28 January 2025, [Foreign Policy](#), James Palmer

The Chinese firm's success might not be a case for massive government investment in the sector.

### What to Make of DeepSeek's Success

On Monday, the news of a powerful large language model created by Chinese artificial intelligence firm DeepSeek wiped \$1 trillion off the U.S. Nasdaq 100 index in a single day, reversing weeks of gains in a heated market driven by belief in an AI-dominated future.

Chipmaker Nvidia was the worst off, losing nearly \$600 billion in value on Monday. DeepSeek's model was reportedly trained on Nvidia's cheaper, older chips and not its cutting-edge products, which are sanctioned in China. Chinese stock markets are closed for Lunar New Year but will likely see a rally upon reopening this week—though DeepSeek isn't publicly traded.

Some of the U.S. media discussion around DeepSeek is overblown, such as the claim that its AI model only cost \$5.5 million to develop. As DeepSeek's own statements make clear, that was the cost of the model's final training run—not including the research, equipment, salaries, and other costs involved.

The rush by analysts to declare that chip sanctions aren't working is also misplaced. DeepSeek was trained on Nvidia's H800 chips, which, as a savvy ChinaTalk article points out, were designed to evade the U.S. chip sanctions put in place in October 2022. The newest round of U.S. sanctions only kicked in at the end of 2023—too late to affect DeepSeek's model.

Nevertheless, U.S. officials and AI analysts will likely use DeepSeek to justify expanding sanctions, with Nvidia's H200—which is very popular with Chinese buyers—a likely target.

Of course, DeepSeek operates with extensive censorship, which is to be expected in China. For now, one can witness the large language model starting to generate an answer and then censor itself on sensitive topics such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre or evade the restrictions with clever wording. With DeepSeek now in the spotlight, this censorship will probably become tighter.

DeepSeek's effect on the AI industry in the United States is still remarkable. Markets always depend in part on storytelling, and two stories drove the AI boom. The first was that AI will radically transform the economy; the jury is still out. The second was that developments in AI would require ever bigger investments, which would open a gap that smaller competitors couldn't close. DeepSeek just blew a hole in that idea.

All of this means that AI boosters in the United States need a new story for investors, and it's clear what they want that narrative to be: that AI is the new space race between the United States and China—and that DeepSeek is, in the words of Sen. Chuck Schumer, a "Sputnik moment."

This would make giving AI firms a lot of money a patriotic priority—so, as U.S. President Donald Trump said, they can be "laser-focused" on winning. That was exemplified by the \$500 billion Stargate Project that Trump endorsed last week, even as his administration took a wrecking ball to science funding.

The problem with this narrative is that DeepSeek's success isn't a product of the Chinese government. There is plenty of Chinese government funding promised to the AI sector, such as the 1 trillion yuan pledged by the Bank of China. But DeepSeek was developed essentially as a blue-sky research project by hedge fund manager Liang Wenfeng on an entirely open-source, noncommercial model with his own funding.

However, now that DeepSeek is successful, the Chinese government is likely to take a more direct hand. Liang already attended an important meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang last week. China has a record of making national champions out of firms that emerge triumphant from the Darwinian jungle of the private economy. That will mean more money and attention—but also more interference by officials with a weak grasp of the technical details.

Beyond that, though, DeepSeek's success might not be a case for massive government investment in the AI sector. It shows that this might be a technology with shallow economic moats, where new developments can come at relatively low costs from smaller players—

and technical ingenuity could outweigh even the biggest backers.

### Assessing China's Growing Footprint in Nepal

28 January 2025, [South Asian Voices](#), Kamal Dev Bhattarai

In early December 2024, Nepali Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli paid an **official visit** to China — his first bilateral visit abroad after becoming prime minister for the fourth time. Oli's visit to Beijing was keenly watched by political and strategic analysts within the country and abroad, primarily for two reasons. First, Oli broke the **long-standing tradition** practiced by Nepali prime ministers of visiting New Delhi first, and second, he signed a significant strategic agreement with China to advance the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Oli's decision to visit China comes in the context of growing cooperation between Beijing and Kathmandu across several sectors — political, economic, and cultural. While India has traditionally been Nepal's closest developmental partner, China's footprint in the country has grown rapidly in recent years. Nepal continues to be a battleground for influence between India, China, and to an extent the United States, given its geographical location in South Asia, and stands to gain from all of them. Under these circumstances, Nepal's government and political parties must approach foreign policy with a clear-eyed and pragmatic view, aimed at using this growing geopolitical competition for Nepal's own economic and social development.

#### Cooperation through BRI

During Oli's visit, the two countries signed a much-touted Framework Agreement on the BRI, which leaders in both countries hailed as a milestone in bilateral cooperation. While Nepal had officially joined the BRI in 2017, this new agreement **identifies** 10 projects to be implemented under the initiative and outlines modalities of **aid financing**. In an interview with **The Global Times**, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song said that the agreement aims to promote Nepal's socioeconomic development with policy and financial support from China and that it will improve Nepal's trade and investment environment. Similarly, Nepali Ambassador to China Krishna Prasad Oli **said** that the BRI framework agreement "ushers in a new era of Nepal-China practical cooperation" and that projects under BRI will help Nepal transform itself from a landlocked country to a "landlinked" country.

**Oli's decision to visit China comes in the context of growing cooperation between Beijing and Kathmandu across several sectors — political, economic, and cultural. While India has traditionally been Nepal's closest developmental partner, China's**

**footprint in the country has grown rapidly in recent years.**

However, despite this bilateral consensus between China and Nepal, the BRI continues to divide Nepal's national politics over the issue of debt and viability. In the aftermath of the agreement's signing, several leaders from the ruling Nepali Congress party (NC) **protested** against it, arguing that the agreement goes against the party's policy of not accepting any loans to execute BRI projects. On the other hand, the country's communist parties **supported** the BRI framework agreement, arguing that it would provide economic benefits to Nepal.

### **Political Engagement**

Tensions over the BRI are arguably grounded in some ideological differences between Nepal's political parties on their visions of Nepali foreign policy, and especially their attitudes toward China. Prior to 2008, when Nepal's long-ruling monarchy was abolished, Beijing saw the monarchy as a reliable institutional partner in addressing its security concerns. In the aftermath of the monarchy's abolition, Nepal's political parties took contrasting positions on issues concerning Beijing. In September 2020, for instance, when **reports emerged** that China had built infrastructure on territory claimed by Nepal, the then communist-led Nepali government promptly **issued a statement** saying there were no border disputes with China. The following year, however, a new government led by the Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba took a stronger stance on the dispute. These partisan differences have also manifested in how different Nepali political parties have handled the activities of the Tibetan community in Nepal and their **positions on the BRI**.

Seemingly in response to these ideological positions, China has **worked** to bring the country's multiple communist parties together to form a powerful coalition and secure its interests in the country. This effort has included several interactions and visits between the countries' communist parties to **share lessons** on issues such as party governance and state administration. Such exchanges appear to have in turn encouraged Nepal's communist parties to promote closer alignment with China.

Political engagement between the two countries has not been restricted to party-level discourse. There have also been cooperation initiatives between the parliaments and judiciaries of the two countries, including through a **Parliamentary Friendship Group** to strengthen bilateral exchanges.

### **Culture and Education**

Over the past few years, China has also enhanced cultural ties with Nepal in multiple spheres. In particular, China regards language as a major barrier to the expansion of its influence in Nepal and it is therefore focusing on **providing access** to Chinese

language courses in the country. During Oli's recent visit to China, the two countries **signed** a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to induct volunteer Mandarin teachers into Nepal's public school system. According to the Chinese embassy in Nepal, there are more than **900 Mandarin teachers** in Nepal who are already teaching the language in various parts of the country. Additionally, China is also promoting its films, arts, and culture in Nepal through various means. For instance, on January 9 this year, Nepal marked its first **China Film Day** to promote cultural exchange between the Nepali and Chinese film industries. China has also **helped organize** the South Asia International Book Fair in Kathmandu for a few years.

Engagement in the education space has also reached new heights in recent years. Various Chinese universities have signed MoUs with key universities in Nepal such as **Tribhuvan University, Sanskrit University, and Lumbini Buddhist University**. Similarly, China has also **increased** government scholarships for Nepali students. Beijing recently awarded a **Chinese Ambassador Scholarship** for primary and secondary school students in Nepal. In October 2024, the Chinese Embassy in Nepal launched a **Youth Pioneer Program** to promote leadership development, social progress, and community-based projects, similar to the **U.S. Embassy Youth Council Nepal**. A cohort of young leaders has already visited China under the program. Such initiatives demonstrate China's eagerness to engage with youth leaders in Nepal — a new trend in Nepal-China relations.

### **Agriculture**

Traditionally, the United States and Japan have been important players in Nepal's agricultural sector, but in recent years, China has stepped up engagement with Nepal on this front as well. In September last year, Nepal **exported some vegetables to Qatar** with support from the China Foundation for Rural Development. Separately, China also offered to help build a chemical fertilizer plant in Nepal under the BRI — a key initiative that has been under discussion in the country for as long as four decades. If successful, this project would help boost Nepal's economic self-sufficiency significantly since it currently imports **almost USD \$300 million** worth of fertilizers each year.

Earlier this month, a team of Chinese investors **visited** Nepal to scope out opportunities to invest in the agricultural sector. Such investment would be a huge boost since agriculture remains a mainstay of the Nepali economy, contributing **around 24 percent** of GDP and employing **61 percent** of the workforce. Still, Nepal **imports** a lot of its food, mainly from India, and food imports continue to be ever-increasing. Over the past few years, **climate**

**change** has affected the productivity of Nepal's agriculture sector due to prolonged droughts, floods, and landslides. Chinese investment and technology could help counteract some of these challenges.

#### **Nepal's Tricky Balancing Act**

Given its geographical location, Nepal is now caught amid three major powers vying for influence — China, India, and the United States. Kathmandu should tread cautiously in its bilateral relations with each of these powers since its interests lie in engaging all of them. While Nepal receives assistance and investment from all three, traditionally, India has been the most influential partner. As of mid-July 2023, in terms of total stock of **foreign direct investment** in Nepal, India holds the top position with holdings amounting to USD \$750 million, followed by China with USD \$260 million. Similarly, of the **USD \$1 billion** that Nepal owes to bilateral creditors, Japan and India together account for over USD \$700 million, with China in third place. The United States has also been **supporting Nepal** through humanitarian assistance, poverty reduction programs, and initiatives to strengthen democratic governance, advance economic opportunities, and combat climate change. Additionally, the United States has signed a USD \$500 million **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)** Compact with Nepal.

**Nepal is now caught amid three major powers vying for influence — China, India, and the United States. Kathmandu should tread cautiously in its bilateral relations with each of these powers since its interests lie in engaging all of them.**

In this context, growing engagement with China is a positive development for Nepal because it not only brings Chinese money, technology, and knowledge but also helps diversify Kathmandu's partners. Diversification of trade partners had, in fact, been a driver of the transit agreement **signed** with China in 2016 — one of Oli's early efforts to reduce dependence on India by pivoting to China.

However, since Nepal's public debt is **increasing rapidly**, Nepal should adopt a policy of accepting only grants and not loans while dealing with major powers and other developmental partners — including for big infrastructure projects under the BRI. Instead of loans, Nepal should ask Beijing for **grants or investment**, as under the MCC Compact with the United States and the **Nepal-India cross-border railway line**.

Given its growing debt burden, it may also be beneficial for Nepal to focus more on small but smart bilateral projects that create immediate results rather than large infrastructure projects. Under the BRI, China is already **urging** Nepal to select small projects instead of big ones, and Nepal and China are now working on a **five-year plan** for small development projects in districts bordering China. These would be

similar to the **small development projects** already being implemented with India.

Nepal can therefore gain tremendously through a balanced relationship with China — one which does not jeopardize its ties with India or the United States. If the Nepali government and the country's political parties are able to prepare a clear roadmap for engagement with the three major powers, the growing competition among them can be utilized for Nepal's social and economic development.

#### **Growing US-India cooperation and China's strategic reactions: A tense 2025**

28 January 2025, [ORF](#), Antara Ghosal Singh

*The Chinese strategic community are closely watching how US-India relations progress under Trump 2.0, viewing it as a threat to Sino-Indian relations*

Even though China-India relations made important progress in recent months, China remains highly vigilant about the ongoing interactions between India and the United States (US).

China kept a close eye on the six-day visit of Indian External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar to the US. This was not only the last high-level contact between India and the Joe Biden administration, but also the first visit to the US by a senior Indian official since Donald Trump's election victory. While some Chinese observers joked that the visit is India's letter of surrender to Trump, other reports in Chinese media wondered if this would be followed by Modi visiting the US, or Trump visiting India in the coming months, further taking US-India bilateral ties to a higher level. Chinese observers' key concern was whether EAM Jaishankar was able to convince President Trump that India could replace China and provide the US with cheaper products, as Trump imposed high tariffs on Chinese products. They speculated if the Modi government, in tandem with Trump's "Made in America" strategy, will now offer more preferential conditions to American companies to set up supply chains in India and produce low-end products. The other interesting issue that featured in Chinese discussions was India's role in the Ukraine crisis. Given Trump's interest in ending the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and India being on particularly good terms with Russia, Chinese observers evaluated if Russia can be an additional factor that brings India and the US together.

*While some Chinese observers joked that the visit is India's letter of surrender to Trump, other reports in Chinese media wondered if this would be followed by Modi visiting the US, or Trump visiting India in the coming months, further taking US-India bilateral ties to a higher level.*

Chinese observers also closely followed former US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's recent India visit on January 5-6, 2025. The Chinese side lamented that, even as the Biden administration is about to bid farewell to the White House, it is making big diplomatic moves in Asia, dispatching its core team to various countries in the continent including Japan, South Korea, India, Singapore, and the Philippines. This, they argued, shows that the Biden administration remains committed to the mechanisms and arrangements created between the US, Japan, South Korea, India, and Australia in the last four years that primarily targeted China, thereby consolidating Biden's diplomatic legacy in the Indo-Pacific before Trump takes over.

There has been an online uproar over Sullivan's farewell visit to New Delhi, which, Chinese media argues, is aimed at stirring up antagonisms between China and India, seeking to win over India, particularly on the dam issue. It was also argued that, on the surface, this visit might be about strengthening cooperation with India, but in fact, the United States is likely worried about the evolving cooperative dynamics between China and India, and it intends to negotiate "new rules" of engagement with India, ensuring that it continues cooperating with the US' China strategy.

On one hand, Chinese observers criticised Sullivan's proposition of the United States and India working together to develop semiconductors. and accused the US of attempting to build a technology supply chain in cooperation with India, weakening China's influence in high-tech fields. They also objected to US-India "military cooperation", accusing it would lead to an arms race in the region and deteriorate China's security environment.

On the other hand, they lambasted Sullivan for allegedly raising the issue of China's dam project in Tibet with Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval during the visit. Various articles in Chinese media emphasised that China and India have their own communication channels to resolve this issue and that there is no need for third-party intervention in this sensitive matter. Former editor-in-chief of Global Times Hu Xijin was quoted in a media report: "Sullivan wants to create trouble for China-India relations before he leaves. Americans are like this, poking (their nose) wherever there is conflict, fearing global peace." *There has been an online uproar over Sullivan's farewell visit to New Delhi, which, Chinese media argues, is aimed at stirring up antagonisms between China and India, seeking to win over India, particularly on the dam issue.*

Going forward, there was much unease within the Chinese strategic community as the "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue" foreign ministers' meeting took place, just one day after Trump took office. Neither

was the symbolism of Minister Jaishankar on the front row at Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2025, lost on Chinese strategists.

Overall, Chinese observers inferred that, although Sino-Indian relations have warmed up recently, India has not relaxed its diplomatic interactions with the US. How will the US-India relationship develop in 2025? What impact will the US-India interactions during Trump 2.0 have on China? These were some of the questions that gripped China's strategic community, which worryingly noted that both the 2017 Doklam conflict and the 2020 Galwan conflict happened during Trump's first term in office.

Possibly, as part of Beijing's coping strategy, Chinese scholars are building up a discourse that stable ties with China are, in fact, a great bargaining chip for India, vis-à-vis the Trump administration's policy uncertainty. If India tries to curry favour with the US at the cost of China, they warn, it will not only fail to gain much from the Trump administration, but it will also lose out on the prospect of benefitting from Chinese capital and technology.

The evolving strategic dynamic between India, China, and the US is most likely going to be a defining factor of global politics in 2025—something that is worth watching.

### **Being sanctioned by China just proves that our advocacy for human rights is having an impact**

28 January 2025, The Globe and Mail, [Margaret Mccuaig-Johnston](#)

Last month, I received a wonderful Christmas present from Beijing. I had been unexpectedly sanctioned by Wang Yi, China's Minister of Foreign Affairs, for my work on human rights, along with 19 other Canadians. Each of us has spoken out for Uyghurs or Tibetans who have been repressed in China, some for both groups. Conservative MP Michael Chong was similarly sanctioned by the Chinese regime in March, 2021, for leading Parliament's unanimous recognition that China's repression of the Muslim Uyghurs is a genocide. Since then, I had wondered how I could ramp up my advocacy and perhaps have my work, too, be recognized by Beijing for its human-rights impact. It turns out, you just have to be on the staff or board of an organization supporting certain diasporas that Beijing wants to silence. In the case of my sanctions group, we are all in civil society; it's an unprecedented sanctioning of regular Canadians by the Chinese regime. The 20 of us include leaders of the Canada-Tibet Committee and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, lawyers who take on human-rights cases, a business executive in technology, leaders in organizational development, an expert on disinformation, former and current professors, and

those who were friends of China and now speak out against its human-rights atrocities.

The sanctions mean that we can never go to China – but who wants to go to a country that kidnaps innocent Canadians to hold them hostage? Our financial assets there are frozen, but none of us have any. And we can no longer collaborate with Chinese people living in China – but most Chinese people there are already worried that talking to Westerners could mean trouble.

Why did Mr. Wang name us? On Dec. 9, 2024, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly announced sanctions against eight high-level Chinese officials implicated in grave human-rights violations. They are responsible for the systemic repression of Tibetans, Uyghurs and Falun Gong practitioners. Some of those who were victimized have ties to Canada. Mr. Wang does not like international attention drawn to this repression.

We applaud the Canadian government's action. When wielded against totalitarian governments, sanctions are one of the most effective tools to show that crimes against humanity are illegal under international law and unacceptable to Canadians. Retired Chinese official Chen Quanguo was so successful in his repression of the local population as Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region that he was transferred to Xinjiang to implement a genocide on the Uyghur people. Together, the people incarcerated under his watch represent millions of individuals put through modern-day concentration camps, including more than two million Uyghur and Tibetan children currently in residential indoctrination schools, with hundreds of thousands unable to reunite with their parents.

Canada was right to identify and sanction such despicable people and their organizations, and the sanctions levied do have impact. International disgust at such atrocities is a disincentive to do more of them. Further, many Chinese officials have secreted personal finances offshore to Canada where they can be safe from seizure in China. They may have a child studying in a Canadian university with the hopes that the child will become a citizen and bring their parents here. Those sanctioned can't do that.

Officials at Global Affairs Canada, Public Safety, the RCMP, CSIS and other agencies have been extremely supportive of us. Since our names have been published, they have provided important information on how we can protect our computers, phones and personal security, including in-person briefings. Some of us are having surveillance cameras installed at our homes, or adding to those already there. We are bolstered by the support of our families and friends, and by the millions of Canadians whose views are reflected in poll after poll against the policies of Xi Jinping.

For decades, China's transnational repression had been focused on silencing their own nationals abroad. Under Mr. Xi, it has been spreading out to Canadians, Americans and Europeans who speak out against Beijing's policies in our legislatures or in the pages of our newspapers, and in university classrooms or legal meetings. Beijing must be very frightened by our voices, which we have raised against injustice.

Those who advised Mr. Wang to sanction us were on a fool's errand – the fool being Mr. Xi. We are now infinitely more motivated to do whatever we can to bolster human rights in China, and we have advice ready for the next government for other initiatives. Now that we know we're having an impact, in concert with counterparts abroad we will be advancing actions against Beijing's transnational repression of China's citizens and Westerners like ourselves.

### The great game in the Himalaya

28 January 2025, [The Kathmandu Post](#), Siddhartha Thapa



*Kathmandu must tread strategically in devising its foreign policy to maximise its interests.*

The Himalaya are known for their unmatched beauty and natural splendour. They are also impenetrable buffers that geographically separate the Tibetan plateau from the Indian subcontinent. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, once remarked that the Himalaya stood as a natural border for India against China. Nehru's observation in the Indian parliament sparked controversy in Nepal. Nepali leaders quickly admonished his comments as akin to undermining Nepal's sovereignty. In his attempt to subdue India's fear about the development of the Araniko Highway with Chinese assistance, King Mahendra later remarked that communism wasn't about to arrive in a taxi.

More than half a century has passed since Nehru and King Mahendra made their formative observations. Yet, while much ground has shifted since then, the Himalayan frontier remains a highly contested and fortified region. The Himalaya have a significant political bearing, even outside our immediate

neighbourhood—in the ever-evolving global politics. Nepal needs to identify the growing power games at play and tread strategically to ensure its autonomy in devising a foreign policy that maximises its interests amid turbulent times.

### **Lumbini's significance**

One cannot undermine Lumbini's importance both in terms of history and current geopolitics. Most Nepalis feel a profound connection with Lumbini because Buddha was in what is now modern-day Nepal. However, the pathetic and shoddy state of the infrastructure reflects the injustice that Lumbini has faced in terms of policy and vision. Mikel Dunham, author of the book *The Buddha's Warrior*, chronicles the Khampa incursions into Tibet from Mustang and sheds light on the importance of Lumbini. Sitting at the charming Shambala Garden in the erstwhile Shangri-La Hotel in Kathmandu in the initial years of the peace process, Dunham remarks, "What Vatican means for the Christians, Mecca for the Muslims, Lumbini is the same for Buddhists".

Recently, Beijing has demonstrated unparalleled interest in Lumbini and its development, which is of critical importance for multiple reasons. First, Buddhism is among the world's most popular religions, and its cultural linkages across most Asian societies provide enormous socio-political leverage. Second, Buddhism is a commonality across most East Asian countries, which could potentially serve as a tool for effective mobilisation to meet political objectives. It is also interesting to observe the increasing influence of Buddhism in the West, where most people are turning to Eastern philosophies to seek solutions to life problems.

The political opportunity Lumbini provides China is also substantive. Above all, China's ambitious plans in Lumbini are aimed at providing leadership to the development of Lumbini to establish China as the natural and undisputed leader of the Buddhist world. China's insecurity is natural, as it was only after the then US President Richard Nixon visited Beijing in 1972 that America's shadow war in the Tibetan plateau against China's invasion of Tibet came to an end. Not only is China most serious about its hand in selecting the next Dalai Lama, but with the development of Lumbini, China aims to control the narrative of Buddhism, which it hopes will put the lid on the Tibetan issue with a lasting solution that no longer challenges China's national security.

Seventy years after Nehru's observation that the Himalaya are a natural barrier to India's security, today's policymakers in New Delhi cannot find comfort in the mighty Himalaya providing a buffer to India's security concerns. In fact, the revolutionary advancement in infrastructure means that the Himalaya are no longer impenetrable and unlike Mahendra's observation, communism wasn't going to

come in a taxicab. The improvement of infrastructure linkages between China and Nepal has dynamically altered the security landscape of the Himalayan region. Not just taxi cabs, many Chinese tourists and businessmen now frequent the roads of Nepal with their vehicles. Nepali policymakers now dream of Nepal serving as a transit point for trade between India and China. Some politicians even suggest that since Nepal is in a geopolitical hotspot, the fruits of a transit country will soon catapult it towards economic prosperity.

Realistically, the infrastructure linkages between China and Nepal serve two purposes. First, China's eventual goal is to use the shortest route possible to access the enormous markets of South Asia. The open border between Nepal and India provides Chinese goods unprecedented access to the Indian subcontinent—home to a quarter of the world's population. Second, in an era of geopolitics dominated by muscle diplomacy, improvement of road linkages can prove advantageous for nations aspiring to acquire strategic superiority against adversaries. Sino-India ties have been fraught with differences over the line of actual control, which remains disputed. Further, the fall of the Hasina government in Bangladesh has been a tremendous setback to India. The previous regime led by Khaleda Zia had provided passage for arms and movement for the Mete (an ethnic group native to Manipur) rebels aiming to destabilise northeast India, posing enormous security challenges to India.

### **The needed response**

The recent initiative by Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba to incentivise economics as a critical tool for starting discussions on foreign policy is creative and timely. However, Deuba must also include feedback from security agencies at the heart of policymaking. Feedback from the business community is necessary to craft a foreign policy that represents the contemporary aspiration of a modern Nepali nation striving for enhanced economic opportunities. As South Asia represents a rich civilisational history, our foreign policy must incorporate that in deepening and expanding our cultural connectivity. Geography should be our utmost priority while determining the practical approaches to shape our foreign policy objectives.

Nepali leaders and political parties should cease vacillating from one foreign power to another to meet short-term political goals. New Delhi, Beijing and Washington are questioning our strategic autonomy. Therefore, Nepal must give up the idea of a transit state in the foreseeable future as Kathmandu suffers from a serious trust deficit in the international arena. Currently, the approach must be inward, with Nepal first. The mantra is simple: With India, we are linked geographically and through civilisational ties; the open border makes our ties unique and special. China is our time-tested partner, and we can learn a lot from it. The

West provides Nepal with the avenues needed to expand its strategic outlets.

**'Birds of a feather': Yuan Zheng on Trump's China hawks and US rivalry endgame**

27 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Orange Wang

**Chinese expert on US explains how Beijing might engage with Donald Trump's team and discusses riskiest flashpoints in Sino-American ties**

**You said that China should maintain communication with the US, including [Donald] Trump himself, his family and the people around him. How difficult do you expect that will be over the next four years?**

Engagement is necessary.

Engagement can be both public and private. Right now, the most appropriate form might be private. Direct contact is certainly better, but if that is not possible, then indirect contact, such as through intermediaries, is the way to go.

As for connecting through Elon Musk, I think if people talk about it too much, it will become problematic and Musk will also be cautious. Some things can only be done and not talked about. If they are over-discussed, they will not work.

Perhaps we could look for people similar to Musk, or Trump's major sponsors, or big American businessmen and entrepreneurs – people who can have a say.

When it comes to the Trump family, I think the most influential person among them at the moment may be his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr.

We could also explore, through direct or indirect channels, which influential figures in the incoming US administration can be reached and try to communicate with them.

I think Trump has not yet made a firm decision on China policy. He is still considering his options.

There are different factions within his team with differing views. On China-related issues, if we can avoid letting any one faction dominate early on and get Trump to make his own decision, it may not be a very bad choice. Trump values practical interests, so I think he will not come in with a strong focus on ideological issues but will be more interested in what he can gain and what gives him something to boast about.

On one hand, establishing contact and avoiding the escalation of ill will between China and the US through dialogue is crucial ... We should do what we can, without too many taboos. We need to be confident, remain calm and maintain a positive attitude in our engagement and communication.

But on the other hand, we must remain calm and not have overly high expectations. The more we expect, the greater the possible disappointment.

The strategic landscape of China-US relations is already set, and in this broader context, can Trump really change things? American policy towards China has been adjusting since the Obama era. The US National Security Strategy report released in October 2022 indicated that the adjustment had been completed, and the US outlined the aim to outcompete China over the coming decade. Even if it is not Trump, the tone of the US is unlikely to change.

**Many of Trump's picks for foreign policy and national security positions are China hawks. What do you think that could mean for future China-US relations? You said the bilateral ties were seen as being in a free fall in 2020. Is that likely to happen again in the second Trump administration?**

The China-US relationship was already at rock bottom in 2020 and there is not much further it can fall now.

If relations were to fall further, it might lead to a real head-on collision. But [the US] does not want that and we do not have the intention either.

[As for Trump's cabinet line-up], I do not find the current situation very surprising.

Trump is the kind of person who likes the idea of the president having absolute power and the final say, though it is very difficult for him to achieve that within the US system.

After his first stint and the four years of the Biden administration, Trump has sifted out a group of people who share similar views with him or adapt their rhetoric to align with his to get close to him. They view China as being on the opposite side of the US, whether in terms of structure, trade or ideology.

Over the years, the people around Trump have effectively split into three main factions. One is the so-called deal-making faction, another is the Maga faction, and the third is the ultra-hardliners, mostly within the national security and foreign policy teams. Now you see figures like Marco Rubio, Mike Waltz and Pete Hegseth, all of whom are unfriendly to China.

I think [this type of Trump cabinet] is inevitable as he has such a limited pool of people to choose from. They are birds of a feather. How could it be likely to find someone friendly towards China among them?

**Considering the characteristics of that group of people, do you expect it to be more difficult than before to manage China-US relations during the second Trump administration? If there is another surprise similar to the balloon incident, would bilateral relations face even greater risks?**

Given the current situation, the pressure to manage crises in the future will be greater. The risks on both sides will certainly be higher.

We need to prepare ourselves mentally for the possibility that China-US relations over the next four years may not go smoothly. That said, we cannot rule out another scenario, albeit less likely, where Trump



does not immediately make a very tough move against China.

He is very likely to use trade issues as a starting point when he takes office. For example, he may pressure China to open up its market and import more American products.

If China makes some appropriate concessions on those issues and the two sides can reach a consensus through compromise, perhaps he would not impose tariffs as high as 60 per cent across the board. Tariffs may only be raised to relatively high levels in selected sectors.

One of Trump's major demands is for China to fulfil the "phase one" trade agreement agreed upon in early 2020, which he believes China has failed to implement. Of course, we were definitely not going to implement it, given how bad China-US relations got later that year. Why should we?

Moreover, the deal itself was somewhat unrealistic. Even if the US exported all their goods to us, it still would not be enough [to meet the targets set]. There are some flaws in that agreement. If the two sides can reach some consensus through compromise on those issues, China-US relations may become relatively stable.

I think that after all those years, China's resilience to external shocks, especially the psychological steadiness of our leadership, has been much more stable than before.

Back in 2018, when Trump launched the trade war, we were really unsure whether China could handle it. The Chinese people were rather cautious and not overly optimistic. We were all considering what the worst situation would be like.

But over time, we found that even with tariffs on all our products, it did not seem to bring us down. We had a hard time, but it seemed that [the US] did not have an easy time either. Chinese companies faced some difficulties, but the tariffs on many products were effectively passed on to American companies and consumers. The subsequent spike in US inflation was surely related to that.

Moreover, in recent years, while the US has been reducing its dependence on us, we have also been reducing our dependence on the US. The reason is that we are concerned that if we rely too much on the US export market, a sudden change could leave us unable to export.

Our efforts to expand in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia are also in preparation and planning for this.

Trump's push for deglobalisation and protectionist policies will not grow the pie but shrink global welfare and wealth.

We also should have a set of measures ready [in response to the potential impact of the new Trump cabinet].

While the coming of those figures is not good news for China-US relations, they are unlikely to upend the relationship entirely.

If relations were to be completely upended, even to the brink of war, it would also be a nightmare for the US.

Our generation of Chinese has far greater endurance and mobilisation capacity than Americans. Moreover, our central government's strong ability to control is an advantage Trump envies but cannot replicate.

**You said that the likelihood of a direct conflict between China and the US remains low. What do you think are the riskiest areas in China-US relations during the second Trump administration?**

The likelihood of a war is low because the costs are too high for both sides to bear. Even if the Americans were to win, it would at best be a pyrrhic victory.

As for our vulnerabilities, the US can easily project power close to us and we are not able to push them out, while we have difficulty reaching their doorstep as it is simply too far away.

But on the other hand, we will be fighting near our homeland if they come to us. We are comparatively concentrated in this region while [they] are taking care of the whole world, which will give us a relative edge.

That is why I am not worried about the Taiwan question. Taiwan cannot achieve independence. The island is only about [70] nautical miles from mainland China but about [6,000] nautical miles from the US. The US is too far away, making it so difficult for them to help defend Taiwan.

Several factors make direct confrontation unlikely. But are there risks? Of course, there are.

First, there is the risk of the US directly interfering in China's sovereignty. For instance, on issues such as Taiwan or the South China Sea, would there be any small unexpected incidents? If such incidents cannot be effectively managed and controlled, would they escalate? And if they do escalate, what would happen? Another risk is the undermining of China's right to development, that is to say, the US joining forces with its allies to blockade and suppress China in technology. However, with Trump coming back to power, will the US allies continue to work in unison with him to target China as before? Some countries may be reluctant to do so. They may question why they should still follow along when the US is also going to take action against them and push them without offering tangible benefits in return.

Then there is the issue of regional security in the western Pacific. The US has been increasing its military presence in the region to enhance its deterrence against China. Since the region is close to our borders, we will respond for the sake of security.

Next is the issue of global industrial chains. The US is trying – though whether it can succeed is another question – to build an industrial chain and a supply

chain that exclude China, including initiatives such as “friendshoring” and “nearshoring” to reduce dependence on China or even cut ties altogether.

Of course, we do not want to be excluded and I think it would be very difficult to kick China out. But that is indeed a risk.

Both sides should, through exchanges and dialogue, avoid strategic miscalculations and properly manage risks when they arise to avoid further escalation.

There are structural contradictions between the two major powers, compounded by America’s ideological bias against China and the Communist Party.

It is crucial now for far-right hawks like Rubio and Waltz to realise that it is very hard for them to bring China down to its knees.

Only when they fully understand that and begin to treat China as an equal on all levels can China-US relations gradually get stable.

They now have the arrogant idea that as long as they put pressure on China, it will lead to the independence of Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet, or the collapse of the Communist Party, which is completely wishful thinking and simply impossible.

**During the Xi-Biden summit in Lima in November, the Chinese side emphasised four “red lines” that must not be crossed, one of which is China’s development path and political system. When Mike Pompeo was the US secretary of state, there seemed to be efforts to promote a “colour revolution” in China. Do you expect the second Trump administration to do the same?**

When it comes to ideological issues, I think we have already established a comprehensive system from top to bottom. Any signs of unrest will be taken seriously at every level of government. It is very difficult [for the US to do something about this].

In fact, I am not worried under current circumstances. What the Americans have done since 2018 has increasingly demonstrated their high-handedness, hegemony or bullying.

That has led many Chinese people to question, “How can the US act like this?” I am not saying everyone feels this way, but a majority do, including intellectuals.

For those of us who study the US, there used to be a sense of closeness among a significant number of scholars who saw much to learn from America. But in recent years we have become increasingly puzzled about how the US became like this today. It is simply unbelievable to us.

When the US and other Western countries claim that Chinese nationalism is on the rise, I sometimes think they should reflect on the reasons behind it. Do they think it is entirely the result of government propaganda? To a large extent, it is their policies towards China, their overbearing attitudes and their

bullying moves that have provoked a reaction from the Chinese people. They fail to see this.

Moreover, many people are now recognising that American democracy itself has significant flaws.

**You said that Trump may be open to making deals on some China-related issues. But you also said it is important to tell the US clearly what cannot be traded and what China will not compromise on. Can you elaborate on this?**

When it comes to issues concerning national sovereignty and territorial integrity – such as Taiwan or the South China Sea – there’s no room for deals.

At most, there might be something tactical. For example, Trump might propose selling fewer weapons to Taiwan in exchange for mainland China buying more American products, which would already be playing on the edge.

But if it involves something like the US sending warships to Taiwan or a significant breakthrough in US-Taiwan relations, those are matters of principle that are absolutely non-negotiable. No one would dare to make a deal on those.

When it comes to trade and economic issues, such as the US asking China to increase imports of American agricultural products and China responding by asking for lower tariffs, these issues that are not a matter of principle can be discussed.

On fentanyl, the US hopes that China can continue to cooperate with them. And China might say, “I’ll help you, but what’s in it for me?” You cannot expect help from the other side while badmouthing – it’s just like basic human interaction.

The fentanyl issue is your problem and you are asking me for help now. If you continue to act tough and impose sanctions, we might just ignore you.

**What about the technology sector?**

The technology sector is particularly challenging.

In technology, the US really wants to decouple. They are trying to block China off completely: “Aren’t you trying to overtake on a curve? I’ll make sure you can’t get access to the most advanced technologies. Go and develop them yourself.”

Biden adopted the “small yard, high fence” approach. But as time passed, Biden gradually expanded those yards and built the fences even higher.

I think Trump will go even further and build a “big yard, high fence”.

I am not optimistic about this area. What can you do when they just refuse to sell their stuff to you?

**There are debates among US think tanks about what America’s goals are in its competition with China and what the endgame of the competition is. What is your view?**

I think there are some people among the American far-right who have a clear goal, which is to bring down China, overthrow the Communist Party government

and break China into pieces. That is the best outcome they aim to achieve.

Regarding the left, [former national security adviser] Jake Sullivan and [former deputy secretary of state] Kurt Campbell have advocated for a different vision – coexistence.

That means that China and the US will end up living alongside each other as major powers. The relationship would not be particularly good and the competition between the two countries would become a norm but war would be avoided. Of course, that is different from what we refer to as “peaceful coexistence”.

I believe some Republicans also follow a realist approach, that is to say, recognising that strength is the key factor determining the final direction of China-US relations and prioritising tangible interests over ideology or values.

In the future, they may come to realise that due to the limits of America’s own strength, China will not have fallen after years or even a longer period of strategic competition but will have continued to advance and get stronger.

By then, they will have no choice but to accept the reality that the result will be living alongside one another. That may become a goal around which a consensus could gradually take shape within the US establishment, whether Democrat or Republican.

So from a realistic point of view at the moment, living alongside one another is probably the outcome that we should strive for.

Although it differs from the “peaceful coexistence” we advocate, given the current state of China-US relations and how Americans perceive China and the future trajectory of bilateral ties, that may not be a bad outcome.

**You expected that Trump would also target US allies. Is it likely that will give China opportunities to expand its global influence? Where do you expect China’s relations with other major countries and regions to go during the second Trump administration?**

Every country prioritises its own national interests. But Trump’s “America first” has taken that to an extreme, as if to say that “only the interests of the US matter”, without considering the feelings of others, including allies.

That carries multiple implications.

One is towards allies, for example, asking them to shoulder their own defence obligations, imposing tariffs on them indiscriminately and being reluctant to provide public goods in global governance.

All those could lead to at least psychological rifts between the US and its allies.

In that case, will the united front on China among them continue in the future? I think it will become more difficult.

Secondly, there is the issue of withdrawal from international organisations. One manifestation of “America First” is the tendency towards neo-isolationism, such as the US no longer being willing to provide military or economic aid.

Trump is unlikely to be interested in multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum and the Group of 20 (G20). He may feel that those international organisations do not listen to him, even though he has paid the money.

That is not necessarily a bad thing. He does not want to spend the money, he is not willing to shoulder international obligations and he is uninterested in multilateral mechanisms. Could that potentially give us more room to manoeuvre?

In diplomacy, if you present yourself as a multilateralist and a global cooperation advocate, your influence in international organisations and regions will certainly rise when the US is no longer there. The US is supposed to be the most powerful within those, but if it were to pull itself out, would that not create opportunities for China?

From the current standpoint, its withdrawal – if we disregard other factors – is at least positive for China to expand its influence.

**Would that lead to China’s relations with the EU, Japan, South Korea and others being on a better footing during the second Trump administration? What are your expectations for China-Russia relations? Do you expect Trump to align with Russia against China?**

Various countries may now have started to prepare some leeway to cope with the possible impacts of the second Trump administration. The idea is that if the US pressures them too hard, they still have common ground with China, which has performed well in areas like global cooperation including on climate change.

The so-called “reset” of the US-Russia relationship has been discussed since the George W. Bush era. Yet so far, we have not seen any substantial [improvement]. Instead, it has become worse and worse.

As long as Putin remains in office, it will be very difficult for the US and Russia to get close to each other and even to ease their relations.

It may be very challenging to reach a peace agreement for the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as ceding the four eastern regions in Ukraine to Russia is unlikely, which is hard for both Ukraine and the EU to accept. The most probable outcome may be a temporary ceasefire.

Even if there is a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, the sanctions against Russia are likely to remain and questions over frozen Russian state assets will persist.

Additionally, strong anti-Russia sentiment exists within both the US and Europe. Within the Republican Party,

for instance, many from the far-right establishment have been anti-Soviet and later anti-Russia. It is too difficult to make some kind of deal with Russia, which would likely face significant opposition even within the US.

I am not too worried that Trump might join forces with Russia against China.

**The recent moves by the EU, Japan and South Korea you mentioned seem more like they are proactively approaching China.**

It is possible that they take the initiative, but we can also do so.

As the rifts with the US may widen, the autonomy of European countries, Japan and South Korea is likely to grow.

Moreover, if the Russia-Ukraine conflict comes to a halt and the sense of crisis in Europe is not as strong, their need for the US may decline, relatively speaking. Of course, it depends on how Trump will play his cards. If Trump's actions deeply hurt the feelings of Europeans, they might drift further away, waiting to see what the next US president will be like.

I think we do not need to wait. It is not a bad thing to have more contact and communications with European countries, Japan and South Korea, including exchanges with foreign think tanks, not only with those of the US.

Engaging with think tanks in other countries might help find opportunities for cooperation.

Talks on the China-Japan-South Korea trilateral free-trade zone previously had difficulty making progress due to souring China-US relations and the Biden administration's efforts to build a unified front on China. Now, especially if Trump increases pressure on them in terms of defence spending and tariffs, do you think Japan and South Korea will still be as aligned with the US as before, especially South Korea?

We should be confident, calm and have positive ideas to take some measures. As for whether we can achieve certain goals or not, we should not have overly high expectations for now since the whole situation is very complex, and what those countries are thinking is also very complicated.

We could only test the waters and understand the situation first to see if there is space for cooperation or expanding cooperation.

With the China-US relationship where it is today, everyone knows it is very tense and challenging. However, while seeing the difficult aspects, we should also see what opportunities are provided for us to seize and work with.

In good times, we should also see the negative side, and in bad times, we must also see the positive side. This way, our decisions will not go astray.

**I was 10 when my father paid a smuggler to take me out of Tibet**

27 January 2025, [RFA](#), Lobsang Gelek

**He hoped for a better life for me, but being separated from my family has been difficult.**



*A page from Lobsang Gelek's bank account passbook, which was opened with the help of the Tibetan Homes School in India before he left for college in 2013. (Tibetan Homes School)*

When my editor asked me to report on the secret journey Tibetans take to escape into exile, I did not think that there was much worth writing about. It is the story of almost everyone in my community. It is not news, and we are in the news business.

But as I reported the story, I could feel its power – and it reminded me of details of my own journey that I hadn't thought about in years.

I was born in Kham, in eastern Tibet, my parents' first born. A brother and sister followed, and the five of us lived with two cousins in a home that sat in a valley where the Salween River flows, surrounded by farm fields and mountain peaks.

My mom sold produce in a town closer to the border with China, and I remember her taking me with her to pick the fruit to sell, teaching me a little Chinese as we worked. When she sold the fruit, she would bring back Chinese toys. All the neighborhood kids would gather around to play with me and my new plastic guns and cars. I loved the attention the gifts from my mother brought me.

When I was 9, my parents told me they were sending me to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. My father had a small business there, and I remember the two of us watching Indian Bollywood movies together. I can still sing some songs from 90s Indian films that I learned while in Lhasa. [This song](#) takes me back to that time in my life whenever I listen to it.

I remember watching an Indian film starring the actor Govinda that featured beautiful cities, sparkling buildings and crystal blue swimming pools. One day, he asked me, "Son, would you like to visit these places in India for a short trip?" I eagerly replied, "Yes!"

I didn't know it then, but my father had already decided to send me to India for a better life under the Dalai Lama's guidance.

In October of 2003, he paid 10,000 Chinese yuan to a Tibetan smuggler to take me. There were 42 of us, including other children about my age. The journey took almost a month, from Shigatse, west of Lhasa, to Kathmandu. Following the smuggler's instructions, my father prepared everything I needed, including sleeping bags, snow goggles, tsampa (Tibetan food) and dried yak meat.

To avoid Chinese authorities, we hid and slept in mountain caves during the day and walked through the darkness of the night. Sometimes, we slept in village cowsheds of villages where people had good connections with our guide.

I remember reaching Nangpa la pass, just a few kilometers away from Mt. Everest. It was so cold that our guide and the adults in the group burned shoes and clothes and whatever else they could find to boil water and keep us warm. But everyone was freezing. All we saw around us was snow and ice. Elders recited Buddhist mantras as we huddled together.

After a few days, I asked our guide to take me back to Tibet. I didn't want to go to India; I just wanted to return to Lhasa to be with my father. I remember crying a lot.

There was a sister in our group who was from my hometown, and my father had asked her to look after me. He had instructed her on how to convince me to continue, telling her to share stories about the beautiful places in India I would see. She comforted me by saying, "We are approaching India, and soon you'll be able to go back to Tibet."

In fact, I was fooled by everyone. I didn't reach India directly, but Nepal, which I didn't even know was a country at the time. Officials from the Tibetan Reception Center came to receive us at the border. The center was already overcrowded when we arrived, with thousands of Tibetan newcomers. We didn't have proper rooms; we had to sleep on the ground on foul-smelling blankets. I stayed there for four months.

I tried to contact my father several times through international call booths, but the calls never reached him. I missed my mom and grandmother so much, and there were times when I would cry under the blankets. Aside from my father in Lhasa, there was no way to contact the rest of my family as my hometown didn't have phone service or electricity at that time.

To this day, I still don't know if my father informed my mother or the rest of the family before sending me to India or about the journey I was about to undertake.

When I was in Nepal I still thought that my separation from my family was only temporary. But soon after arriving in Dharmasala I met other kids my age who shared similar stories, and I realized I was meant to grow up in India.

Some years later, I was finally able to talk to my mother, but it wasn't actually much of a conversation. Whenever I tried to talk, she would immediately cry

out "bhu," which means "son" in Tibetan. I cried along with her, feeling the deep ache of separation.

I haven't spoken to my family since then, though I occasionally get word through relatives also in exile that they are safe and healthy. I hope that sometimes they see videos I do for RFA or read articles I write and know that I am well.

Back in Nepal and India reporting for RFA last year, I felt nostalgia and emotion I did not expect after one of the people I interviewed shared a similar story of having walked in the snow with little food.

In just a few weeks, I'll become a parent myself. As I approach fatherhood, I admit that sometimes I feel anger toward my father for his decision. But I try not to blame him because I know he did what he thought was best for me. And I think he did give me a brighter future – I would never have been here in the U.S., or met my beautiful wife, who, like me, was also smuggled out of Tibet as a child, if I had stayed back. Like all expecting parents, we're anxious and excited for what's to come. One thing I know for sure: I will never send my child far away from me. The pain of separation is something that lingers in your soul, until the moment you can be finally reunited. I still hope for that day.

### China's Large and Mysterious Dam Project Is Alarming Neighbors and Experts

27 January 2025, [The New York Times](#), Tiffany May, Isabelle Qian, Suhasini Raj

The hydropower dam, in quake-prone Tibet, is set to be the world's biggest. But China has said little about the project, which could affect nearby countries.



*China says it will build a dam in Medog, a remote county in Tibet, that could generate three times as much electricity as the Three Gorges Dam.*

Step aside, Three Gorges Dam. China's latest colossal infrastructure project, if completed, will be the world's largest hydropower dam, high up in the Tibetan plateau on the border with India.

China says the Motuo Hydropower Station it is building in Tibet is key to its effort to meet clean energy targets.

Beijing also sees infrastructure projects as a way to stimulate the sluggish Chinese economy and create jobs.

But this project has raised concerns among environmentalists and China's neighbors — in part, because Beijing has said so little about it.

The area where the dam is being built is prone to earthquakes. The Tibetan river being dammed, the Yarlung Tsangpo, flows into neighboring India as the Brahmaputra and into Bangladesh as the Jamuna, raising concerns in those countries about water security.

#### **What's known about the project?**

China announced in late December that the government had approved construction of the Motuo project in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo, but it has released few details about it. That includes the cost of the project, where the money will come from, what companies are involved and how many people are likely to be displaced.

What is known is that the dam will be in Medog County in Tibet, in a steep canyon where the river makes a horseshoe turn known as the Great Bend, then falls about 6,500 feet over roughly 30 miles.

By harnessing the kinetic energy of that drop, the hydropower station could generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours of energy per year, the state-owned Power Construction Corporation of China, or PowerChina, estimated in 2020. That would be triple the capacity of the Three Gorges Dam, currently the world's biggest, which cost China about \$34 billion to build.

China has not disclosed which company is building the dam, but some analysts say PowerChina, the country's largest builder of hydropower infrastructure, is most likely involved. The company did not respond to requests for comment.

Experts say construction in the Great Bend, a 500-meter-deep canyon with no roads, would probably take a decade because of the technical challenges.

Even the dam's basic design is unknown.

According to Fan Xiao, a senior engineer at the Sichuan Bureau of Geology who spoke to The New York Times, one proposal, which he saw as a likely approach, involved building a dam near the top of the Great Bend and diverting the water through enormous tunnels drilled into the canyon.

China's top leader, Xi Jinping, has promised that the country's carbon emissions will peak around 2030 as it replaces coal with renewable sources of energy. The ruling Communist Party, which uses massive public works projects to showcase its engineering prowess, has for years studied ways to tap into the power of the Yarlung Tsangpo.

#### **Are there environmental risks?**

The same forces that created the Great Bend pose risks to the dam China is building on it. The Tibetan

plateau was formed by a collision between the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates millions of years ago. To this day, the Indian plate is still slowly moving toward the Eurasian one, which is why the Himalayas are regularly hit by earthquakes.

Such seismic events threaten the safety of dams. Chinese officials said cracks appeared on five hydropower dams in Tibet after a magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck near the city of Shigatse this month, killing more than 120 people.

Even if the Motuo dam is built well enough to withstand an earthquake, the landslides and mudflows resulting from quakes are difficult to contain and can kill people living nearby. Experts say the massive excavation involved in dam construction could make such disasters more likely.

#### **What about the people living there?**

It is hard to know how the project is being received by Tibetans and members of other, smaller ethnic groups who live in the area. Tibet is tightly restricted by the Communist Party, which has encouraged Han Chinese people to move to the plateau and strictly controlled the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibet is open to foreigners only by permit, and it is usually off-limits to foreign journalists.

In the past, Tibetans have held protests against hydropower dam projects that threatened to displace them, including a demonstration last year in Sichuan Province, according to a news report.

The Motuo dam project is expected to bring more changes to Medog, which was once China's most remote county. The government has built highways into the region that have drawn tourists and adventure travelers in recent years, according to Matthew Akester, a Tibet researcher based in India.

Now, people will have to be relocated to make way for the dam, which may require farmlands and towns to be submerged. It is unclear how many people could be affected. Medog has a population of 15,000.

Tibet, which is vast but sparsely populated, does not need a lot of energy, and the dam's estimated capacity would also exceed what neighboring provinces require, Mr. Fan said. Nearby Sichuan and Yunnan have many hydropower plants, producing more energy than the region needs. And sending the power over long distances to other parts of China would be expensive.

#### **How are India and Bangladesh reacting?**

The dam could affect people living downstream in the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, as well as in Bangladesh. If the dam trapped sediment, that would make the soil along the river downstream less fertile and erode riverbanks and coastlines in India, said Dr. Kalyan Rudra, a professor of river science and the chairman of the West Bengal Pollution Control Board, a government body.

Scientists in India and Bangladesh have asked China to share details of its plans so they can better assess the

project's risks. Indian diplomats have also urged Beijing to ensure that the project will not harm downstream states. China says it has taken measures to prevent negative consequences for its neighbors. China's secrecy is fueling mistrust, said Genevieve Donnellon-May, a researcher at the U.K.-based Oxford Global Society who studies water policy and environmental conflict. "Without Beijing releasing hydrological data and detailed plans for the dam, India and Bangladesh are left in the dark, so it's harder to prepare to mitigate any potential impacts from it," she said.

Both China and India have accused each other of trying to exert control over water resources for strategic or economic gain — what some experts and officials call "hydro-hegemony." The dam could be seen as a way of projecting Chinese power near the disputed border with India, including in Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as its territory.

Because it is upstream, "China can make decisions that directly affect the water flow downstream, raising fears in India," Ms. Donnellon-May said.

Some officials in India have proposed building a large dam in a tributary of the Brahmaputra to store water and counter any reduction in flow that the Tibet dam might cause. But Dr. Rudra of the West Bengal Pollution Control Board said such a dam could cause the same problems with soil fertility and erosion.

### **Y Nithiyandam on the Risks of China's Ambitious Yarlung Tsangpo Project**

27 January 2025, [The Diplomat](#), Sudha Ramachandran

"Without greater transparency on the part of China and cooperative frameworks, this dam could become a flashpoint in an already delicate regional equilibrium"

On December 25, China approved the construction of a mega hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo river in Tibet. The dam is to be constructed at the Great Bend, just before the river enters the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. China has said that the "measures have been taken for the security of the project and ecological environment protection" and that the dam will not have "negative impact" on downstream countries. There are concerns in India that the dam will impact water flow with serious implications for the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in the country. Should India be worried?

In an interview with The Diplomat's South Asia editor Sudha Ramachandran, Y Nithiyandam, one of India's foremost experts on geospatial intelligence, and professor and head of the Geospatial Research Program at Takshashila Institution, pointed out that the dam's location in a disaster-prone region makes the river basin vulnerable to landslides, earthquakes,

and flash floods. Additionally, the dam is located in strategic territory and has geopolitical implications. "China's reluctance to share consistent hydrological data has compounded these challenges, particularly amid recent geopolitical tensions," he said.

### **What do we know so far about the mega hydropower project that China plans to build on the Yarlung Tsangpo River?**

In March 2021, China's 14th Five-Year Plan was approved, setting ambitious goals across multiple sectors, including the development of a modern energy system. Among its key initiatives is the creation of a renewable energy hub in Nyingchi prefecture, integrating hydropower, wind, and solar energy projects. The centerpiece of this strategy is the construction of a colossal 60,000 MW hydropower plant on the Yarlung Tsangpo River (Brahmaputra), boasting a generation capacity three times greater than the Three Gorges Dam, currently the world's largest operational hydropower facility.

China's state news agency, Xinhua, has recently confirmed the government's financial approval for this project, described as an engineering marvel of unprecedented scale in reports. The mega-dam is planned in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between China and India — a region fraught with strategic sensitivities. This proximity has intensified concerns over potential downstream impacts, including disruptions to water flow, sediment transport, and the risks of artificial floods, which could exacerbate tensions between the two nations.

The Yarlung Tsangpo originates in the Angsi Glacier of the Tibetan Himalayas at an altitude of 5,319 meters. It flows through the Tibet Autonomous Region, carving one of the world's deepest canyons at the "Great U Bend," before descending into India as the Siang River and eventually transforming into the Brahmaputra in India, and the Jamuna in Bangladesh. Stretching over 3,350 kilometers and spanning four nations — China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh — the river and its tributaries are vital to the region, nourishing the world's largest delta, hosting remarkable biodiversity, and supporting millions of livelihoods.

The proposed hydropower plant, planned near Medog County, underscores China's ambition to dominate large-scale renewable energy development. However, it also raises serious geopolitical and ecological concerns. The scale of the project, combined with the fragility of the Himalayan ecosystem, makes the potential for environmental disruptions significant. Furthermore, the lack of transparent data-sharing mechanisms with downstream nations has heightened fears over unilateral water resource management. For India, in particular, the dam's location near its borders is not just an environmental issue but a strategic one, adding to an already complex bilateral relationship.

While the project exemplifies China's commitment to renewable energy, its broader implications — spanning ecological, economic, and geopolitical dimensions — warrant rigorous scrutiny and regional dialogue. Without greater transparency on the part of China and cooperative frameworks, this dam could become a flashpoint in an already delicate regional equilibrium.

**What do satellite images tell us about the project's progress?**

Our analysis, published in the Takshashila Geospatial Bulletin, indicates that China is systematically reshaping the Yarlung Tsangpo region to facilitate the construction of its ambitious hydropower dam. The emergence of settlements and agricultural farms along the riverbanks strongly suggests strategic preparation for the dam's construction and subsequent regional development. A detailed land use and land cover (LU/LC) analysis, conducted using high-resolution 10-meter Sentinel satellite imagery provided by the European Space Agency, reveals a marked transition from open land to settlements and agricultural areas within a short span of three years (2018–2021). This transformation, coupled with intensified military activity in the region, shows no signs of abating. Furthermore, China's steady advancement toward constructing massive dams in Medog is underscored by the swift development of high-quality mountain roads, strategically located border villages, and smaller dams along the river corridor. These developments reflect a calculated effort to assert infrastructural dominance in the region.

**A reservoir near the Great Bend is said to be "risky, dangerous and irresponsible." Why?**

The proposed reservoir near the Great Bend carries risks for several reasons. The dramatic elevation drop of over 2,000 meters in the Yarlung Tsangpo Canyon after the U-Bend introduces formidable engineering and environmental challenges. Questions persist regarding the project's design and methodology, particularly whether it will utilize a reservoir-type or Run-of-River Hydropower. Such a structure could disrupt the river's natural flow, impede the downstream transport of fertile soil, and provoke concerns about potential water diversion for China's use — raising fears that it could serve as a geopolitical instrument under the guise of development.

Adding to these concerns, the basin's vulnerability to natural disasters significantly magnifies the risks. Over 600 flash flood incidents have been reported in the basin since 1980, with more than 15 influencing factors identified in the river system (Fei et al., 2025). The potential for flash floods remains a serious concern due to the basin's complex geomorphology and climatic variability. Although flash floods are less frequent in the lower reaches of the river, their occurrence cannot be discounted. The area's seismic

activity is particularly alarming, with the past year alone recording 130 earthquakes of magnitudes 4 and above. This sustained seismic activity presents a continuous threat, particularly at the proposed site, which is categorized as having high landslide susceptibility. The recent 7.1-magnitude earthquake in Shigatse Tingri caused structural deformations in nearby dams and infrastructure, further emphasizing the precariousness of the area.

This combination of engineering challenges, the basin's susceptibility to multiple disasters — including landslides, earthquakes, and flash floods — and the geopolitical implications raises profound questions about the project's long-term safety, viability, and regional impact.

**Some Indian experts have said that since the Siang gathers most of its water due to rains in Arunachal, a reservoir or diversion of water at the Great Bend will not impact lower riparian countries.**

The precipitation data available in the open domain indicates that the river stretch after the "U Bend" receives substantial rainfall just before entering Arunachal. According to a World Bank report, the Tibetan Plateau averages 734 millimeters (mm) of annual precipitation, while the Yarlung Tsangpo region sees up to 2,000 mm. Precipitation increases significantly in the eastern Himalayas, ranging from 1,000-4,000 mm, and peaks in the Brahmaputra floodplains, with 3,500-4,000 mm annually. The Jamuna floodplains in Bangladesh receive between 1,500 and 3,000 mm.

The contribution of the Yarlung Tsangpo to the Brahmaputra remains contentious due to inconsistent and often outdated data. Reliable assessments require updated ground measurements of tributaries and year-round monitoring of water flows to account for seasonal variations. Downstream countries like India face challenges in acquiring accurate data due to limited access to upstream hydrological information. While geospatial tools especially remote sensing offer valuable insights into precipitation and river runoff, they fall short in providing the level of accuracy achievable through detailed on-ground measurements.

China's reluctance to share consistent hydrological data has compounded these challenges, particularly amid recent geopolitical tensions. The suspension of data-sharing agreements and the failure to renew critical Memorandums of Understanding highlight a troubling lack of transparency. As a result, downstream nations must rely on open-source models and datasets, which reveal anomalies in river flow patterns in the Yarlung Tsangpo basin for 2024. Data from the Australian National University's 25-year remote sensing archive shows unprecedented highs in some areas and record lows in others, indicating potential stress on the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra



system from both climate change and upstream infrastructure development.

China's aggressive dam-building activities, including the proposed mega-dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo, exacerbate these concerns. These projects disrupt natural river flows, complicating predictions of water availability and sediment transport for downstream nations. The cumulative impact of such projects, combined with unreliable data, threatens the ecological balance of the river basin, the livelihoods of millions, and regional stability. Without greater transparency, data-sharing, and collaborative hydrological studies, the long-term consequences for the Brahmaputra and its riparian nations remain deeply uncertain.

### **How will the project impact downstream regions in India and Bangladesh especially in the context of climate change?**

The Yarlung Tsangpo basin encompasses over six distinct sub-climatic zones, as classified by the Köppen Climate Classification (1908–2016). While much of the basin experiences a cold, dry mountain climate, the eastern section, beyond the Great U Bend, transitions into a warm, humid tropical monsoon climate characterized by significant rainfall. These climatic variations, coupled with the effects of climate change, are likely to have profound impacts on water flow into downstream regions.

In the Tibetan Plateau, climate change is expected to alter water availability across these zones, influencing the quality, quantity, flow rate, and seasonal patterns of water reaching downstream areas in India. The tributaries of the Yarlung Tsangpo, originating from snow-covered high mountains, are primarily snow-fed. Rising temperatures and retreating glaciers threaten to disrupt the volume and flow patterns of the river, posing challenges for water availability downstream. For India and Bangladesh, the risks are compounded by their vulnerability to extreme climate events and the impacts of anthropogenic activities along their own river basins in the Brahmaputra and Jamuna rivers. These interconnected systems face cascading risks, with downstream regions, home to dense populations and critical habitats, being particularly vulnerable. The reliance of millions on these waters underscores the urgency of addressing the potential disruptions to the fragile balance of these river systems.

### **Chinese analysts say that foreign media reports are amplifying the scale of the project and that it's "impossible" to build a project of that magnitude in the area and that it would not be "cost-effective" Your views?**

While the exact details of the proposed project — such as the type of technology to be employed, the engineering design, the exact site of the Dam Toe, and the mitigation measures to address potential

environmental and social impacts — remain undisclosed, the announcement of its scale has naturally drawn comparisons with the world's largest dam, the Three Gorges Dam. This comparison is primarily fueled by claims that the proposed dam's capacity would be three times larger than that of the Three Gorges Dam, leading to significant speculation about the project's potential size, engineering complexity, and overall impact on the region.

Although the projected capacity implies an immense structure, it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges posed by the unique terrain and environmental conditions of the proposed site. These factors could drive the development of a fundamentally different design and approach. For instance, advanced hydroelectric technologies might be required to navigate the area's topographical constraints while minimizing disruption to the local ecosystem. Moreover, the logistical demands of constructing such a colossal project in a remote and potentially unstable environment would likely result in high costs and complex engineering challenges.

In the absence of concrete details, the discourse remains largely speculative, making it difficult to assess how the project would address critical environmental, social, and geopolitical considerations. Key concerns include the potential impact on downstream water flow, the implications for neighboring countries, and the long-term sustainability of such a massive undertaking. Until more comprehensive plans and deliberations are made public, the comparisons with the Three Gorges Dam are hypothetical at best, driven by capacity estimates and assumptions rather than substantiated facts. This lack of clarity underscores the need for greater transparency and detailed analysis before drawing definitive conclusions about the project's feasibility and implications.

### **India is building multiple dams on the Siang and other rivers in Arunachal Pradesh. Would not the concerns that India is raising regarding the Medog dam apply to its own dams in Arunachal? Should Bangladesh be concerned?**

The scenarios, while superficially similar, reveal fundamental differences upon closer examination. India's dam projects are designed with a multi-pronged approach, addressing critical regional challenges such as flood mitigation, water resource management, and livelihood support. These initiatives are not driven solely by energy demands but prioritizing broader objectives like water scarcity management and climate resilience, while minimizing downstream impacts. Additionally, India has demonstrated a commitment to transparency, maintaining data-sharing mechanisms and establishing water-sharing initiatives to ensure harmony with its downstream neighbors. This

approach underscores India's role as a responsible and cooperative stakeholder in regional water management.

By contrast, the Medog dam represents a markedly different approach. The emphasis appears to be on fulfilling energy requirements, often at the expense of addressing the potential downstream consequences. Limited transparency and a lack of regional risk considerations raise significant concerns about the broader implications, especially when such large-scale projects risk disrupting entire river systems. Shifting the burden of risk onto neighboring countries without prioritizing cooperative frameworks or environmental safeguards creates a stark divergence in priorities. It highlights how the concept of responsibility can vary dramatically, shaped by differing national agendas and strategic objectives. This divergence is a crucial point for reflection, particularly in regions where shared water resources have profound geopolitical and ecological implications.

### **What is China government's view on DeepSeek? How is Chinese startup disrupting the AI sector?**

27 January 2025, The Economic Times

Chinese startup [DeepSeek](#)'s launch of its latest AI models, which it says are on a par or better than industry-leading models in the United States at a fraction of the cost, is threatening to upset the technology world order.

The company has attracted attention in global AI circles after writing in a paper last month that the training of DeepSeek-V3 required less than \$6 million worth of computing power from Nvidia H800 chips.

DeepSeek's AI Assistant, powered by DeepSeek-V3, has overtaken rival ChatGPT to become the top-rated free application available on Apple's App Store in the United States.

This has raised doubts about the reasoning behind some U.S. tech companies' decision to pledge billions of dollars in AI investment and shares of several big tech players, including Nvidia, have been hit.

#### **Beijing on DeepSeek**

DeepSeek's success has already been noticed in China's top political circles. On January 20, the day DeepSeek-R1 was released to the public, founder Liang attended a closed-door symposium for businessman and experts hosted by Chinese premier Li Qiang, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Liang's presence at the gathering is potentially a sign that DeepSeek's success could be important to Beijing's policy goal of overcoming Washington's export controls and achieving self-sufficiency in strategic industries like AI.

A similar symposium last year was attended by Baidu CEO Robin Li.

#### **ChatGpt to DeepSeek - Disruptor in AI Industry**

The release of OpenAI's ChatGPT in late 2022 caused a scramble among Chinese tech firms, who rushed to create their own chatbots powered by artificial intelligence. But after the release of the first Chinese ChatGPT equivalent, made by search engine giant Baidu, there was widespread disappointment in China at the gap in AI capabilities between U.S. and Chinese firms.

The quality and cost efficiency of DeepSeek's models have flipped this narrative on its head. The two models that have been showered with praise by Silicon Valley executives and U.S. tech company engineers alike, DeepSeek-V3 and DeepSeek-R1, are on par with OpenAI and Meta's most advanced models, the Chinese startup has said. They are also cheaper to use. The DeepSeek-R1, released last week, is 20 to 50 times cheaper to use than OpenAI o1 model, depending on the task, according to a post on DeepSeek's official WeChat account.

But some have publicly expressed scepticism about DeepSeek's success story. Scale AI CEO Alexandr Wang said during an interview with CNBC on Thursday, without providing evidence, that DeepSeek has 50,000 Nvidia H100 chips, which he claimed would not be disclosed because that would violate Washington's export controls that ban such advanced AI chips from being sold to Chinese companies. DeepSeek did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the allegation.

Bernstein analysts on Monday highlighted in a research note that DeepSeek's total training costs for its V3 model were unknown but were much higher than the \$5.58 million the startup said was used for computing power. The analysts also said the training costs of the equally-acclaimed R1 model were not disclosed.

#### **Pragmatism over politics: Trump's China thaw?**

27 January 2025, [Think China](#), Chen Gang

#### **Judging by Trump's first actions as US president, US-China relations may see a re-adjustment that may be in China's favour, observes East Asian Institute deputy director Chen Gang.**

The Chinese may have breathed a sigh of relief when US President Donald Trump mentioned the word "China" only twice in his inauguration speech on 20 January, both references related to the relatively obscure Panama Canal. Given that Trump had named Marco Rubio — one of the most vocal critics of China — as his secretary of state, and had threatened a massive 60% on Chinese products, China had feared

that the Trump administration would ramp up efforts to contain it through more aggressive economic and geopolitical strategies.

However, with the “America First” doctrine dominating his rhetoric, Trump’s speech suggested a potential softening of hostility toward China, within the broader context of a strategic retreat from global affairs and a more focused approach on specific issues like AI and space programmes.

... the primary focus of Trump’s speech was on strengthening American domestic power and national security.

#### **China not top of Trump’s agenda**

President Trump’s speech reaffirmed his commitment to mercantilist objectives, such as reducing the trade deficit and attracting foreign investment. His words did not resemble a typical script for a second Cold War against China or Russia.

While the reference to William McKinley — the 25th US president (1897-1901), who initiated a period of American imperialism by seizing Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines from Spain — could signal a revival of interventionist policies in Asia, the primary focus of Trump’s speech was on strengthening American domestic power and national security. “We will move with purpose and speed to bring back hope, prosperity, safety and peace for citizens of every race, religion, colour and creed,” Trump declared, suggesting a domestic agenda and diplomatic pragmatism.

... the dispute over the Canal is unlikely to significantly impact the broader strategic relationship between the US and China.

Despite his aggressive rhetoric on China during the election campaign, President Trump seems to be contemplating a recalibration of the US’s approach toward China after eight years of confrontation under both his first term and President Joe Biden’s administration.

Notably, in his inauguration speech, Trump made no mention of new punitive tariffs on China, nor did he reference the Indo-Pacific strategy that underpins US geopolitical plans targeting the East Asian superpower. His remarks on China’s presence in Panama serve as a McKinley-style warning about distant powers in the US backyard, but the dispute over the Canal is unlikely to significantly impact the broader strategic relationship between the US and China.

By prioritising American interests, Trump advocates for policies aimed at reducing dependence on foreign nations and securing American borders through stricter immigration policies. He admires McKinley’s tariff approach, which did not single out any country but applied high tariffs to all foreign products. McKinley, known as the “Napoleon of Protection”, framed the Tariff Act of 1890, which raised average duties on imports from 38% to 49.5%. By contrast,

soon after his inauguration speech, Trump has only spoken about a possible 10% tariff on Chinese products by 1 February, as opposed to the planned 25% tariff on products from Canada and Mexico.

#### **Trump’s goodwill**

Since winning the election, Trump has extended several goodwill gestures toward China. He invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to his inauguration and paused the enforcement of the TikTok ban in the US until early April. Additionally, he gave a warm reception to China’s Vice-President Han Zheng, Xi’s special envoy to the inauguration. Trump also expressed his intention to establish a dedicated communication channel with the Chinese leadership and indicated his desire to visit China within his first 100 days in office.

In response, the Chinese government has signalled its readiness to engage in dialogue and “manage differences” with the new US administration, indicating a mutual interest in avoiding further escalation. “Cooperation between China and the United States benefits both countries, while confrontation harms them both, as the history of China-US relations clearly demonstrates,” said Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning.

... his admiration for McKinley may point to a more benign attitude toward China, as long as China remains open to American investment and products.

Historically, President McKinley’s policies played a significant role in shaping US-China relations at the turn of the 20th century. In 1899, McKinley initiated the “Open Door” policy, which advocated for equal trading rights in China and opposed the colonial division of the country by European powers. This policy became a cornerstone of American foreign policy in East Asia for decades, foreshadowing China’s later opening up under Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s. McKinley’s vision sought to prevent China’s “carving up” by colonial powers, supporting both Chinese territorial integrity and equal trading privileges among major powers. This laid the groundwork for improved US-China relations in the first half of the 20th century. Given the profound changes in East Asia’s power structure, Trump cannot simply replicate McKinley’s policies. However, his admiration for McKinley may point to a more benign attitude toward China, as long as China remains open to American investment and products.

#### **Trump: a hawkish pragmatist**

While Trump’s speech struck a relatively moderate tone, internal dynamics within his administration could complicate his approach to China. His secretary of state, Marco Rubio, is a staunch China hawk who has been on China’s sanction list for over four years. Rubio has called China the “most potent, dangerous, and near-peer adversary” the US has ever confronted. Immediately following Trump’s inauguration, Rubio

met with counterparts from Japan, India and Australia in the Indo-Pacific “Quad” group, aimed at countering China’s growing influence in the region.

Trump’s openness to dialogue with Beijing reflects his hawkish pragmatism, rooted in his “America First” ideology and transactional approach.

However, even Rubio has begun reaching out diplomatically to China. He recently spoke with China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi, where he reiterated that Trump’s approach would focus on advancing US interests while putting the American people first. Wang, in turn, expressed hope that Rubio would play a constructive role in the bilateral relationship. This phone call signals the potential for more flexible diplomacy despite the ongoing tensions.

Trump’s openness to dialogue with Beijing reflects his hawkish pragmatism, rooted in his “America First” ideology and transactional approach. His alignment with business leaders like Elon Musk, who have substantial investments in China, may lead to a more realistic stance on US-China relations. Inspired by McKinley’s Open Door policy, Trump may find a business-oriented pathway in his second term that stabilises the bilateral relationship and serves both nations’ national interests.

### **Political Storm “Brews” In China; Supreme Leader Xi Jinping Under Massive Pressure; What’s Cooking?**

27 January 2025, [The Eurasian Times](#), Prakash Nanda

#### **Is President Xi Jinping, the supreme leader of the People’s Republic of China, in political trouble?**

Is it a sign of Xi’s weakness that, instead of ignoring the invitation, he decided to send Vice President Han Zheng to represent China at Donald Trump’s Presidential inauguration on January 20?

That many keen China watchers are asking these questions appears strange at first glance. After all, for quite some time now, Xi has been considered China’s supreme, unimpeachable, and irreproachable leader. Xi had elevated himself to the same official status as communist China’s iconic leader, Mao Zedong, and done away with presidential term limits so that he could lead China for the rest of his life.

At home, he boasted of having reduced poverty and taken the country to the near status of a developed country. Abroad, Xi claimed to be raising China’s international prestige to new heights.

However, on closer scrutiny, that no longer seems to be the case, say many avid Chia-watchers. Faced with a sluggish economy, a tight job market, and intense competition in many aspects of life, things are proving difficult these days in China. So much so that many Chinese are [turning](#) to “divination, spiritualism and superstition” as these act as a “pressure-relief valve,”

according to Chen Jinguo, a professor of philosophy and religion at Minzu University of China.

All this is having an impact on China’s political leadership. Dr. Willy Wo-Lap Lam, an Adjunct Professor at the Center for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and author of the book, “Xi Jinping: The Hidden Agendas of China’s Ruler for Life,” [believes](#) that Xi Jinping is in political trouble.

Xi, according to him, faces challenges from multiple groups, including retired politburo standing committee members, fellow princelings, some of the military top brass, and even some in the country’s middle class. “As a result, his ability to shape policy in the financial, foreign affairs, and other arenas has been truncated,” he argues.

However, all this does not mean, Lam cautions, that Xi is going to be ousted from power, but it is worth understanding who his enemies are.

Apparently, all former party heavyweights and supporters of late Deng Xiaoping’s economic policies, whom Xi has sidelined over the years, have joined hands in expressing disapproval of the latter’s handling of economic issues and relations with the United States since the third plenary session of the 20th CCP Central Committee last July.

And, a relatively weaker Xi has now started listening to the dissidents, which Lam explains was evident at a banquet on the eve of the country’s National Day on October 1, 2024, when Wen Jiabao and Li Ruihuan sat on either side of the Chinese President.

“This was regarded as a subtle signal by Xi that he was receptive to advice or warnings from former senior leaders, even if they lacked the authority to remove him. Their barely concealed critique of Xi’s policy-making prowess suggests the supreme leader may be increasingly at odds with parts of the CCP’s top echelon,” Lam explains.

The second source of discomfort for Xi happens to be “princelings” (children of top communist leaders of the past like India’s political dynasts). It is an open secret that when it comes to one’s rise within the party hierarchy, one’s family reputation and Communist pedigree matter as much as competence and ideology. Xi benefited immensely from the connections of his father, Xi Zhongxun, a top leader who had served as propaganda minister under Mao. Naturally, in the process of reaching the country’s supreme position, Xi has fought many other princelings, who have now become his fiercest critics, especially those based overseas, according to Lam.

If Cai Xia, who was a Professor at the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party from 1998 to 2012, is to be believed, Xi has suppressed all his competitors and consolidated his authority by [explaining](#) that he is fighting the ideological dilution of the party in the post-Deng era and rampant

corruption, thereby saving the party from “self-destruction.”

But now, Xi seems to be confronted with “reactions” from all the sidelined factions. Cai Xia explains that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has never been a monolith. Today, it has broadly three factions – orthodox Marxists like Xi on the left; Deng’s political descendants at the center who support full-throated economic reforms and limited political reforms; and sub-factions on the right, which in the Chinese context means liberals who advocate a market economy and a softer form of authoritarianism.

Those on the right include followers of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, both former CCP Chairmen. It also arguably includes Wen Jiabao, who was China’s premier from 2003 to 2013 and is still said to have some influence.

Xia argues that “Xi faces growing opposition from all three factions. The left, while initially supportive of his policies, now thinks he has not gone far enough in reviving Mao’s policies, with some having become disenchanted after he cracked down on the labor movement. The center resents Xi’s undoing of economic reforms. And the right has been completely silenced by Xi’s elimination of even the slightest political debate”.

Last but not most important, Xi is said to have lost, of late, substantial control over personnel arrangements among the top brass of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Examples that have been cited in this regard are the following:

On December 26, the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Communist Party of China (the topmost military body of which Xi is the chairman) appointed Chen Hui as the army’s political commissar and promoted him to the rank of senior general four days later. However, former army political commissar Qin Shutong and three other senior generals were absent from the ceremony. Experts believe the four might have been dismissed because of corruption issues and that the incident might reveal power struggles within the Communist Party and the military.

It may be noted here that in November, the CMC was in the news as Xi had to sack Adm. Miao Hua, one of his closest proteges in the military, because of the allegations about his “serious violations of discipline.” As the head of the CMC’s political work department, which oversees political indoctrination and personnel appointments, Miao is said to be the most senior scalp in Xi’s latest military purge.

Incidentally, since last summer, more than a dozen high-ranking figures in China’s defense establishment have been ousted, including the last two defense ministers promoted to the CMC by Xi.

Incidentally, Xi was absent recently when General Zhang Youxia, the first-ranked vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission, hosted some meetings.

“The recent investigation of the director of the CMC Political Work Department, Admiral Miao Hua, as well as that of around a dozen rising stars in the PLA Navy, may be a result of Xi’s opponents in the PLA trying to get rid of his loyalists, including a number of officers who had worked with Xi during his time in Fujian Province in 1985–2002,” according to Lam.

Significantly, the PLA Daily, the official newspaper of the People’s Liberation Army, recently championed the virtues of “collective leadership,” which experts interpret as a slap in the face of Xi’s insistence since he came to power in 2012 on the dictum that all decisions should “rely on a single voice of authority.”

All these developments suggest some erosion in Xi’s authority, which, if true, could be a source of good news for countries in the Indo-Pacific. Pressures on him at home will likely make Xi a little more restrained in displaying Chinese hard power in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

### Inside the secret, dangerous journey to flee Tibet

27 January 2025, [NewsGram](#)

*Norbu was only 17 the first time he helped smuggle Tibetans out of Tibet. One cog in a well-oiled machine, Norbu — who is being referred to as a pseudonym for security reasons — played the role of a guide. His job was to meet small groups of escapees at the Dram border (Zhangmu) in southwest Tibet and lead them along remote pathways into the safety of Nepal. All were fleeing Chinese repression back home.*



*Norbu was only 17 the first time he helped smuggle Tibetans out of Tibet. One cog in a well-oiled machine, Norbu — who is being referred to as a pseudonym for security reasons [RFA]*

Norbu was only 17 the first time he helped smuggle Tibetans out of Tibet. One cog in a well-oiled machine, Norbu — who is being referred to as a pseudonym for security reasons — played the role of a guide. His job was to meet small groups of escapees at the Dram border (Zhangmu) in southwest Tibet and lead them along remote pathways into the safety of Nepal. All were fleeing Chinese repression back home.

To avoid patrols on both sides of the border, their only option was to take strenuous mountain routes during the middle of the night. After three or four hours of trekking, they’d reach a village safe house. There, the

group would await cars to take them the rest of the way to Kathmandu, where they could be registered and processed by the Tibetan government-in-exile's reception center.

"There was one Tibetan who was so frightened that even when we reached the house in the village he was still trembling," Norbu recalled in a recent interview, raising his voice as he mirrored the mournful cry the man made.

A member of Nepal's Sherpa ethnicity, Norbu, now 33, grew up in the Himalayas — which has long served as a natural border between Tibet and Nepal. His shared background and his Nepalese-accented Tibetan made him a good fit for the shadowy job of a smuggler.

The term "smuggler," however, is rarely used by Tibetans, who call men like Norbu *lamtikpa* (ལམ་འབྲིང་པ།), which means *guide* in Tibetan.

That word hints at how these individuals have been a lifeline for refugees over the past 65 years. Since 1959, when the Dalai Lama and around 8,000 Tibetans were forced to escape to India after Communist China's takeover of Tibet, tens of thousands of Tibetans have been smuggled out of the country.

For Tibetans, this journey to Nepal and then India represents a crucial path to freedom, a chance for a better life, and an opportunity to see their living god, the Dalai Lama. But for most it is also a deeply painful journey, as more often than not leaving means never returning home again.

"They look exhausted and they often pray to God for freedom. I feel sad seeing their suffering, but there's nothing I can do to ease their pain," Norbu said. "All I can offer is reassurance, saying, 'Don't worry, you're in Nepal now, and it's a safe place,' hoping to calm them. That's all I can do."

#### **A shrinking stream of Tibetan refugees**

Norbu worked as a smuggler from 2009 to 2015 — years that traced the start of a precipitous decline in crossings as a result of tightening border restrictions and increased surveillance within Tibet. He stopped when those restrictions grew even tighter in the wake of the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

Data from the Tibetan government-in-exile shows that about 1,000 Tibetan refugees crossed each year in the first decade of the century. From 2010 to 2014, that number dipped to about 400 a year, and 70 in the following half-decade. Only 55 Tibetans in total have crossed since 2020, including [just 8](#) who crossed last year.

In the mid-1990s, when he was 7, Rinchen Dorjee was smuggled to India along with 28 other Tibetans. They took the famous Nangpa la pass, a crossing less than 20 miles from Mt. Everest, to reach Nepal — a journey that lasted over a month, including a week of walking through the snow.

"As we neared the Nepal border, we had no food left, and survived on just drinking tea leaves for two days,"

recounted Dorjee, who is now 36, living and working in Dharmasala, India.

Eventually, they found a village and their guide bought a sheep and slaughtered it. But someone had alerted the authorities, Dorjee learned, and the group was forced to flee before they even had a bite of meat.

"When a flashlight from the Chinese border tower swept our way, we had to lie still in the grass, moving only when it passed," he recalled.

Dorjee's experience of transiting in a large group reflects how Tibetans fled throughout the '80s and '90s.

Until the early 2000s, individual smugglers would move 20 to 30 Tibetan refugees at a time. Unlike the network system Norbu was part of years later, these individuals took full responsibility for completing the journey from start to finish, according to people familiar with the journey who spoke to RFA.

In 2008, rare public protests against Beijing's rule in Lhasa and elsewhere culminated in mass arrests and as many as 140 killed by security forces, according to figures from rights groups. As a result of the uprising, China tightened border restrictions; implemented strict surveillance systems along the Tibet-Nepal border; and exerted pressure on the Nepalese government to prevent Tibetans from crossing. Crossing the border became more dangerous, particularly in large groups.

After that, smugglers like Norbu began operating within larger networks that had leaders and agents spread across Tibet, Nepal and even China. These agents would collect Tibetans fleeing from places like Lhasa and Shigatse and pass them along to other smugglers.

"We divided ourselves into two groups," said Norbu. "One group would move ahead to scout the path and signal the way forward. They used the small flashlight from a Chinese lighter, which served as a beacon to guide us in the dark. The narrow beam of light would send a signal, and we would carefully follow its direction."

Norbu's unit consisted of three Sherpas whose role was to transport escapees from hiding spots during the night, often in remote rocky mountain caves, and guide them safely to Nepalese villages. He was only paid 3,000 Nepalese rupees per day (about \$30 in 2014) from their network agent group, but even that meager sum was better than what he earned in his previous job as a porter, where he made only a sixth as much.

Certainly, the risks were much higher. "Whenever the mission started, there was a sense of fear," he said.

"Sometimes, when we went to get the Tibetans, they were suspicious, unsure if we were police. They would stay hidden in the forest and not come out easily. We had to reassure them that we were there to help and on their side. The Tibetans rarely spoke or asked

questions,” Norbu said. The youngest person he smuggled was just 13, the oldest nearing middle age.

### **Separation, longing and exiled life**

Around 7,000 Tibetan refugees now live in Dharamshala, the northern Indian hill town that since 1959 has served as the spiritual, cultural and political center of the Tibetan diaspora.

Most of those living here carry a story of emotional separation.

Tsering, 30, an office assistant for the Tibetan government-in-exile, was raised by his father who arranged to have the boy smuggled to India at the age of 11 by paying 7,000 Chinese yuan (\$850) in 2005.

While Tsering assumed he would one day reunite with his family, his father’s recent death from a car accident has left him unmoored. He learned of it from his aunt in Dharamshala, who was able to remain in touch with some family back home.

“I have always yearned to return to Tibet and to be with my father but the tragic news turns everything’s empty, I feel there are many words left unspoken, which makes me feel lonely,” he said.

Since 1980, nearly 50,000 Tibetans have arrived in India and Tibet as refugees. Globally, there are about 150,000 Tibetans in the diaspora, with the majority born in exile.

Family separation is the norm for nearly all who left the country through smuggling routes. Those who leave as children may have relatives on the other side of the border, but many arrive alone. The school system in Dharmasala is run with that in mind, with most students housed in dormitories run by foster parents who focus on caring for the emotional needs of new arrivals and integrating them among the community.

But in spite of those efforts, some Tibetan refugees struggle with trauma and depression as a result of family separation — even decades after leaving their homeland.

Not far from the offices of the exile government, a narrow road leads to the Kunphen Recovery Center, a drug rehab center set in a northern Indian-style hostel adorned with Tibetan prayer flags and surrounded by a gated compound with barbed wire.

Unlike some drug rehab centers, there are no guards here and patients are free to roam inside the compound. Treatment involves lectures from Buddhist monks, yoga, meditation and traditional Tibetan arts.

Today, Dorjee has a good job as a night guard for the residence of the Sikyong, or president, of the exile government. But not too long ago he was a patient at Kunphen. After he was smuggled to India at 7, he spent his childhood haunted by homesickness. As he got older, the stress of separation pushed him to pills and marijuana.

“If I had stayed in Tibet, I think I wouldn’t have been involved in drug addiction because my parents and all the relatives are there ... they would definitely stop me from doing wrong things,” said Dorjee, recalling that he was sent to India only after his aunt convinced his parents it would afford him better opportunities.

Changes in China’s Tibet policy that began in 2008, have accelerated since Chinese president Xi Jinping took office in 2013. Beijing has drastically increased the deployment of soldiers and continued to build infrastructure along Tibet’s border, building new border villages which are filled with both Tibetans and relocated Han Chinese. High-tech surveillance systems have made free movement more difficult than ever.

With fewer Tibetans able to cross, the diaspora in India and Nepal has drastically declined, hollowing out both monasteries and schools.

“Increasing Chinese restrictions have strained family relationships and has had a negative impact on exiled schools and monasteries,” Sikyong Penpa Tsering said in November 2024 at a public gathering.

“Last year we received only four students from Tibet, but this year not a single student from Tibet has been enrolled,” Tsultrim Dorjee, the general secretary of Tibetan Children’s Village, or TCV, told RFA in late 2024. For those who have made it to India relatively recently, many cited education as a driver of their move. One key aspect of China’s Tibetan policy has been replacing Tibetan education with Mandarin-only schooling, as part of a forced assimilation program that has seen monasteries shuttered and children pressed into abusive boarding schools.

Sonam Dharkyi, an 11th grader at TCV, left Tibet in 2014.

“We didn’t have a proper school in my village, but I dreamed of going to school. Now, I’m getting a modern education and [studying] Tibetan as well, which I never would’ve known if I stayed back home in Tibet,” she told RFA.

To make it to India, Sonam and five others walked for more than 20 days to reach the Nepal border, crossing slippery patches of ice, treacherous rivers and rickety bridges in the Himalayan mountains. Along the way, they slept in mountain caves.

“I remember feeling hungry and freezing through the night,” she recounted. “With no choice, we had to cross the steep slopes and rugged valleys, and I feared slipping to my death, unsure if I could complete the journey.”

A decade after her arrival, Sonam dreams of being a doctor. Today, she can look forward to a future that would have been unimaginable under Chinese rule.

For Norbu, the former smuggler, helping Tibetans access hope for the first was a rich reward.

“I must say that this is the best job I did in my life so far as well as on a humanitarian level,” Norbu told RFA.

“I cannot express that joy over here how I felt when I

was able to help them make their journey to Nepal.”  
RFA/SP

### China turning Tibet into strategic pillar of its economy

26 January 2025, [Caliber](#), Naila Huseynova

**Proceeding from an [article](#), Foreign Policy unveils that the evolving dynamics of Tibet under Chinese rule are explored, highlighting the dramatic shift from a once isolated and resistant region to a booming tourist destination.**

A young woman in an ornate brocade dress gazes up at the Jokhang Temple, Lhasa’s oldest and holiest pilgrimage site. Around her, people dressed in vibrant, traditional clothing move about: women with braided hair spin handheld prayer wheels, couples in matching chuba robes exchange loving glances, and men in fur-lined nomadic coats stride through the alleys, swords by their sides, reminiscent of a romanticized past.

However, a closer look reveals the scene isn’t quite as it appears. The jewelry is imitation, the braids are extensions, and the chubas are rented. Many women are spinning their prayer wheels incorrectly. The young woman in the brocade dress isn’t a true pilgrim, but a Chinese tourist striking a pose for a photographer. As she adjusts for the perfect shot, an actual pilgrim impatiently walks through the frame, glaring at the obstruction to his path along the prayer route.

Since China’s invasion of Tibet in 1950, Tibetans have resisted becoming part of Communist China. Tibetan guerrilla forces fought against the People’s Liberation Army until the early 1960s, but despite their military defeat, their loyalty to the Dalai Lama, who fled to India in 1959, remained steadfast. In an effort to quell dissent, Beijing has maintained a significant military presence in Tibet. However, in the early years of the annexation, the number of Chinese civilians in the region was relatively small. Many Chinese workers viewed being stationed in Tibet—a remote, culturally unique area isolated by vast mountain ranges—as a hardship and required special incentives to relocate there.

For a long time, China regarded Tibet as a distant, underdeveloped region, claiming it was liberated from a feudal theocracy by China. However, this narrative has shifted in recent years.

After decades of attempting to integrate the once-independent Tibet through force, Beijing may have found a more effective method of making Tibet an integral part of China: by transforming it into a major tourist destination.

Mass tourism to Tibet became a reality in 2006 with the completion of a railroad to Lhasa. That same year, Chinese authorities declared it “the year of rural tourism,” promoting it as a strategy to bring prosperity to regions like Tibet, which had long struggled with

poverty. Three years later, tourism was officially recognized as a “strategic pillar industry” for the national economy, and it has since grown at an extraordinary rate.

In 2023 alone, over 55 million tourists visited Tibet—more than 15 times the region’s population. The Chinese Communist Party’s latest five-year plan for Tibet aims to further expand tourism. Today, Tibet is viewed in the Chinese public imagination as the nation’s spiritual and ecological core, even as many Tibetans continue to resist China’s presence and seek greater autonomy.

### Border fix: A shaky truce short on trust

26 January 2025, [Deccan Herald](#), Srikanth Kondapalli

China’s insensitivities towards India and blatant violation of written agreements have hampered bilateral relations for more than four years. With Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri scheduled to visit Beijing soon, the full circle of high-level interactions between leaders and officials of India and China would be complete. This raises the question whether normalisation of bilateral relations has commenced after the bloody clash of troops at Galwan in June 2020. As both countries mark 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations, the pattern indicates improvement in high-level political and official relations sans robust ties in various fields.

In October last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS summit at Kazan in Russia. This was preceded by an announcement on disengagement of troops and resumption of patrolling in contested border areas in Depsang and Demchok in the western sector. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun at Vientiane in November. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in July at Astana and reminded him of observing the “three mutuals” – respect, sensitivity and interest. China’s insensitivities towards India and blatant violation of written agreements have hampered bilateral relations for more than four years. National Security Advisor and Special Representative on territorial dispute with China Ajit Doval met Wang Yi at St Petersburg in September and at Beijing in December. However, the Indian foreign ministry spokesman denied any “six-point consensus” that emerged out of this meeting as China suggested.

Apart from these strategic leadership discussions, there were as many as 22 rounds of Corps Commanders (Senior Highest Military Commanders) meetings at the tactical level to usher in the disengagement of troops. A month after the Galwan skirmish, the first disengagement of troops in all friction areas was announced. Four more rounds



followed – in February 2021 in Pangong Tso lake, in August of that year in Gogra area, in September 2022 in Hot Springs, and in October last year at the Demchok and Depsang Plains.

While overall disengagement of troops took place, as trust levels are low given the Chinese volte face in 2020, the Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi suggested recently that the situation is “stable but sensitive”. However, given the ground realities, the Indian Army is unwilling to de-induct troops in the border areas. That China is not fully interested in normalising ties with India is indicated by its announcements: in the midst of the troop disengagement, the construction of a mega dam on Yarlung Tsangpo at a cost of \$137 billion was announced.

Attempts to normalise relations also came from external pressures. The foreign ministers’ meeting at Moscow – in September 2020, a couple of months after the Galwan incident – indicated Russian interest in bringing the two Asian parties together with the emerging Ukraine conflict in the background. Likewise, China was preparing for the American leadership transition late last year and putting in place its time-tested “united front” tactics of “not attacking in all directions” but aligning with select neighbours as a cushion. Specifically, as President Trump is toying with the idea of heavy tariffs on Chinese products, Beijing is keen to diversify exports to India and other countries. Normalisation of bilateral relations hinges on peace and stability in the border areas. Disengagement, resumption of patrolling and traditional grazing, and the more difficult processes of de-escalation and de-induction have not been completed to the satisfaction of both parties. On the other hand, “escorted” patrolling in some areas suggest a cautious approach on the borders.

Prior to the Galwan clashes, both developed nearly 30 engagement processes such as strategic dialogues between foreign ministries, annual defence dialogues between the defence forces, macro-economic and strategic dialogue, financial dialogue, steel dialogue, youth and educational exchanges, think-tank meetings, media exchanges, and others. These have not yet resumed given the border clashes and the aftermath.

Despite these problems and the spread of the pandemic, bilateral trade has increased from \$87 billion post Galwan in 2020 to \$125 billion in 2021, \$136 billion in 2022, \$116 billion in 2023 to about \$118 billion in 2024. However, more alarmingly, in the last decade, India lost over \$645 billion in trade deficits to China, while cumulatively since 2008, when China became the largest trading partner for India, the trade deficit overshot more than a trillion. This has called for certain drastic economic measures from India.

Misri will also be seized with a discussion in China on resumption of the Manasarovar Yatra and visas, direct flights, and others. Yet, normalisation of bilateral relations will have to wait till trust levels are upgraded on the ground.

### **Earthquakes in Tibet: A Man-made Disaster, Not Natural Calamities**

26 January 2025, [Japan Forward](#), Tsewang Gyalpo Arya

Scientists say human activities, including mining and massive dam building, cause earthquakes in Tibet, compounding the impact on billions of people downstream.

A recent earthquake has suddenly brought Tibet back to the media's attention after a long hiatus of Chinese shutdown and information blockade. The quake claimed many lives, although official reports say 126 only. However, the real figure is estimated much higher. The disaster displaced around 45,000 people with many still missing.

This earthquake is a clear message to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership and to the international community about what is happening in Tibet. The Tibetan plateau has witnessed frequent earthquakes and landslides in the past few years. While the authorities attribute these earthquakes as natural disasters due to the friction of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, many see them as man-made disasters prompted by rampant damming and mining activities on the Tibetan plateau.

This paper will examine and explore why the Tibetan plateau is experiencing such natural disasters, what is the possible cause, and the remedy.

#### **What Happened?**

On the morning of January 7, a massive earthquake of magnitude 7.1 followed by a series of aftershocks struck southwestern Tibet. Its epicenter was in Dingri County, Shigatse prefecture, some 270 km from the Tibetan capital Lhasa.

The earthquakes claimed many lives and left the region and areas around it devastated. Tremors were felt in Nepal, India, and Bhutan, such was the intensity. While the United States Geological Survey measured the earthquake as 7.1 on the Richter scale, the China Earthquake Networks Center records it as 6.8. The earthquake is said to be among the worst tremors to hit the Himalayan region in 100 years.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun was asked about help from Nepal, India, and others. In response, he simply said, "Currently China's search, rescue, and medical care support is well guaranteed. We appreciate the care and support from the international community," thus directly avoiding the question.



A view inside the Main Assembly Hall during the prayer ceremony for victims of the recent earthquake in Tibet. It was led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Bylakuppe, Karnataka, India on January 9, 2025. (©Tenzin Choejor)

His Holiness the Dalai Lama prayed for the people affected. Also, the Central Tibetan Administration's leadership requested China's cooperation in the efficient execution of relief work. However, Chinese spokesperson Guo Jiakun, in a typical Chinese wolf warrior diplomacy, condemned the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration as separatists.

#### **Global Times' Stunning 'Spin'**

A Global Times' editorial comment came more fiercely: "The Western human rights lens that some have tried to impose on Xizang will inevitably be torn apart by the facts and ultimately collapse completely." It is a totally irrelevant and out-of-context comment that betrays the CCP's guilt.

The editorial further boasts:

"Just 10 minutes after the earthquake, rescue helicopters were already in the sky. Within less than half an hour, the team had begun to clear debris. Within less than a day, local networks, roads, and power supplies were restored, and most affected residents were sheltered in warm tents or prefab houses, with hot three meals a day."

This is very commendable and professional. But if what they say is true, why China is not allowing neighboring Tibetans and international media and volunteers to join and witness the facts?

The reality of the situation is that the CCP has shut down Internet connections and arrested more than 21 netizens for sharing information. It has further blocked individuals and organizations from entering the affected areas. Residents are threatened not to send pictures and information to the outside world.

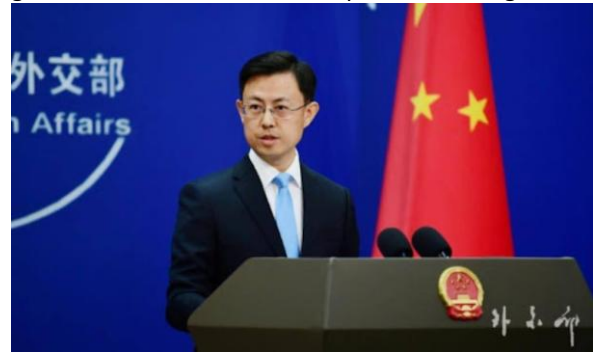
#### **Chinese Focus on Infrastructure**

China's first reaction to the earthquake was, "Tibet earthquake caused no damage to dams [or] reservoirs." According to the *South China Morning Post*, following the earthquake, China's Ministry of Water Resources stated that inspections found no impact on dams or reservoirs in the region.

This succinctly betrays the CCP's fear and guilt. They are more concerned about the dams than the people's

lives. Nevertheless, the dams are sure to be affected. It is for this reason that China did not allow neighboring Tibetans and international volunteers in Tibet.

A week after the earthquake on January 16, China confessed to damage at five of the 14 hydropower dams it had inspected. It had also evacuated about 1,500 people from six villages downstream to higher ground. But this could be the tip of the iceberg.



Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun. (Courtesy of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

#### **Why Earthquakes in the Himalayan Region?**

Nepal and Tibet are said to be on the active seismic zones and fault lines of the Indian and Eurasian plates. The Indian tectonic plate is slowly moving northward and pushing the Eurasian plate at a rate of 5 cm a year. This is creating strong pressure on the earth beneath, resulting in earthquakes in the region. Many attribute the earthquakes in the regions to this friction of the Indian and Eurasian plates. This puts the Himalayan region in a very precarious and earthquake-prone zone.

While the above explanation may be one of the major causes of earthquakes, it is not the sole source of the tremors. Continued and frequent earthquakes in the last few years tell another story. In 2008 earthquake of magnitude 7.9 quake in the Ngaba region of Eastern Tibet killed almost 12,000 people. A magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit Kyegudo (Yushu) in eastern Tibet in 2010. More than 3000 died and many more were rendered homeless and displaced. Nepal was the epicenter of a magnitude 7.8 quake in 2015 that claimed more than 9000 lives and destroyed more than a half million homes. In May 2021, an earthquake of magnitude 7.3 shook southern Qinghai.

Reports say that according to China's CCTV, "There have been 29 earthquakes of magnitude three or above in the past five years within 200 km of the Shigatse quake epicenter." It also reported that since 1950, 21 earthquakes of 6 or above magnitude occurred in the Lhasa block with the 2017 Mainling earthquake of magnitude 6.9 as the largest.

#### **Why Tibet?**

Why are so many earthquakes in Tibet all of a sudden? Tibetans have never experienced earthquakes so frequently in the past. My parents never said anything

about experiencing them, and even the ancient Tibetan folklore and folktales rarely mention earthquakes. Why have the Indian and Eurasian plates started colliding frequently in these past few years? This is an important question that we all must contemplate.

While the Indian and Eurasian plates may play a role, we cannot dismiss other causes as factors. Many, including scientists, attribute their frequency to human factors such as China's damming of the Tibetan rivers, deforestation, excessive mining, and militarization of the Tibetan plateau.

China has occupied Tibet since 1950. Since then, it has always looked at Tibet as a colony to be exploited and a military base to further its hegemony in Southeast Asian countries. Disruptions from these activities cause earthquakes, making these man-made disasters and the CCP regime is responsible for them.

Now the Tibetan plateau, ravaged and over-exploited by the CCP regime, has burst out to protest and to ring the alarm bell about the lurking cataclysmic disaster in the region and the deadly and devastating repercussions for the neighboring states.

#### **Rivers that Flow to Billions Throughout Asia**

Former World Bank Vice Chairman Dr Ismail Serageldin has rightly said that the next world war will be over water. If what China is doing in Tibet is any indication, this is true and the danger is very imminent.

Tibet is known as the Water Tower of Asia. Some ten of the largest rivers of Asia and their tributaries feeding more than 1.8 billion people originate from the Tibetan plateau. Tibet also hosts the largest number of glaciers (46,000) and permafrost, next to the North and South poles. Often it is referred to as the Third Pole and the roof of the world.

China wants to control these rivers through cascades of behemoth dams. If it does so, it will gain hegemonic sway over the riparian states.

Four major rivers of Tibet: Senge Khabab, Langchen Khabab, Maja Khabab, and Tachog Khabab are the Indus, Sutlej, Ganges, and Brahmaputra rivers of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Indus River, which provides water to 268 million people in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, is already drying up because of Chinese dams upstream.

India's Brahmaputra River which originates in western Tibet as Tachog Khabab, flows 1625 km along the southeast Indo-Tibet border. It is joined by the Kyichu River and others and flows further east as Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra). Then, at Metok County, it takes a sharp U-turn and descends toward India into Arunachal Pradesh and on to Bangladesh.

Covering 2,900 km from its source in Tibet to the Bay of Bengal, the Brahmaputra feeds and provides fresh water to more than 114 million people in Tibet, India,

Bangladesh, and Bhutan. It accounts for 30% of India's freshwater resources. (ICIMOD 20/03/2024).

#### **Damming the Brahmaputra and Other Rivers**

China has built numerous dams to control the water flow of these rivers. These are not run-of-the-river dam projects, as China wants the international community to believe. The CCP harbors a more sinister political and hegemonic agenda behind these dams than simply satisfying its hunger for hydropower.

It has dammed the Indus and Sutlej rivers. Not satisfied with the six major dams of Zangmu, Yamdrok, Pangduo, Zhikong, Jiacha, and Lalho on the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra River), China is going ahead with its \$137 billion mega-dam project at Metok region. This is the crucial point where the Tibetan river takes a sharp U-turn to flow into India and Bangladesh. The project cost is reported to surpass all other infrastructure projects globally, including China's Three Gorges Dam, currently considered the world's largest.

China says dam construction is ongoing in tandem with its quest for clean energy for the Tibetan plateau. But Fan Xiao, a Chinese geologist, says, "The region surrounding the Yarlung River has too few people and too small an economy to require all that electricity." Zangmu Dam alone produces 2.5 billion kW of electricity annually. Combining it with hydroelectricity from other dams on the Yarlung Tsangpo, the total is much more.

Then why does China need this Metok dam with 300 billion kW capacity at a great risk of geological disaster? Fan Xiao, a Chinese geologist, warned against Beijing's plan to construct the controversial mega-dam. In the South China Morning Post, he cites it as a geologically unstable biodiversity hotspot that could cause irreparable environmental damage. (Business Standard Jan 7, 2025).

#### **Weaponizing the Mekong**

Tibet's rivers, Driчу and Machu, are the sources of the Yangtze and Huangho Yellow Rivers, the cradle of Chinese civilization. Tibet's Gyalmo Nyulchu River flows to China, Myanmar, and Thailand as Nujiang, Thalween, and Salween. Zachu River of Tibet is the source of the famous Mekong River which flows to China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, providing fresh water and sources of livelihood for the people throughout the region.

On the Mekong River alone, China has built 11 huge dams, including the massive Three Gorge Dam. Several more are still being planned. 5000 kilometer Mekong River comes into the news sometimes in desperate attempts to warn the inhabitants that it is drying and dying. The livelihood of more than 70 million people in the riparian states is at stake with the damming of the Mekong River by China. Furthermore, dams on the upstream Mekong were built without any consultation

or information sharing with the downstream countries.

With total control over the rivers in Tibet, China harbors an "open and close tap policy" to gain geopolitical leverage over the countries downstream. The riparian states are brought to kowtow to Chinese dictates through intimidation and threats to open or close the dams, weaponizing water to cause floods or droughts. This leaves the government and people in these regions at the mercy of the CCP's dictates and manipulation.

#### **Environmental and Human Damage**

China's dam-building frenzy on the Tibetan plateau is said to satisfy the mainland's water scarcity and hunger for hydropower. This is clear from Xi Jinping's policy to turn Tibet into a base for the "West-East Electricity Transmission Project." However, it leaves Tibet, China, and other neighboring states at perpetual great risk of earthquakes, flooding, and massive environmental damage.

Another main and important reason for this dam-building frenzy is to achieve geopolitical leverage over downstream nations. This is dangerous. It will adversely affect the security of all the Southeast Asian countries. The international community must stop China from weaponizing the dams.

There is also a third reason: forcible relocation. These dam construction and mining projects enable the communist regime to relocate the Tibetans forcefully from their traditional homes and settlements under the pretext of development and better housing. China has forcefully relocated many Tibetans to exploit their water and mineral resources. This practice leaves those moved in a precarious position and dependent on meager government subsidies.

More than 930,000 Tibetans have been coerced into moving since 2000, Human Rights Watch says.

#### **Cost of Huge Power Output**

Dechen Palmo, a research fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute, writes, "Over the last seven decades, the People's Republic of China has constructed more than 87,000 dams. Collectively they generate 325.26 gW of power, more than the capacities of Brazil, the United States, and Canada combined. On the other hand, these projects have led to the displacement of over 23 million people."

In February 2024, despite appeals and protests from Tibetans and the international community, China went ahead with the Kamtok Dam in Derge, Kham region in Sichuan. According to Tibet Watch, the dam was expected to relocate 12 villages from both sides of the river affecting some 4287 people.

We still don't know what happened to the 1000 people who were arrested at the time.

Some scientists have blamed large dams for triggering earlier earthquakes. Most notoriously, the role of

the Zipingpu dam in the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008 is raised in question.

According to the International Rivers advisory note in 2010, "Yushu County, on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, is a hotbed of planned dam building in China. As we know from more than 100 documented cases around the world, high dams can trigger earthquakes. There is strong evidence linking the devastating Sichuan earthquake of May 2008 to the Zipingpu Dam."

#### **A Ticking Time Bomb**

Brahma Chellaney, a geo-strategist, writes, "The new dam project will give China control over cross-border river flows, thus allowing it to leverage its territorial claim to India's sprawling, Tibet-bordering Arunachal Pradesh state, which is almost three times the area of Taiwan."

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute has reported that "China is quietly and irreversibly working to legitimize its control over border regions, including territories disputed with India." China has been relocating and populating the border regions along India, Nepal, and Bhutan to gain a better negotiating position while contesting territorial disputes.

The Pentagon's 2021 annual report revealed that China has built housing complexes within the disputed area with India. These are close to the mega-dam project near the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. This is the same salami-slicing tactic used by China to encroach upon and claim territories by occupation in the Southeast China Sea. It has people in the Indo-Pacific region, including Japan and the Philippines, on high alert.

According to some reports, between 1954 and 2003, 3484 of the country's 85,300 dams collapsed. China's dam critic Fan Xiao warns that the country's poorly built and dangerous reservoirs are time bombs waiting to be exposed in the event of a severe flood or other unexpected occurrence.

According to a recently updated report, "A case in point is the 2001 disaster after an artificial dam in Tibet gave away to kill 26 people and damaged property worth Rs 140 Indian crore (over 16 million USD) along river Siang in Arunachal Pradesh."

#### **Conclusion**

From the above warnings, China's rampant dam-building and mining activities are not just a Tibetan problem. They are a ticking time bomb for India, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Mekong countries. These riparian states must join the Tibetans in garnering international support to stop China from damming the Tibetan rivers and ensure the free passage of fresh water.

This Chinese hegemonic expansionist policy must not succeed. Furthermore, the CCP regime must be warned and made accountable for the mega-disaster in the making before it's too late.

### What Riparian Nations Can Do Now

The riparian nations under threat should make it a point to join the International water-sharing law and call on China too to sign the treaty. The UN Watercourses Convention, the World Bank international rivers and lakes initiative, and the UN Law of International Water Resources should govern all those affected. China should be stopped from exploiting the Tibetan water and land resources and weaponizing Tibetan rivers to gain geo-political hegemony over the neighboring countries.

### Opinion: Shaken Ground, Unshaken Spirit- Tibet's Sacred Response and Resilience

25 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Karma T. Ngodup



*The devastation in Dingri following the earthquake in Dingri (Photo/Facebook)*

When the ground shook Tibet to its core, it exposed not just the fragility of earth, but the unshakeable spirit of its people. As tremors tore through the ancient plateau, they did more than shatter buildings and split roads—they revealed the profound resilience woven into Tibet's cultural fabric. From the devastation emerged not just stories of loss, but a powerful testament to community that challenged every preconception about modern Tibetan society.

Social media brought vivid glimpses of these responses to the world: at midnight, streams of headlights illuminated the winding mountain passes as a young Tibetan woman with her drivers navigated perilous roads with unwavering determination. Their bloodshot eyes stayed fixed on the path ahead, even as their phones buzzed incessantly with updates about which villages needed aid. Many hadn't slept for days, their faces lit by dashboard lights as they coordinated tirelessly, with the sheer sense of Tibetaness, that's the call from within.

In and around Lhasa, donation points sprang to life. Volunteers worked tirelessly to sort through mountains of winter coats, boots, blankets, and tents. Every available vehicle transformed into a makeshift relief truck—luxury SUVs and ancient tractors alike. A convoy of trucks, their cargo beds heaped with aid supplies, stretched along the highway in an unbroken chain of solidarity.

Young volunteers, including students, artists, braved subzero temperatures to load and unload supplies. Trucks adorned with fluttering prayer flags climbed higher into the mountains, carrying more than just material aid, a song of solidarity. They bore the collective hope, resilience, and unity of an entire community determined to rise together in the face of tragedy.

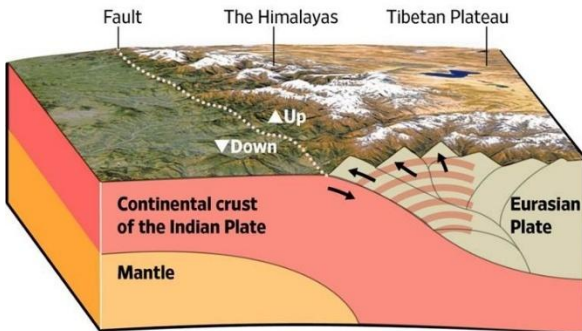
### The Earthquake and The Damming of the Mighty River

In a chilling twist of fate, mere days after Beijing greenlit the controversial Medog hydropower dam project—slated to become the world's largest dam in an earthquake-prone zone—the earth itself seemed to protest. A massive earthquake ripped through the region, unleashing devastation that would haunt the area for years to come. As tremors tore through the landscape, confusion reigned: While the United States Geological Survey (USGS) reported it as a 7.1-magnitude tremor, Chinese authorities classified it as a 6.8-magnitude. However, beyond these numerical discrepancies lies a more pressing human tragedy, where 126 lives were lost and hundreds more bearing physical and emotional scars, and entire communities left to rebuild their shattered world from the ground up.

The Tibetan Plateau, often called the "Roof of the World," stands as one of Earth's most remarkable geological features and a testament to the power of tectonic forces. Its seismic activity, tells a story millions of years in the making, shaping not only the land but also the lives of those who call this elevated paradise home, the Tibetan people. At the heart of Tibet plateau, lies a grand geological collision that began approximately 50 million years ago. The Indian tectonic plate, moving northward with the persistence of time itself, continues its steady march into the Eurasian plate at roughly five centimeters per year. This ongoing collision has created the world's highest plateau and the towering Himalayan mountains and continues to shape the region's destiny through frequent earthquakes and ongoing geological deformation. The earthquake serves as a somber reminder that when we ignore the delicate balance between development and preservation, the consequences can be devastating. (Above clip is with the approval from Prof. Christopher Scotese, an American geologist and palaeogeographer, retired professor here at Chicago).

## Continental Collision

As the Indian subcontinent pushes against Eurasia, pressure is released in the form of earthquakes. The constant crashing of the two plates forms the Himalayan mountain range.



Source: USGS; Google Earth

### Scientists Unravel Tibet's Triple Geological Enigma: Channel Flow, Delamination, and Crustal Dynamics

Scientists studying Tibet's complex geology have identified several critical processes shaping the region's seismic activity. At the deepest levels, a phenomenon known as channel flow occurs where high temperatures and pressures create a layer of partially molten rock that behaves like a viscous fluid, flowing slowly beneath the plateau at depths of 15-50 kilometers. This molten rock movement contributes to the plateau's ongoing deformation and uplift. Simultaneously, a more dramatic process called delamination is taking place, where the Indian Plate, as it slides beneath the Eurasian Plate, begins to peel apart like layers of an onion. The denser lower layer detaches and sinks into the mantle, while the more buoyant upper layer remains closer to the surface, fundamentally altering the region's crustal structure. This process is further complicated by the plateau's unique crustal characteristics – its crust is unusually thin for such high elevation, making it hypersensitive to tectonic forces. The combination of thin crust and extreme elevation creates a geological environment where even minor stress changes can trigger significant earth-shaking events, as the reduced crustal thickness provides less resistance to deformation and movement along fault lines. For example: For example, In the article titled– Tectonic plate under Tibet may be splitting in two, the Cona-Sangri rift system manifests as a significant north-south trending geological structure in southern Tibet, representing a surface expression of deeper lithospheric processes. This rift system appears to be directly linked to a tear developing in the subducting Indian plate beneath Tibet. Klemperer (2018).



This theory suggests that a portion of the Indian Plate is “delaminating” as it slides beneath the Eurasian Plate. (CREDIT: CC BY-SA 4.0)



New satellite-acquired radar data show that deformation in northwestern Tibet is localized along a major strike-slip fault. Credit: Google Earth (From Interview with Terri Cook, Freelance Writer and Dr. Simon Daout from University of Kiel discussion on continental deformation for RFA in 2018)

The Tarim Basin, a vast desert expanse in the northwest China, is a geological depression, bounded by the Tibetan Plateau to the south, and serves as a natural laboratory for seismic monitoring. However, scientists face significant challenges in obtaining precise GPS measurements along its fault lines. The difficulties stem from three main factors: the basin's unique geological structure, which distorts signal transmission; atmospheric interference caused by extreme temperature variations in the desert environment; and technical limitations of GPS equipment in such harsh conditions. According to recent research by Zhang et al. (2019), the convergent plate boundaries here show variable behavior – sometimes advancing, other times retreating. Despite these obstacles, monitoring stations in the Tarim Basin detected subtle but significant ground deformation patterns weeks before the earthquake, demonstrating the region's value as an early warning system for tectonic events affecting Tibet. The construction of massive dams and extensive mining operations across Tibet's sensitive geological landscape has increasingly been linked to earthquake and landslides activity. This relationship becomes particularly concerning given Tibet's location atop active fault systems and its ongoing tectonic uplift.

The region's geothermal systems, characterized by extensive hot springs and geysers, often show notable changes before seismic events. For instance, local observations have documented variations in spring water temperature and gas compositions, particularly in areas like the Yangbajing geothermal field near Lhasa. The high elevation and thin crust of Tibet make these geothermal features particularly sensitive to tectonic stress changes. As I remember discussing this issue with Stanford geophysics Professor Simon Klemperer for RFA in 2022. He has spent the better part of a decade traveling to Tibet and India to collect

samples to support his theory that chemicals bubbling to the surface could be used to understand what's happening 50 miles below. Land deformation across the plateau is especially pronounced due to the ongoing mega projects.

### How Human Development Amplifies Tibet's Seismic Risks

The Earth trembled in Tibet, but perhaps it wasn't just nature's unpredictable fury. While ancient wisdom taught reverence for these sacred peaks and valleys, modern ambitions carved deep wounds into the landscape. Massive dam projects have reshaped these sacred river systems that flowed undisturbed for millennia. Mining operations bore into mountains considered sacred by local communities, extracting minerals while leaving spiritual and ecological scars. Despite initial denials, Chinese officials were eventually compelled to acknowledge that five out of fourteen inspected dams had sustained damage, including concerning structural issues such as cracks. Three of these damaged dams required complete drainage, while a particularly severe case in Dingri county, near the earthquake's epicenter, exhibited tilting walls that necessitated the emergency evacuation of approximately 1,500 residents from six downstream villages.

The intersection of human ambition and geological fragility in Tibet has created a concerning pattern of increased earthquake activity linked directly to major infrastructure projects.

The Xiaowan Dam on the Mekong River stands as a prime example of this troubling relationship – since its completion in 2010, local seismic monitors have recorded a marked increase in earth tremors, suggesting that the immense weight of its reservoir is stressing underlying fault systems.

The Gyama Mine near Lhasa tells a similar cautionary tale, where extensive deep tunneling and routine blasting operations have triggered a series of small but significant earthquakes, raising concerns about the cumulative impact of mining activities on regional stability. These effects become even more pronounced in the

Three Rivers region shows compound effects of reservoir loading and mining activities creating a complex web of geological stress – here, the weight of reservoir waters from dams interacts with the structural weakening caused by mining operations, creating a potentially dangerous feedback loop.

The Yamdrok Lake pumped storage project adds another dimension to this story, as scientists have observed a clear correlation between its water pumping operations and local seismic events, demonstrating how even seemingly routine human activities can disturb the delicate balance of tectonic forces beneath Tibet's surface.

The Koyna Dam in India stands as a stark example, where reservoir loading triggered a devastating 6.3 magnitude earthquake in 1967, demonstrating how human-made structures can awaken dormant geological forces.

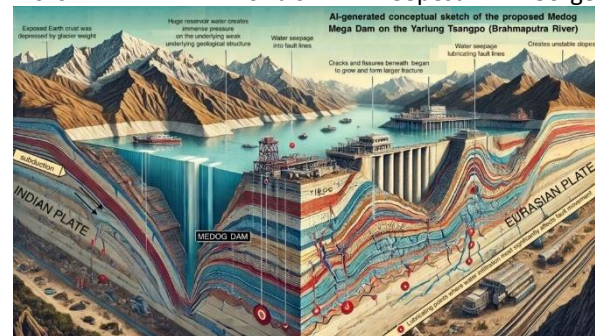
The Zangmu Dam, situated on the seismically active Tibetan Plateau, is vulnerable to earthquake risks due to its location near the Indo-Eurasian tectonic plate boundary, one of the most earthquake-prone regions globally.

More recent events, such as the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, have brought the region's seismic vulnerability into sharp focus. With a magnitude of 7.9, this disaster claimed over 87,000 lives and led to significant changes in how the region approaches earthquake safety.

The 2015 Nepal Earthquake, while centered outside Tibet, affected the southern regions of the plateau and triggered avalanches on Mount Everest, highlighting the interconnected nature of seismic events in the greater Himalayan region.



The Seismic Peril: Proposed Medog Mega Dam at the Junction of Tectonic Plates – Assessing Earthquake Risks in World's Deepest Gorge



The cumulative impact of multiple dams on the Yarlung Tsangpo, including the proposed Medog Dam – planned to be the world's largest hydropower project – significantly amplifies geological and hydrological stress in this fragile environment. Combined with climate change risks like glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), these developments threaten downstream regions through reservoir-induced seismicity. As the dam's reservoir fills with billions of cubic meters of water, it creates enormous pressure on the underlying rock formations, particularly critical in the steep gorges where water weight can deeply penetrate the Earth's crust. At its famous Great Bend, the river makes

a dramatic U-turn around Namcha Barwa mountain, defying the typical west-to-east flow pattern of China's major waterways. As Philip Ball notes in *Water Kingdom: A Secret History of China*, this deviation characterizes it as a 'rogue river' – one that China now seeks to "discipline" through this mega-dam project. The river's path through the world's deepest gorge intersects with several major fault systems, including the active Jiali-Parlung Fault Zone in the Eastern Himalayan Syntaxis, making any major infrastructure project here particularly concerning from a seismic perspective.

The integration of fault systems with regional tectonics adds significant complexity, particularly in areas marked by active plate boundaries and major fault zones. In the collision zone between the Indian and Eurasian plates, where numerous hot springs and geothermal features dot the landscape, the additional stresses from reservoir impoundment can interact dangerously with natural tectonic forces. The plateau's extensive network of active faults, especially along the Kunlun and Altyn Tagh fault systems, frequently exhibits pre-seismic indicators, and when combined with the added stress from reservoir loading, this interaction can potentially trigger larger earth-shaking events by destabilizing already stressed fault systems. The reckless exploitation of Tibet's pristine landscapes—its rivers, mountains, and sacred traditions—threatens not only the ecological balance of the plateau but the lifeline of billions downstream. As the Tibetan Plateau, the "Third Pole," faces rising seismic and environmental pressures, its fate serves as a stark warning. The tremors we witness—literal and metaphorical—remind us that this fragile land cannot sustain unchecked ambition. Either we honor and protect this delicate ecological balance, or we risk turning the "Roof of the World" into yet another cautionary tale of human suffering and irreversible loss.

### **Shaking foundations: How China's infrastructure push in Tibet risks ecological and geological catastrophe**

24 January 2025, [PML Daily](#)

On January 7, 2025, a devastating earthquake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale struck the Shigatse region of Tibet, resulting in over 120 fatalities and injuring hundreds.

Nearly 50 aftershocks followed the quake, amplifying the destruction and leaving local communities grappling with the immense aftermath.

While the region is no stranger to seismic activity due to its location in a tectonically active zone, this disaster has reignited debates about the role of human activity in exacerbating geological vulnerabilities.

Shigatse, a region known for its rich cultural heritage and proximity to Mount Everest, was severely affected. Entire villages were reduced to rubble, critical infrastructure such as roads and bridges was destroyed, and thousands were displaced.

Difficult terrain and frigid winter temperatures hampered rescue efforts, making it challenging to provide timely relief to those in need.

The earthquake's impact extends beyond immediate human and material losses.

The psychological toll on survivors, many of whom have lost loved ones, homes, and livelihoods, is profound. Schools, hospitals, and monasteries—integral to the region's social fabric—were not spared, further complicating recovery efforts.

Tibet lies within one of the world's most seismically active regions. The Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates collide, creating the towering Himalayas.

Earthquakes are a natural consequence of these geological processes, and moderate to severe tremors are common.

However, the scale of destruction in recent events, including the Shigatse earthquake, has raised questions about whether human activities are exacerbating the region's natural vulnerabilities.

Criticism has increasingly focused on China's aggressive infrastructure projects in Tibet.

Over the past two decades, the Chinese government has invested heavily in mining, dam-building, and urban development to exploit the region's natural resources and strengthen its strategic position.

While these projects are often touted as drivers of economic growth and modernisation, they significantly cost Tibet's fragile ecosystem.

Tibet is rich in mineral resources, including gold, copper, and rare earth elements.

Large-scale mining operations have scarred the landscape and disrupted local ecosystems.

The extraction process often involves blasting and drilling, which destabilises the earth and makes it more susceptible to landslides and earthquakes.

Moreover, mining activities generate toxic waste that pollutes water sources, impacting both human populations and wildlife.

Tibet is home to the sources of several major rivers, including the Yangtze, Mekong, and Brahmaputra, which sustain millions of people downstream.

Over the years, China has constructed numerous dams in the region to generate hydropower and store water. While these dams contribute to energy production, they also pose significant risks.

The weight of large reservoirs can increase stress on fault lines, potentially triggering earthquakes.

Dam failures during seismic events can lead to catastrophic flooding, compounding the damage.

Chinese authorities in Tibet said they have detected problems, including cracks, at five out of 14



hydropower dams that they have inspected since the earthquake rocked Tibet.

According to officials, three of the five affected dams have since been emptied.

The environmental toll of these activities is immense. Tibet's unique high-altitude ecosystem is already vulnerable to climate change, with rising temperatures causing glaciers to retreat at an alarming rate.

Mining and dam-building further exacerbate these issues, disrupting water cycles and reducing biodiversity.

These projects often displace local communities socially, many of which are Tibetan nomads with deep cultural and spiritual ties to the land.

The destruction of sacred sites and traditional livelihoods has fueled resentment among Tibetans, leading to calls for greater environmental and cultural preservation.

Experts have long warned that Tibet's fragile ecosystem cannot sustain the current pace of exploitation.

The region's high altitude, low vegetation cover, and extreme weather conditions make it particularly susceptible to degradation.

Once damaged, the ecosystem takes decades—if not centuries—to recover.

The Shigatse earthquake serves as a stark reminder of the delicate balance between natural forces and human activity.

While earthquakes cannot be prevented, reducing human-induced stress on the environment can mitigate their impact.

The disaster has sparked renewed calls for sustainable development practices in Tibet.

Activists and environmental organisations are urging the Chinese government to reconsider its approach to infrastructure development in the region, and they have mentioned some recommendations —

Conducting comprehensive environmental assessments: Before initiating any project, thorough assessments should evaluate potential ecological and geological impacts. These studies must be transparent and involve local stakeholders.

Limiting mining and industrial activities: Restricting mining operations in seismically active zones can reduce the risk of destabilising the earth. Investment in alternative industries that are less harmful to the environment should be prioritised.

Rethinking dam construction: While hydropower is a valuable renewable energy source, the risks associated with large dams in seismically active regions cannot be ignored. Smaller, distributed energy projects may offer a safer and more sustainable alternative.

Preserving Tibetan culture and livelihoods: Development must be inclusive and respect the rights and traditions of local communities. Efforts should

focus on empowering Tibetans through education, healthcare, and sustainable economic opportunities.

Tibet's environmental challenges are not just a regional issue; they have global implications.

As the "Third Pole," the Tibetan Plateau contains the largest freshwater reserve outside the polar regions.

Its glaciers feed rivers that support nearly two billion people in Asia.

Any ecological damage in Tibet has a cascading effect on the continent's water security, food production, and biodiversity.

The international community has a role to play in advocating for the preservation of Tibet's unique environment.

Experts opine that collaborative efforts, such as cross-border water management agreements and support for sustainable development initiatives, can help balance the region's economic needs with ecological preservation.

The Shigatse earthquake is a tragic reminder of the delicate interplay between natural and human forces.

While the region's seismic activity is a natural phenomenon, the extent of destruction underscores the need for more responsible and sustainable development practices.

As Tibet rebuilds after this disaster, it is crucial to prioritise ecological preservation and the well-being of its people.

The lessons learned from Shigatse must guide future policies, ensuring that Tibet remains a land of natural beauty and a region resilient to the challenges of an uncertain future

### **Trump 2.0 is going well for China so far. But can the honeymoon last?**

24 January 2025, [CNN](#), Simone McCarthy

Donald Trump's second term in office is getting off to a good start for China.

The new US president has so far refrained from acting on his threat to slap hefty tariffs on China, told business and political leaders at an economic forum in Davos that the two countries could have a "very good relationship" and reportedly expressed interest in visiting the Chinese capital in the months ahead.

Trump even gave a 75-day reprieve to Chinese-owned app TikTok and signaled he would look to dilute a law requiring the company divest its American business or be banned.

All this adds up to a strong signal that the returning president is willing to talk – and cut deals – with China. At least for now.

That is welcome news for Beijing, which has been bracing for a tumultuous period in US-China relations as Trump stacked his cabinet with China hawks and

campaigns on levying high tariffs on all Chinese imports to the US.

“China realizes that’s there an opportunity to negotiate with Trump,” said political scholar Liu Dongshu of the City University of Hong Kong. “And a better US-China relationship is more important to China than to United States ... so China is eager” to engage.

Stakes are high for Beijing, as a tit-for-tat trade war like the one during Trump’s last administration would hit China’s ailing export-reliant economy at a bad time. And Chinese leaders have been keen to seize on the opportunity to soften Trump’s hard line.

Xi called for a “new starting point” in US-China ties during a call with Trump days ahead of the inauguration and dispatched Vice President Han Zheng to the US capital to attend the swearing-in ceremony, the seniormost Chinese official ever to attend such an event.

Meanwhile at the World Economic Forum in Davos this week, Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang said China wants to “promote balanced trade,” not “surplus” with the world – striking a note that appeals directly to Trump’s chief complaint about the relationship between the two largest economies.

But China’s policymakers are also under few illusions about how quickly the tenor of US-China relationship could change – and are likely carefully calculating how to use the current breathing room to negotiate with the “art of the deal” president in the months ahead.

#### **Containing the tariff threat?**

Looming over this period of tone-setting is a “phase one” trade deal brokered during the last Trump administration.

The 2020 deal marked a truce in a tit-for-tat trade war that saw Trump heighten or impose tariffs on hundreds of billions of Chinese imports to the US – an act he claimed would level the playing field with China and that has largely stayed in place since.

Now that deal, which analysts say Beijing never fully implemented, is part of a larger probe of US-China economic and trade relations that Trump called for in an executive order on his first day in office.

The review will guide whether the White House imposes duties on China but is expected to take months. That gives Beijing time to build a relationship with Trump, entertain him in Beijing or push for a pre-emptive deal to avert more severe economic penalties.

In an interview with Fox News that aired Thursday, Trump described tariffs as a “tremendous power” over China, but said he “would rather not have to use” them and thought the two countries could reach a trade deal. It also remains unclear whether Trump will deepen export controls on sensitive technologies implemented by former President Joe Biden.

“China has realized Trump can be negotiated with, but he is a different, new Trump – what we committed to last time may not satisfy his new desires,” said Shanghai-based foreign affairs analyst Shen Dingli. This time, instead of being “coerced” into a tit-for-tat trade war by Trump, Beijing may do better to “smile, stay calm, and start talking with him,” Shen said. Tariffs on 10% of Chinese imports into the US could still come as early as next month in retaliation for what Trump described as the role played by Chinese suppliers in America’s fentanyl drug crisis.

But those are a far cry from the 60% duties he campaigned on – and observers of China’s foreign policy say Beijing is likely looking at those threats as levers it could pull to mollify Trump.

For example, Chinese officials could move to implement more of the existing “phase one” deal and further open China’s huge market to foreign firms. They also could take additional actions to stem the export of precursor chemicals used to make the fentanyl.

In China’s domestic debates about foreign policy, many pundits too are advocating dialogue and cooperation on the economy rather than hard lines.

Jia Qingguo, a former dean of Peking University’s prestigious School of International Studies, expressed as much in a recent interview with state-linked financial publication Yicai.

“Rather than adopting a blanket veto of all US proposals,” China should “analyze which issues require opposition and which can be cooperated on based on our own interests,” he said.

If Trump does visit Beijing in the coming months, a trip sources close to the president have suggested he is eyeing, that will also give Beijing a key opportunity to woo the US leader.

#### **‘Must not let our guard down’**

But there are also very real limits to how much China can bend toward Trump’s demands – and skepticism within China about how possible it will be to cooperate with his administration. Xi pointed to those in his call with Trump a week ago.

“The important thing is to respect each other’s core interests,” the Chinese leader said, name-checking Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy Beijing claims and has vowed to take control of, as an issue the US needs to treat with “prudence.” On the other hand, there is a “broad space of cooperation” available on other areas, like economic ties, he intimated.

Within China there’s also debate about how the Chinese government should respond if the US president does begin to raise hefty tariffs against Chinese goods – and signs Beijing is preparing for a potential fight.

The country revamped its export control regulations late last year, sharpening its ability to restrict so-called dual-use goods. It’s also already limited the export of

certain critical minerals and related technologies that countries rely on to fabricate products from military goods to semiconductors – another kind of leverage Beijing could use to fight tariffs.

Meanwhile, any deal-making between Beijing and Washington will not exist in a vacuum. Rather it will sit amid myriad tensions between the two sides on issues including China's human rights record, a competition for technological and military dominance, and the balance of power in Asia.

China is unlikely to tamp down on behaviors enflaming those tensions – like its drive to modernize and expand its military and its ramped-up aggression pressing its territorial claims in the South China Sea and over Taiwan. And many US lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, unlike Trump, have given no sign they are willing to work with the country they see as the principal threat to America's sole superpower status.

On Thursday, for example, lawmakers introduced a bipartisan bill that would revoke China's preferential trade status with the United States, phase in steep tariffs and end a duty exemption for low-value Chinese imports.

Chinese leaders, too, need to ensure that they look strong in their dealings with the US, both for their domestic audience and countries across the Global South, where Beijing aims to project leadership.

So even as Chinese officials are welcoming overtures from a less combative Trump in week one of his presidency, there's skepticism within China that those warmer-than-expected signals will last.

"This does not mean that the China-US relationship is any easier; it's just that the US approach has changed," Jin Canrong, deputy director of the China-US Research Center at Renmin University in Beijing, said in a video posted on his account on the social media platform Weibo. "We must not let our guard down ... the US still views China as a strategic rival."

### **'Dam for a dam': India, China edge towards a Himalayan water war**

24 January 2025, [Aljazeera](#), Yashraj Sharma

*Despite local protests, India is building a giant hydro dam on the Siang River to counter a Chinese dam – the world's largest – upstream in Tibet. Millions of people in India and Bangladesh could be hurt.*

Gegong Jijong lined up with hundreds of other protesters on a cold afternoon last month near the Siang River in India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, shouting antigovernment slogans.

"No dam over Ane Siang [Mother Siang]," the protesters in Parong village demanded.

The Siang River, cutting through serene hills, has been considered sacred for centuries by Jijong's ancestors in

the Adi tribal community – farmers whose livelihood depended on its water.



*India's proposal for a counter-dam on the Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh, has raised concerns about ecological risks, water security and the impact on communities [File: Reuters]*

But all of that is now at risk, he said, as India moves to build its largest dam over their land.

The \$13.2bn Siang Upper Multipurpose Project will have a reservoir that can hold nine billion cubic metres of water and generate 11,000 megawatts of electricity upon completion – more than any other Indian hydroelectric project. It was first proposed in 2017, and officials are now carrying out feasibility surveys.

Locals, however, warn that at least 20 villages will be submerged, and nearly two dozen more villages will partly drown, uprooting thousands of residents.

Amid intensifying resistance from locals, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) -led state government has ordered the deployment of paramilitary forces to quell protests, though there have not been any clashes yet. The protesters insist that they are not going anywhere.

"The government is taking over my home, our Ane Siang, and converting it into an industry. We cannot let that happen," said Jijong, the president of the Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum (SIFF) community initiative. "Till the time I'm alive and breathing, we will not let the government construct this dam."

But the BJP government argues that the protesters have got it wrong. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has insisted that it is "not just a hydro dam," but that its "real objective is to save the Siang River".

From China.

#### **A fragile ecosystem**

At the heart of the Indian dam project that Jijong and his community are opposing is a geostrategic contest for water and security between New Delhi and Beijing, who are locked in a tense rivalry that, in recent years, has also at times exploded into deadly border clashes. The Siang River originates near Mount Kailash in Tibet, where it is known as the Yarlung Zangbo. It then enters Arunachal Pradesh and becomes much wider. Known

as the Brahmaputra in most of India, it then flows into Bangladesh before sinking into the Bay of Bengal.

Last month, China approved the construction of its most ambitious – and the world’s largest – dam over the Yarlung Zangbo, in Tibet’s Medog county, right before it enters Indian territory.

Soon after China first officially announced its plan to construct the dam in 2020, officials in New Delhi started seriously considering a counter-dam to “mitigate the adverse impact of the Chinese dam projects”. The Indian government argues that the Siang dam’s large reservoir would offset the disruption in the flow of the river by the upcoming Medog dam, and safeguard against flash floods or water scarcity.

But the presence of two giant dams in a Himalayan region with a fragile ecosystem and a history of devastating floods and earthquakes poses serious threats to millions of people who live there and further downstream, caution experts and climate activists. And India and China’s dangerous power tussle over Himalayan water resources could disproportionately hurt Indigenous communities.

#### **‘Major flashpoint’**

The new mega-dam in Medog county over the Yarlung Zangbo will dwarf even the Three Gorges Dam, currently the world’s largest hydro dam, in central China. Beijing says that the project will be vital in meeting its net-zero emissions goal by 2060, and Chinese news agencies reported that the dam will cost \$137bn. There is no immediate clarity on how many people will be displaced on the Chinese side.

The dam’s construction, at the Great Bend near Mount Namcha Barwa, will also be an engineering marvel of sorts. As the water falls into one of the deepest gorges in the world – with a depth exceeding 5,000 metres (16,400 feet) – it will generate about 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually.

The massive new project is the latest in a series of dams – the previous ones were smaller – that China has built on the Yarlung Zangbo and its tributaries, said BR Deepak, professor of Chinese studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi.

And these dams “should be considered as one of the major flashpoints between India and China,” he said, citing how “some of the biggest conflicts have originated out of the trans-water rivers”. The water of the tributaries of the Indus River is a major bone of contention between India and Pakistan. Ethiopia and Egypt, meanwhile, are locked in a dispute over a giant dam that Ethiopia is building on the Nile.

But India’s response, by constructing a dam over the Siang River, “adds fuel to the fire,” said Deepak. “Till China keeps damming these rivers, fears and anxieties will continue and stoke strong responses from lower riparian countries.”

A report by the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, in 2020 [argued that](#) control over rivers

originating in the Tibetan Plateau essentially gives China a “chokehold” over India’s economy.

#### **The ‘chokehold’**

Throughout history, the Yarlung Zangbo was often known in China as the “river gone rogue”: Unlike other major Chinese rivers that flow west to east, it turns sharply south at the Great Bend to enter India.

Beijing’s decision to choose this strategic location for the dam, next to the border with India, has prompted concerns in New Delhi.

“It is obvious that China will have the card to use the dam as a strategic factor in its relationship with India to manipulate water flows,” said Saheli Chattaraj, assistant professor of Chinese studies at Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi.

Deepak agreed. “Lower riparian like Bangladesh and India will always fear that China may weaponise water, especially in the event of hostilities, because of the dam’s large reservoir.” The reservoir is projected to have the capacity to hold 40 billion cubic metres of water.

The fragility of the terrain adds to worries. “The damming of the river is fraught with several dangers,” said Deepak. About 15 percent of the great earthquakes – with a magnitude greater than 8.0 on the Richter Scale – in the 20th century occurred in the Himalayas.

And that pattern of major earthquakes hitting Tibet has continued. On January 7, a 7.1-scale earthquake killed at least 126 people. At least five out of 14 hydro dams in the region examined by Chinese authorities after the earthquake had ominous signs of damage. The walls of one were tilting, while some others had cracks. Three dams were emptied, and several villages were evacuated.

Meanwhile, the Indian government has told anti-dam protesters in Arunachal Pradesh that a counter-dam is needed to mitigate the risks of China flooding their lands, punctuating its warnings with terms like “water bomb” and “water wars”.

Chattaraj, the assistant professor, pointed out that neither India nor China are signatories to the UN’s international watercourses convention that regulates shared freshwater resources, like the Brahmaputra.

India and China have been parties to a memorandum of understanding since 2002 for the sharing of hydrological data and information on the Brahmaputra during flood seasons. But after a military standoff in Doklam – near their shared border with Bhutan – between the nuclear-armed neighbours in 2017, India said that Beijing had temporarily stopped sharing hydrological data. That spring, a wave of floods hit the northeastern Indian state of Assam, leading to more than 70 deaths and displacing more than 400,000 people.

“It is a problematic scenario and, moreover, when the relationship deteriorates or it is malevolent, like the

way it was in 2017, China immediately stopped sharing the data,” said Deepak.

### **Sour neighbours, bitter relations**

The Medog county dam was part of China’s 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), and planning has been under way for more than a decade. However, it was officially announced on December 25, triggering sharp responses from India.

Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for India’s Ministry of External Affairs, said that New Delhi has “established user rights to the waters of the river”, and has “consistently expressed our concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory”.

He added that New Delhi has urged Beijing “to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas”, adding that India will “continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests”.

Two days later, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mao Ning, told reporters that the project “will not negatively affect the lower reaches”, and Beijing will “continue to maintain communication with [lower riparian] countries through existing channels and step up cooperation on disaster prevention”. She again underscored the Medog county dam’s role in China’s pivot towards clean energy and other hydrological disasters.

Yet, trust between India and China is in short supply.

Last October, the countries reached an agreement to disengage after nearly five years of a tense military standoff in Ladakh, following a deadly military clash on the disputed border in 2020.

But the agreement must not be mistaken for an ice break in sour relations, warned Michael Kugelman, South Asia Institute director at the Wilson Center, a Washington, DC-based think tank. “There are simply too many points of divergence and tension between India and China, including this latest flashpoint around water, to expect that we could see strength in relations,” he told Al Jazeera.

Kugelman pointed out that both India and China have borne the adverse effects of climate change, including water shortages, and their tussle over water will likely only intensify in the coming years.

“India just cannot afford to see water, which it expects to flow down, be bottled up in China,” he said.

### **‘Bangladesh will face most adverse impact’**

But while India and China engage in a tug-of-war, experts say that the worst impact could be felt by millions of people in Bangladesh.

Although only 8 percent of the 580,000-square-kilometre (224,000-square-mile) area of the Brahmaputra basin falls in Bangladesh, the river system annually provides over 65 percent of the country’s water. That’s why it is viewed as the “lifeline of Bangladesh”, said Sheikh Rokon, secretary-general

of Riverine People, a Dhaka-based civil society organisation that focuses on water resources.

“The ‘dam for a dam’ race between China and India will impact us most adversely,” Rokon told Al Jazeera.

Those fears have kept Malik Fida Khan, executive director at the Dhaka-based Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS), on edge for a decade now.

“We have access to no information. Not a feasibility report, or the details of the technology that will be used,” he said, his tone tense. “We need a shared, and detailed, feasibility study, environmental impact assessment, and then social and disaster impact assessment. But we have had nothing.”

The Brahmaputra also forms one of the world’s largest sediment deltas in Bangladesh, before entering the Bay of Bengal, and directly supports millions who live on its banks. “If there is any imbalance in the sediment flow, it will increase the riverbank erosion and any chances of potential land reclaiming will vanish,” Khan said.

India’s dam, Khan lamented, could be particularly damaging to the part of the basin in Bangladesh. “You cannot counter a dam with another down,” he said. “It will have a huge and fatal impact on millions of us living downstream.”

Rokon agreed. “We need to get out of the ‘wait and see’ attitude regarding Chinese or Indian dams,” he said, reflecting upon the Bangladesh government’s current policy. “The discussion on the Brahmaputra river should not be a mere bilateral discussion between Bangladesh and India, or India and China; it should be a basin-wide discussion.”

Since the ouster of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from Dhaka, whose government was backed by New Delhi, the new dispensation led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has maintained its distance from India. This also means that there is no joint effort, or a unified pushback, from the South Asian countries to counter China’s growing command over the Brahmaputra river, say analysts.

Whereas Khan sees this water crisis as “a golden opportunity” for India and Bangladesh to forge ties, Kugelman of Wilson Center isn’t optimistic.

“We’ve seen that China is not a country that is receptive to external pressure, whether it be from one country, or two, or even 10,” said Kugelman. “Even if India and Bangladesh were in a position to muster joint resistance toward these Chinese moves, it would not be sufficient to deter Beijing’s actions.”

Meanwhile, the threat facing communities on the front lines of these water tensions is only going to grow, say experts.

“One cannot emphasise enough on the significance and seriousness of these water tensions because of how climate change effects could make these tensions

much more dangerous and potentially destabilising in the upcoming decade,” Kugelman told Al Jazeera.

Back in Parong village near the Siang River, Jijong says he has no time to rest. “We have been making more and more people aware about the implications of these dams,” he said.

“I do not know about the next generation, but, even if I am 90 years old and cannot walk,” said Jijong, pausing for a long breath, “I will continue to resist.”

### What (or who) after the Dalai Lama?

24 January 2025, [Nepali Times](#), Sudiksha Tuladhar

The Dalai Lama succession question has uncertain implications for Nepal

In December, the Nepal government announced it would not allow a Beijing-appointed Tibetan spiritual leader, the Panchen Lama, to attend a Buddhist conference in Kathmandu. Immigration at the airport was put on high alert to ensure he did not try to sneak in.

Coming soon after Prime Minister K P Oli’s visit to China, that decision underscored Nepal’s precarious tight-rope act in addressing religio-political sensitivities in its relations with China. The Panchen Lama episode can be seen as a test for Nepal’s handling of the succession of the Dalai Lama, who turns 90 in July.

“When the time comes to find a successor to the Dalai Lama, Nepal will face a larger policy dilemma,” predicts Sudheer Sharma, author of two recent books on Nepal-China relations. “The government is still unclear what it will do if the successor is chosen from the Tibetan community in Nepal, or from China or India.”

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism and a symbol of Tibetan identity; he is revered as the manifestation of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. He was born in 1935 in northeastern Tibet and was formally recognised as the Dalai Lama in 1940.

He has been living in exile in Dharamsala for the past 65 years after fleeing Lhasa following the Chinese takeover. He has been allowed to make a low-profile visit to Lumbini only once in 1987, and never after that due to objections from China.

Nepal does not have a national strategy to handle the presence of religious leaders. If there are policies, they are ad-hoc or undeclared, depending on the government of the day in Kathmandu. The Nepal government, under Chinese pressure, even prevents public celebrations marking the Dalai Lama’s birthday on 6 July.

“The Dalai Lama’s attempts to visit Nepal again have been stopped since Nepal thinks he is not only a religious leader, but a political figure as well,” says

Sharma. “There is no discussion in Nepal’s political circles regarding the succession of the Dalai Lama. The topic is regarded as a non-issue.”

Over the years, the Dalai Lama has made various statements regarding his succession. At times, he has suggested that he will write a will to select a successor from within the Tibetan community. On other occasions, he has hinted that the next Dalai Lama could be chosen from a “free country”, and could even be a woman.

The Panchen Lama succession in 1995 could provide a hint about how the post-Dalai Lama era will play out. The Panchen Lama is the second most important spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism, and heads the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Xigatse, the epicentre of the 7 January earthquake, located 250km away from Lhasa.

The Panchen Lama traditionally has the role of finding the next Dalai Lama, but the previous Panchen Lama (Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup Choekyi Gyaltzen) has been missing since 1995, after the Chinese installed their own candidate (Gyaltzen Norbu). The present Panchen Lama’s visits are carefully planned, and he has made only one foreign visit so far, to Thailand.

“Nepal did not permit Panchen Lama’s visit as he is Chinese Communist Party-appointed, thus making him a political figure,” says Amish Mulmi, author of the book *All Roads Lead North*.

What China was trying to do through the Panchen Lama’s visit for the Nanhai Conference in Kathmandu last month was to project its soft power, and perhaps prepare the ground for the Dalai Lama succession. But the ban raised the question of what Nepal will do if there is a visit by Hindu figures from India at events in Nepal.

Religious leaders and figures from various faiths regularly visit Nepal for devotional events, meetings and conferences. Their trips are often significant for promoting dialogue and cultural exchange, and cannot be banned under the Constitution.

“We did the Nanhai Conference, and in future religious leaders will definitely visit Nepal. The question arises whether or not to allow them to engage in political activities or not,” says Mulmi. “Religion has always been political. So Nepal must not take easy decisions and must think it through.”

Although Nepal and Tibet fought wars in the past two centuries, they share deep-rooted and ancient cultural, religious and trade ties. After the Chinese annexation of Tibet 70 years ago, Kathmandu gradually started dealing directly with Beijing.

Today, Nepal is the only country with a consulate in Lhasa, a city from where the only direct international flight is to Kathmandu.

Over the years, these ties have evolved, with shifts in trade dynamics and people-to-people interactions reflecting broader regional and global changes.

Despite this, the historical bond between Nepal and Tibet remains a significant aspect of present-day bilateral relations with China, and this is why the selection of the next Dalai Lama has resonance here.

“It is clear that China has been trying to adopt Tibetan Buddhism as a soft power. It is trying to co-opt Tibetan Buddhism on the lines of China’s ambitions and narratives,” explains Mulmi.

The Dalai Lama’s considerable following in Nepal, India, Europe and the United States is an irritant for Beijing. Recent Sino-American tensions have therefore given the spiritual ownership of Tibetan Buddhism a geopolitical dimension, and in this the Dalai Lama succession will become an important factor.

Relations between Washington and Beijing during the second Trump term will have a bearing on this.

As a buffer state between India and China, Nepal has historically tried to maintain equidistance between the two powers.

But China has rarely stuck its neck out for Nepal. Despite repeated requests for military help during its war with the British East India Company in 1814-16, the emperor in Beijing refused.

Explains Sudheer Sharma: “China did not want to get involved with the British. They thought of their own national interests then, and they are thinking of their own national interests now with India.”

During the Khampa Uprising in the 1960s, Kathmandu was also squeezed between American support for the guerrillas and China’s objections to Nepal being used as a base. But with the Nixon-Mao rapprochement in 1972, the Americans stopped helping the Khampas. Nepal then yielded to pressure from Mao Zedong to mount a military campaign to drive them out.

Nepal was left to manage and host Tibetan refugees, and balance that with China’s security concerns. Explains Amish Mulmi: “Nepal has pretty much done everything China has asked to do, including deporting Tibetans. China doesn’t need to be insecure, but Nepal needs to maintain a careful balance.”

Today, despite Donald Trump’s chest-thumping and threats of a tariff war against Beijing, he and Chinese President Xi Jinping are on the same page regarding democracy and freedoms. Which may mean Washington could once more leave the Tibetans in a lurch, and this could have a direct bearing on the Dalai Lama succession sequence.

The United States’ shifting foreign policy has often been criticised for leaving allies and partners to fend for themselves. Trump may revive his pressure on Japan, Korea and Taiwan to pay for the US defence umbrella.

Nepal’s stance on the Tibetan community relies on marking boundaries and offering protection. During Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Nepal, China proposed that Nepal sign an extradition treaty which Nepal politely refused.

“Nepal has tactfully not let the Chinese side extend a longer hand on the Tibetan issue,” says Sharma. “Possibly, we are learning our lessons from history.”

The question of who will choose the successor to the Dalai Lama will be decided by geopolitics, and China’s increased stature as a global economic power.

Beijing could insist on sticking to tradition to let its candidate for the Panchen Lama make the final decision. This would allow it to move the seat of the Dalai Lama from Dharamshala back to Lhasa.

The present Dalai Lama could also appoint his own candidate, but that person will not be allowed into Tibet by China. In that case, we may have a situation where there are two Dalai Lamas.

### **Tibet Earthquake: Tibetan resilience and future risks**

24 January 2025, [ICT](#)

The new year opened with a devastating 7.1 magnitude (6.8 according to the Chinese Government) earthquake in western Tibet amid the freezing winter. Unlike crisis reporting from around the world, not a single international media outlet has been able to directly report from the earthquake affected area to date. In the absence of independent reporting from the ground, the Chinese government’s international communications have largely shaped the discourse over the Dingri earthquake to project the efficiency of China’s response and effectiveness of its governance through its state media. Notably, these communications consistently refer to Tibet as “Xizang,” reinforcing China’s policy of altering Tibet’s name. This report aims to provide a more nuanced perspective. It sheds light on the unsung heroes, explores critical yet unreported details, and examines potential future risks and the broader implications for Tibet and its people once the public memory starts to fade.

The International Campaign (ICT) for Tibet rejects the Chinese government’s propaganda and projection of Tibet earthquake response to the international community as responsible and efficient. The ICT deplores the government of China for stifling the organic and spontaneous Tibetan grassroots efforts to deliver relief-aid to the earthquake affected area. The Chinese government’s non-transparency on the full extent of destruction and death toll in the Dingri earthquake and censoring Tibetans from speaking is despicable. It is highly reprehensible that not a single international rescue team has been able to arrive at the ground to save lives in the critical first days post-earthquake due to China’s stance.

Diplomatic condolence messages from China’s friendly states extended to Beijing certainly does not heal the Tibetans in the earthquake affected area. International development teams and their expertise are needed on

the ground for reconstruction and rebuilding, but Beijing's positioning of self-sufficiency and blockage of international development assistance makes the rebuilding opaque and an opportunity for further sinification of Tibet.

The Dingri earthquake reminds us of the power of nature over the chase for economic growth. China's rampant dam building spree in Tibet is dangerous to the Tibetans and the downstream countries. China acknowledged that the earthquake has cracked at least five reservoirs in the epicenter zone and at least 1500 people have been evacuated from the course of the river. This reminds the international community on the potential scale of destruction with China's plan to build the world's largest dam on Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) in Tibet. The plan to build the dam, which was approved by the Chinese government last month, must be withdrawn to ensure safety for the Tibetans and the millions living in India and Bangladesh.

#### **Tibetan solidarity and unity**

Despite the great grief, the Dingri earthquake showed the solidarity and unity of the Tibetan people across the Tibetan plateau. As soon as news of the devastating earthquake spread, Tibetans from all walks of life across the plateau, primarily in and around Lhasa, quickly coordinated relief efforts through Chinese social media, especially video-based apps.

Although news reports, especially the jingoistic Chinese state media outlets, focused on official rescue and relief efforts organized by the Chinese government and military, ordinary Tibetans were the unsung heroes who quickly came together to coordinate relief for the quake-hit areas.

Dispatches of relief and services quickly arrived at ground zero, providing solace, cash, and essential supplies to the grief-stricken Tibetans in the quake zone. As per Tibetan religious custom, groups of monks visited the quake-hit villages to offer prayers and last rites to the dead. In one video clip shared on Chinese social media, a group of monks could be seen visiting villages in the middle of the cold night. Beijing based Tibetan writer and rights activist Woesser in social post wrote that "starting from January 7, 2025, monks from Sakya Monastery quickly rushed to the 15 affected villages in Dingri to hold a memorial service for the victims...The monks traveled to various villages for a day and a night. Wherever they went, they chanted sutras and prayed for blessings, comforting the families of the victims and the villagers. In some villages, the local people embraced the monks and wept when they saw them."

Clips of truckloads of wood for funeral pyres heading towards the quake zone were shared on social media. In times of great calamities where the number of dead is too large for birds to consume, traditional Tibetan

sky burial practices are forgone for cremation. In one video clip, at least seven burning funeral pyres could be seen at an elevated location.

Monasteries across Tibet also coordinated fundraising efforts. Multiple video clips shared on social media showed monks donating their personal savings for the grief-stricken Tibetans in the quake zone.

Ordinary Tibetans across society also mobilized quickly to coordinate aid to the quake-affected area. Tibetan entrepreneurs and artists were prominent on Chinese social media, donating monetary and essential supplies. Video clips of Tibetans helping relief efforts and providing monetary assistance also circulated widely on social media. Tibetan influencers on Chinese social media played a major role in coordinating monetary assistance to the quake-affected families. As proof of accountability to their audience and donors, the influencers shared video clips of themselves handing cash directly to the quake-affected Tibetans and often sharing the stories of the recipient families' losses in the earthquake.

#### **Grassroots relief efforts stalled**

With the immense and quick outpouring of relief and support from the ordinary Tibetans to the quake hit Dingri Tibetans as soon as the news of the devastating earthquake spread, the Chinese authorities stalled the grassroots mobilization of relief presumably on fears of the preferred official narrative on the earthquake from being derailed. The next day after the earthquake, Dingri County in a notice officially suspended relief from the Tibetans and required vehicle permits and built new checkpoints to limit access to the disaster zone for Tibetans willing to help. With no access, the Tibetan donors piled up essential supplies including perishables in front of the government's local disaster relief management center in the hopes of delivery to the affected people.

Since China already has stringent controls over international aid and international non-profits, international relief efforts to the quake affected Tibetans were minimal. A statement made by the elected leader of the exile Tibetan community on January 12 called for "granting unrestricted and immediate access to international aid organizations and media delegations" and rebuilding efforts taking into account the traditional Tibetan needs and fundamental rights was also quickly dismissed by the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China.

#### **Censorship**

In order to mold the narrative surrounding the earthquake and its relief efforts to align with their political agenda, both domestically and on the global stage, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese government took measures to control the flow of information. Tibetan influencers, who provided a unique perspective on the plight of the quake affected people, were explicitly cautioned against



sharing their views or the stories of those impacted by the disaster.

This pressure from the authorities led to significant self-censorship among these influencers. Instead of sharing firsthand accounts or critical commentary, they began to post messages to their followers, often couched in requests for understanding and patience. This self-censorship was driven by a palpable fear of retribution, reflecting the tight control the government exerts over information dissemination.

One such influencer encapsulated this stifling atmosphere with a poignant reference to a well-known Tibetan proverb: "If one does not control the long tongue, one's round head will be in trouble." This saying underscores the perceived danger of speaking out or sharing unapproved information, highlighting the personal risks involved. By invoking this proverb, the influencer not only conveyed the necessity of silence but also subtly critiqued the oppressive environment where free speech is curtailed and where the act of speaking out can lead to severe consequences.

In another video clip, a female influencer shared in her post from the ground that the police ordered her to cease live broadcasting and warned her that her Douyin account (the Chinese version of TikTok) would be suspended. Expressing helplessness, she cautiously displays the relief supplies laid out on the ground and 10,000-yuan cash in her hand, which are to be distributed to the people waiting in line in the background.

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By International Campaign for Tibet | January 24, 2025  
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### Translation

*Since the “1.07” earthquake in Dingri (Tingri) County, all sectors of society have responded positively, extended a helping hand and donated generously, providing Dingri County with strong material support and powerful spiritual motivation. At present, Dingri County has sufficient reserves of various disaster relief supplies. After having discussions, it has been decided to stop accepting donations of disaster relief supplies from all walks of life from now on.*

*For the materials that have been communicated and accepted in the early stage and are in transit, the statistics, warehousing, and management work should be carried out in accordance with the regulations.*

*For the materials that have not yet been shipped and the materials that are intended to be donated by all walks of life, the acceptance will be suspended.*

*The People’s Government of Dingri County  
January 8, 2025*

### Censorship

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This pressure from the authorities led to significant self-censorship among these influencers. Instead of sharing firsthand accounts or critical commentary, they began to post messages to their followers, often couched in requests for understanding and patience. This self-censorship was driven by a palpable fear of retribution, reflecting the tight control the government exerts over information dissemination.

One such influencer encapsulated this stifling atmosphere with a poignant reference to a well-known Tibetan proverb: “If one does not control the long tongue, one’s round head will be in trouble.” This

saying underscores the perceived danger of speaking out or sharing unapproved information, highlighting the personal risks involved. By invoking this proverb, the influencer not only conveyed the necessity of silence but also subtly critiqued the oppressive environment where free speech is curtailed and where the act of speaking out can lead to severe consequences.

In another video clip, a female influencer shared in her post from the ground that the police ordered her to cease live broadcasting and warned her that her Douyin account (the Chinese version of TikTok) would be suspended. Expressing helplessness, she cautiously displays the relief supplies laid out on the ground and 10,000-yuan cash in her hand, which are to be distributed to the people waiting in line in the background.

*The young man expresses helplessness and states that he won't talk about Dingri earthquake anymore. Expressing a well-known Tibetan proverb: "If one does not control the long tongue, one's round head will be in trouble", the man asks for understanding for his self-censorship.*

*The woman says the police ordered her to stop live broadcasting and warned her that her Douyin account would be suspended.*

*In a cryptic message facing censorship, the person says that he wants to talk but his ears are being pulled. He says that if he doesn't take caution, his neck might be cut.*

### **Dingri Earthquake**

The devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake that rocked Dingri and beyond occurred at 9:05 am local time on January 7, 2025. What had gone unnoticed and unreported in the news media was a smaller-scale quake that preceded it by almost an hour at the same location at 8:11 am, measuring 3.6 magnitude according to the China Earthquake Administration (CEA). Lives could have been saved if only early warning systems existed for an earthquake-prone region.

Tibet is seismically active as it sits on a major geological fault line where the Indian tectonic plate collides with the Eurasian plate. Twenty-nine earthquakes measuring at least 3 magnitude had occurred in the past five years within 200 km (124 miles) of the January 7 quake epicenter, and 3,614 aftershocks have been recorded by January 14 since then, according to [Chinese data](#).

While both the USGS and CEA data were in agreement about the worst affected zone of the earthquake, there were divergences in terms of magnitude and epicenter of the quake. The USGS measured the quake as 7.1 magnitude (Moment magnitude), whereas the CEA measured it as 6.8 (Surface wave magnitude). For the epicenter, the USGS pinpointed it at 28.639°N

87.361°E, whereas the CEA differed, placing it at 28.50°N 87.45°E.

### **The quake affected zone**

A total of one city, six counties and 45 townships in the Tibet Autonomous Region were affected by the earthquake, according to Chinese state media China Central Television on January 10 citing the Ministry of Emergency Management and China Earthquake Administration. The highest intensity zone covered an area of about 411 sq kms affected 5 townships in Dingri county. The 5 townships were named as:

### **Death Toll**

The earthquake's death toll has been controversial due to lack of meaningful transparency and censorship by the Chinese government. The determination of the actual death toll is almost impossible just as the number of deaths when COVID hit Tibet.

By 19:00 on January 7, the [official death toll](#) was determined to be 126, after raising it throughout the day. The death toll has been static since then. The official death toll appears to be based on the search operations in 27 villages comprising 6,900 people within the 20 km (12 miles) radius of the earthquake epicenter as the Chinese state controlled media focused on those villages early on. Unofficial death toll through independent research ranged between 134 – 400.

The Voice of America Tibetan Service estimated the death toll to be at least 134 as of January 13, 2025, citing data received from Tibet and confirmed by reliable sources. Unlike China's official earthquake death toll, VOA disaggregated the death toll as:

Chulho Township	Tsonga	3
	Tsowar	3
	Tsotso	2
	Kyibuk	3
	Chulho	2
	Bagha	5
Tsogo	Tsogo	30
Lhatse County	Lhatse	3
Sakya County	Sakya	2
Dramtso Township	Serkhar	17
	Gurum	30
	Nechung	17
	Karpo	8
	Gutso	1
	Jangkar	3
	Sharlung	2
	Nesar	3

Citing an interview with a medical staff in a hospital in Dingri county on January 11, Radio Free Asia Tibetan Service reported, based on the estimate of morgue staff, as stating more than 400 dead in Dingri and Lhatse due to the earthquake.

Inside Tibet, some Tibetans estimate the death toll to be around 265, a figure that has been circulating on the internet within the Chinese firewall. The authorities have refuted this death toll as a rumor and imposed administrative punishment on some Tibetans for spreading “rumors” online. The Chinese government insisted that the official death toll is 126, presenting it as the “truth.” However, the Chinese government has not provided a disaggregated death toll to date.

In the five worst-affected townships, there are 13,336 people, according to the most recent township-level data from the 6th census conducted in 2010. In one video clip shared on Chinese social media, a Tibetan

man states that around 100 people are dead in his native Dramtso. The man, who appears to be resting at a tea shop, also answered to the videographer that he had come back from the funeral site, where 13-14 bodies were cremated in the morning.

#### **Potential future risks**

China does not waste crises, and this recent earthquake is unlikely to be a wasted opportunity. As China takes full control of the post-earthquake reconstruction, it gives the Chinese government an opportunity to justify further sinification of Tibet and the Tibetan people, and infrastructure development with potential dangers to regional stability, yet highly likely to be presented to the international community as post-quake reconstruction and modernization.

In a highly state-centric development approach, the quake-hit Tibetans are unlikely to have any meaningful participation in the reconstruction just as the Tibetans in Kyegudo (Yushu) experienced after the devastating earthquake in April 2010 that killed around 3000. Reconstruction then was unsatisfactory as Tibetans were disappointed with their town rebuilt in Beijing’s image. 14 years after the Kyegudo earthquake, a retired Tibetan government official and a member of the CCP in December 2024 alleged misappropriation of earthquake relief funds and causing environmental damage in a video statement.

China has been displacing Tibetans from their native hometowns over the years under the policy labels of “poverty alleviation” and “environment protection”. Multiple villages above the 4000 meters sea level have been relocated from their ancestral homes. Since the worst quake affected villages have a median elevation above 4000 meters, the villages under Dramtso, Chulho and Tsogo may face displacement further south towards the border in new Xiaokang border villages.

In December 2022, the Development and Reform Commission of the Tibet Autonomous Region announced the “General Aviation Development Plan of the Tibet Autonomous Region (2021-2035).” 14 new airports will be built by 2025 and 58 new airports altogether will be built by 2035, declared the plan. Dingri earthquake provides an opportunity for the Chinese government to justify and accelerate its aerial infrastructure plan in the controversial border areas. Accelerating China’s current action constructing and upgrading dozens of military and dual-use airports and heliports in western Tibet, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in early 2022.

The largest rivers in Asia begin in Tibet, and China’s rapid development of hydropower dams on these rivers leads to the displacement of Tibetans from their homes and land as reported in ICT’s report Chinese Hydropower: Damning Tibet’s Culture, Community and Environment. This construction also endangers the well-being and health of as many as 1.8 billion

individuals throughout China, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

China Central Television on January 15 reported that five dams in the epicenter zone showed “cracks and other issues” with reporter Liu Jing showing one 560 meters long with 50 cm wide crack at Tsogo reservoir. Describing the risk in the event of a dam collapse, the reporter says, “What’s the real danger of this situation? Let’s look at its surroundings. Our cameraman, following my finger, can see Tsogo Lake in front of me. Tsogo Lake forms a large water surface against the mountains. Below Tsogo Lake is this dam. What’s beyond the dam? Below the dam is a very important road connecting to Dingri. During this emergency rescue operation, it serves as a crucial main artery for transporting rescue personnel and supplies. Looking further down, below this road are some villages. If a major incident were to occur here, with water entering these cracks and threatening the dam structure, and if the dam collapses, the water would rush down, first flooding the road and then the villages.” State media Xinhua a day after stated that monitors have been installed on the Tsogo dam. The report also stated that Laang reservoir in Dramtso Township, Dingri County, “experienced dangers such as tilting of the right side retaining wall of the spillway and water seepage on both sides of the discharge tunnel”. The Tsogo and Laang reservoirs have a storage capacity of 580,000 and 450,000 cubic meters respectively according to Chinese diaspora media. In response to these findings, Chinese authorities emptied three of the affected reservoirs and relocated at least 1,500 people from villages downstream of the river to mitigate potential risks. This earthquake highlights the vulnerability of large-scale infrastructure projects to natural disasters. The risks of China’s plan to build the world’s largest dam in Tibet is manifold to this despite China portraying this new world’s largest dam as able to withstand earthquakes.

### **China-India Relations: The Thaw-Provoke-Repeat Cycle**

24 January 2025, [The Diplomat](#), Rahul Jaybhay

Since the Cold War, relations have followed a pattern: a thaw, followed by a concoction or recycling of the boundary dispute.

China-India relations are back to sizzling again after a recent thaw. China recently created two new counties in Hotan Prefecture – an area in Aksai Chin that India claims as part of its Union Territory of Ladakh. The administrative move is expected to consolidate China’s de facto control of the region. The Indian government responded by vehemently protesting, with the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson,

Randhir Jaiswal, decrying “China’s illegal and forcible occupation” of the Indian territory.



*This photo, provided by the Indian Army, purports to show troops with China’s People’s Liberation Army disengaging from an unspecified location along the LAC in Feb. 2021.*

The recent spat was at odds with the China-India thaw taking place at the border after four years of a standoff. Chinese and Indian troops had faced off along the disputed border since the June 2020 Galwan Valley clash that claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers. In a December 18 meeting between India’s National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, the two sides showed signs of rapprochement, discussing military disengagement and the willingness to adopt a “new framework for peace and tranquility” to manage boundary disputes – and the larger bilateral relationship.

The Chinese cartographic updates are bewildering in this context. Yet it fits within a cycle that Indian policymakers have faced since the Cold War: a Sino-Indian thaw, followed by a concoction or recycling of the boundary dispute that undermines troubleshooting of the already-tense bilateral ties. China’s latest move in declaring new counties in disputed territory exactly rhymes with its Cold War strategy, which continues to circumscribe progress in relations.

This thaw-and-provoke cycle appears to be a concerted strategy on the part of China, which aims to establish regional hegemony in Asia. But India’s strategy to constantly engage in order to influence Beijing’s tack has also stuttered and misfired.

### **Revisionist Intentions: China’s Strategy in the China-India Dispute**

In April 1954, India and China signed the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse on Tibet, famously elaborating on the “five principles of peaceful coexistence” to redefine existing ties. India renounced its privileges in Tibet, and China assumed sovereign control over the region.

This bilateral move came against important geopolitical context. March 1954 saw the fall of Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam to Viet Minh forces, supported by China's new Communist Party government. In response, the United States intended to form the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization based on the presumption that outcomes of the Geneva negotiations would not stall China's creeping expansionism in Southeast Asia.

To forestall U.S. efforts, Zhou Enlai, then China's premier as well as minister of foreign affairs, leveraged Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's distrust for military coalitions to adopt the "five principles of peaceful coexistence" as a regional template for interstate relations in Southeast Asia. Zhou pushed for signing "non-aggression" pacts with India, Burma, and Indonesia to allay regional concerns about China's expansionist ambitions.

Interrogating China's intentions, Nehru, in his talks with Mao Zedong, China's paramount leader, and Zhou in November 1954, was concerned about the presence of ethnic Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, especially Burma and Indonesia, that might do the Chinese Communist Party's bidding, therefore destabilizing regional governments.

Beijing was partly able to assuage the fears of subversion by communists. U Nu, Burma's prime minister, was also reassured by Beijing that it preferred converting Southeast Asia into an "area of peace." Both governments pledged to resolve outstanding boundary disputes and the status of overseas Chinese citizens through "diplomatic channels." Similarly, Zhou was able to sate Indonesian concern at the Bandung Conference in April 1955 by signing a "dual nationality" agreement that resolved the political status of the ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia, lowering the chances of political subversion and destabilization in Jakarta.

China instrumentalized the "five principles" to signal its benign political image and shatter the perception of Chinese expansionism. The shift was a tactical move to counter Washington's containment strategy and to hide its communist revolutionary traits. Yet the narrative of benign intentions was revealed as a myth when China violently crushed the Tibetan uprising in 1959 and then initiated a brutal, offensive war against India in 1962.

It was India's first experience with the new Chinese state's favored strategy: defuse conflict when necessary, only to resurrect it at a more convenient time.

#### **China-India Ties Under Modi**

Similar hiccups in relations continue to this day. In 2014, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office, he invited China's President Xi Jinping to visit India. The engagement was driven by Modi's multi-alignment foreign policy to engage all major powers.

However, Xi's visit was marred by considerable disturbances caused by the People's Liberation Army in the Demchok and Chumar region in September 2014.

Still, Xi's visit to India was reciprocated by Modi's trip to China in 2015, resulting in mutual proclamations that emphasized building "strategic trust," "high-level exchanges" between bureaucracies, "enhanced military ties," and reiterating "agreements and protocols" to maintain stability in the borders.

Again, such positive engagements derailed as the two clashed in Doklam, the disputed trijunction where India, Bhutan, and China meet. China's Doklam intrusion in 2017 – it was constructing an extension of a road on territory claimed by Bhutan – was unacceptable to India, and New Delhi precluded China's incursions by entering Doklam. Such a unilateral push from China also impinged on India's "neighborhood policy."

Relations plunged after the Doklam stand-off, but diplomacy was rechristened in an attempt not to let boundary disputes hamper the progress in bilateral ties. Xi welcomed Modi to Wuhan in 2018, culminating in a ten-hour meeting that reassessed relations, deepened communication, and reinstated confidence-building measures to avert any possibility of clash. The two also consulted in BRICS annual meetings, followed by the RIC (Russia-India-China) engagement in April 2019 in China. The cycle had come back to a period of thawing.

Another milestone was reached when Modi and Xi held an informal meeting at Mamallapuram, an ancient city in South India. The "Chennai Connect" initiative of October 2019 was born to rectify India's trade deficit with China, urging the Chinese to invest in India. However, relations drastically fell off just months later, as China's military began a concerted push to alter the Line of Actual Control along the disputed border in the spring of 2020.

In May 2020, the Indian External Affairs Ministry criticized China's unilateral assertiveness in altering the status quo by impinging on Indian-held territory. This resulted in sporadic standoffs, culminating in a deadly clash in Galwan on June 15, 2020.

#### **India's Skepticism and Reappraisal In Strategy**

Since the 1950s, then, China has shown a preference for "tactical expediency," where it will forge agreements and protocols, proceed to violate these pacts, and then seek to cover for its incursions and defiance with reassurances via high-level engagements. Looking closely, China's offers during periods of thaw are mostly hollow and imprecise. In the latest instance, Beijing's relative warmth toward India may have been emboldened by Donald Trump's comeback in the United States and the confrontational prognosis that bounds his foreign policy approach – a

feature he demonstrated in his previous presidency. Yet the creation of new counties in Hotan Prefecture shows that China has little interest in changing its behavior to address India's concerns.

In this scenario, India must not expect too much from the latest agreements or engagements as they are unlikely to restrain China. New Delhi cannot compensate for its material weakness by seeking agreements that Beijing periodically violates or flouts. There is no alternative but to focus on strengthening defenses, modernizing the military, and implementing infrastructural upgrades to shift the balance of power in India's favor in the Himalayan region. India's multi-alignment strategy needs recalibration – New Delhi's emphasis on engagement cannot continue unless actionable outcomes follow Beijing's reassurances.

India's engagement strategy also invokes a sense of New Delhi's unreliability – reinforced by its past non-aligned stance – and erodes the government's credibility. India's strategic template for managing China is incongruent with the West's containment of Beijing. India's ties with the West, particularly the United States, are more promising for bolstering India's strength than engaging China.

### **China's new super-dam carries both geopolitical and environmental risks**

23 January 2025, [The Hill](#), Brahma Chellaney

The Chinese Communist Party has long thrived on secrecy, and 2024 was no different. As the year was ending, it became clear that Chinese President Xi Jinping's regime is pressing ahead with a controversial plan that will likely wreak environmental havoc by damming the world's highest-altitude river as it passes through Earth's largest canyon.

The dam, the biggest ever conceived, also holds geopolitical risks given its location next to the disputed and heavily militarized China-India border. Indeed, the mammoth dam is being built just before the Himalayan river Yarlung Tsangpo (known downstream as the Brahmaputra) enters India.

Sketchy reports in Chinese state media last month about China's "approval" of the super-dam's construction suggest that work is already well underway, given that the project received the go-ahead from the country's rubber-stamp parliament in March 2021. In fact, Xi's regime included this dam project in its 2021 five-year economic development plan.

The unparalleled dam, which will cost a staggering \$127 billion, highlights the government's continuing fixation on building the world's tallest, largest, deepest, longest and highest projects. The new dam will dwarf the biggest dam in the world today, China's own Three Gorges Dam, whose

reservoir is longer than the largest of North America's Great Lakes.

When completed, the super-dam in southeastern Tibet will generate up to 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity yearly — more than triple the 88.2 billion installed capacity of the Three Gorges Dam. Located in central China, the Three Gorges Dam officially uprooted 1.4 million residents to make way for its mammoth reservoir, which submerged two cities, 114 towns and 1,680 villages.

In keeping with its record of secrecy, China has disclosed few details of the super-dam or the number of local Tibetans likely to be displaced, other than to claim that the project would produce "clean" energy. China's foreign ministry, without saying anything about the dam's current status, flatly asserted on Dec. 27, "The project will not negatively affect the lower reaches" of the river basin.

In truth, the dam will likely have far-reaching downstream impacts in India and Bangladesh, including altering the cross-border flow and course of the river, which empties into the Bay of Bengal. It will also trap the river's nutrient-rich silt that helps to naturally fertilize farmlands during the annual monsoonal flooding, as well as sustains marine life.

The dam, in fact, is being built in one of the world's most species-rich mountainous regions that is known as a biodiversity hotspot. Tibet's fragile ecosystems are already threatened by climate change and China's reckless exploitation of the plateau's vast mineral and water resources. And the super-dam threatens to cause lasting damage to these ecosystems, which play a central role in triggering Asia's annual monsoons.

To make matters worse, the behemoth dam is in a seismically active area, which raises the specter of a geological disaster. Tibet's southeastern region is earthquake-prone because it sits on the geological fault line where the Indian Plate and the Eurasian Plate collide. Building the huge dam close to this fault line makes the project potentially a ticking water bomb for downstream communities.

Geopolitically, the megaproject is likely to sharpen the Sino-Indian territorial and border disputes, which date back to China's 1951 annexation of the then-autonomous Tibet. By occupying the water-rich Tibetan Plateau, where most of Asia's great river systems originate, China gained significant upstream leverage over multiple neighboring countries to which rivers flow.

Now, the new dam project will give China control over cross-border river flows, thus allowing it to leverage its territorial claim to India's sprawling, Tibet-bordering Arunachal Pradesh state, which is almost three times the area of Taiwan.

Since 2006, Beijing has been calling Arunachal Pradesh "South Tibet" to assert that it should be part of China.

The purported basis of China's claim to that Indian state, however, has only served to highlight that Tibet remains the core issue in China-India relations.

While maintaining a veil of secrecy over its super-dam project since it was conceived, Beijing has asserted a "legitimate right" to dam the river in a border area. This is in keeping with its longstanding claim that it has "indisputable sovereignty" over waters on its side of the international boundary, including the right to divert as much shared water as it wishes for its legitimate needs.

China is now the world's most dammed country, with more large dams in operation than the rest of the world combined. China's dam building has increasingly moved from dam-saturated internal rivers (a number of which are drying) to international rivers.

Over the years, Beijing has kept every major project on an international river under wraps until construction is far enough along that the dam can no longer be hidden from commercially available satellite imagery and the project becomes a fait accompli. In this fashion, China has built 11 giant dams on the Mekong River (and is constructing or planning at least eight more), thereby gaining geopolitical leverage over its Southeast Asian neighbors, but also wreaking serious environmental harms, including recurrent droughts, in the downriver basin.

Against this backdrop, there is growing concern among downstream countries that China is seeking to weaponize the water resources of the Tibetan Plateau, most of whose river systems are transnational in nature. Not content with the 87,000 dams it has, China remains engaged in dam-building frenzy.

Its colossal dam project will not only compel India to prepare for contingencies but also ensure that, despite recent conciliatory moves, mistrust and strategic rivalry continue to define the Sino-Indian relationship. More fundamentally, the project will impose incalculable environmental costs extending from the Himalayas to the delta in Bangladesh.

### Why Tibet Has Become A Hotspot For Natural Calamities

23 January 2025, [News 18](#), Arun Anand

Geologically, the Tibetan Plateau ranks among the most seismically active areas worldwide, serving as a convergence zone for the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates

On 7 January 2025, Tibet, often referred to as the "roof of the world", experienced a catastrophic earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale, which struck Tingri County in the Shigatse prefecture, located approximately 80 km north of Mount Everest. This seismic event has led to a tragic loss of life, with over

100 confirmed fatalities and more than 300 individuals injured, while the tremors were felt widely across South Asia, resulting in injuries among residents in both Nepal and northern India. In terms of infrastructure, the earthquake destroyed over 1,000 homes in Tingri County, displacing thousands during the harsh winter months when temperatures can plummet to minus 15 degrees Celsius. The destruction has left many without shelter in an already inhospitable environment, and rescue operations are further complicated by severe weather conditions typical of the upper Himalayas, exacerbating the suffering of those affected by this disaster.

Geologically, the **Tibetan Plateau** ranks among the most seismically active areas worldwide, serving as a convergence zone for the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. The mountains in this region are relatively young and unstable, resulting in frequent and devastating earthquakes that impact areas from Tibet to other parts of the Himalayas. The earthquake of 2025 serves as a stark reminder of the region's susceptibility to seismic events. Beyond earthquakes, various natural disasters are prevalent in this area; for instance, in January 2023, an **avalanche in Nyingchi** resulted in 28 fatalities. Similarly, in August 2016, **severe flooding occurred** in Tashigan township within Lhatse County due to a breach in river embankments.

Additionally, in **July 2024, heavy rainfall** led to significant erosion along a highway, stranding over 100 individuals in a mountainous town.

### Chinese Infrastructure Projects And Seismic Activity In Tibet

Since its annexation of Tibet, China has endeavoured to assimilate the Tibetan populace into its framework, with large-scale road construction being a primary objective to connect Tibet with mainland China. However, following Xi Jinping's ascension as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, the focus has shifted towards other infrastructure initiatives, particularly the development of dams for hydroelectric power generation.

The Chinese government justifies this shift by asserting the necessity to reduce coal dependency and meet energy demands through alternative sources. While hydroelectric power is considered a cleaner energy option, it poses significant risks; the creation of reservoirs through dam construction alters the natural flow of rivers. A report by **Radio Free Asia** notes that in 2013, academic Tashi Tsering documented 114 dams either constructed or proposed on three major Tibetan rivers, and a decade later, this number has increased to at least 193.

According to a report by the International Campaign for Tibet, a Washington-based organisation, the construction of all proposed dams in Tibet could result in the **relocation of between 750,000 and 1.5**



**million** Tibetans. In February of last year, numerous Tibetan monasteries protested against Chinese authorities upon discovering plans for an 1100-megawatt hydroelectric plant in Sichuan, which would lead to the submersion of six monasteries. This situation has raised significant concerns regarding the preservation of cultural heritage and the rights of local communities amid ongoing infrastructural developments in the region.

The recent earthquake has intensified concerns regarding the safety and environmental ramifications of constructing large infrastructure in seismically active regions. Experts contend that **substantial dams erected in such areas may exacerbate geological instability**, potentially leading to disasters such as earthquakes and landslides. This situation raises critical questions about the long-term sustainability of these projects and the risks they pose to downstream communities, particularly given their proximity to major fault lines.

The construction of large dams in Tibet carries significant environmental and geopolitical consequences. Environmentally, these initiatives threaten the delicate ecosystems of the Tibetan Plateau, which plays a crucial role in Asia's hydrology and climate systems. Disruptions to river flow can have catastrophic effects on agriculture, fisheries, and biodiversity, impacting millions downstream in countries including India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan.

The January 2025 earthquake serves as a tragic reminder of Tibet's seismic vulnerability and highlights numerous overlooked issues. The top-down approach to development is causing significant distress for the Tibetan population, whose homes are increasingly threatened by earthquakes, avalanches, and floods. The pressures from these activities may have spill-over effects to the south of Tibet, further complicating the situation. It is essential for the international community and concerned nations to acknowledge the escalating vulnerabilities in Tibet due to these infrastructural developments. Through timely and collective action, millions of lives could be safeguarded in both Tibet and South Asia.

### What's in a Name? Tibet, Xizang, and the Politics of Erasure

22 January 2025, [Inkstick](#), Victoria Jones

Museums are guardians of historical narratives and play inherently political roles in shaping perceptions across time and space.

While visiting the Silk Roads exhibit at the British Museum, a seemingly minor detail caught my eye. On one of the plaques about Tibet, the word "Xizang" was also used. Most visitors would likely not even have

noticed, but I recognized the inclusion of that word as a deeply political and controversial choice.

I had first learned of the concerted Chinese campaign to start replacing "Tibet" with the word "Xizang" — the pinyin romanization of the Mandarin word for Tibet — last year, during research for a story on Dr. Gyal Lo, a scholar and expert on the colonial-style Tibetan boarding schools. During our interview, I asked him about a video I had seen circulating on social media that said there was now a governmental push to refer to Tibet as "Xizang." "Officially, they announced this publicly on August 14, 2023 when they hosted the International Seminar on Tibetan Studies in Beijing," he explained. The stated goal of that event was to reshape perceptions of Tibet globally.

I asked Gyal Lo why he believes these changes are happening now. "It's a good question," he responded. "You have to understand the broader context." He said that previously, China lacked the confidence it now has as the world's second-largest economy. "Now they want to call it Xizang to show even more strongly that Tibet belongs to China. The push to use Xizang is a huge signal from China's side to show that Tibet is fully under their control."

Crucially, Gyal Lo noted that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is not only advocating for the replacement of the word Tibet amongst Chinese, but also the world at large. "Not only do they want to use it in China, but they also want the international community to follow suit and start using the term Xizang." It appears that now this strategy is beginning to take effect.

What's In a Name?

Gyal Lo was clearly alarmed about this development, remarking, "The word Tibet has a long history of over 200 years — way before the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949. They are playing a game of words, and it won't work." However, he also acknowledged concerns. "At the same time, I'm a bit worried about this, because if other countries have a good relationship with China, then their media will follow what China says. They're going to say 'Xizang' instead of 'Tibet.' I hope they won't do that."

"There is no more Tibet in the official documents of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

*United Front Work Department*

Gyal Lo made a point to clarify that when he and other Tibetan advocates talk about Tibet, they are referring to the entire Tibetan region, including the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), the ten Tibetan autonomous prefectures, and the two Tibetan autonomous counties. This encompasses parts of provinces like Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan. "What China tries to do is to use the term 'Tibet' to only refer to the TAR. So now China is using Xizang to only refer to TAR."

One of the individuals that uses the wider definition of Tibet is the Dalai Lama. China's fear of the charismatic

spiritual leader's political power has also contributed to the CCP's desire to redefine Tibet. The United Front Work Department (UFWD) — a CCP organization responsible for building influence and managing relations with individuals and groups domestically and internationally to advance party goals — stated on its official WeChat account that the word "Tibet" was misleading, as it granted the community, some of whom advocate for independence and their own state, wider geographic scope. As far back as 2014, Chinese officials expressed worry that the usage of that term could benefit the exiled leader.

Since 2019, Chinese state media outlets have been using Xizang rather than Tibet, and in 2023, the UFWD's official news account declared that Tibet is no longer used in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official papers. Pointing to the greater intentions behind the renomination, the UWF account declared: "There is no more Tibet in the official documents of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

As director of the Tibet Policy Institute Dawa Tsering remarked, "The most important thing is not what China does. It's about whether the international community will buy it."

#### Museums as Sites of Contention

The British Museum is not the only Western cultural institution to have used the term. Two museums in France faced controversy for replacing the word "Tibet" with "Xizang," prompting local protests in Paris, a message in response from the president of the Tibetan government-in-exile to the French government, and ultimately resulting in a change in practice and an apology by one of the museums.

That institute was the Musée du Quai Branly, whose spokesperson said that the museum had been using the word "Xizang" before the China's formalization of it last year, and that "It has never been used on its own and a mention of Tibet has always been present....[But] Tibet will no longer be in brackets, and the Xizang name will soon be removed."

At the British Museum, both words were used alongside each other. Yet, Tibetan activists in London, like Tsering Passang, argue that the move is not objective. "The choice of terminology here is far from neutral; it is a political stance that dismisses the unique identity of Tibet and subtly reinforces China's contested claim to Tibet as an inherent part of its territory." Pointing to the efforts of initiatives like the Xizang International Communication Centre, he is concerned about how far Europe's cultural institutions "are willing to bend to political pressure."

Tsering Passang's organization, the Global Alliance for Tibet and Persecuted Minorities, received a letter from the British Museum, which stated that it did not intend to substitute "Xizang" for "Tibet" in the labels. The activists did not find this to be satisfactory in addressing the concerns they had raised. For the

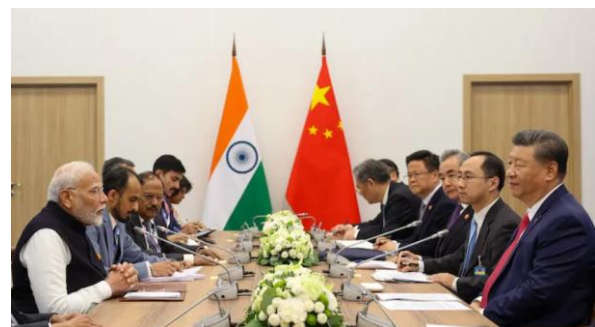
activists, it is the very inclusion of the word itself that is provocative. The British Museum did not respond when I approached them for comment on this matter. This case brings up broader questions about the ethical practices of museums, and underscores their importance as guardians of historical narratives, highlighting their inherently political roles in shaping perceptions across time and space. Nations wield these institutions as tools to advance their given agendas and eliminate the parts of history they want to be dismissed as a way to control and manipulate collective consciousness. This dynamic becomes even more critical when it comes to hotly contested regions — not only Tibet, but many others, like Ukraine and Palestine — where museums become potent weapons in the battle for memory.

As Phuntsok Norbu, chairman of the Tibetan Community in Britain, explains, the Silk Roads example concerns "the museum's role in shaping global understanding of a culture that is actively being suppressed."

The word "Xizang" is largely unrecognized by international audiences, which is precisely to China's benefit. Tibet carries with it a level of familiarity in popular culture and international discourse, drawing associations to the Dalai Lama and the struggle for autonomy and human rights — exactly what Beijing wants to avoid. By pushing Xizang into global discourse, the CCP aims to redefine Tibet's identity as distinctly Chinese, erasing its unique history — and it will be up to foreign cultural institutions whether or not they are willing to accept this revisionism.

#### India's Limited Options Against China: Strategic And Diplomatic Dilemmas – OpEd

23 January 2025, [Eurasia Review](#), K.S. Venkatachalam



*India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a bilateral meeting with the President of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS Summit at Kazan, in Russia on October 23, 2024. Photo Credit: India PM Office*

Three recent developments involving China are raising alarms in South Asia, with serious implications for the geopolitical landscape, particularly for India. These developments are:

1. China's plan to build a \$137 billion Yarlung Tsangpo dam in Tibet, which could generate 40,000 megawatts of electricity annually. This dam, located in Medog County, could potentially be used as a weapon to control and divert the flow of water to India, leading to flooding risks.
2. China's refusal to withdraw troops from areas they intruded upon in 2020, coupled with military drills in Eastern Ladakh to prepare for possible future conflicts with India.
3. China restricting the export of critical equipment to India, especially for manufacturing solar panels, electric vehicles, and electronics.

These actions indicate that China is unlikely to mend ties with India anytime soon. There's a growing sentiment that China is determined to prevent India from emerging as a dominant power in Asia.

First, The Yarlung Tsangpo dam project, which will be the world's largest hydroelectric project, has raised serious concerns. While China claims that the dam is a "run-of-the-river" project meant solely for hydroelectric power, India worries that China could use the dam to control the water flow of the Yarlung Zangbo river, which flows from Tibet to India's Arunachal Pradesh and then to Bangladesh. If China were to divert or block the flow of water, millions of people downstream in India and Bangladesh could be affected.

Experts, such as Y. Nithyanandam from the Takshashila Institution, argue that the area chosen for the dam is prone to landslides and is situated on a geological fault line. This poses significant risks to both Tibet and the downstream regions of India and Bangladesh. The dam's construction could cause environmental damage and displace local Tibetans. Further, it could lead to ecological disaster as the Tibet Plateau to regions seismic activities.

India has expressed its concerns, fearing that China could leverage the dam to choke India's economy by manipulating the flow of water, potentially affecting vital agricultural regions. A report from the Lowy Institute suggests that controlling the river could significantly impact India and Bangladesh's water security.

Second, China has refused to pull back its troops from areas where they intruded into India in 2020, contrary to agreements made between the two countries. Chinese military drills in Eastern Ladakh signal preparations for a potential escalation, even though both nations had agreed to disengage their forces in late 2024 following months of tension.

The military situation remains fragile, and while India has been focused on maintaining peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), China's actions suggest that they are preparing for potential conflict.

Thirdly, China has also restricted the export of critical equipment to India, particularly for the manufacturing of solar panels, electric vehicles, and electronics. Taiwanese company Foxconn, which has operations in India, has been significantly affected by China's move, hindering its efforts to ramp up production.

China's refusal to supply essential components is seen as an attempt to slow down India's growth as a manufacturing hub, especially as companies are increasingly moving their operations to countries like India and Vietnam to escape China's dominance in global trade. China, by adopting this strategy, is forcing companies not to move their facilities from China.

India's position in the face of China's rising power is constrained by several factors—geopolitical, economic, military, and diplomatic.

India faces significant challenges in countering China militarily. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is one of the largest and most advanced military forces in the world, with superior technology, resources, and a strategic focus on the Asia-Pacific region. In contrast, India's military, despite being one of the largest standing armies, struggles to match China's advancements. The terrain of the disputed border regions, particularly the Himalayas, further complicates military operations.

In recent clashes, like the 2020 Galwan Valley skirmish, India has demonstrated a willingness to confront China militarily, but the risks of escalation into a larger conflict, including the use of nuclear weapons, deter both sides from engaging in full-scale war. Therefore, India's military options remain limited to smaller-scale confrontations rather than a broader, all-out conflict. Economically, India is deeply intertwined with China. China is India's largest trading partner, and many Indian industries rely on Chinese imports, particularly in electronics, machinery, and pharmaceuticals. While India has taken steps to reduce its dependence on China, such as promoting self-reliance through the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" campaign, complete decoupling is difficult and would likely have severe economic consequences for India, from inflation to supply chain disruptions.

China's dominance in global supply chains and its economic influence across various regions, including Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, complicates India's ability to isolate China economically without facing significant repercussions. Diplomatically, India faces challenges in dealing with China. While India engages China in forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, the strategic mistrust between the two nations makes cooperation difficult. China's veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has also hindered India's efforts to isolate Pakistan and designate certain terrorist organizations as global threats.

India has sought to counterbalance China's influence by strengthening alliances with the United States, Japan, and Australia through the Quad—an alliance aimed at promoting stability in the Indo-Pacific. However, the focus of the Quad is more on diplomacy and regional cooperation rather than direct confrontation. Moreover, China's growing global influence dilutes India's ability to rally international support against Chinese actions.

**The way forward**

India's options against China are limited by a complex web of military, economic, and diplomatic factors. While India possesses considerable resources and influence, its ability to confront China directly is constrained by the risks of escalation, the complexities of global trade, and China's deep geopolitical influence.

To meet the Chinese challenge, India must invest in Research and Development, particularly in defense technology, like developing fighter jets and manufacture of jet engines to reduce its overdependence on GE for jet engines to match China's advancements. However, the prospect of military conflict remains a last resort, given the devastating consequences of escalation. In the long term, India will need to pursue a balanced strategy that involves military preparedness, economic diversification, and strategic diplomacy to safeguard its national interests while managing its complex relationship with China.

**The five signs China is preparing to invade Taiwan**

22 January 2025, [The Telegraph](#), Michael Day

As Beijing's warships surround the island, many fear that Xi Jinping will enact his 'political destiny' sooner rather than later



With a new and unpredictable US president in the Oval Office and increased signs of China's belligerence in the Taiwan Strait, fears are growing that Beijing is accelerating plans to invade Taiwan, the island democracy that the Communist superpower regards as a renegade province.

Alarm bells rang on Wednesday with news that undersea cables connecting Taiwan with the Matsu

Islands had been damaged. Taiwanese authorities said the incident may have resulted from natural decay. But already this month, Taiwanese authorities said a Chinese-owned vessel had damaged an undersea internet cable to the north-east of the island, even as Beijing's jets and warships continue to circle the island of 23 million people.

US intelligence suggests Xi Jinping has instructed his military to be prepared to make a move by 2027. And Xi, the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, views retaking Taiwan as part of his political destiny. As such, many observers think it is a question of "when" not "if" he makes his move.

Here are the five signs that suggest China might be preparing to make a move on the island:

**Grey-zone warfare**

China's military launched a record number of warplane incursions – over 3,000 – into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) in 2024 as part of its "grey-zone" warfare, designed to exhaust a foe without resorting to open combat. In addition to intimidating Taiwan, such activities allow the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to hone its capabilities ahead of a full-scale invasion. Analysts say China's relentless harassment has already taken a psychological toll and depleted Taiwan's resources.

Underlining Beijing's willingness to compete militarily with Washington, China's navy announced on Wednesday it has ordered a new-generation frigate to "play a vital role in enhancing the overall combat effectiveness" of its forces.

**Coercive tactics**

As well as near-daily air incursions, China has upped the ante with other "coercive" tactics. It has already been swamping the waters around the island with balloons, drones and civilian boats. Most experts believe that ahead of an all-out assault, China would first try sieges, blockades and cyber-attacks to bend the Taiwanese to its will before risking a Third World War with a full-scale attack. In December, China unveiled a new tactic: large-scale drills with no fanfare in a bid to normalise a heightened military presence – and to suggest to Washington that it could attack Taiwan whenever it wanted to.

**Delay in weapons integration**

Some in Taiwan fear the attack might come sooner, with China spurred on by Taipei's delays in integrating US weapons systems. The timeline for incorporating the systems has remained largely hidden in part because the Pentagon releases little information on such activities. And unsurprisingly, Taiwan is reluctant to advertise such hold-ups to China. But in order to deter Beijing, many in Washington and Taipei have focused on defences such as the Harpoon anti-ship over-the-horizon missile system, given the likely central role of the Chinese navy in an invasion. 400 land-launched Harpoon systems have been ordered,

with delivery expected in 2028. But even in three years' time it is uncertain how soon Taiwan's military will be able to employ the weapon, given uncertainties over the construction of bases for new anti-ship missile units and shortfalls in military manpower.

#### Propaganda

A constant barrage of propaganda and disinformation is another weapon that China is using against Taiwan. Taipei's National Security Bureau said the number of pieces of false or biased information distributed by China on sites such as X and Facebook increased 60 per cent last year, to 2.16 million from 1.33 million in 2023. China has created bogus accounts to distribute its propaganda on YouTube, used AI to create fake videos and flooded comment sections with pro-China statements.

#### Diplomacy

Some experts think China's supreme leader Xi Jinping believes now is the time to up the pressure. "I think China does see an opportunity with Trump," says Prof Rex Li, a professor of international relations at King's College London. "Biden indicated that he wanted to defend democracy and defend Taiwan. Trump has been more ambiguous. He is less ideological and more transactional. He probably doesn't care. Xi is upping the pressure with all the shows of military strength. He wants Trump to think that Taiwan is not worth defending because the cost would be too high."

Initial signs suggest Trump is open to entreaties from Xi. The Chinese president was the first foreign leader publicly known to have been invited to Trump's inauguration – though vice-president Han Zheng went in his place – and already Trump has said he has "had the invite" for a visit to Beijing this year.

Xi, who has made the annexation of Taiwan central to his dream of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation", will be using all his diplomatic and economic levers on Donald Trump, the most transactional of US presidents.

"I think there is lots of behind-the-scenes bargaining going on between the Trump administration and Beijing," says Prof Li. "Xi wants to show that he is willing to co-operate in other areas – the Middle East, Ukraine – provided the US does not provide military support for Taiwan."

But other experts think the risks to China, the US and the rest of the world from a full blockade or Chinese invasion are so huge, that the status quo is likely to be maintained for now. Steve Tsang, historian and director of the SOAS China Institute, says: "I do not think Xi is going to invade Taiwan in the next four years, just because Trump is in power." Invading Taiwan in the hope that Trump would not step in to help Taiwan despite overwhelming Congressional support for the island would, he says, be "reckless, particularly since the PLA is obviously not ready to mount such an operation".

And there remains much ambiguity in the Trump administration's stance on Taiwan. That it still might not tolerate any outright aggression against the island was underlined when diplomats from the China-focused "Quad" grouping of the US, Australia, India and Japan, appeared to warn China yesterday against moving on Taiwan. "We also strongly oppose any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion," a joint statement by the Quads said, after a meeting in Washington. China has denounced the Quad as a Cold War grouping.

Prof Li adds that economic concerns, including America's dependence on Taiwan's hi-tech computer chip, will also figure in the Trump administration's calculations. The island produces over 60 per cent of the world's semiconductors.

#### **Dangers of China's mega-dam plans on the Yarlung Tsangpo**

22 January 2025, [The Pioneer](#), BK Singh

#### **With the Tibetan region's seismic vulnerability due to tectonic plate activity, such mega-dam projects could exacerbate risks to life, biodiversity and regional stability**

Earth quake of 7.1 magnitude on the Richter scale on January 7 in Tibet killed 126 people and injured 188 making rescue and relief difficult as the temperature dropped to -60 Celsius. Tremors were also felt in Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian states of Bihar and West Bengal. The epicentre of the quake was Tibet's Tingri County, 75 km north of Mount Everest, the World's highest mountain. The quake brings focus on China's latest plan to build the World's biggest dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet, very close to the Indian territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Tibetan region and its fringe areas in China are seismically quite active.

This is the area where the Indian and Eurasia plates clash and the force generated can be strong enough to cause uplifts and increase the height of the Himalayan peaks. In Sichuan province alone earth earthquake of 7.9 magnitude was struck in May 2008 killing 90,000 people, another of 7.1 magnitude in April 2013 killing 196 people, and the third one of 6.8 magnitude in September 2022 killing 93 people has been recorded. Qinghai province has also seen two major earthquakes of 7.1 magnitude in April 2010 and 6.2 magnitude in December 2023 killing 2698 and 126 people respectively.

Two earthquakes have also struck Gansu province in July 2013 and December 2023. A report released after the 7th January earthquake in Tingri, Tibet, NASA has brought out that the speed of earth rotation has slowed down after the water was impounded in three gorges dam (607 meters in height and 2 km long) on

the River Yangtze in China. The report further says that the earth takes .06 microseconds more to complete a rotation about its axis, post-construction of the dams. Earth rotation is linked to interplanetary activities, and can influence activities from Sun as well as the atmosphere.

The dams make the region seismic prone increasing the vulnerability of the population. More such dams in the region would increase the vulnerability further. Seismic activities have the potential to damage large dams too. If any such dam bursts in an earth quake, a large quantity of water would outflow through human areas washing away lives and properties.

This can be catastrophic in the region. The world's mightiest river Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, which becomes Brahmaputra as it flows in Arunachal Pradesh has several gigawatts of energy stored as it runs down the steep mountains. China has projected 60 gigawatts of power by damming this river in Tibet at the cost of \$137 billion.

The power output of this project is two and half times the output of the Four Gorges Dam, along the river's upper and middle reaches. These are Dagu dam (640 megawatts), Zangmu Dam (510 megawatts), Jiacha Dam (320 megawatts) and Jiexu Dam (300 megawatts). The Zangmu dam project is the only one among these that has been operational so far. The other three projects are still in the construction stage and are marred by logistical and technical challenges posed by steep mountains and deep gorges. China being an upper riparian state should not work on such projects in secrecy and put lower riparian states like India and Bangladesh to a disadvantage.

It is irresponsible and aggressive posturing of China that it plans to change the flow of water in the Brahmaputra River during lean as well as peak seasons. Data suggest that the total annual outflow of Yarlung Tsangpo in China is significantly lower than the Brahmaputra in India. Brahmaputra, therefore enjoys a much bigger catchment in steep mountains than Yarlung. This is when only the Zangmu dam project is operational. The challenges encountered by China in completing other projects in the middle reaches are not unsurmountable.

With the level of technological advancements, the country possesses, the remaining dam projects will also be a reality and eventually, very little water will be allowed to flow in the Brahmaputra in the lean period. This is likely to hurt biodiversity conservation and agricultural production in India and Bangladesh.

For more than a decade China has been dumping the maximum amount of greenhouse gases nearly 14 gigatons annually into the atmosphere. The US is the distant second with 8 gigatons annually.

With the warming Sea surface huge amount of moisture is dumped in the atmosphere having the potential to bring heavy downpours for one or two

days. In such circumstances, 400 mm of rain in 48 hours is not uncommon these days. It would result in unprecedented flooding and the authorities would be forced to release water from the dams, to save the lives and livelihood of the population.

The Brahmaputra in India during the rainy season always swell. It has more disadvantages than advantages. While the floodplains of Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam become fertile when the water recedes and leaves silt behind, the flooding brings misery to people and biodiversity. Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO hotspot, is world world-famous site for biodiversity conservation. It is one of the best conservation sites for endangered single-horn rhinoceros. Though Kaziranga is a tiger reserve, but state of Assam gives first preference to rhinoceros conservation. Poachers kill this huge animal for a single horn. Forest personnel sacrifice their life to protect it. During the flood, many species of even big mammals get washed away with the flow of water.

The Forest department of the Assam government has made several arrangements including the construction of high-rise embankments using earth, to ensure that wild animals take shelter on these embankments during peak flooding.

The release of any additional quantity of water from the Chinese dams will cross the threshold and wash away wild animals in even bigger numbers. Though there is no formal water treaty between the two countries, the Chinese plan for the dam without consulting riparian states and UNESCO is morally inappropriate. Since China won't listen to anyone on earth, India must take certain actions in its interest.

We should enhance our monitoring system and record the volume of flow of water in different seasons in rivers flowing from China. Satellite imagery should also be used in mapping and forecasting flood risk. More storage facilities should also be created so that the flood water can be diverted into them, whenever the river crosses the high flood level mark.

While selecting sites for flood storage structures, local and ecological factors must be taken into consideration. Further seismic activities must also receive proper consideration. State governments and the centre must boost navigation activities in the Brahmaputra basin. The central government has already prioritized investments in inland waterways. Brahmaputra Waterway 2 has direct access to Chittagong Port in Bangladesh and Haldia in West Bengal.

It can be a very good economic corridor for trade with south-east Asian countries. In the absence of a water treaty, we should flag the issues relating to climate change, wetland conservation, and biodiversity conservation on all forums where both India and China are signatories.

### Delusion of de-escalation on the China-India border

22 January 2025, [Asia Times](#), Muhammad Burhan  
October pact touted as landmark reset after years of Himalayan border tensions but both sides continue to prepare for more conflict

In late October 2024, India and China began implementing what was touted as a landmark [pact](#) to de-escalate tensions along their disputed Himalayan border, a region known as the Line of Actual Control, or LAC.

The agreement, forged ahead of a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking the leaders' first formal talks in five years, included provisions for troop pullbacks, dismantlement of temporary infrastructure and a return to 2020 patrolling patterns in contested areas such as Depsang and Demchok in eastern Ladakh.

Though touted at the time as the biggest thaw in relations since deadly high-mountain clashes in the Galwan Valley in 2020, months later, the agreement is proving more symbolic than substantive in addressing entrenched issues and ensuring meaningful implementation.

Beneath the surface of this diplomatic facade lies a glaring contradiction where, on one hand, both sides publicly advocate peace, and on the other hand, their actions reveal a steadfast commitment to military preparedness and geopolitical rivalry.

The stark disconnect between the rhetoric of de-escalation and the realities on the ground underscores the hollow nature of the supposed breakthrough agreement. Aggressive military buildups are still in full effect for both countries along the LAC.

Using its "dual-use" infrastructure strategy, China has been building new villages and military outposts near the contested border. These sites, concealed as civilian infrastructure, boost China's capacity to quickly deploy forces and consolidate its control of contested territories.

At the same time, India has expedited its own infrastructure drive, including the construction of the Sela Tunnel, which ensures all-weather access to northeastern border regions. Far from a move toward genuine disengagement, this parallel buildup indicates that both sides are still preparing for the possibility of future confrontations.

Moreover, the so-called restoration of pre-2020 patrols raises doubts. India and China have fundamentally different interpretations of the LAC, and previous agreements to clarify the boundary have failed.

This ambiguity allows both nations to claim compliance while continuing to pursue their strategic objectives. Without a clear and enforceable mechanism to verify troop withdrawals and patrolling rights, the agreement has become an exercise in

political theater rather than a genuine step toward resolution.

Similarly, China's recently unveiled plan to build the world's largest hydropower dam on the Brahmaputra River presents a strategic threat to India. Located near Arunachal Pradesh, once operational, the dam will enable China to control water flows critical to millions of people in India's remote northeast, threatening agriculture, water security and hydropower. This leverage will exacerbate India's vulnerabilities.

While India is monitoring the project and planning countermeasures, the growing geopolitical imbalance highlights China's dominance in South Asia's water politics. India also views China's assertiveness in the Global South and Indo-Pacific with growing unease, while China is wary of India's rising aspirations for global recognition and its deepening ties with the West.

These conflicting interests make a comprehensive Himalayan reconciliation unlikely, leaving the agreement as little more than a tactical pause in an enduring standoff that has badly damaged broad relations, including crucially at the commercial level.

Ultimately, The India-China border agreement is a case of diplomacy without commitment. Both nations continue to prepare for conflict even as they talk of peace, rendering the agreement a contradiction in itself.

It shows clearly that agreements like these cannot be mistaken for strategic resets. Genuine peace requires not just words but actions that address the deep-rooted mistrust and conflicting ambitions that drive the rivalry, dating back to a border war in 1962.

Until then, Asia's two largest nations will remain locked in a precarious and uneasy coexistence, with agreements serving as temporary bandages rather than lasting solutions to problems with the potential to become major destabilizing flashpoints.

### EXPLAINER - Why are India-China tensions resurfacing despite recent thaw?

21 January 2025, [Anadolu Ajansi](#)

India-China relations remain tense over an ongoing border dispute in the Himalayan region of Ladakh, despite a top-level meeting late last year aimed at military disengagement

Just two months after a thaw in India-China relations, tensions have resurfaced.

In late October, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met China's President Xi Jinping in Russia, marking their first bilateral talks in half a decade. This came after a series of diplomatic negotiations to end their military stand-off at their disputed frontier in the disputed Ladakh region.

Days earlier, India's Foreign Ministry had confirmed a new patrolling arrangement along the border, leading to military disengagement and further easing of friction that had peaked after deadly clashes in 2020, resulting in a total 24 soldiers killed — 20 from India and four from China.

But the detente has not lasted. Earlier this month, China announced it was establishing two new counties in parts of the disputed Ladakh border region it claims control over, a move that has drawn ire from New Delhi, which responded with a diplomatic protest.

Further fueling tensions, Beijing also has plans to build a hydropower dam on the Yarlung Zangbo River in Tibet have also raised fresh concerns in downstream India.

Analysts suggest that although relations had shown signs of improvement, recent developments indicate they remain far from normal. They point to another major factor in the dispute — the two countries' bilateral relationship with Washington — which is shaping ties between the two Asian neighbors.

#### - Last four years

The India-China border dispute dates back to the 1950s, culminating in a brief but intense war in 1962 over boundary demarcation. India suffered a defeat, losing control of Aksai Chin, a region that remains disputed to this day. Despite several border agreements in the 1990s aimed at ensuring peace, tensions have continued intermittently.

The situation escalated significantly in the 2020 clash in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, the deadliest confrontation in decades.

Tensions had been triggered months after India divided Jammu and Kashmir and separated Ladakh from the region into two federally-ruled union territories, revoking their long-held autonomy.

Reportedly, Beijing gained control of 60 square kilometers (about 23 square miles) previously held by Indian troops, though New Delhi denies any territorial loss.

This event led to widespread public outrage in India and strained bilateral relations. In retaliation, India imposed economic restrictions on China, including banning Chinese apps like TikTok and tightening investment regulations.

Following the 2020 incident, both nations engaged in multiple rounds of talks to ease tensions. Occasional border scuffles took place in 2021 and 2022, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, but did not escalate. Meanwhile, ramped-up diplomatic efforts culminated in a 2023 agreement to push for further disengagement. In August 2023, Modi and Xi met on the sidelines of a BRICS summit in South Africa, signaling a potential thaw and a shift toward more constructive dialogue, despite the disagreement over the border.

The disengagement initially took place in several spots of tension, including Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and PangongTso, but two spots — Demchok and Depsang — remain contentious.

#### - Recent thaw

On Oct. 21, India's Foreign Ministry announced an agreement with China on an arrangement for patrolling by the armies of the two countries on the disputed border.

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told a news briefing that the agreement "is leading to disengagement and eventually the resolution of issues that had arisen in these areas in 2020."

On Dec. 4, India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar informed Parliament that the disengagement along the border has set the stage for improving relations between the two countries.

"The next priority will be to consider de-escalation, that would address the massing of troops along the LAC," he added, referring to the Line of Actual Control, the de facto boundary in the disputed region.

Both countries, he said, must respect and adhere to the status quo, and ensure that past agreements are fully honored.

Despite the tensions, India and China are key trading partners, with bilateral trade at \$118 billion. Improved relations, experts say, could boost business collaboration, especially in telecommunications and pharmaceuticals, where China plays a significant role as a supplier to India.

"China would like to see a prosperous India as part of an Asian Century, while India needs technology, investment, and trade goods that can be economically supplied by China," Beijing-based political analyst Einar Tangen told Anadolu.

But observers say that a lack of trust, fueled by misunderstandings and media influence, makes rebuilding relations difficult. Both sides must take gradual actions, but the challenge is heightened by the clash of differing civilizations and areas of influence, Tangen said.

#### - Fresh friction

But after the announcement of the two new Chinese counties, India's Foreign Ministry said on Jan. 3 that it had lodged a protest with Beijing.

According to New Delhi, parts of the counties, He'an and Hekang, fall within India's Himalayan Union Territory of Ladakh, which New Delhi claims as its sovereign territory. India doubled down on this position, asserting it does not accept China's "illegal occupation" and that the creation of these counties would not affect its sovereignty claim.

India has also raised concerns over China's plan to construct a massive hydropower dam on the Yarlung Zangbo River in Tibet, which flows into India. The government has urged Beijing to ensure that



downstream states, including India, are not negatively impacted by this project.

Approved last month, the dam will be the largest of its kind globally, with an estimated generation capacity of 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually.

- Why have tensions reignited?

Pravin Sawhney, the editor of New Delhi-based strategic affairs magazine Force, said India wants the border situation to de-escalate and for the sides to return to their April 2020 positions — an “unlikely” prospect as China “is not expected to retreat.”

“India knows this,” he said. “So, what they have done is they have shifted the goal posts.”

On the naming of two new counties, Sawhney said the move was part of china’s response to India’s 2019 decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir’s special status.

India drew new maps in the wake of the decision, showing Aksai Chin, which is under Chinese control, within its boundaries. The move was rejected by China, calling it “cartographic aggression” and reaffirmed the area as part of its territory.

“China is responding to India’s move to rename areas in China by renaming areas in India. It’s a tit-for-tat exchange,” said Einar, referring to reports from June 2024, when it was revealed that India planned to rename several locations in China’s Tibet region in response to Beijing assigning official Chinese names to places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Sawhney said the course of the India-China relationship will be largely determined by US President Donald Trump’s China policy.

“India may be forced to reassess its policy towards China if US-China relations improve,” he said.

Einar said Beijing wants to move things along, “but (has) a concern that Delhi is trying to use the situation as a chip against current frictions with Washington,” he said.

He stated that Indian Prime Minister Modi’s trip to Moscow and developments during the trip signaled his displeasure with Washington’s perceived meddling in the 2024 Indian elections and its alleged role in dethroning a pro-Indian government in Bangladesh.

Einar said Washington is unhappy with India’s economic ties to Russia, as New Delhi is the largest buyer of Russian oil and the second-largest supplier of sensitive equipment.

“The fact that the border dispute made progress only after the problems with Washington, and the lack of movement towards a border demarcation has made China wonder if it’s being used as a chip in the US-India relationship,” he said.

### **Opinion: A Few Words (for the people of Dingri)**

20 January 2025, [Phayul](#), Theurang



*Tibetans in Dingri go through the rubble to find survivors following a devastating earthquake in Southern Tibet’s Shigatse region (Photo/Tibet Fire and Rescue)*

It is now snowing in Dzoerge, which is a district located in southern Amdo. The local people, who are used to the cold mountain wind, are busy in the narrow streets. The government officials, wearing badges of two different conferences on their necks, have a serious and strange expression written on their faces, much like today’s weather. I walk out of my house and go to a new coffee house nearby. Though my face is being bitten by the chilly wind, the coffee house is just one street away. I know the place is comfortably warmed, and so I don’t have to worry too much about this bitter wind. However, the terrible event that took place yesterday morning cannot be chased out of my mind.

Thinking about it now makes it even harsher. The terrible news that fell down like an iron ball from the sky – did it land in the valley of my heart? Because of the continuous pain in my heart, I cannot sit still. But where will I go? Go to the valley of pain? Go to the ruins of fallen walls and broken stones? Go to the people who’ve lost their fathers and mothers, their children and houses? To walk with those who carry heavy loads with so much pride and grace?

I am terribly sad because only my thoughts can travel there. And what use will that be? What benefit can a thought bring? This fills me with sadness. In the face of such suffering, only those who are physically there are the real allies and friends. They are the ones who bear the burden by taking care of the old, lifting the children, providing clothes to those who are feeling cold, and giving food to the hungry. They are the ones who lift up the fallen walls and clear away the rubble. But it is not just the bricks and stones that they lift up – they are hauling up the homes and pillars of that place. What they are lifting up are the lives of brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers. What they lift are the souls of courage, affection, pride and hope of our people.

In truth, they are fortunate to be able to get this opportunity to care for our brothers and sisters at their worst possible time. These are the best deeds in their lives. What could be a better practice of the “*kyi duk*

*nyam nyong*” or “together in joy and sorrow” than this act? Where else can you talk about it and practice it? Suddenly, suddenly, in the labyrinth of my heart, the pain and suffering of the people of Dingri multiply like mushrooms and fall down like rolling stones. Sitting here, I truly and deeply admire the work and dedication of those who are physically there with the people of Dingri. My admiration for them stirs like a sea of blood in my heart.

Perhaps because I am a child of a race that lives a solitary life, whenever I witness a large gathering of our people in times of sorrow or joy, I experience a knot in my throat and tears build in my heart. This gives me strength and the capacity to have endless dreams. It also brings me perpetual joy and sorrow. This time too, when I witness our people march in unity, like warriors of our ancient kings, my heart pulsates and my body shakes with pride.

*Kye! Kye!* My brothers and sisters whom I may not know... the people of Dingri, whom I also may not know – I am aware that these words I write from a warm place have not much strength. But this flower of compassion that grows from the depth of my affection is unblemished. I am in a position where I cannot walk to the staircase of the Potala Palace nor can I offer a *khata* to Jowo Rinpoche. I am the most unfortunate one. I am someone who wants to visit Central Tibet and yet the horse for my journey is reined in. I am someone who wants to go to the Ngari region but my limbs are shackled and manacled. I am powerless among the powerless.

I have not seen your tall mountains, where your vultures and deities reside. I have also not seen your faces that are nurtured by the wild and rough terrains. Nevertheless, today I feel the pain in your hearts and I can identify with your chests that can proudly bear the pain and the suffering.

Look at the white mountain rising up in the sky like a giant umbrella... isn't that the soul mountain of your land? This indicates that your confidence has not fallen to the ground. Look at the path on which the sun of compassion travels... isn't that the chest of your people? There's never been a time when you've lost your love and compassion.

Today, dharma warriors are marching towards you like tongues of flame. Today, our brothers and sisters are marching towards you like fog in the mountains. Today, my heart is shaking like an earthquake after seeing you reciting mantras and rotating the hand-held prayer wheels while sitting on the dusty ground. Today, the river of my affection thunders from its depths after witnessing you on the roadside with hands folded and reciting prayers.

Witnessing all of this, the power of my speech and the strength of my mind have instantly diminished. When a person becomes overwhelmed with love and affection, the only recourse is to console oneself.

There is nothing I can do except soothe my inner trembling self and my desperation. Just as you were made powerless before the natural disaster, I am made weak before the strength of love and affection of our people. I stand with you, my blood brothers and sisters! I stand with you, people of Dingri, who are the protectors of the snow mountains.

### China's 'water-industrial complex' set its sights on Tibet

20 January 2025, [NewsGram](#)

*The focus of China's sprawling hydropower industry is increasingly shifting to Tibet, according to researchers and a Tibetan advocacy group's study, highlighting the potential for unrest and environmental damage in a region that Chinese officials have long viewed as a source of resources for the industrialized east.*

The focus of China's sprawling hydropower industry is increasingly shifting to Tibet, according to researchers and a Tibetan advocacy group's study, highlighting the potential for unrest and environmental damage in a region that Chinese officials have long viewed as a source of resources for the industrialized east.

China has built an estimated 22,000 large dams – about 40% of the world's total – to help power several decades of rapid industrialization and economic growth, maxing out the hydropower potential of many rivers. The exception has been the Tibetan plateau.

The roof-of-the-world region, invaded and annexed by China in the middle of the last century, is the headwaters of major rivers in Asia and home of Himalayan glaciers that are a source of water for hundreds of millions of people.

It has about 110 gigawatts of untapped hydropower potential that could fuel the economy of China's east, a researcher said, citing government figures. A single gigawatt is enough power for 100 million light bulbs.

In 2013, academic Tashi Tsering catalogued a total of 114 dams either built on three major rivers in Tibet or proposed for them.

A decade later, the number of constructed and proposed dams is at least 193 and probably much higher, according to a two-year desktop research project carried out by International Campaign for Tibet, or ICT, a Washington-based group that campaigns for Tibetan self-determination.

Globally, the hydropower industry promotes dams as an environmentally friendly energy source without the drawbacks of volatile wind and solar power. However, dams often impose significant costs such as eviction of communities, destruction of fisheries and impoundment of sediments that fertilize river deltas while only benefiting the narrow financial interests of dam builders and operators.

China's long-term plans to divert major rivers are also contentious and have faced domestic criticism from some Chinese engineers. If ever carried out, diversions could also inflame tensions with India since some of the plans affect transboundary rivers.

ICT's research is framed by a political agenda and it refers to Tibet as occupied by China. No country recognizes Tibet as a sovereign state. Experts not involved in the research had mixed opinions of its quality.

#### **'Justified concern'**

Two said the findings were plausible. One expert on hydropower in China had several criticisms including the methodology for estimating potential populations affected and that it failed to sufficiently differentiate between dams built for hydropower and other purposes such as water supply and flood control.

The research, this expert said, has a focus on China whereas the rapid pace of hydropower development in the entire Himalayan region including India, Bhutan and Nepal is more pertinent.

This expert did not want to be named in relation to the ICT report as they feared it could result in denial of permission to carry out research in China.

ICT compiled publicly available information on proposed and already built dams in Tibet and analysis of satellite imagery to arrive at its figures. Using population data for locations where dams are planned, it estimated that between 750,000 and 1.5 million people could be forced to relocate if all of the dams are built.

The group said Chinese authorities have obfuscated the true extent of hydropower ambitions in Tibet because the plans attract "justified concern and scrutiny from environmental experts, local communities and downstream countries."

The long-term nature of the plans means there are still opportunities for authorities to rethink the current "destructive" course, according to ICT. Nearly 60% of the dam projects it counted have not begun construction.

Plans for a 1,100 megawatt hydropower dam in a Tibetan county of Sichuan province adjacent to Tibet that will reportedly submerge six Buddhist monasteries sparked a rare public protest last year and drew renewed international attention to China's rule of the region.

"Tibet will likely see the most dramatic and highly problematic rise in hydropower development," said Sabrina Habich-Sobiegalla, a professor at Berlin Free University's Institute of Chinese Studies.

"China's southwest is currently the world's largest hydropower hotspot in terms of capacity and number of projects with development already advanced in Sichuan and Yunnan," she told Radio Free Asia.

"Because many downstream parts have already been exploited, development is shifting upstream and into Tibet," Habich-Sobiegalla said.

#### **'Hidden interests'**

In December, China's state news agency Xinhua reported the government had approved plans to build the world's largest hydropower dam in Tibet. The proposed Medog dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which flows into India and Bangladesh, would generate three times the power of China's controversial Three Gorges Dam. It is unclear when construction would start.

China's hydropower plans are consistent with its push to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, Habich-Sobiegalla said. President Xi Jinping's high-profile support for those goals means officials "will do whatever it takes to achieve them – even if only on paper – but even better for them if they can show large infrastructure projects."

Aside from climate goals and other factors driving power demand, authorities in China have long viewed its west as a source of resources for the east, where population and industry is concentrated, said Emily Yeh, a geography professor and Tibet researcher at University of Colorado Boulder.

More broadly, the gargantuan electricity requirements of artificial intelligence including chatbots such as ChatGPT and pervasive cloud-based computing mean electricity demand will only keep increasing, she told RFA.

Researchers such as Tsering, a lecturer at Calgary's Mount Royal University, have likened China's hydropower industry and dam builders to the U.S. military-industrial complex due to their enormous economic influence and deep political connections.

In an April 2024 seminar, he said China's dam builders have hijacked the state to further their own interests. A disaster that upends tradition, ancient culture and the environment is looming for Tibet unless Tibetans and Chinese discover that protecting Tibet's ecology is an important common ground, Tsering said.

"Tibet's hydropower development plans and the hidden interests of China's water industrial complex are unknown to most people, particularly Chinese people and leaders," he said.

"If this trend continues, Tibet will soon be home to hundreds of new big dams and many water diversion projects."

#### ***Trump may take an aggressive stance on China***

19 January 2025, [The Sunday Guardian](#), Khedroob Thondup

In the realm of US-China relations, the contrast between Donald Trump and Joe Biden's approaches is stark. As Trump prepares for his second term, his

policies promise a more aggressive stance on China, which could potentially yield stronger results than Biden's more measured approach.

Trump's economic policies towards China have always been characterized by a hardline approach. During his first term, he imposed significant tariffs on Chinese goods, igniting a trade war that aimed to protect American manufacturing and reduce the trade deficit. In his second term, Trump has vowed to increase tariffs even further, up to 60% on all Chinese imports. This aggressive tariff strategy is designed to pressure China into fairer trade practices and protect American jobs, a stark contrast to Biden's continuation of existing tariffs without significant escalation.

Trump's administration has been vocal about the threats posed by Chinese economic espionage and technology theft. He has proposed stringent regulations to limit Chinese ownership in critical infrastructure sectors such as energy, technology, and telecommunications. These measures are intended to safeguard national security and prevent China from gaining undue influence over vital American industries. Biden, while also addressing these concerns, has taken a more collaborative approach, working with allies to counteract China's practices rather than implementing unilateral measures. One of the most contentious issues in US-China relations is Taiwan. Trump has taken a firm stance, suggesting that Taiwan should pay for its defence while simultaneously increasing military sales

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and diplomatic engagement with Taipei. This unpredictable approach keeps China guessing and potentially deters aggressive actions. Biden, on the other hand, has maintained a consistent but less provocative support for Taiwan, focusing on strategic partnerships and alliances.

Trump's administration has not shied away from confronting China on human rights issues, including the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and the suppression of democracy in Hong Kong. By imposing sanctions and publicly condemning these actions, Trump has positioned the US as a staunch defender of human rights. Biden has also addressed these issues but has often been criticized for not taking as strong a stance, opting instead for diplomatic pressure and multilateral efforts.

While both Trump and Biden recognise the challenges posed by China, Trump's more confrontational and unilateral approach may prove to be stronger in terms of immediate impact. His willingness to escalate economic measures, impose strict regulations, and take bold stances on national security issues sets him apart from Biden's more cautious and collaborative strategy. As Trump steps into his second term, his policies could potentially reshape US-China relations

in a way that asserts American strength and protects national interests more aggressively.vf

### China's bid to tame a 'rogue' river

19 January 2025, [National Herald](#), Pankaj Chaturvedi

#### **In the absence of a water-sharing treaty, we are in a vulnerable position, but a dam for a dam is not in our best interest either**

China's ambitious hydropower dam in Tibet was approved on 25 December 2024. Mooted in 2010, it was included in China's 14th Five-Year Plan in 2020. Proposed across the Yarlung Tsangpo (the Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra), the world's biggest hydro-electricity project is also being described as the 'biggest investment in a single project on the planet' at an estimated cost of USD 137 billion.

It would dwarf China's Three Gorges Dam — currently the world's largest — and generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually. The location is a Himalayan gorge where the river plunges some 6,560 feet along a section called the 'Great Bend' before making a U-turn into Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and, thereafter, Bangladesh.

Sources say the proposed site is on the left bank of the river that morphs from the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet to the Siang in Arunachal and the Brahmaputra in Assam. While it is unclear when construction will begin, China has sought to allay fears that the project would harm the ecology of the region and the interests of lower riparian countries like India, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It is from Bangladesh, the lowermost riparian nation, that the river drains into the Bay of Bengal.

A Chinese spokesperson stated that the project was approved after decades of rigorous scientific studies and would have no adverse impact on countries downstream. Soon after the reassurance, on 7 January 2025, Tibet was struck by an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale. With at least 126 deaths and countless injured and homeless, the earthquake revived fears that the project would be catastrophic.

The Indian government has reacted with caution, partly because India has been threatening to take unilateral steps by building dams on the Indus river, which would choke the water flowing into Pakistan, a lower riparian state on the Indus. (There is a treaty between India and Pakistan on the Indus but none on the Brahmaputra.)

Indian intelligence agencies said on News18 channel that the dam planned by China was "a weapon without artillery", adding that the "construction will be dangerous and will impact geology because drilling will hit tectonic plates, which could cause earthquakes". The official announcement caused consternation in both Arunachal Pradesh (claimed by China as part of Tibet) and Assam.

Assam Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi said, “Ten years ago, in Parliament, I had raised [this] urgent issue... I had also highlighted that, as per global convention, China can claim greater right of access to the Brahmaputra. A decade later, it appears the concerns were not taken seriously.”

Fellow Assam Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi recalled an inter-ministerial group anticipating the crisis in 2012 and recommending a Brahmaputra River Basin Board. Both Gogoi and Bordoloi point out that in the absence of a water-sharing treaty between China and India, we are in a vulnerable position. Bordoloi feels it is still not too late to constitute a body with other lower-riparian countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh as members. Such a group, he argues, would be able to draw international attention and put pressure on China.

Speaking to the *Voice of America*, Srikanth Kondapalli, professor of Chinese Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said, “China acts unilaterally on issues related to trans-boundary rivers that originate in their territory,” adding that questions arise about a dam being built in such a contested and fragile area.

“The region proposed... is highly susceptible to landslides and is located on a geological fault line that intersects the Yarlung Zangbo,” said Y. Nithyanandam, head of the Geospatial Research Programme at the Takshashila Institution in Bengaluru.

“Planning a dam of this magnitude in such complex terrain poses significant risks to downstream regions of India and Bangladesh, especially in the event of a mishap or... any alteration in the water flow,” VOA reported.

India has countered China with its own dam announcement: the Siang Dam on the Upper Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh, touted as our largest. Meanwhile, Bhutan has been planning and building several medium to small dams, causing ripples of concern in downstream India and Bangladesh.

None of the riparian nations of the Brahmaputra river basin have, however, signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 2014; hence first user-rights on river systems are non-enforceable. Writing in the *Hindu*, Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, visiting associate fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies in New Delhi, points to the 1950 earthquake which had its epicentre at Medog in Tibet.

It changed the riparian landscape trapped until then by an unending cycle of catastrophic floods. Quoting Philip Ball’s *Water Kingdom: A Secret History of China*, he reminds us that the Chinese have historically viewed Yarlung Zangbo as a ‘river gone rogue’. (Probably because the river turns sharply from west to east at the Great Bend to flow south into India.) China, Rahman writes, ‘is going ahead with building mega-

dams in Tibet to correct this geographical anomaly by disciplining a “rogue river”’.

While India too has harboured ambitious plans of constructing dams, barrages, embankments and hydropower plants in the Brahmaputra river basin, experts warn about the futility of India committing vast resources to compete with China. This is what China may actually want.

With China sitting pretty on top of Asia’s water tower, with complete control over Tibet’s rivers and the material, military and technological might to have its own way, a dam for a dam may not be the right response, writes Rahman. ‘Transboundary river systems are often likened by nation states to “taps”, which they think can be closed or opened through hydraulic interventions such as dams within their respective nation-states. The Brahmaputra river system has been the site of planned and ongoing mega-dam projects by China, India and Bhutan, all contributing to an intense geopolitical power projection in the river basin... highly dramatised terms such as “water wars” are part of the geopolitical vocabulary and upstream hydropower dams are viewed as “water bombs” by lower riparian nations, as in the case of the Medog dam project.’

Has the Indian government been blindsided? Should they have seen it coming? In December 2016, then MoS M.J. Akbar had spoken of water experts from India and China meeting regularly since 2006; following an agreement signed in 2013, hydrological data were also exchanged between the two countries. At the 10th such meeting in April 2016, China had assured India that hydropower plants being built posed no threat to the flow of the Brahmaputra. It is not clear though whether such exchanges continued after the Galwan clash in 2020.

Meanwhile, glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) have increased in the Himalayas. The Chungthang Dam collapse in Sikkim in October 2023 caused widespread damage to life and property. Dams being built across the Himalayas affect agropastoral communities, biodiversity and wetland systems. Threats to the Brahmaputra river basin by the world’s largest dam are very real and India would have to move very quickly to address them, and thrash out, if not a treaty, at least a working arrangement with China.

### **The Colonial Strategy and India-China Conflict: Past, Present, and Future**

18 January 2025, [GJIA](#), Vishal Singh Bhadauriya

*The longstanding interconnections among Nepal, Tibet, and India remain important in contemporary geopolitics. This article argues that British historical border management strategies are being mimicked in the Himalayas, where great powers continue to*

*interfere to further their own strategic interests, and that existing border agreements—predicated on British precedents—are themselves unstable and driving conflict. Today, the contest for influence in the Himalayan region underscores how unresolved border tensions and the strategic importance of Tibet and Nepal continue to drive regional India-China competition.*

### **British Colonial Strategy and Its Long-Term Impact**

In the early to mid-19th century—especially following the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842)—the British colonial government began formulating its geopolitical strategy in the Himalayan region. During this period, heightened concern about Russian expansionism in Central Asia fueled the “Great Game,” a strategic rivalry between the British and Russian empires. In an effort to secure the northern border of India, British authorities formalized a number of treaties and agreements, the most notable being the Shimla Convention of 1914, which established the McMahon Line. This line demarcates the eastern sector of the India-China border, running from the easternmost point of Bhutan to the Talu Pass in the eastern Himalayas. Presented by the British as an official boundary between British India and Tibet, the line aimed to consolidate colonial control and serve as a defensive buffer.<sup>1</sup> Mapped out with British strategic objectives at the forefront, this boundary reflects the opaque complexities of colonial-era border delineations. Consequently, China has routinely refrained from fully recognizing it, leaving its legal and diplomatic standing in limbo and paving the way for ongoing disputes.

Britain’s historical perspective on border management emphasized the strategic role of infrastructure and advanced military outposts in asserting sovereignty and managing power dynamics in the Himalayas. British officials prioritized building roads, telegraph lines, and rest houses in key frontier areas to enhance connectivity and facilitate troop movement. Documents preserved in archives, such as the India Office Library’s Political and Secret Department Files reveal that infrastructure projects such as the construction of the Old Hindustan-Tibet Road and the establishment of military cantonments in Shimla and Kalimpong were central to British strategy.<sup>2</sup>

These initiatives not only reinforced territorial claims but also extended British influence into Tibet and Nepal, effectively integrating remote regions into the colonial administration. The colonial strategies employed in the past maintain significant relevance today, as both India and China have mirrored Britain’s historical approach by forging alliances with local elites, employing strategic ambiguity in border demarcations, and leveraging infrastructure projects to extend influence across the Himalayan region.

The deep-seated impact of Britain’s original border demarcations also remains evident in the Himalayan region, where the Line of Actual Control (LAC)—established after the 1962 Sino-Indian War—functions as the de facto boundary between Indian and Chinese territories. Although not internationally recognized, the LAC closely aligns with earlier British-era claims, most notably the McMahon Line. This colonial model of border demarcation was starkly demonstrated by the 2020 Galwan Valley clash along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which resulted in the fatalities of 20 Indian soldiers and an indeterminate number of Chinese forces. The incident, triggered by disputes over territorial claims and infrastructure development near the LAC, exposed the fragility of existing border management agreements, while simultaneously reinforcing the ongoing strategic contest for dominance in the Himalayan region.

In addition, Western countries have often seen the rivalry between China and India as a chance for strategic gain, with American involvement in the area mirroring a complex development of British colonial policies. While British policies focused on infrastructure development and boundaries like the McMahon Line to counter Russian expansion, U.S. strategies after World War II favored leveraging regional tensions, such as Sino-Indian disputes, to maintain U.S. influence and align the region with Western interests. In Nepal and Tibet, the United States has historically supported initiatives countering Chinese influence, such as covert CIA operations in Tibet during the Cold War.

Indeed, the strategic alliances and direct engagement of the United States have, in fact, intensified regional rivalry. China emerged victorious from the 1962 Sino-Indian War, which altered the McMahon Line and paved the way for current tensions in Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. During the war, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sought U.S. assistance, attracting American military aid to bolster India’s defense. For the United States, this served both to counter China’s regional ambitions and to integrate India into Western spheres of influence. These dynamics highlight how colonial legacies—restructured and redefined under Pax Americana—continue to stoke tensions between India and China, keeping the Himalayan frontier a central focus of global power competition.

### **The Strategic Significance of Nepal and Tibet**

Nepal and Tibet were integral to British India’s northern defense strategy. Lord Curzon’s forward policy in the Himalayas exemplified Britain’s drive to counter Russian ambitions, intensifying efforts to secure the region. Nepal’s importance lay in enabling the British Empire to recruit Gurkha troops, who later served as mercenaries in the British Indian Army. The Anglo-Nepalese Treaty of 1923 affirmed

Nepal's independence on paper, yet ensured its foreign policy would support British goals. Meanwhile, Britain regarded Tibet as a crucial bulwark against Russian expansion, prompting British political officers in Sikkim and missions—such as those led by Colonel Weir—to guarantee that the Dalai Lama supported British objectives.

China's annexation of Tibet in 1950 reconfigured the regional power balance, effectively eroding Tibet's role as a buffer state and instigating new tensions in border management with Nepal and India. Confronted with these shifting geopolitical realities, Nepal and China negotiated agreements in 1961 and 1963 to formalize their 1,439-kilometer frontier. These accords sought to mitigate the uncertainties that arose once Tibet's intermediary position disappeared, transforming China's relationship with its Himalayan neighbors in the aftermath of the Second World War. These accords, including the Sino-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, saw Nepal formally recognize Tibet as part of China. Reflecting Cold War power dynamics, these agreements aligned with China's strategy to consolidate territorial claims and stabilize its periphery. For Nepal, this resolution secured peaceful borders and bolstered its position as a buffer state between China and India, enabling it to navigate relations with both powers strategically while maintaining its sovereignty in a geopolitically sensitive region. For China, this agreement established a stable relationship with Nepal, ensuring that the strategic buffer remained favorable to Chinese interests.

By contrast, India and China have not reached a similar consensus on the McMahon Line, an issue that remains contentious. Alastair Lamb's comprehensive analysis indicates that China consistently views the McMahon Line as a product of colonialism and refuses to acknowledge it as a valid boundary with India. Neville Maxwell underscores that this unresolved territorial dispute extends beyond geography, being closely associated with strategic stakes like militarization, regional influence, and border security, and cultural dimensions such as Tibetan Buddhist heritage in Arunachal Pradesh and sovereignty narratives. These factors deepen mistrust, entrench national pride, and complicate resolution, reflecting broader geopolitical and cultural rivalries. China is concerned that settling the border dispute would increase India's influence over Tibet, strengthening historical and cultural links and perhaps promoting Tibetan independence or autonomy. Such a resolution could weaken China's sovereignty narrative, challenge its control over strategic areas like the G219 Highway, and amplify civilizational rivalries in the region. John W. Garver observes that the Sino-Indian rivalry has consistently involved a contest for influence in the Himalayan region, and strategic factors have kept the

border issue unsettled, making the Himalayas a continual focal point of regional security concerns.

### **Learning from History for a Stable Present**

India, referencing colonial historical contexts, has pursued a policy that underscores sovereignty and national security, strengthening its defenses in Arunachal Pradesh. Nevertheless, the mere act of militarization is inadequate; a successful resolution necessitates diplomatic involvement supported by strategic preparedness. By invoking colonial-era maps and documents, India and China have reinforced ambiguous territorial claims, perpetuating interpretive disputes and limiting the scope for constructive negotiations. This persistent reliance on historical precedents highlights an urgent need for more rigorous, transparent diplomacy to prevent misreading and avert potential conflict. While confidence-building measures such as joint military exercises, high-level dialogues, and bilateral agreements offer potential avenues toward mutual understanding, their real impact hinges on a carefully calibrated approach that recognizes the depth of historical sensitivities and the asymmetries of power at play.

While there is no precedent for formal joint military exercises between India and China due to their strategic rivalry, some progress has been made through mechanisms like the Annual Defence Dialogues and coordinated activities under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). These engagements, though limited, reflect the possibility of expanding such frameworks.

A potential bilateral defense agreement would likely focus on specific areas of cooperation, such as joint disaster relief operations, information sharing on terrorism, or limited joint patrols in less contentious border areas. However, mutual distrust, asymmetric power dynamics, and divergent strategic interests constrain the feasibility of such an agreement. For instance, India remains cautious of China's growing influence in South Asia, while China views Indian partnerships with the Quad and other Indo-Pacific initiatives as counter to Chinese strategic interests.

A more realistic approach might involve incremental steps, such as establishing hotlines to prevent accidental escalation, enhancing transparency in troop deployments, and creating mutually agreed-upon buffer zones in contested regions. These efforts, combined with a robust defense framework on both sides, could reduce the risk of conflict while maintaining a deterrence posture. Ultimately, such measures would need to be carefully negotiated, addressing both nations' security concerns while promoting stability and reducing colonial-era legacies of mistrust.

The inherited colonial framework—shaped by vague frontiers and tactical maneuvering—continues to

cast a long shadow over the region's geopolitics. Although both India and China must grapple with this legacy, merely acknowledging it does little to break free from the entrenched structures it created. True progress demands a willingness to confront the underlying imbalances and rivalries that colonialism fostered. Establishing clear, jointly endorsed boundaries remains a baseline measure, but dismantling old power asymmetries requires sustained political resolve and a deeper commitment to equitable dialogue. In an increasingly multipolar world, it will take bold leadership and genuine cooperation to transcend the colonial blueprint that still shapes regional security concerns, ensuring the region can finally move beyond the enduring specter of imperial rule.

### Battle for Water

18 January 2025, [Millenium Post](#), Dipankar Dey

China's approval of a massive hydropower project on the Yarlung Zangbo River raises concerns over its environmental and geopolitical impact, with India planning countermeasure in the form of Siang Dam which is not a viable solution and could ironically threaten regional stability

On December 25, 2024, the state controlled Chinese media Xinhua reported that the Chinese government has approved the construction of a hydropower project in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river—known, in the downstream, as the Siang in Arunachal Pradesh, as Brahmaputra in Assam and Jamuna river in Bangladesh. The hydropower project is expected to boost local people's livelihood and prosperity in Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region. The hydropower project is a green project aimed at promoting low-carbon development, claimed the government. On December 27, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson in her regular briefing assured that China's hydropower development in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River aims to speed up developing clean energy, and respond to climate change and extreme hydrological disasters. The hydropower development there has been studied in an in-depth way for decades, and safeguard measures have been taken for the security of the project and ecological environment protection. The project has no negative impact on the lower reaches. China will continue to maintain communication with countries at the lower reaches through existing channels, and step up cooperation on disaster prevention and relief for the benefit of the people by the river, the official statement claimed. Also Read - [Click in to Chinese tech tsunami](#) A section of hydrologists are of the opinion that despite China controlling more than half the Brahmaputra basin's

area and building a super dam to control water without consultation with downstream neighbours, water conflict between India and China is less likely due to the unique hydrology of the Brahmaputra basin. They argue that while China controls over half of the basin's area, most of that area lies in a rain shadow, formed when monsoon winds rise over Himalayan peaks and then descend again onto the Tibetan Plateau. In contrast, the Indian, Bhutanese and Bangladeshi portions of the basin lie in some of the world's highest precipitation areas, with rainfall consistently above 98 inches per year. In fact, the state of Meghalaya, in the Indian portion of the basin, is often referenced as the wettest place in the world, with 433 inches of annual precipitation in some areas. As a result, China's contribution to overall flow is undoubtedly lower than its share of basin area. At one extreme, figures from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) put China's contribution to Brahmaputra flow at 30 per cent while at the other, the Government of India sources put the figure at 7 per cent. Since the Indian portion of the basin is in one of the highest rainfall regions in the world, India has little need to draw from the river now or in the future for agriculture or other purposes. Even India's most grandiose plans to transfer water out of the basin to more arid areas would have little impact on total flow because of the Brahmaputra's great volume, analysts argue. Also Read - [Disrupted lifeline](#) Shortly after China announced its plans for the Yarlung Tsangpo dam project in 2020, a senior Indian government official told Reuters that India's government was exploring the development of a large hydropower dam and reservoir "to mitigate the adverse impact of the Chinese dam projects". China's foreign ministry previously responded to India's concerns around the proposed dam, saying in 2020 that China has a "legitimate right" to dam the river and has considered downstream impacts. Reacting on China's formal announcement on the project, Brahma Chellaney, a geo-strategist and the author of the award-winning book, "Water: Asia's New Battleground", commented that 'the project will impose incalculable environmental costs extending from the Himalayas to the delta in Bangladesh'. According to him, the dam will likely have far-reaching downstream impacts in India and Bangladesh, including altering the cross-border flow and course of the river, which empties into the Bay of Bengal. It will also trap the river's nutrient-rich silt that helps to naturally fertilise farmlands during the annual monsoonal flooding, as well as sustains marine life. To counter this impending threat, the Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Chowna Mein, claimed that India has planned to construct a dam in the Indian territory when the Siang river enters Arunachal Pradesh. The Upper Siang Hydropower Project is a



proposed dam on the Siang River in the Upper Siang district of Arunachal and can produce up to 11,000 MW of electricity. “The Siang dam will counter the Chinese mega-dam on Yarlung Tsangpo. It is for national security and people should understand. We are making people aware of the implications of the Chinese project on our state”, the Minister specified. Also Read - Threshold of transition The Siang Dam is facing resistance from locals in the area in Arunachal Pradesh. More than 350 individuals, civil society and environmental groups across the country have urged President Droupadi Murmu to withdraw paramilitary forces deployed in Arunachal Pradesh to allegedly “forcefully carry out” surveys for a mega hydropower project, reports NDTV. It may also be recalled that since 2006, Beijing has been calling Arunachal Pradesh “South Tibet” to assert that it should be part of China which India firmly rejects. Moreover, India claims the Aksai Chin plateau in the Himalayas, which is controlled by China. In September 2023, accreditation to three sportspersons from Arunachal Pradesh for participation in the Hangzhou Asian Games was denied by China. Three women players from Arunachal Pradesh couldn’t travel to Hangzhou as they were not provided the required accreditation by Chinese authorities. Also Read - China’s speed demon The Yarlung Zangbo super dam: the mother of all dams The construction of the world’s largest dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River marks a monumental development in global hydropower infrastructure. This ambitious project, the Medog Hydropower station, is set to reshape the geopolitics of transboundary water resources in South Asia and redefine the eco-system of the region. According to the Hill, the super-dam’s construction work is already well underway, given that the project received the go-ahead from the country’s parliament in March 2021. Xi’s regime included this dam project in its 2021 five-year economic development plan. The mammoth dam, which passes through Earth’s largest canyon, is being built just before the Himalayan river Yarlung Tsangpo enters into the heavily militarised China-India border at the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which is almost three times the area of Taiwan. The new dam project will give China control over cross-border river flows, thus allowing it to leverage its territorial claim to India’s sprawling, Tibet-bordering Arunachal Pradesh. The super-dam, built in one of the world’s most species-rich mountainous regions that is known as a biodiversity hotspot, threatens to cause lasting damage to these ecosystems, which play a central role in triggering Asia’s annual monsoons. Tibet’s fragile ecosystems are already threatened by climate change and reckless exploitation of the plateau’s vast mineral and water resources. In addition to these, the largest dam is being built close to the geological fault line in a seismically active area where the Indian Plate and the

Eurasian Plate collide. Building the huge dam close to this fault line makes the project potentially a ticking water bomb for downstream communities, experts warn. Recent research proposes that parts of the Indian Plate may be delaminating, with its denser lower section peeling away. This theory was supported by data from earthquake waves and gas samples from Tibetan springs. Helium isotopes indicate mantle rocks emerging where the plate separates. The Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates are engaged in a slow-motion collision that began sixty million years ago. This geological clash not only created the mountains but also harbours enigmatic processes deep below the surface. The super dam will cost around USD 127 billion and will dwarf the biggest dam in the world today, China’s own Three Gorges Dam, whose reservoir is longer than the largest of North America’s Great Lakes. When completed, this super-dam in south-eastern Tibet will generate up to 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity yearly — more than triple the 88.2 billion installed capacity of the Three Gorges Dam. Located in central China, the Three Gorges Dam officially uprooted 1.4 million residents to make way for its mammoth reservoir, which submerged two cities, 114 towns and 1,680 villages. NASA reports that the construction and operation of the Three Gorges Dam have slightly slowed the Earth’s rotation by 0.06 microseconds due to the redistribution of water mass. Though the Chinese state media has described this as “a safe project that prioritises ecological protection”, saying it will boost local prosperity and contribute to Beijing’s climate neutrality goals, the human rights groups and locals have raised concerns. Among them are fears that the construction of the dam could displace local communities, as well as significantly alter the natural landscape and damage local ecosystems. Reports indicate that the colossal development would require at least four 20km-long tunnels to be drilled through the Namcha Barwa mountain, diverting the flow of the Yarlung Tsangpo, Tibet’s longest river. Large dams: a ticking water bomb In early June, 1938, Chinese troops were ordered by the Chinese President Chiang Kai-Shek to destroy the dykes along the Yellow River—a symbol of Chinese civilisation, with the hope that the resulting floods would halt invading Japanese forces. It was done in a panic mode as Japan’s rapid and devastating invasion of China continued inward. The result was cataclysmic. Thousands of square miles of agricultural land were destroyed, at least half a million were killed and millions were displaced. The victims were almost all Chinese citizens. The floods did little to stop the invasion. Today, China has adapted this strategy of weaponising water, now for political gains, writes Berkeley Political Review. Weaponisation of water by building big dams and barrages on rivers is not new. Cyrus the Great reputedly took Babylon in a single

night in the 6th century BC, by diverting an old artificial lake back into the Euphrates, so that his army could come right up to the city walls at night. Hulagu, the destroyer of medieval Baghdad, used the Tigris River's flood waters to trap the caliph's horsemen outside the city walls. In the 1980s, both Iran and Iraq used water as an area denial weapon to check the other's advance in the southern marshlands. Iran tried to bomb Iraq dams out of commission. More recently, in April 2014, fighters of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria captured the Nuaimiyah Dam in western Iraq, despite earlier efforts to defend the site. They then overflowed it to dislodge Iraqi soldiers dug in upstream of the site—and to deny drinking water to civilians downstream. It is alleged that in 2023, Russia deliberately destroyed the Nova Kakhovka hydroelectric dam, creating “the largest man-made disaster in Europe in decades.” This unleashed heavy flooding across southern Ukraine. The Ukrainian authorities evacuated thousands of people from flood-hit areas of Kherson region, in the south of the country. The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy termed the attack as an attempt at “ecocide,” saying that around 150 tonnes of oil had contaminated the floodwaters and run off into the Black Sea. For nearly 70 years, China has controlled the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau — the largest freshwater reserve outside the polar ice caps and origin of the continent's ten greatest rivers — which two billion people rely on. Though domestic rivers are becoming oversaturated to the point of decay with dams, yet the dam building frenzy shows no signs of slowing. Instead, Beijing has begun to dam international rivers. Unsatisfied with the 87,000 dams within its borders, China has been financing international hydropower projects that will power its own southern grids, while avoiding the environmental and social costs of hydropower in its own territory. The Chinese built dams on the Mekong River is a case in point. Known as the ‘Mother of Waters’, in Laos and Thailand, Mekong flows from the Chinese controlled Tibetan Plateau to South China Sea through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam—Asia's Rice Bowl where farmers produce, every year, enough rice to feed over 300 million people. In addition to this the Mekong basin produces 25 per cent of the world's fresh water fishes. This vital river is now under threat as China has built many big dams near the border of the Tibetan Plateau before crossing the international border. It is reported that China has built 11 giant dams on the Mekong River (and is constructing or planning at least eight more), thereby gaining geopolitical leverage over its Southeast Asian neighbours, but also wrecking serious environmental harms, including recurrent droughts, in the downriver basin. In 2016, when the Mekong River was drying up, China distributed “emergency water flows” from its dams to revitalise the river. To Southeast Asians, this wasn't an act of

generosity, but a concerning reminder that their water is subject to the will of a hegemonic neighbour who uses its control over upstream dams — and access to water — as a bargaining tool. The same fates might wait for the people of India and Bangladesh though various reports suggest that China controls only a meagre per cent of water that flows through Brahmaputra. Observations Construction of another dam on Brahmaputra (Siang) at Arunachal Pradesh to mitigate the impact of the Chinese dam is not a viable solution to this serious issue. Such a move will aggravate the problem. Large dams and barrages on any free flowing river are usually built for the benefits of those who live upstream. And those who reside downstream are usually the losers. However, in the long run, everyone loses due to irreparable damages caused to the river and its surrounding ecosystem. This is true for dams and barrages built in Tibet and India. Farakka barrage on river Ganga before it enters Bangladesh and multipurpose dams on river Damodar in Jharkhand before it flows to West Bengal are cases in point. The same is true for dams in Nepal. In every rainy season, water released from the overflowing Kosi Barrage and the Mandar dam floods the Bihar state of India. Unfortunately, India and China are not parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Water Courses (1997). However, while exercising the riparian right to use water in its territory, the States are under an obligation not to cause significant harm to the river flow, as pronounced by the International Court of Justice. If the States consent, the world court may adjudicate. The best option before India to ensure its water security is to enter into a water treaty with China to avoid any future conflict due to weaponisation of water by the latter. Before that, India must revisit its existing treaties with neighbouring countries to ensure an equitable share of water of its transnational rivers.

### Capturing Siang

17 January 2025, [Down To Earth](#), Anupam Chakravartty and Jyotirmoy Saharia

*As India pushes for a mega-dam on the Siang river to counter China's upstream projects, the Adi tribal community of Arunachal Pradesh fears losing ancestral land.*

Anthony Pabin sits by the Siang river, peeling an orange with practiced ease. “We sell a dozen oranges for Rs 20 and make a hefty profit,” he says. “But we have to think about our children. We do not want them to grow up as refugees, separated from their land.” Pabin, a farmer from Parong village in the Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, echoes the anxiety felt by the residents of several villages along the Siang

river, where a proposed mega-dam has stirred a complex web of geopolitics, development and human rights concerns.



*Ogak Boko, the head of Komkar village in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district, fears that the reservoir of the proposed dam on the Siang river will submerge the village (Photographs: Anupam Chakravartty)*

The river, known as Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, flows from China into Arunachal Pradesh before joining the Brahmaputra in Assam. For centuries, it has been the lifeline for the region's Adi tribal community, providing water for their farms and enabling a cultural connection to their ancestors. But now, the river has become the centre of a contentious tug-of-war between two powerful neighbours—India and China. The 11.2-gigawatt (GW) Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) is planned near Geku village in Upper Siang district. The project has faced opposition ever since it was proposed by government think tank NITI Aayog in 2017. In April 2022, the Centre directed the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) to carry out a pre-feasibility survey to understand the technical, economic, social and environmental feasibility of the project. Such surveys are done in phases and involve several tasks such as drilling of the area's rocks to check for strength and earmarking villages for relocation. A September 2024 report from NHPC estimated the cost of the dam at US \$13.2 billion. Across the McMahon Line, China has unveiled plans to build an even more massive 66-GW hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo river, the upper course of the Siang. It will cost \$137 billion. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has framed SUMP as a necessary countermeasure to China's upstream dams. "The SUMP is not just about generating power but also about maintaining the natural flow of the Siang river and mitigating potential flood risks from water releases by China," Khandu said at a public meeting in Boleng on December 19, 2024. He claimed that 60 per cent of the population supports the project, which the people living around the river outrightly contest.

#### **From the ground up**

"Our resistance began in the 1980s when the Brahmaputra Board first proposed a dam on the Siang," says Oyar Gao, founder of Arunachal Pradesh-

based non-profit Siang Peoples' Forum. "Back then, dams were sold as a means to control floods downstream. Today, the narrative has shifted to concerns about China. But for us, it has always been about safeguarding our river and our land," says Gao. Community leaders accuse the government of misleading the public into accepting the project. "NHPC has been conducting corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities without seeking prior, informed consent from the communities," says Gegong Jijong, president of the community initiative Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum (SIFF). He says at least 27 villages in Siang and Upper Siang districts will be directly impacted by the dam.



*Parong and Riew villages, situated on opposite banks of the Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh, have been at the forefront of protests against large dam projects. The residents cultivate on steep, terraced slopes, growing paddy and oranges, which form the backbone of their livelihoods*

In Parong village, the epicentre of the protests, women gather every night on the riverbanks to perform traditional rituals and keep an eye on any survey activities. "Two years ago, we intercepted government vehicles conducting clandestine surveys," says Tabeng Siram, a SIFF member. "We depend on our paddy and orange farms for survival. If the dam is built, we will lose everything." Tarok Siram, head of Parong, recalls how the district administration created local development committees to rally support for the project. According to Siram, out of the 31 committee members, seven resigned after realising they had been misled. "We were taken to Tehri and Narmada dams to showcase so-called benefits, but we saw first-hand the devastation caused by them. It has only strengthened our re-solve," he says.

In November 2024, Arunachal Pradesh-based human rights lawyer Ebo Mili spoke against the proposed dam at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, and was rudely surprised when the Chinese delegation took offence to his statement. "I criticised the use of defence narratives to justify mega-dams," he says. "But a Chinese representative through diplomatic channels demanded that portions of my speech be removed." Mili's activism has come at

a personal cost. He has been detained twice in the past by Arunachal Pradesh police for protesting against hydro projects. “The government painted me as a terrorist,” he says.

#### **Use of brute force**

In December 2024, reports emerged that the Centre planned to deploy Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) to facilitate NHPC’s drilling operations as part of its ongoing pre-feasibility survey. The announcement triggered widespread outrage. Riew, a village on the opposite bank of the Siang river, was designated by the district administration to host the CAPF contingent. As soon as the notification was issued, residents of the village marched to the Dite Dime bridge over Siang river in protest. The notification instructed the village head to arrange funds to repair a primary school to house the CAPF team.

“We had been demanding the repair of the school for a long time, but nothing ever happened,” says Tabeng Tamuk, village head, Riew. “Now, the officials have asked us to raise money for the repairs to station the CAPF in our village. The deputy commissioner has deceived us,” says Tamuk. Interestingly, in August 2023, NHPC had earmarked `2 crore under CSR for the renovation of the school. Residents of Komkar village, upstream from Riew, have also burnt an effigy of the chief minister to voice their anger over the decision to deploy central forces. The Siang administration, on December 24, 2024, also issued notices to the village heads—*gaonburi* (head woman) and *gaonburha* (head man)—of Parong village for participating in anti-dam protests. In 2023, the Upper Siang administration had issued a circular directing government functionaries, particularly village heads, not to participate in any protests or meetings against the dam. “We are not just government functionaries. We represent the people. After the 2023 circular, we offered to resign from our position,” says Ogak Boko, head of Komkar.

Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, an independent researcher on border ecologies related to rivers, warns that the dam-building race between India and China is a geopolitical exercise with little regard for communities or the Himalayan ecosystem. “At the cost of indigenous riparian communities, these nations are engaged in signalling each other by asserting their control over border territories. We have seen how smaller projects like Ranganadi in Arunachal Pradesh wreak havoc in Assam during the flood season. Without any agreement between India and China on river water sharing, if these dams come up, it will only destroy fragile Himalayan ecology and communities living here,” says Rahman.

#### **China’s think tanks need to do more. Is stronger research and autonomy the answer?**

15 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Zhao Ziwen

#### **2,000 intellectual groups now advise Beijing, but experts say they are producing fewer ‘constructive comments’ to influence decision makers**

In 2013, during a core decision-making meeting, Chinese President [Xi Jinping](#) used the term “think tank” for the first time as he laid out a case in which such intellectual groups would help advance a sound system of governance and policy consultation for Beijing.

Two years later, Beijing acted on that vision by publishing its first comprehensive document to promote the idea of “think tanks with Chinese characteristics”. Apart from helping with official decision-making, the document highlighted what would be another key feature of these domestic thought groups – instruments of soft power to promote China’s “international influence and discourse”.

The nationwide efforts seem to have paid off, according to analysts. In 2022, the China Think Tank Directory listed nearly 2,000 active organisations in the country, ranking China second in the world, after the United States. In the latest Global Go To Think Tank Report, China accounted for nearly 17 per cent of the of 11,175 internationally identified organisations in 2021.

But as Beijing seeks urgent economic reforms against the backdrop of a growing geopolitical rivalry between the two countries, several prominent Chinese scholars have said China’s think tanks need to do more.

Despite the rapid expansion and increasing global influence of China’s thought groups, the scholars have cautioned that they still fall short in terms of professionalism and academic achievements – deficiencies that could curb their influence in both domestic and international arenas.

Some experts have also urged the bodies to defend their independence while calling for more privately funded think tanks to diversify in public sectors, despite China’s shrinking space for discourse.

Zheng Yongnian, a scholar at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, who is also a Beijing policy adviser, told a panel last month that despite significant improvement over the past decade, China’s think tanks still lacked “originality” and had produced fewer “constructive comments” in recent years.

“The current situation of [Chinese] think tanks is that ... we can apply the policies of the West or other places immediately, but there is less originality based on our own Chinese experience,” he said at a meeting organised by the Centre on Contemporary China and the World at the University of Hong Kong.

Zhu Xufeng, dean of the school of public policy and management at Tsinghua University, warned that a lack of meaningful research would make it increasingly difficult to influence decision makers.

“Although China’s think tanks have developed in a relatively comprehensive manner, the general quality of their research still needs improvement,” he said.

“We have a lot of think tank research, but they have not had enough ability to influence decision makers,” the professor said in a speech to the HKU panel.

In 2013, as Xi emphasised their policy advisory features, China’s think tank establishment was initially expected to provide intelligence to the government.

Li Cheng, the founding director of the Centre on Contemporary China and the World at HKU, wrote in a 2022 report – “A Ladder to Power and Influence: China’s Official Think Tanks to Watch” – that Xi’s clear preference for the participation of academics and technicians in policy discussions was a major factor driving their development.

Zheng, from CUHK, said that solving the output deficit from China’s think tanks was a matter of division of labour.

“If we can develop think tanks based on the principle of the division of labour, we will all have a comparative advantage ... Sometimes, when a research topic comes up, many think tanks will rush to it, but the actual content of the research is not enough,” he said.

Cui Hongjian, a professor at the Academy of Regional and Global Governance, Beijing Foreign Studies University, and former head of the department of European studies at the China Institute of International Studies – a leading Chinese think tank – said it was also crucial for think tanks to balance their research quality with communication ability to build influence.

“China’s think tanks need to fulfil many functions, including research, communication and influencing decision-making ... However, some think tanks favour only one field and are weak in other areas,” he said.

“Chinese think tanks must improve in all three areas. If the research is solid enough, the policy influence will come naturally and can be disseminated,” he added.

Observers have warned that a continued lack of valuable output will not only diminish the influence of think tanks in Beijing, it could also reduce their impact on the global stage, especially compared with their [American counterparts](#).

Wang Lili, an associate professor at Renmin University in Beijing, and a member of its think tank – the National Academy of Development and Strategy – told the HKU panel that “compared with top international think tanks, Chinese think tanks still lag in research on strategic and forward-looking issues”.

Da Wei, director of the Centre for International Security and Strategy (CISS), a think tank at Tsinghua University, said that compared with the US, China’s

bodies of experts had yet to play significant roles in shaping Beijing’s international strategies.

“In the past decade, our think tanks have not succeeded in providing particularly important ideas. In comparison, [American] think tanks have played a very big role in adjusting Washington’s strategy towards China in the past 10 years,” he said during the HKU panel.

The role of think tanks in the global rivalry between China and the West, particularly in the realms of knowledge and research, has also drawn increasing attention from observers.

In 2015, the first government document advocating the establishment of think tanks stated that the groups should also play diplomatic roles in enhancing China’s “international influence and discourse”, in line with Xi’s overarching plan to promote China’s governance and “tell China’s story”.

Cui, of Beijing Foreign Studies University, said that amid the growing competition between China and the West, research output was still the most important way to grow the international influence of think tanks and further China’s soft power.

If Chinese think tanks could offer “better solutions” to the world – especially in the “humanities and social aspects” – their role could gain crucial advantages in countering big powers, he told the Post.

“If China puts forward an important point of view and a doctrine in the field of humanities and social sciences, it could make the West feel that China could be capable of improving the world. China’s intellectual community would then have a greater international presence, which should be the goal that China’s think tanks set for themselves in future foreign exchanges,” he said.

But according to some observers, gaining more presence on the international stage would depend on how much independence Chinese think tanks have – most of the major ones maintain close ties with the government and the Communist Party.

Under Xi, China’s intellectual sector has faced some of the strictest scrutiny since the country’s opening up. The 2015 document on think tanks underscored one basic principle above all others: adherence to the leadership of the Communist Party, the socialist system, and China’s constitution and laws.

But it may fuel backlash and suspicions in their Western peers.

In their report – “Whispering Advice, Roaring Praises: The Role of Chinese Think Tanks under Xi Jinping” – last May, authors Nis Gruenberg and Grzegorz Stec, two leading China analysts at Merics, warned that foreign scholars should be cautious about the narratives fashioned by Chinese think tanks.

“Intensifying political oversight at home means that think tankers are constrained by Beijing’s propaganda

red lines, putting Chinese intellectuals and researchers in a tough spot,” they wrote.

“They are tasked to exert more influence; at the same time, they are being limited by growing narrative rigidity and red tape when engaging partners abroad,” the report said.

However, using a Western operating model for Chinese think tanks would not be an optimal solution. Some observers said that think tanks in the West, particularly in the United States, showed tendencies towards political division.

“Compared to think tanks in the US, the relationship between Chinese think tanks and the government is more stable and sustainable. In the past 20 years, think tanks in the United States have had major problems, and the polarisation of politics has affected the development of think tanks,” Tsinghua University’s Da told the HKU panel.

Some observers have suggested that privately owned think tanks could be a remedy for overseas scepticism. In 2017, Beijing published an official document to promote privately funded think tanks, but years later, they are still excluded from the mainstream marketplace of ideas in China.

Li Wei, former director of the Development Research Centre of the State Council, said China had about 2,000 think tanks, 90 per cent of which were run by the party-state.

When China announced its first group of 25 high-level think tanks in 2015, all of them were state-affiliated.

Wang Huiyao, who founded the Centre for China and Globalisation, a non-governmental think tank, told the HKU panel that Beijing should continue to encourage privately funded think tanks to enhance the pluralism of intellectual debate in the country.

“Private think tanks will promote the better formation of China’s market of ideas and policy, which is very critical. Like our economy, it has to be diversified, it cannot be a single composition,” he said.

Cui said that amid an intellectual decoupling between the US and China, “social think tanks” – private or non-government think tanks – would be less constrained, therefore helping to deepen exchanges.

“The development of social think tanks in China has filled some of the gaps in China’s intellectual landscape. Social think tanks have the flexibility and, in many cases, the ability to travel abroad without restrictions,” he said.

“In terms of foreign exchanges, social think tanks will have more advantages in the future.”

## China’s Forced Boarding Schools: The Systematic Erasure of Tibetan Cultural Identity

15 January 2025, [Tibet Rights Collective](#)

China’s ongoing policies in Tibet have long been criticized for undermining the region’s cultural, religious, and linguistic identity. A particularly alarming aspect of this strategy is the establishment of forced boarding schools for Tibetan children, which aim to sever their connection to their heritage while subjecting them to political indoctrination and forced assimilation.

### The Scale of Forced Separation

According to reports from human rights organizations, nearly one million Tibetan children have been enrolled in boarding schools far from their homes. These schools are not optional; parents face significant pressure to send their children away, with authorities often portraying the institutions as necessary for “educational advancement” and “economic opportunity.” The reality, however, is starkly different.

### Cultural Erasure Through Education

In these schools, Tibetan children are taught almost exclusively in Mandarin Chinese, with limited or no instruction in the Tibetan language. This language shift is not accidental; it’s a deliberate move to diminish the younger generation’s ability to engage with their cultural and spiritual heritage. Language is a cornerstone of identity, and by eroding it, China’s policies aim to assimilate Tibetans into a homogenized national identity centered on Han Chinese culture.

The curriculum emphasizes Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology, glorifying the Party’s rule and presenting Tibetan history through a lens that marginalizes or erases the region’s distinct identity. Tibetan Buddhism—a key pillar of Tibetan culture—is largely excluded from the education system, replaced with content promoting atheism and loyalty to the CCP.

### Psychological and Emotional Toll

The separation of children from their families inflicts profound psychological and emotional harm. Tibetan children are often sent hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away, with limited opportunities to visit home. The loss of familial and community bonds during formative years has long-term consequences, including identity confusion and emotional distress.

Parents, too, suffer immensely. Many are coerced into compliance through threats of economic sanctions or other forms of state retribution. The pain of separation is compounded by the fear that their children will return alienated from their roots and unable to communicate in their native language.

### International Outcry and Resistance

International human rights organizations, including the United Nations, have condemned China’s boarding school policies as a violation of human rights,

particularly the rights of children and Indigenous peoples. In a 2023 statement, UN experts called on China to “abolish these boarding school systems and policies that forcibly assimilate Tibetan culture and language.”

Resistance within Tibet persists despite the risks. Many Tibetan families and communities strive to preserve their traditions by teaching their children Tibetan language and customs at home. The global Tibetan diaspora is also playing a vital role, amplifying awareness of these abuses and advocating for international intervention.

### **The Broader Context of Sinicization**

The forced boarding schools are part of a broader campaign of Sinicization—a strategy aimed at erasing non-Han cultures and identities. In Tibet, this campaign includes the destruction of religious sites, restrictions on religious practices, and the replacement of Tibetan place names with Mandarin ones. By targeting children, China ensures that the impact of these policies will extend across generations, fundamentally reshaping Tibetan society.

### **Conclusion**

China’s forced boarding schools for Tibetan children represent a calculated effort to erase one of the world’s most ancient and vibrant cultures. The separation of children from their families and the suppression of the Tibetan language and identity are not just policies—they are acts of cultural genocide. The international community must take stronger action to hold China accountable and support the Tibetan people in their struggle to preserve their identity. The voices of Tibetan children, their families, and their communities must be heard, and their right to cultural and linguistic freedom must be upheld.

### **A powerful quake rocked Tibet but the full impact remains unclear due to China's censorship**

15 January 2025, [ABC News](#), Kathleen Calderwood and Xin-yun Wu

Overlooking a vast plateau in Tibet, a woman cries as she describes the scene in front of her.

Her camera focuses on the ruins of a nunnery, painted a deep maroon and set into a hillside.

It's here the poster of the video believes many were injured and in need of help after a magnitude-7.1 earthquake that struck Dingri county, Shigatse prefecture in south-west China a week ago.

"The whole nunnery has fallen into pieces. I can barely look at it," she says through tears.

**"I don't even know what to do. I wish I was dreaming. This is devastating."**

While the Sun is shining overhead, temperatures are extremely cold, as low as -18 degrees Celsius in the days following the quake, stoking fears that

those trapped in the rubble had little chance of survival.

For many Tibetans living overseas — who have limited contact with family and friends in the highly controlled region — videos like these have been the only way to get any sense of the scale of the damage in their homeland, beyond the official accounts in state media and press conferences from Communist Party officials. They have also been at the centre of an information war involving artificial intelligence, contested stories and even a rumour-busting monk.

Chinese state media reported that 126 people have died, and at least 330 more have been injured.

"The region is located on a plateau and in a cold, mountainous area, [where] infrastructure such as that of transportation, communication, and electricity is underdeveloped," said Hong Li, vice-secretary of the Party Committee of the Emergency Management Department of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Local officials said in a press conference that large-scale search and rescue operations had finished by Thursday, after more than 400 people were pulled from the rubble.



*Chinese authorities have sent soldiers, police, firefighters and emergency services personnel to search for survivors. (AP: Liu Yousheng/Xinhua)*

"For a disaster like an earthquake at this scale, it's a race against time," Zhang Yunhong of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) told the ABC from Beijing.

"The people stuck in the rubble need to be rescued within the golden period of the first 24, 48, 72 hours.

"Now the focus is on shelter, on food, and also livelihood support."

More than 61,000 people were affected by the earthquake, at least 47,000 of which had to be relocated by authorities.

Ms Zhang added that the Red Cross of China had deployed more than 100 personnel and delivered nearly 9,000 emergency items, including quilts and disaster kits to the affected region.

### **CCP mobilises monk to dismiss 'rumours'**

The video of the ruined nunnery was posted on Douyin — China's version of TikTok.

While it appears to have been removed from the original poster's page, it has been circulating among Tibetans overseas on other social media.

It has also been picked up by Chinese state media, with Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mouthpiece The Global Times quoting a monk refuting the influencer's claims that they were in desperate need of help.

"After the earthquake, some vloggers took advantage of our focus on earthquake relief to secretly visit Zongbu Temple, a local nunnery in Chamco township," said Ngawang Tsering, deputy director of the Shekar Chode Monastery management committee.

"They filmed videos alleging that the temple was damaged but left unattended, they also falsely claimed that injured nuns were left without assistance.

"These are completely rumours, which made me very angry."

He went on to say that injured nuns were taken to hospital, while those that were unharmed had been resettled.

The influencer said in her video that two nuns had been killed in the earthquake, a claim that The Global Times article did not address.

According to Radio Free Asia, authorities have been prohibiting people from posting earthquake-related content on social media.

The ABC has chosen to blur the faces of those posting from Tibet over concerns for their safety that have been raised by Tibetans living overseas.

#### **Censorship and the baby with six fingers**

This example highlights just how hard it can be for those outside Tibet to know exactly what is going on in their homeland, with many unable to contact friends and relatives due to fear of reprisals.

One of the Tibetans living overseas who the ABC has spoken to has been able to contact family members back home to check on their wellbeing, but said they've kept their conversations to the basics to limit the risk of any harm coming to their relatives.

Complicating matters is the fact that AI images have been shared among the posts purporting to show earthquake damage and rescues, leaving many further questioning what information can be trusted.

Even Chinese state-run television CCTV has published a story about fraudulent pictures online, including one showing a baby emerging from the rubble, which when looked at closely has six fingers on its left hand. Former political prisoner Ngawang Sangdrol was scouring social media in the hours after the earthquake.

"People were too scared to send videos directly through [messaging app] WeChat at the beginning ... and some people reminded each other to be careful, even though it's not related to politics," she told the ABC.

"The people who go [on social media] and see for themselves, they're crying, they're so emotional.

"I don't trust the state media, they only show propaganda."

Now based in the US, Ms Sangdrol, who spent more than a decade in jail by the age of 25, said she wasn't in touch with anyone in Tibet due to her history of advocating for Tibetan independence.

It's the first time she's seen so much of her homeland in years.

"Usually everybody's not open, but this time, everybody is less scared because it's a natural disaster," she said.

"Sometimes I feel I can't see that much ... but this time I can feel how they are strong and united with each other.

"They feel like we're all one family, so it made me more deeply emotional when I saw those [videos on social media]."

#### **Beijing denies cracking down on Tibetan identity**

Information out of Tibet is routinely censored and communication strictly controlled, with foreign journalists rarely allowed into the region.

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China's 2023 Media Freedoms Report said only one of its members had been granted access to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), with the area officially off-limits to international journalists.

The club's 2021 report found that journalists who'd been to Tibetan-inhabited areas of other regions had experienced harassment.

"Journalists selected by the Chinese government to participate in state-organised trips to TAR were closely watched and prevented from going to places or meeting people other than those present by state officials hosting the visit," the 2021 report said.

A report to the US Congress about access to Tibetan areas stated that the TAR is the only part of China that diplomats and other officials have to request formal permission to visit.

"US mission personnel were unable to conduct any American Citizen Services visits to the TAR in 2023 because requests for visits by consular officers were not approved," the report said.

"No consular officer has visited the TAR since 2019." Chinese state media has also reported on the earthquake almost exclusively referring to Tibet as Xizang, the region's Chinese name, in its English language coverage.

Many advocacy groups cite this as another way China has been cracking down on the region and its citizens, and trying to minimise or erase a distinct Tibetan identity, which Beijing rejects.

Kalsang Derab from the Australia Tibet Council said there had been vigils held by communities around Australia, but many still felt disconnected from their friends and families in Tibet.



"They are also trying to gather donations, but it's not possible for the Tibetans in Australia to send donations to Tibet," said Mr Derab, who previously worked for the Tibetan Government in Exile, in India.

"So they are sending the money to India to do prayer offerings to the deceased and also to pray for the recovery of those who were injured in the earthquake.

**"Everyone feels kind of helpless because we can only watch and pray and we cannot do anything on the ground."**



The Dalai Lama asked followers to remain positive during prayers for the victims of the earthquake. (AP: Tenzin Choejor)

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun dismissed calls by the Tibetan government in exile to consider the traditional needs of those affected by the earthquake, calling it a separatist political group.

He went on to say the disaster response was quick and continuing smoothly, with rescuers braving bitter cold and low oxygen levels to find those who'd been trapped.

Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, who's been in exile since a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959, led a prayer gathering of about 12,000 people at the Tashi Lhunpo monastery in southern India.

"This tragedy that has taken place in Tibet should be neither a cause for anger nor something that makes us disheartened," he told the vigil.

"It is important to maintain the bonds between us that are founded on our unshakable faith and commitment."

For Ms Sangdrol, there has been some comfort in seeing her fellow Tibetans band together during a time of crisis.

"Although it is heartbreaking to see the natural disaster that has occurred in Tibet, I am very happy to see that Tibetans inside Tibet still maintain their strong unity as before," she said.

"However, from my experience, I am worried because it is inevitable that some people who are showing concern for this incident will face difficulties due to false political accusations against them."

## Opinion | Tibet's quake is a seismic warning to China and India over their mega dam ambitions

14 January 2025, [SCMP](#), Shi Jiangtao

### Just as border tensions seemed to be easing, the Yarlung Tsangpo River project raises new questions between the two countries

Beijing's announcement of a new mega dam project on the world's highest river near the disputed border on the Tibetan Plateau with India did not come as a complete surprise.

The damming of the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River had been rumoured for years, but the timing of the news – in a state media release on Christmas Day – suggested that Beijing had anticipated controversy and was keen to avoid scrutiny, especially from New Delhi.

Such concerns were not unreasonable, given the sheer scale of the project – at more than three times the size of the Three Gorges Dam.

China's damming of Tibetan rivers has long been a source of tension between the Asian giants, along with repeated disputes over their Himalayan border.

Those long-standing strains had started to ease late last year, with Beijing and New Delhi signing an agreement to de-escalate border tensions and the leaders of the two countries having a rare meeting – all within the same week in October.

Relations appeared to improve further on December 17, when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced that one of Beijing's diplomatic priorities for 2025 was to improve ties with New Delhi.

"We have properly handled differences and are working with India to find the right and bright path for big, neighbouring countries to live in harmony and develop side by side," Wang said in his year-end speech at a government-linked think tank.

It was quite unusual for Beijing's top diplomat to talk so amicably about ties with New Delhi and the comments obviously underlined Beijing's high hopes for a quick turnaround in bilateral relations after a prolonged military stand-off along the disputed Himalayan frontier since 2020.

The following day Wang met Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval in Beijing for the first such high-level talks in five years.

According to India's Ministry of External Affairs, the meeting "provided positive directions for cross-border cooperation and exchanges", including data sharing on trans-border rivers.

It remains unclear if New Delhi was informed of Beijing's dam construction plan before it was made public about a week later, but Beijing had clearly waited until after the "special representatives' meeting on the boundary question" to drop the bombshell announcement.

Beijing took a similar approach over a decade ago when it moved to build the first hydropower plant on the Yarlung Tsangpo, which flows into India as the Brahmaputra.

It chose to drop the news about the Zangmu project on the river's middle reaches in November 2010, about a month before a planned visit to New Delhi by China's then premier Wen Jiabao.

Although Indian officials complained about Beijing's lack of information sharing over its dam building and raised concerns about its possible impact on downstream areas, it did not appear to have a big effect on Wen's trip.

Beijing had clearly hoped for a similarly mild response from New Delhi this time, betting that India would also want to turn a new page in bilateral ties, considering its deepening economic dependence on China.

New Delhi so far has not reacted strongly to the planned mega dam, which pundits said could affect the flow of water from Tibet to India and put India at a strategic disadvantage in the management of the waterway.

It is at least in part due to New Delhi's counter-strategy to accelerate the construction of dams on the Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh near the contested border with China, in a bid to assert India's first-use rights over the waters.

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh did say that New Delhi was "on alert", and the Indian foreign ministry said it conveyed its concerns to Beijing and urged China to ensure interests of downstream states were not harmed by activities upstream.

However, Beijing quickly dismissed New Delhi's concerns, with foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun insisting that the dam project "will not have a negative impact on the ecological environment, geological conditions and the rights and interests related to water resources of downstream countries".

"Rather, it will, to some extent, help with their disaster prevention and reduction and climate response [in the downstream areas]," he claimed on January 6.

But his assertion is hardly convincing, as the dam site, near the Grand Canyon, or the "Great Bend", on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo, is known as a seismically active area prone to earthquakes, landslides and other geological disasters.

Those threats were heightened a day later when a [magnitude-6.8 earthquake](#) centred in Tibet's Tingri county near the Indian border shook the region, killing at least 126 people.

The quake highlighted the region's vulnerability to disasters and revived the debate over whether mega dams should be built there in the first place.

As Beijing and New Delhi step up their dam building competition over the Brahmaputra as part of their deepening strategic rivalry, it is high time for them to address concerns about the dams' damage to the

plateau's fragile environment and the livelihoods of ethnic groups.

### As Trump Returns, Sino-Indian Relations Are Changing

14 January 2025, [Project Syndicate](#), Debasish Roy Chowdhury

*As the incoming US president threatens to impose steep tariffs on any country challenging the dollar's global dominance, India has been quietly making overtures to China. This development, partly driven by both countries' attempts to strengthen their bargaining position, could herald a seismic geopolitical shift.*

HONG KONG – Weeks before his return to the White House, US President-elect Donald Trump issued a pointed warning to the BRICS countries. "Go find another sucker," he [wrote](#) on his social media platform, Truth Social, threatening the group's nine members with 100% tariffs should they attempt to challenge the dollar's global dominance.

Trump's warning came on the heels of his campaign promise to impose a 25% tariff on imported goods from Canada and Mexico on his first day in office. China, the primary target of Trump's protectionism, is expected to face an additional 10% tariff. While this is hardly surprising, given the escalating trade war between China and the United States, Trump has also directed his ire at India, a founding member of the BRICS and one of America's key allies.

So far, India has managed to avoid immediate conflict by reaffirming its commitment to the dollar. But such policy uncertainties are among the many reasons why the Indian government has been quietly hedging its bets by pursuing rapprochement with China – a move that could herald a seismic geopolitical shift.

The China-India thaw has become increasingly evident in recent months. In October, the two countries reached an agreement to end the years-long military standoff along their shared Himalayan border, setting the stage for a surprise meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia. Another sign of this shift is Indian officials' newfound interest in attracting Chinese investment.

Meanwhile, US-India relations appear to be cooling. Since a popular uprising ousted Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August, Modi's favored news outlets, social-media operatives, and Hindu supremacist allies have portrayed the insurrection as a CIA-orchestrated regime change. Some have even warned of similar attempts by the "American deep state" to destabilize India.

Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has since embraced anti-American sentiment, accusing the US

of targeting Indian tycoon Gautam Adani – a close ally of Modi charged with securities fraud and bribery in the US – in an effort to undermine the Indian government. Such rhetoric, a stark departure from decades of strategic cooperation, evokes memories of the Cold War, when a nominally nonaligned India, wary of US interference, gravitated toward the Soviet Union.

This shift is driven by several factors, primarily America's diminishing ability and willingness to act as a global leader, along with China and India's attempts to strengthen their bargaining position. With deglobalization reshaping the world economy, America has less to offer countries like India, which do not entirely rely on it for defense.

By contrast, China's dominance in global supply chains has become impossible to ignore. As the world's manufacturing superpower – producing more than the next nine largest manufacturers combined – China could support India's efforts to expand its own industrial base. The government's annual economic survey highlighted this imperative, stating that “to boost Indian manufacturing and plug India into the global supply chain,” the country must “plug itself into China's supply chain.” To this end, the report advocated a pragmatic approach focused on attracting Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI).

Such unequivocal government support for cooperation with China was once unthinkable in India, which has maintained adversarial relations with its neighbor since the 1962 Sino-Indian War. After 20 Indian soldiers were killed in border clashes in India's Ladakh region in 2020, India responded by imposing sweeping restrictions on investments and imports from China, limiting executive visas, and banning Chinese apps. But these measures resulted in massive losses for Indian businesses reliant on Chinese imports. Worse, they deprived India of critical Chinese investments at a time when FDI inflows were already declining.

As global supply chains shift away from China, Chinese manufacturers are also relocating, establishing bases in countries that stand to benefit from the West's friendshoring and nearshoring strategies. Chinese investments in greenfield projects tripled year on year in 2023, to \$160 billion, with much of these flows going to countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Hungary, and Serbia. India, grappling with jobless growth and high youth unemployment, is eager to capitalize on this trend.

The US, once a major source of FDI, is now competing with India for investment as it seeks to boost domestic manufacturing. This competition, which is expected to intensify under Trump, has prompted India to approve several investment proposals and offer concessions – including expedited visas – to Chinese businesses and executives.

India's course correction aligns closely with China's interests, as the country's economic slowdown has piqued Chinese firms' interest in India's rapidly growing market. India is projected to become the world's third-largest economy by the end of this decade, and deeper engagement with it would provide China with a major buffer against US efforts to contain its geopolitical rise.

Moreover, while global attention remains focused on the escalating tariff war between the US and China, India faces significant risks of its own. Trump, who has repeatedly labeled India a “very big abuser of tariffs,” had revoked its preferential trade status during his first term, raising the likelihood of further punitive measures.

To be sure, India – designated by the US as a “Major Defense Partner” – is unlikely to abandon its strategic relationship with the US for closer ties with China. But like other emerging powers in the Global South, India is increasingly frustrated with the inherent asymmetry of the US-led liberal international order, particularly the dollar's hegemony.

These frictions are also fueled by America's occasional rebukes of India's treatment of minorities. Having systematically weakened democratic institutions and tightened control over the media, Modi's government bristles at any international criticism. Fortunately for Modi, such differences may resolve themselves. After all, it's hard to imagine Trump being overly concerned by India's ties to Russia, anti-Muslim policies, or democratic backsliding.

Still, as Modi steps up his efforts to transform India into a Hindu state, he may want to secure America's support by signaling that he has alternatives. In that sense, India's overtures to China could be viewed as a geopolitical maneuver aimed at enabling India to tell Trump to “go find another sucker” should he decide to play hardball.

### **Behind the India-China talks: Unravelling Beijing's deceptive long-term strategy**

14 January 2025, [ORF](#), Kalpit A Mankikar

*The border rapprochement is a ruse; China hopes to keep the border issue alive to maintain its dominance in Asia*

Sun Tzu's treatise on war offers many stratagems to deal with the enemy. He emphasises deception and patience, cautioning that the general who makes many calculations like a chess player is more likely to win. Unfortunately, endurance is in short supply when it comes to India-China dynamics, especially in the era of 24/7 news cycles.

In December 2024, the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Special Representatives (SRs) between India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, and China's Foreign

Minister, Wang Yi, took place after a hiatus of nearly five years. The SRs mechanism was constituted in an agreement in 2003, which mandated that ways to resolve the boundary question should be looked into from a political perspective. In the Indian readout, both Doval and Wang Yi underscored the overall India-China bilateral relationship was dependent on the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in border regions. Decks are being cleared for the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage in Tibet, trade in border areas, and data sharing on trans-border rivers.

*The SRs mechanism was constituted in an agreement in 2003, which mandated that ways to resolve the boundary question should be looked into from a political perspective.*

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs communique refers to the “six consensus”—developments related to the disengagement along the border—as a “solution”. It states that the border issue should be “handled appropriately”, and should not affect the development of bilateral relations. It cites efforts on both sides to arrive at a “mutually acceptable package solution” to the border issue, based on the SR accord on the boundary issue reached in 2005. The Chinese readout also pledges that the two nations must empower the SRs framework, and strengthen coordination and cooperation in diplomatic and military negotiations. It also refers to the continuation of the SRs mechanism through a meeting in the next year, underlining that a stable China-India relationship is key to peace in Asia. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs assesses the SR mechanism’s revival as “hard-won”, giving an impression that it values efforts to normalise ties after the tense military standoff. Yet, like the generals listening to Sun Tzu’s counsel, Beijing had other calculations up its sleeve. While all along, China’s actions were classified as grey-zone warfare, academics are now increasingly debating the use of the term “ICAD”, denoting “illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive” behaviour, to explain Beijing’s tactics. China is building on its ICAD strategy, as evidenced by its large hydro-power project on the Yarlung-Tsangpo river in Tibet, which becomes the Brahmaputra after it enters Arunachal Pradesh. New Delhi has conveyed its concerns to Beijing, insisting that the interests of lower riparian states like Bangladesh be protected. Furthermore, the Xinjiang Autonomous Region announced the formation of two counties in the Hotan prefecture, subsuming territory in Ladakh. This is in line with the cartographic-onslaught strategy under which China earlier unilaterally renamed towns in Arunachal Pradesh, to which it lays claims. Beijing has also published an official map showing large parts of Indian territory as part of China.

*China is building on its ICAD strategy, as evidenced by its large hydro-power project on the Yarlung-*

*Tsangpo river in Tibet, which becomes the Brahmaputra after it enters Arunachal Pradesh.*

This renewed belligerence might be propelled by China’s calculations that New Delhi was too eager to reduce tensions with Beijing, and due to the important divergences in New Delhi and Washington D.C.’s strategic interests. Liu Zongyi, Director of the South Asia Research Center of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, assesses that India’s motivation to mend fences with China is influenced primarily by financial and economic considerations. First, he points to the fact that the military standoff in eastern Ladakh has drained India’s finances due to heightened investments in weapon purchases and physical infrastructure development, diverting New Delhi’s focus from the Indian Ocean. Second, he adds that Western-led containment alliances around China had led to strategic competition between Washington and Beijing and that India was keen to use this opportunity to develop its economy, for which it needed China as a development partner. Third, there is also a belief that India was relenting on its “xiè mò shā lú” [卸磨杀驴] attitude towards Chinese corporates, which roughly translates ‘to kill the donkey after the grinding is done’. The implication here is that New Delhi unjustly curbed Chinese firms doing business in India. Yuan Jirong, who covers India, as a correspondent for a Chinese media outlet, believes India-US compact is fraying due to divergent strategic interests. First, he makes this argument based on an assessment by Washington that India was a “big country” pursuing its own interests, and it would never formally become an ally of the US, thus circumscribing US-India cooperation. Second, he also argues that India’s aspiration for global leadership will mean that it may challenge the US. Conversely, he also suggests that Washington’s goal is to encourage competition between the two developing powers that are rising parallelly, thus letting its global hegemony continue. This pessimistic outlook on India-US relations does not seem to be rooted in reality, given that US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan visited Delhi in January 2025, meeting the Indian leadership to take stock of the “Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership” between the two nations in sectors like technology, defence, space, civil nuclear, clean energy, semiconductors, and artificial intelligence (AI). Washington has also announced its intent to remove hurdles to cooperation in the field of civil nuclear, including removing regulations for Indian scientific establishments, under which they are subjected to export restrictions with respect to specific goods and know-how.

*Chinese strategists feel that India’s conceptualisation of a “multipolar Asia” as the basis of a “multipolar world”, places India on an equal footing with China in*

*Asia, thereby hindering Chinese ambitions to become the dominant power in Asia.*

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the October 2024 BRICS summit in Russia, Modi affirmed that stable India-China relations would contribute to a multi-polar Asia and a multi-polar world. Chinese strategists feel that India's conceptualisation of a "multipolar Asia" as the basis of a "multipolar world", places India on an equal footing with China in Asia, thereby hindering Chinese ambitions to become the dominant power in Asia. Beijing feels that given the power differential between the two, India would be incentivised to join other countries to check and balance China. Thus, China would prefer to keep the border issue alive, and its projection of a rapprochement is only a ruse to further its ICAD strategy.

### How China is erasing Tibetan culture, one child at a time

14 January 2025, [The Japan Times](#), Chris Buckley



*Young Tibetan monks sit on a scooter as they arrive to take part in a protest march held to mark the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, in the northern hill town of Dharamsala, India, on March 10, 2024. | REUTERS*

Across China's west, the Communist Party is placing children in boarding schools in a drive to assimilate a generation of Tibetans into the national mainstream and mold them into citizens loyal to the party.

Tibetan rights activists, as well as experts working for the United Nations, have said that the party is systematically separating Tibetan children from their families to erase Tibetan identity and to deepen China's control of a people who historically have resisted Beijing's rule. The activists have estimated that around three-quarters of Tibetan students age 6 and older — and others even younger — are in residential schools that teach largely in Mandarin, replacing the Tibetan language, culture and Buddhist beliefs that the children once absorbed at home and in village schools.

When China's top leader, Xi Jinping, visited one such school in the summer, he inspected a dormitory that

appeared freshly painted and as neat as an army barracks. He walked into a classroom where Tibetan students, listening to a lecture on Communist Party thought, stood and applauded to welcome him.

Xi's visit to the school in Qinghai province in June amounted to a firm endorsement of the program, despite international criticism. Education, he said, must "implant a shared consciousness of Chinese nationhood in the souls of children from an early age." Chinese officials say the schools help Tibetan children to quickly become fluent in the Chinese language and learn skills that will prepare them for the modern economy. They say that families voluntarily send their children to the schools, which are free, and that the students have classes in Tibetan culture and language. But extensive interviews and research by The New York Times show that Tibetan children appear to be singled out by Chinese authorities for enrollment in residential schools. Their parents often have little or no choice but to send them, experts, parents, lawyers and human rights investigators said in interviews. Many parents do not see their children for long stretches.

Dozens of research papers and reports from experts and teachers within the Chinese system have warned about anxiety, loneliness, depression and other psychological harm to the schools' Tibetan children.

The Times reviewed and analyzed hundreds of videos posted to Chinese social media sites by Tibetan boarding schools, state media and local propaganda departments that showed how the schools operate and serve the party's objectives.

Student life is heavy with political indoctrination. Schools, for instance, celebrate what China calls "Serfs' Emancipation Day," referring to the anniversary of the Communist Party's full takeover of Tibet in 1959, after a failed Tibetan uprising and a Chinese crackdown that forced the Dalai Lama into exile. The party accuses the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, of having ruled over a slaveholding society.

Children as young as preschool age were being sent away, and parental visits were limited. The Times talked to three Tibetan parents with children of elementary-school age in residential schools who said that they had no choice and that they were not allowed to visit their children at will.

Chinese officials insist that enrollment is voluntary. In reality, the government has closed village schools and privately run Tibetan language schools while strictly enforcing mandatory education laws.

"One can hardly speak of any choice if local schools are all closed down," said Fernand de Varennes, a human rights expert.

He and two other independent experts with the United Nations investigated the boarding schools and expressed alarm in 2023 at what they said appeared to

be a "policy of forced assimilation of the Tibetan identity into the dominant Han-Chinese majority."

In 2021, a video surfaced online showing an elementary schoolteacher in eastern Tibet beating a child with a chair in his classroom. The video circulated on the internet in China more than 1,000 times before it was taken down.

Physical punishment is outlawed in Chinese schools, but studies by Chinese academics have found that the practice persists in Tibetan boarding schools.

The Chinese government does not say how many Tibetan children are in boarding schools. The Tibet Action Institute, an international group that has campaigned to close the schools, estimates that among children ages 6 to 18, the figure is at least 800,000 — or 3 in every 4 Tibetan children. The group arrived at its estimate, which it published in a report in 2021, based on local government statistics.

Statistics collected by the Times from local government documents across Tibetan areas show similar numbers in boarding schools, with some areas notably higher than others.

In Golog, a Tibetan area of Qinghai province, 95% of middle school students were in such schools, according to a study published in 2017 in China's main journal on education for ethnic groups. A report from the local Legislature in 2023 said that 45 of the 49 elementary schools in Golog were residential.

The expansion of boarding school enrollment in Tibetan areas runs counter to the national trend. Chinese government guidelines issued in 2018 say that elementary schoolchildren should not, in general, be sent to such schools.

But children from ethnic minorities in border regions seem to be treated as an exception. In the far western region of Xinjiang, children of the Muslim Uyghur ethnic group have also been sent to residential schools in large numbers.

Chinese officials say such schools help children in Tibetan regions avoid long commutes. But official websites also promote instructions from Xi on minority education, arguing that youth in ethnic minority regions were at risk of having "erroneous" ideas about religion, history and ethnic relations.

To counter those threats, Xi said in 2014, children of the right age should "study in school, live in school and grow up in school." The government's hope is that those children will then become champions of the Chinese language and the party's values.

But some of the starkest warnings about the toll that boarding schools are taking on Tibetan children come from within China's education system.

Teachers, education researchers and local legislators in China have written reports describing Tibetan children as suffering from being separated from their families and from being largely confined within their schools.

Education, especially in minority areas, is a politically sensitive topic. Tibetans who oppose the boarding schools risk imprisonment if they protest.

Yet some still voice their worries. On Douyin, China's version of TikTok, parents lamented the diminishing role that the Tibetan language plays in their children's lives.

"After just one month in kindergarten, my child basically no longer speaks Tibetan. Now when we speak to our child in Tibetan, they only respond in Mandarin," one person wrote in a comment. "No matter how we try to teach Tibetan now, they won't learn it. I'm really heartbroken."

### How China Plans To Kill 3 Birds With One Stone With Mega Dam Near Tibet | Exclusive

13 January 2025, [News18](#), Manoj Gupta

Sources told CNN-News that by building the dam, China intends to end the Tibet issue, weaponise water, and gain control over downstream countries like India and Bangladesh

China's mega dam — touted to be the world's largest — on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet close to the Indian border is a "weapon without artillery and the biggest investment in a single project on the planet", top intelligence sources have told CNN-News18.

Decoding what the sources called China's new "game plan" to control downstream counties like India and Bangladesh, the sources said: "Hundreds of Tibetan protestors are in long-term custody in the Tibet region after unusual protests. The displacement of communities from the region is a major idea and China will impact the security of the region. This will create major imbalance and ultimately damage the regional balance, economic stability and security."

Satellite images seen by agencies reveal large-scale construction for the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project near the Tibet region and very close to Arunachal Pradesh. These include heavy machinery and army camp-like formations.

According to sources, the construction is happening on the left bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo River or Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh and the Brahmaputra in Assam.

"The construction will be dangerous and will impact geology because drilling will hit tectonic plates, which could cause earthquakes," they said.

According to sources, China has approved the construction of the project with capacity of 60,000 MW of power on the Yarlung Tsangpo. Its entry point into India is located at Tuting in Upper Siang district.

This is very close to the Indian border post, which is just five kilometres away in Gelling, Upper Siang, 5.75 kilometres from Gelling village, 1.62 kilometres from

the McMahon Line, and 35 kilometres from Medog town in the Nyingchi region of Tibet.

"The dam construction is a strategic project of China and Chinese have clear advantage to store or divert the flow of the river system. The Chinese have never worked on any project without a purpose. This dam will serve as a tool where both India and Bangladesh will suffer in the times of stand-off like the recent one after Galwan and Doklam."

They added: "China's intent may be to divert water from multiple water reservoirs under the project, which will dry the regions of Tibet. In case China does this, the river coming to India — which is Siang — will also lose its water flow and impact both Assam and Bangladesh."

The sources said by building dams in the Tibetan plateau, China will gain significant upstream leverage over multiple neighbouring countries to which the rivers flow.

India has expressed concern that China might redirect additional water from transboundary rivers to its northern regions to meet the water demands of its coal and grain production centres.

Compared to China's other main rivers, the Brahmaputra River has the lowest rate of hydropower utilisation.

Top government sources, while speaking to CNN-News18, said the matter is already in the knowledge of the government and "we are taking counter measures to meet our long-term requirements".

"Special Representative-level talks are going to discuss all these issues and we will take it forward. We have also announced some dams in Arunachal Pradesh in light of developments in our areas and tackling Chinese threat."

### Colossal energy reservoir discovered under Tibet: China would need to blow the mountain up

13 January 2025, [The Pulse](#), More M.

An enormous energy reserve that could change the future of energy in the region has been discovered in Tibet through a ground-breaking finding. However, there can be significant environmental costs associated with using this resource. China may use drastic methods, **such as extensive excavation**, to unlock the energy potential hidden beneath the Tibetan Plateau, according to experts.

Revealing the asset: A revolution in energy security  
With its abundance of hydrogen and other renewable resources, Tibet's energy reservoir is a viable way to meet China's expanding energy needs. China wants to transform its energy landscape, and a major hydrogen energy industrial park is being developed on the Tibetan Plateau. The project promotes hydrogen as a

greener option and is in line with **international efforts to lessen reliance on fossil fuels**.

It's not easy to access this energy gem, though. Tibet's untamed landscape and fragile ecology provide formidable obstacles. Concerns regarding the effects on culture and the environment have also prompted criticism from local Tibetan groups and conservationists. If they need to do extensive excavation, then it could potentially lead to harm more than good that they can find underneath.

China is in desperate need of hydrogen: It believes it will rise

Since non-fossil industries will account for the majority of future power supply growth, expanding the usage of "green hydrogen" would be essential for China to meet its dual carbon objectives, according to analysts. A 15-year strategy to grow the hydrogen energy sector and increase the share of such energy produced from renewable sources was released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration.

Four green hydrogen projects have already been developed by China Petroleum and Chemical Corp., also known as Sinopec, the largest refiner by volume in the world. These include a 100,000 t/y renewables-based project in Ulaanqab, Inner Mongolia; a 10,000 t/y offshore wind-based project in Zhangzhou, Fujian province; and a 20,000 tonnes per year solar-based project in Kuqa, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

This also includes a 10,000 t/y wind and solar-based project in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. These are included in its **\$4.6 billion investment plan for the hydrogen industry through 2025**, to increase its yearly capacity to produce 500,000 tonnes of hydrogen by that time. Therefore, China's goal to dig into Tibet is also associated with every hydrogen plan they have in place from now until 2030.

Environmental consequences: Dangers of extensive digging

In order to access the energy beneath Tibet, extreme means could be required, such as possibly blowing through portions of the mountain. Concerns regarding habitat destruction, environmental deterioration, and elevated seismic activity are raised by such a strategy. Critics contend that one of the most ecologically vulnerable areas in the world could suffer irreversible damage as a result of these efforts.

Tibet is currently at the centre of a global discussion about how to balance environmental protection with energy requirements. Experts advise making investments in cutting-edge technology that reduces ecological disturbances and enables sustainable energy extraction without endangering the environment. However, the question is, is it possible to strike a balance or are we risking our environment?

Local and worldwide responses: A conflicting agreement

Although we want to produce cheaper and renewable energy, it is not worth putting the environment at risk, and that is where there is an international debate about this issue with China's initiative. While Tibetan tribes worry about the socio-cultural consequences, **Chinese officials highlight the possibility of renewable energy leadership** and believe that the global community will benefit too at the end of the day.

Surely, the world could benefit; then China will be hailed as the leader in renewable resources, but at what cost? Is it worth damaging the natural reservoirs for power and money? Or is it better to let it go, find solutions to save the world and still supply sustainable energy? We know the answer to that but China does not seem to comprehend how this will affect future generations and deplete the environment in the long run.

### **Decades of dwindling: Drop in Tibetan arrivals raise concerns**

13 January 2025, [Hindustan Times](#), Dar Ovais

The current trickle of Tibetan arrivals is in stark contrast to the 1990s and early 2000s when thousands would arrive annually from Tibet

Only eight people--four youths and four elderly-- have arrived in India from Tibet during the current financial year compared to 42 arrivals witnessed last year, as per details shared by Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) officials.

The current trickle of Tibetan arrivals is in stark contrast to the 1990s and early 2000s when thousands would arrive annually from Tibet.

Due to decline in the number of arrivals, the Tibetan Reception Centre at Khanyara in Dharamshala has significantly reduced activity in recent years. It was built as a transit point for thousands of Tibetans who annually made the clandestine journey from Tibet into Nepal and then to Dharamshala — home to the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, since his escape from Tibet.

While young Tibetans typically come to pursue education, elderly arrivals usually stay in Dharamshala. According to CTA officials, in 2020, only five Tibetans arrived in Dharamshala while ten had arrived in 2021. The numbers did not improve much, with only five arrivals in 2022. The same figure stood around 2,500 to 3,000 around the 1990s or the early 2000s.

#### **CTA cites intensified control inside Tibet as reason**

CTA officials said the number of arrivals is nowhere close to what it was a decade or two ago because of the stricter control inside Tibet and pressure on the Nepalese government. The decline in arrivals was majorly seen after a major demonstration in Tibet in 2008.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering said, "The number of arrivals has been decreasing since 2008, when large-scale demonstrations erupted across Tibet, involving people from all walks of life. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of arrivals dropped drastically. While there seems to be a semblance of an increasing number of people coming out, it is a very difficult journey, requiring people to climb over the Himalayas, and you also need to pay guides to help you cross."

"It still remains very challenging because control within Tibet has intensified. The Chinese government has removed all the guides. Additionally, there is increasing pressure on the Nepalese government. For the first time, in March of last year, an incident occurred when Nepalese police arrived at the reception center with the IDs of three monks who had escaped from Tibet. This is happening for the first time," he said, adding that we also have to be mindful of when people come out of Tibet to Nepal, to move them to India as soon as possible.

The CTA operates three Reception Centres in Nepal, Delhi, and Dharamshala. New arrivals first enter Nepal, then transit through Delhi, before ultimately arriving in Dharamshala.

Notably, the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) Schools, a non-profit organisation that takes care of the education of Tibetan students, are also seeing a decline in admissions due to decreased influx of people from Tibet to India.

Last year, no new admissions of students from Tibet were reported at TCV Upper Dharamshala and TCV Gopalpur, a stark contrast to the nearly 1,000 Tibetan students who took admission in TCV schools over a decade ago.

### **Tibet quake highlights earthquake risk for dams on roof of the world**

13 January 2025, [Reuters](#), Colleen Howe

Tibet's earthquake of magnitude 6.8 that killed 126 and damaged four water reservoirs this week highlights the risks from a hydropower building spree by Asian giants China and India in one of the world's most remote, quake-prone regions, experts say.

Some 68 major dams in the Himalayan region exploit the enormous hydropower potential of high-altitude lakes and rivers - just a fifth of which has been tapped, researchers say, but face seismic risks.

Another 101 are in the stages of being planned or built.

Even before the quake centered on Tingri county, the northern gateway to the Mount Everest region, experts had voiced concern about both nations' hydropower ambitions there, exemplified by China's plan for the world's largest hydropower dam.



The project, more than three times the size of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest, is set to provide 34 gigawatts of clean energy vital to China's aim of peak carbon emissions before 2030.

"A strong earthquake could cause direct damage," Fan Xiao, a former chief engineer in the geology and mineral bureau of Sichuan in southwestern China, wrote in an article in October 2022 on the province's Motuo project approved in late December.

Fan, who warned the project was in an area prone to strong earthquakes, did not respond to Reuters questions on messaging app Wechat about the article. Hydropower projects in the remote mountainous area highlight the tension between the risks of building there and the enormous demand for clean power in China and India, the world's No. 1 and No. 3 emitters of greenhouse gases respectively.

Earthquakes have damaged dams in the past, particularly by setting off landslides and rockfalls. A massive earthquake in Nepal in 2015 shuttered almost a fifth of its hydropower for more than a year, research published in 2018 showed.

Building more dams in the Himalayas is not sustainable, said C P Rajendran, a geologist at India's National Institute of Advanced Studies, citing ecological concerns and the earthquake risk from the weight of gigantic reservoirs on faultlines.

#### AGEING RESERVOIRS

China's water resources ministry has raised concerns, opens new tab about ageing reservoirs, more than 80% built between the 1950s and 1970s.

However, it did not respond to a faxed request for comment and has not detailed the reservoirs damaged in the Tibet quake.

The Motuo project has been rigorously tested for disaster prevention and mitigation, China's foreign ministry has said.

Tectonic activity in the region could make the site hazardous though analysis is needed to determine specific risks at the site on the upper reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river, said Wolfgang Schwanghart, a Potsdam University expert who studies the formation and changes of the earth's surface.

His research in 2018 showed about a quarter of the region's projects were at risk of moderate to severe damage in a future earthquake.

China says the dam will play a major role in reaching carbon peaking and neutrality goals and will stimulate the economy and create jobs.

Hydropower generation is more reliable and flexible than intermittent wind and solar, and helps with the urgent need to transition away from polluting coal.

But Fan said the project was unnecessary, given the low hydropower demand in sparsely populated Tibet and the high costs of transmitting it elsewhere.

Some mega-dam building in China may be motivated more by economics than energy needs, he said.

"The gross domestic product brought by huge hydropower projects, as well as the increase in investment and tax revenue, is a great temptation for the government and related interest groups," Fan added.

#### Balancing ties with China and India

12 January 2025, [The Financial Express](#)

In the previous article (Part I), we have discussed how Bangladesh's emerging economic relationship with China can lead to new developments in its bilateral negotiations with India, which are required for resolving some of the crucial issues like Ganges and Teesta water-sharing disputes, trade imbalances, and economic dependency. We emphasized how China's expanding influence in South Asia, particularly through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), presents Bangladesh with unique opportunities to strengthen its bargaining power with India. By diversifying its economic ties, attracting Chinese investments, and enhancing water resource management through Chinese-backed infrastructure projects, Bangladesh can push India toward more cooperative and equitable agreements.

Building on these strategic insights, Part II explores in greater detail how Bangladesh's defense, security, infrastructure, and diplomatic partnerships with China might continue to reshape India's engagement of the region. We discuss how security cooperation with China might encourage India to upgrade its military relations with Bangladesh toward more regional stability and robust bilateral dialogues. We also examine how Bangladesh's increasing infrastructure development under China's BRI might force India to accelerate its cross-border connectivity projects in order to maintain regional competitiveness.

Finally, we discuss how Bangladesh's improved diplomatic standing in key regional organizations such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor can strengthen its influence on India regarding unresolved issues like trade agreements, transit arrangements, and water-sharing negotiations. As former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wisely said, "In crises, the most daring decision is often the safest." By using its strategic relationship with China, Bangladesh can turn the tables and change its regional position so that India will have to approach bilateral negotiations with greater urgency, flexibility, and mutual respect.

This second part comprehensively analyzes how Bangladesh can convert its geo-economic vulnerabilities into strategic assets by balancing its relations with both regional giants. A well-calibrated foreign policy driven by national interest may

transform Bangladesh from a passive regional player to an assertive diplomatic force capable of shaping the geopolitical landscape of South Asia.

**Security and Defense Balance:** China's expanding role as a defense supplier to Bangladesh has fundamentally altered the regional security dynamics of South Asia. By supplying submarines, naval vessels, missile systems, and advanced military technologies, China has positioned itself as a critical defense partner for Bangladesh. India views this growing military cooperation with unease, realizing that its traditional strategic dominance in the region is under threat.

**Security Dialogues and Cooperation.** Bangladesh's growing defense relationship with China may influence India to seek deeper security arrangements with Dhaka. India may further strengthen maritime security cooperation, counterterrorism operations, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms to retain its leverage in Bangladesh's security calculus.

This may be done by expanding the scope of bilateral security dialogues on: (a) **Maritime Stability:** Joint naval exercises and coordinated patrols in the Bay of Bengal to counter China's growing naval presence. (b) **Counterterrorism and Border Management:** Expanding cross-border security protocols to combat smuggling, trafficking, and insurgency-related threats. (c) **Defense Technology and Training:** Increasing military training programs and defense technology transfers to Bangladesh's armed forces.

As aptly noted by former U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Proactive security cooperation with Bangladesh would reduce India's anxiety over China's strategic military foothold in South Asia.

**Broader Regional Security and Strategic Stability.** A greater regional framework involving Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar on security issues in order to balance China's fast-developing defense relations in the Bay of Bengal would not be out of place either. The cooperation in disaster management, peacekeeping operations, and maritime security, meanwhile, will further reinforce the regional stability against China's strategic depth in South Asia.

As former Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon once said, "Regional cooperation in security is not a luxury but a necessity for maintaining peace and development in South Asia." India's recalibrated security policy toward Bangladesh could exemplify this philosophy.

**Negotiation on Infrastructure and Connectivity:** The BRI has shaped Bangladesh's infrastructure landscape, wherein projects such as the Payra Deep-Sea Port, Karnaphuli Tunnel, and Padma Bridge have enhanced economic connectivity. India needs to fast-track its cross-border transit agreements and connectivity projects so that China does not monopolize critical infrastructure development in Bangladesh.

**Strengthening Transit and Connectivity Arrangements** India could fast-track key infrastructure projects such as: (a) **India-Bangladesh Coastal Shipping Agreement:** developing sea-borne trade through ports at Chattogram and Mongla, among others. (b) **Expanding cargo routes** through Indian northeastern states via the so-called BBIN corridor for transshipment. (c) **Reinforcing cross-border rail lines**, such as the Agartala-Akhaura and Kolkata-Chattogram routes. By developing connectivity projects, India can decrease the dependence of Bangladesh on China-funded infrastructure, thus ensuring far greater regional integration.

**Strategic Impact on Regional Trade.** Improved transit arrangements would place Bangladesh as a strategic trade hub, connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia. More regional trade corridors would also lead to the diversification of Bangladesh's economic partners and greater economic independence from China.

As former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh aptly said, "Connectivity is the lifeline of the economy in the modern world." In chasing mutual infrastructure objectives, Bangladesh and India could achieve higher efficiency in trade and greater regional integration.

**Diplomatic Maneuvering in Regional Organizations.** Bangladesh's improved relations with China have given the country a higher status in powerful regional platforms such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor. This increased diplomatic profile provides substantial strategic leverage vis-à-vis India.

**Enhancement of Bangladesh's Strategic Leverage** China's international reach in multilateral organizations provides yet another platform to Bangladesh for putting pressure on India on critical issues relating to water-sharing and trade integration. China, an important player in water management and economic projects, is likely to convince India through its involvement towards a more cooperative attitude.

**Strategic Influence on Bilateral Engagements.** It might push India to offer better trade, water-sharing, and investment deals as a counterbalance to the fast-expanding role of China in Bangladesh's strategic affairs: faster resolution of the long-stalled Teesta Water Treaty, reduced trade tariffs, and more development aid packages.

As former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wisely said, "In crises, the most daring decision is often the safest." The more Bangladesh could establish its strategic worth through Sino-Bangladeshi cooperation, the better the deals it could negotiate with India.

**Conclusion: A Strategic Balancing Act for Bangladesh:** Bangladesh's deepening ties with China present a critical opportunity to reshape its regional diplomacy by balancing India's dominance while advancing its

national development goals. Strengthening its economic partnership, expanding military cooperation, and securing diplomatic support from China can help Bangladesh address long-standing bilateral challenges with India—particularly in water-sharing agreements, trade negotiations, security dialogues, and cross-border infrastructure projects. All of that, however, requires tremendous skill in diplomacy, political foresight, and strategic patience. This art of balance between China and India is a delicate balance for Bangladesh, in which neither should be given disproportionate influence while fostering cooperation where there is a benefit to her national interests. As once famously said by Singapore’s founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, “In the end, geopolitics is about balance of power. You align where your interests lie.”

By leveraging China’s strategic investments while enjoying constructive relations with India, Bangladesh has an opportunity to evolve from a regional underdog into a significant powerbroker in South Asia. How well the country negotiates concessions, secures fair treaties, and further strengthens its economy depends on this tightrope walk. As former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger aptly said, “In crises, the most daring decision is often the safest.”

Bangladesh now stands on the threshold of redefining its geopolitical future—turning geographic vulnerabilities into strategic assets under a robust foreign policy framework. It is capable of transforming regional challenges into platforms for lasting stability, prosperity, and global recognition with prudent, visionary leadership and a well-defined national vision. As the Chinese proverb goes: “When the wind of change blows, some build walls, others build windmills.”

It is time for Bangladesh to build its windmills, harnessing the changing geopolitical winds to secure a brighter, more resilient future.

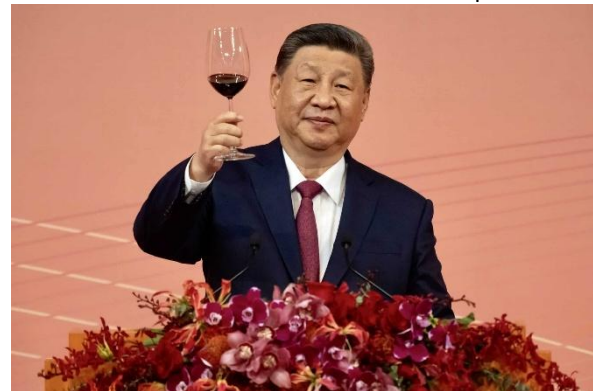
### How Xi Jinping Became a Prisoner of His Party’s Language

12 January 2025, [The Wire](#), Lizzi C. Lee

As the ultimate institutionalist, Xi derives his power and authority from the Party’s ideology, rhetoric, and rules — but now finds himself constrained by them.

China’s economic recovery, long awaited after the Covid lockdowns, remains stubbornly elusive. Growth has stalled, consumer spending is muted, and confidence — both domestic and global — has frayed. The initial buzz created by [policy pivots](#) announced last September and reaffirmed at December’s Central Economic Work Conference has fizzled. The world’s second-largest economy feels

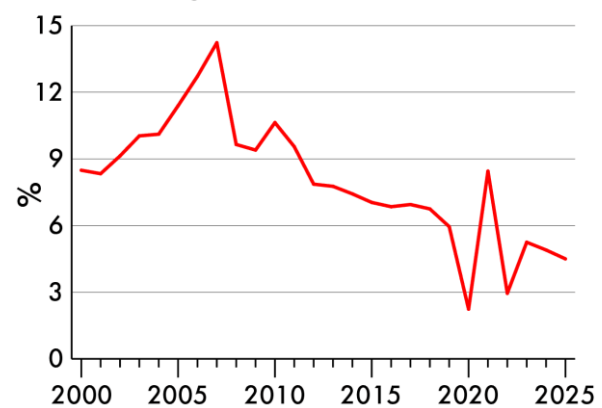
stuck in second gear, unable to reclaim the momentum that once defined the “China speed.”



Chinese President Xi Jinping makes a toast after delivering a speech during celebrations for the 25th anniversary of Macao’s handover, December 19, 2024. Credit: Anthony Kwan via [AP Images](#)

## A Glance at GDP Growth

China’s GDP growth rate, forecasted to 2025.



Note: 2024 and 2025 figures are World Bank [estimates](#). Data: [World Bank](#)

At first glance, the reasons seem clear: heavy-handed regulatory crackdowns, a fixation on supply-side investment, and a refusal to unleash meaningful fiscal support for households. But a deeper issue lies beyond these missteps. The heart of the problem is political. China’s economic malaise is a reflection of its governance, and in particular, the language used by Xi Jinping’s Communist Party and its structure. The very system that consolidated Xi’s power now acts as a drag, incapable of the agility needed in a time of crisis. Directives from Beijing arrive swiftly, but the system falters where it matters most: execution. Communication within the bureaucracy is deeply asymmetrical. Orders flow downward in a torrent of dense, ideological language, leaving local officials scrambling to interpret Xi’s true priorities. Feedback from the ground up, meanwhile, is slow, fragmented, and distorted in a system that discourages honesty. Local officials, already crippled by debt and resource shortages, are preoccupied with studying ideology and attending political sessions, leaving little time — or capacity — for practical problem-solving. Even when

they spot issues, they lack the language to express them in a hierarchy that rewards ideological loyalty over results. Paralyzed by contradictory demands — reduce debt, expand welfare, boost spending — and fearful of political missteps after years of anti-corruption purges, officials default to inaction. The result is a bureaucracy spinning its wheels, incapable of bridging the widening gap between lofty directives and ground-level realities. Beijing speaks to itself in an echo chamber, while the economy sputters under the weight of this fractured communication.

**Xi has retreated into a cocoon of tightly scripted speeches and ideological platitudes, shielding himself from any meaningful communication with either the domestic audience or the international market.**

This communication breakdown isn't merely a glitch in the bureaucratic system — it's rooted in language itself. Marxist-Leninist philosophy, with its emphasis on dialectical materialism and the resolution of contradictions, forms the ideological backbone of the Party's governance. In theory, it provides a framework for balancing competing priorities and navigating complexity. In practice, it often generates dense, impenetrable language that obscures intent. Xi has entrenched this style into a rigid dialect of governance, leaving both officials and markets struggling to decipher his true aims. The hallmark phrases of Xi Jinping Thought — contradictory by design — frequently confuse more than they clarify. Take the ubiquitous “既要...也要...” constructions: “we must both do this and that,” a quintessential expression of Marxist dialectics. This rhetorical style, while ideologically cohesive, leaves markets guessing and officials floundering. Does Beijing prioritize short-term consumption or long-term investment? Is property sector support a temporary fix or a fundamental shift? The answer, invariably, is “both.” This ambiguity doesn't just cloud decision-making — it erodes the clarity and focus essential for driving economic recovery.

For a market economy, this style of expectation-setting is disastrous. Restoring confidence requires clear, decisive policy signals, while economic recoveries depend on bold, swift action that can be adjusted in real time. Former U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke's “bazooka” metaphor captures the essence: in a crisis, you overshoot to make an impact. But China's governance, with its reliance on ideological slogans and rigid timelines, struggles to deliver this kind of urgency. Key decisions are tethered to set-piece events like the annual legislative sessions in March, leaving months of inertia between acknowledgment of a problem and the rollout of solutions.

Even when policy announcements do arrive, they often carry the baggage of Xi's legacy slogans. “房住不

炒” (“housing is for living, not speculation”) continues to anchor fears of insufficient property market support. “共同富裕” (“common prosperity”) conjures memories of Maoist egalitarianism and spooks private enterprise. These catchphrases may embody Xi's vision for a more equitable China, but they inadvertently dampen the confidence needed to accelerate economic recovery. Efforts to reassure the private sector are undermined by the inherent contradictions in these slogans, which signal both change and continuity, leaving businesses uncertain about where the boundaries truly lie.

This ambiguity is rooted in the Leninist style of communication that defines Xi's governing philosophy. Unlike Mao, who relied on mass mobilization to challenge and reshape the Party, Xi derives his power from its institutional structure and rigid hierarchies. He sees the Party not just as a tool of governance but as the very foundation of his authority. This deeply Leninist approach, with its emphasis on discipline, ideological purity, and procedural rigor, ensures tight control but leaves little room for flexibility or responsiveness. The result is a bureaucracy bound by rigid language and ritual, ill-suited to managing the complexities of a dynamic economy.

This rigidity contrasts sharply with the more relatable, unscripted Xi glimpsed in the early years of his leadership. In those days, he occasionally went off script, engaging more naturally with the media and the public. Those moments, while rare, offered a glimpse of his personality and priorities. Over time, however, Xi has retreated into a cocoon of tightly scripted speeches and ideological platitudes, shielding himself from any meaningful communication with either the domestic audience or the international market. This shift underscores his deep reliance on the Party apparatus for control but has left the world — and perhaps even his own bureaucrats — guessing about his true intentions.

Meanwhile, the market is growing impatient. Consumers remain cautious, weighed down by deflationary pressures, job insecurity, and dwindling savings. Business leaders, unnerved by regulatory crackdowns, hesitate to invest. While Beijing has pledged more fiscal spending and social welfare reforms, it resists direct cash transfers that could immediately spark consumption, warning against “welfarism” and the dangers of “feeding lazy people.”

The Party is not blind to the stakes. Promises to boost consumption, raise pensions, and expand healthcare signal a recognition of the problem. But announcements alone fall short. Markets and citizens alike are demanding action, not rhetoric. Herein lies Xi's dilemma: the very system he has meticulously built — anchored in ideological loyalty and institutional control — is the same system that now hampers his ability to act decisively. His slogans,

crafted to inspire loyalty and discipline, have become shackles, binding China's policymaking at critical moments.

For Xi, the challenge is existential. His vision of a stronger, self-reliant China — a vision steeped in Marxist nationalism — depends on sustained economic success. Yet his governance style, rooted in discipline over dynamism, threatens to undermine it. For now, Xi remains a prisoner of his own language, trapped in a system that enforces control at the expense of adaptability. The walls of that prison aren't cracking — they're closing in.

### **An earthquake in Tibet**

12 January 2025, [The Sunday Guardian](#), Khedroob Thondup

The recent earthquake in Tibet has left a devastating mark on the region, with the death toll rising to 126 and over 30,000 people

इस शब्द का अर्थ जानिये

evacuated. This tragedy has not only highlighted the vulnerability of the region to natural disasters but also exposed significant gaps in the emergency response mechanisms. The earthquake, which struck with a magnitude of 7.1, was particularly destructive due to its shallow depth of about 10 km. Shallow earthquakes often cause more damage because the seismic waves have less distance to travel before reaching the surface, resulting in more intense shaking. The epicentre was in a remote part of Tibet, near Mount Everest, an area known for its challenging terrain and harsh weather conditions. Many of the affected areas are sparsely populated and difficult to access, which significantly hampered rescue efforts. The region's infrastructure, including roads and communication networks, was severely damaged, making it even more challenging for rescue teams to reach those in need. Additionally, the cold winter temperatures, dropping as low as minus 18 degrees Celsius, further complicated the rescue operations. The slow response to the disaster can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the remoteness of the affected areas meant that it took time for rescue teams to mobilize and reach the sites. The initial hours after an earthquake are crucial for saving lives, and any delay can result in a higher death toll. In this case, the combination of damaged infrastructure and harsh weather conditions created significant obstacles for the rescue missions. Secondly, the scale of the disaster overwhelmed the local resources. With over 3,000 buildings damaged and thousands of people in need of immediate assistance, the local authorities struggled to cope with the magnitude of the crisis. While international aid and support were eventually mobilized, the initial response was slow, leading to a tragic loss of life. This

disaster serves as a reminder of the need for better preparedness and response mechanisms in earthquake-prone regions. Investing in resilient infrastructure, improving early warning systems, and ensuring that local communities are trained in disaster response can significantly reduce the impact of such events. Moreover, it is crucial to have a coordinated and well-resourced emergency response plan that can be quickly activated in the event of a disaster.

In conclusion, the tragedy in Tibet underscores the need for improved disaster preparedness and response. While natural disasters cannot be prevented, their impact can be mitigated through proactive measures and timely interventions. It is a call to action for governments, international organizations, and communities to work together to build a safer and more resilient future.

### **India must deepen understanding of Tibet's geopolitical importance: Experts**

12 January 2025, [Times of India](#)

A session on the topic 'Himalayan Geopolitics' held as part of the seventh edition of the Mangaluru Literature Festival delved into the complex dynamics shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Himalayan region, featuring a diverse panel of experts. Dr Claude Arpi, a renowned expert on Indo-China and Tibet relations, shared his personal journey and the evolution of his interest in Himalayan geopolitics. A dental surgeon from France, Dr Arpi's first visit to India in 1972 marked the beginning of his deep connection with the region. He expressed concern over the rapid development in the region, emphasising the need to balance growth with environmental preservation to maintain the natural and spiritual essence of the Himalayas.

The discussion also touched on territorial disputes and military tensions between India and China. Dr Arpi discussed the events of May 2020, when Chinese forces attempted to advance into disputed areas in Ladakh, leading to tense standoffs. Despite China's infrastructure advantage, he expressed confidence in India's defence capabilities, particularly along the LAC, and reassured that a repeat of the 2020 incursions was unlikely.

Dilip Sinha, a former senior diplomat with expertise in critical international relations, shared insights from his book, 'The Imperial Games in Tibet', which explores the history of Himalayan geopolitics. Sinha argued that China's territorial claims over Tibet, including Arunachal Pradesh, lacked historical legitimacy, as Tibet was only temporarily colonised during the Qing Dynasty.

Jangchup Choeden, deputy general secretary of the International Buddhist Confederation, introduced the

cultural and religious dimensions of Himalayan geopolitics, emphasising Buddhism's significant role in shaping the region's identity. He discussed the ongoing geopolitical narratives surrounding Tibetan Buddhism, particularly China's attempt to reshape the religion with Chinese characteristics, while India continues to uphold Buddhism's roots. The session concluded with a key message that India must deepen its understanding of Tibet's history and geopolitical importance, leveraging its cultural and spiritual heritage to navigate the complex dynamics of the region and counter China's growing influence.

### OPINION – The Politics of Anti-Corruption in the Chinese Military

12 January 2025, [Macau Business](#), Sonny Lo Shiu Hing

On 6 January 2025, Xi Jinping, who is the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Chinese President, and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), delivered an important speech at the fourth meeting of the 20th CPC Central Discipline Inspection Committee (CDIC). His presence and remarks were broadcast live and attended by the CDIC members and many members of the central agencies and military units, including the Xinjiang production brigade.

CMC Chairman Xi Jinping said that the CPC in 2024 insisted on its “self-revolution that led the societal revolution,” increasing the consciousness of party members to abide by the party law and regulations, eliminating “the soil and conditions of corruption,” solving the “prominent problems” raised by a large batch of masses, and persisting in the “anti-corruption struggles” and the “capability of strict party discipline.” All the members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo attended the meeting, including Premier Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, and Li Xi.

Xi Jinping instilled a sense of crisis consciousness into the psyche of the CPC members by saying that “corruption constitutes the greatest threat to our Party.” As such, anti-corruption is “the most comprehensive self-revolution.” He said: “We must clean any corrupt element and continuously purify the cadre team, protect the image of the Party, consolidate the red lakes and mountains, ensure that the Party does not change its nature and colours.” In this way, China will become strong, and the Chinese renaissance will continue to be an active historical initiative.

As the CMC Chairman, Xi emphasised that at present, anti-corruption work remains “serious and complex” because the corrupt elements have not been eradicated. Therefore, anti-corruption has to be “resolute,” and “any hesitation, any soft hand or any

abandonment half-heartedly would bring about a subversive mistake.” Hence, anti-corruption requires determination and faith.

Xi added that “political supervision work” has to be concretised and regularised, while CPC members have to ensure that their thinking and direction must be united and conforming to the party line. Politically, CPC members have to be under the united leadership of the Party centre, he said. In terms of action, the Party decisions have to be implemented to ensure continuous reforms and high-quality development.

As with his previous speeches, Xi Jinping stressed that Party members have to adhere to self-discipline, be practical, and arrest those few people who violate the discipline much earlier. Hence, the CMC Chairman insists on an approach to adopting permanent rectification, continuous self-revolution, and persistent anti-corruption work.

Strict Party discipline, to Xi Jinping, refers to the action of supervising subordinates well, fulfilling one’s responsibilities, improving the performance appraisal system, and holding those who do not adhere to their responsibilities in an accountable manner. Clearly, the CMC Chairman emphasised the need for integrating the anti-corruption criterion into the performance appraisal of the military officers and generals.

Li Xi, the Secretary of the CDIC, delivered a speech at the same meeting. He emphasised the importance of deepening clean governance in the CPC, promoting “anti-corruption struggles,” and entrenching the foundation of “Chinese-style modernisation.” Li Xi echoed Xi Jinping’s speech, which could be regarded as providing the gist of how the CPC should deal with anti-corruption in the Chinese military.

***Xi Jinping, as Chairman of the CMC, has elevated anti-corruption to a permanent “self-revolution” and a “societal revolution” that seeks to instil a crisis consciousness among CPC and PLA leaders and members***

Recently, some news reports have claimed that the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has been so plagued with corruption that its fighting ability could have been reduced. Nevertheless, this argument is superficial and has ignored two important issues. First, since November 2012, when Xi Jinping became the CMC Chairman, anti-corruption has become a permanent “self-revolution” of the Chinese military. Second, there is no evidence to show that anti-corruption has undermined the PLA’s capability. Conversely, in the psyche of the Chinese leaders, the more intensive the anti-corruption drive, the stronger the PLA’s capability – a principle adopted and emphasised by CMC Chairman Xi Jinping.

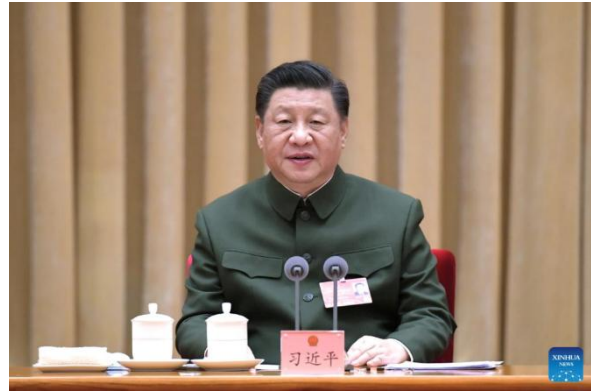
In the mid-1980s, China entered the rapid reform era, during which military expenditure became tense. To subsidise military expenditure, the CMC in 1985 allowed the PLA to manage businesses so that it could

become more “self-subsidising” than before. Many military districts and brigades went into various business ventures, setting up hotels, aviation companies, pharmaceutical services, electronics companies, insurance organisations, telecommunication networks, and even entertainment centres. Although military expenditures could be increasingly self-funded, allowing the PLA to go into business undoubtedly created a breeding ground for corruption, including smuggling activities along the coastal regions of China. Military-civilian relations became increasingly messy, creating potential conflicts of interest between the military and ordinary citizens. Conflicts of interest also emerged rapidly within the PLA units that conducted businesses.

In the early 1990s, the late CMC Chairman Jiang Zemin realised the severity of the problems of allowing the military to operate businesses. In July 1998, he convened a meeting of the PLA high command and required the entire military force to control and combat smuggling, while simultaneously, the central leadership decided to ban the PLA and its units from doing business.

An immediate clean break of the military from its businesses was difficult. By the end of 1998, only 5,000 out of 20,000 military-related enterprises surrendered their operations to civilian organisations at the local level. Some retired and demobilised military officers left the PLA to operate civilian enterprises, but their personal connections with the military lingered – a phenomenon that led to continuous and hidden corruption. The CMC from 2008 to 2012, under the leadership of Hu Jintao, established a plan for anti-corruption in the Chinese military. However, as civilian leaders without solid military backgrounds, and unlike the late Deng Xiaoping, who was a political commissar in the PLA, both Jiang Zemin’s and Hu Jintao’s anti-corruption drives in the military naturally met silent resistance and opposition.

When Xi Jinping came to power in November 2012, he was keen to make anti-corruption a permanent “self-revolution” and “societal revolution” in China, including the PLA. Unlike Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping actually worked in the CMC Secretariat from 1979 to 1982 as a military officer. Of course, Xi’s record could not be compared with Deng Xiaoping, who was the PLA political commissar continuously from the Red Army’s Long March to the Second World War and the Civil War.



After Xi Jinping became the CMC Chairman in late 2012, he began to clean up the corrupt elements who could be regarded as the remnants of the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao era. In 2015, Xi said that the situation of corruption and anti-corruption remained tense. During the Party Plenum in 2016, Xi Jinping revealed that the anti-corruption situation became “dominant,” implying that PLA corruption was under control. From 2013 to 2016, it was reported that at least 45 high-ranking PLA officers were purged because of corruption and violations of party discipline, including CMC deputy chairs Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong. Both were found guilty of accepting bribes to assist others in the process of promotion.

The cases of Xu and Guo were significant, as their bribery and corruption charges indicated a common pattern of syndicate corruption within the PLA. After the purges of Xu and Guo, Xi Jinping in 2018 announced that anti-corruption had gained an “overwhelming victory and it can be consolidated and developed further.”

However, the most recent arrests and disappearances of several military generals have shown that opposition to anti-corruption in the Chinese military persists. As such, Xi Jinping’s remarks on 6 January that anti-corruption remains the greatest threat to the CPC are a testimony to the permanent political struggle against corrupt elements in the PLA.

The turning point appeared to be the corruption cases involving many PLA officers from mid-2023 to 2024. At least nine high-ranking PLA officers were involved in corruption scandals in 2023: Lieutenant General Zhang Zhenzhong from the Rocket Force; Major General Lu Hong of the Rocket Force; General Li Yuchao of the Rocket Force; General Zhou Yaning of the Rocket Force; Lieutenant General Ju Xinchun of the Naval Force; Lieutenant General Zhang Yulin of the Logistics Development Department; and Lieutenant General Rao Wenmin of the Logistics Development Department. Apparently, the Rocket Force had problematic procurement procedures related to an entire corruption syndicate at the top level of the PLA leadership. As a result, a purge was regarded as a necessity.

In 2024, another batch of corrupt PLA generals and officers were investigated and purged. They included Lieutenant General Li Zhizhong, Deputy Commander of the Central Theatre Command; Lieutenant General Ju Xinchun, the Naval Commander of the Southern Theatre Command; and former Defence Ministers General Li Shangfu and General Wei Fenghe. Both Li and Wei were expelled from the CPC for accepting bribes and favouring others in the processes of not only procurement but also personnel arrangements. In November 2024, the Director of the CMC Political Work Department, Miao Hua, came under investigation. Apparently, Miao failed to conduct his political work effectively among PLA colleagues and was directly or indirectly responsible for the corruption mess within the military.

***Anti-corruption purges within the PLA will continue and are unlikely to fade away.***

The CMC under the leadership of Xi Jinping has focused on the problems of procurement and lax auditing in the PLA. On 4 January 2025, a booklet outlining the criteria for centralising capital, receiving and offering payment, and calculating reimbursement, as well as auditing, was published and distributed to military leaders and officers. The booklet details the processes for calculating, reporting, reimbursing, and auditing military expenditures, including procurement, which has constituted a serious loophole in clean governance within the PLA. Twenty-four types of expenditure are listed in the booklet to ensure that every military unit strictly adheres to these procedures.

On 11 January 2025, CMC Deputy Chairman He Weidong said in an extended meeting of the CDIC under the CMC that the military must uphold the direction and teachings of “Chinese socialism in the Xi Jinping new era,” promote the process of comprehensively and strictly governing the Party and managing the military, and resolutely pursue “the CMC Chairman responsibility system.” He reiterated military obedience to the leadership of CMC Chairman Xi Jinping and emphasised the continuation of permanent anti-corruption as part of the “self-revolution” mentioned by Xi.

In conclusion, China under the Xi Jinping era has entered a new period of deepening and broadening the anti-corruption campaign within the Chinese military. As corruption in the Chinese military has become a legacy of the reform era under Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping, as Chairman of the CMC, has elevated anti-corruption to a permanent “self-revolution” and a “societal revolution” that seeks to instil a crisis consciousness among CPC and PLA leaders and members. Accompanying this “permanent revolution” is the introduction of much tighter rules and detailed regulations on military procurement and expenditure

for stricter auditing and internal checks and balances. The role of the CDIC within the CMC and the work of internal auditing will likely become increasingly important as institutional safeguards against the “virus” of corruption, which has stemmed from personal connections and syndicate corruption. As such, anti-corruption purges within the PLA will continue and are unlikely to fade away. Nor is there any evidence linking anti-corruption efforts in the PLA with a decline in its fighting capacity. Rather, in the psyche of China’s top leaders—especially Xi Jinping, who can be regarded as having combined civilian-military experience in his career—anti-corruption within the PLA can and will enhance the military’s capability, refine its professionalism, and make it even stronger.

**Earthquake in Tibet: The Wrong Condolences**

10 January 2025, [Bitter Winter](#), Marco Respinti

Statements of solidarity in the name of friendship with “the Chinese people” just send the wrong message.

On January 7, 2025, a serious earthquake, of 7.1 magnitude, according to data from the US Geological Survey, hit the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), causing more than 120 victims and injuring at least 188. It was also felt in Nepal and parts of India. The number of casualties could have been higher, if it were not for the fact that the region is scarcely populated.

As it is customary and proper, heads of states and governments all over the world sent prompt messages of sympathy, mourning, and solidarity to the devastated people. As it is usual, these messages were addressed to the head of the state where TAR lies, that is, the People’s Republic of China (PRC). What is inappropriate, though, was to address President Xi Jinping expressing condolences in name of the friendship with “the Chinese people” as it has been done right after the catastrophe, for example by the President of the Republic of Italy, who recently was at the center of another capitulation to the PRC.

In fact, doing it takes for granted the official but fake idea nurtured by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), that regions occupied, militarily and politically, by the Chinese government to be components of the PRC are natural geographical geo-cultural, and geo-anthropological parts of the Chinese state since time immemorial and their inhabitants are basically “Chinese.” Of course, Tibetans are not.

Renamed “Xizang” in the CCP’s ideological attempt to rewrite history and geography to serve its propaganda purposes, Tibet is a cultural and anthropological subject that differs from China. It was incorporated into the PRC by way of a bloody occupation, which used corruption and force since the CCP took power in 1949, culminating in 1959.



“Bitter Winter” always carefully and intentionally avoids all direct political topics that may discuss territorial integrity of states (rogue states included), partitions, separations, and revolts. It does it because its only focuses are religious liberty and human rights—and also to avoid the easy trap that rogue states (the PRC included) set to delegitimize the causes we culturally and even legally fight for by cunningly rebranding them as just another attempt to ignite, fuel, or support separatist and even terrorist aims.

But, in this regard, no one can deny at least two basic truths on Tibet. First, that before the invasion by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of the PRC, Tibet was a distinctive country, even politically, whatever that could mean. Second, that this is all the more demonstrated by the fact that, by way of intrigue and assault, Tibet was annexed by the PRC.



*Rescue squads at work after the earthquake. Screenshot.*

All this makes Tibet and Tibetans a distinctive region and a people who suffers military and political occupation up to this day. The attempts by the CCP to Sinicize Tibet to annihilate Tibetan peculiar identity use different tools, among which the infiltration and/or denial of Tibetan Buddhist religion, the effort to cancel Tibetan language, the ideological re-education of Tibetan children through state boarding schools, the parcelization of historic Tibet into new “Chinese” regions and provinces, the change of Tibetan names, the sterilization of Tibetan women, and the crude practice of organ harvesting that strikes also Tibetans. They all demonstrate the supreme strive of Beijing to make Tibet “China.”

Not acknowledging all this, including in diplomatic messages about the earthquake, and implying even indirectly that Tibetans are part of “the Chinese people,” sadly amounts to pardon the [CCP’s](#) inhuman policy in Tibet even in the dire occasion of a natural catastrophe. It adds one more sorrow to Tibetans already suffering under the Communist regime’s rule.

### The Tibet warning

10 January 2025, [The Kathmandu Post](#)

Given the millions of lives on the line, earthquake risk should be taken as a perpetual emergency. On the morning of January 7, a magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck the remote Tingri County in southern Tibet, killing over 120 individuals and injuring countless more. Located just 80 km north of Mt Everest, the epicentre also sent tremors in Nepal and caused residents to flee their homes in fear. Even though no major damage was reported on this side of the border, the powerful jolt certainly reminded us of Nepal’s vulnerability to earthquakes by evoking the painful memories of 2015, when a fearsome temblor killed almost 9,000 people, and also the 2023 Jajarkot earthquake, which claimed more than 150 lives—plus many smaller ones in between.

Earthquakes in Nepal and the surrounding Himalayan region have long concerned seismologists and experts. Nepal lies in one of the world’s most active seismic zones—formed by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. According to experts, Nepal’s Western region is particularly at risk, as it hasn’t seen a major earthquake for over 500 years. Since 2022, there have been more than 15 tremors in the Sudurpaschim province—including the recent big one in Bajura of a magnitude 5.2. This again invariably makes us fear the impending Big One. Both other areas of the country are no less at risk. In addition to geographical vulnerability are man-made risks. Concrete jungles, built by flouting the national building codes in high-density areas like the Kathmandu Valley, are mushrooming. Houses in [far-flung](#) areas of the country are also being built by ignoring the building codes.

Nepalis were caught unaware by the 2015 earthquake, and awareness programmes and construction of earthquake-resilient houses gained momentum in its immediate aftermath. But, predictably, complacency has crept in with the passage of time. Not only has reconstruction of earthquake-resilient houses slowed, even basic safety measures are being ignored. The authorities have failed to punish those who have bypassed the building rules. They have also fallen short of providing enough budget to rebuild and retrofit houses in quake-affected areas.

For instance, the federal government provides only Rs50,000 in two tranches to rebuild completely or partially damaged houses, but this is far from enough to build earthquake-resilient homes. As a result, many quake victims in Sudurpaschim Province and Karnali Province are still languishing in temporary shelters, while others are returning to their damaged houses. A recent report in this *Post* shows how people in Rukum West, out of frustration of delays in housing aid, are building shelters that don’t adhere to building codes.

These are not signs of a responsible state that is worried about the safety of its citizens.

A centre of perpetual seismic activity, no amount of awareness or rescue operation training will be enough in Nepal. As vital is building robust infrastructure, strictly enforcing the building codes and expediting rehabilitation. Many urban centres in the country also lack public spaces for temporary settlements and shelters. Time has come to think of innovative ways to create new open spaces. Given the millions of lives that are at stake, earthquake-risk should be treated as a matter of perpetual emergency. The latest tremor in Tibet should be enough of a warning.

### Damage control: On the Tibet earthquake

10 January 2025, [The Hindu](#)

#### Adherence to existing regulations can limit the impact of earthquakes

This week, an early-morning earthquake in Tibet of magnitude 7.1 and originating at a depth of 10 km has reportedly claimed at least 100 lives and damaged buildings and houses. The tremors from the quake were felt in Nepal as well as parts of Bihar and even New Delhi, thousands of kilometres away. The main earthquake was followed by at least two aftershocks. If the epicentre had been located closer to India, the damage could have been manifold. Earthquakes in the Himalayas evoke a special kind of dread in the country. Memories of two deadly quakes in Nepal in April and May of 2015 that killed at least 9,000 and caused incalculable damage still bubble up. The tectonic plates are the gigantic shards into which Earth is broken up. Layered on them are the continents and the seas. These plates are constantly in motion — colliding with, diverging with, or sliding past one another. The Indian plate collided with the Eurasian plate and the crust tilted upwards, creating the Himalayas. The fractured zones along which they interact create the fault lines where earthquakes occur. By studying these faults and the pattern of past earthquakes, seismologists can estimate how much latent energy at these fault lines, which can run thousands of miles, has been released and how much of it still resides in them.

Scientists have long warned of a massive, overdue earthquake in the Garhwal-Kumaon range because of what is known about the pattern of quakes in the region. The records of the last 300 years suggest that those that have occurred have not released all the pent-up energy and that is why there is a broad consensus among experts that an 8-magnitude temblor is overdue. Unfortunately, predicting the day and time is outside the ambit of current science. Thus, the best we can hope for is insulation against the projected damage. It is in this context that

infrastructure development in the Himalayan region must be viewed. While several of these projects are intended to smooth the movement of people and goods, the recurrent landslides and glacial lake outbursts that wash away dams, hydropower projects, and roads serve as a constant reminder of the inherent fragility of the region. Every form of infrastructure in the region — power plant or dam — must take into account the imminence of a major earthquake and the associated costs factored into planning. Adhering to already existing building codes, not only in the Himalayas but in the surrounding Indo-Gangetic plains, can go a long way in limiting the inevitable damage.

### China's Internal Struggles: The Rising Violence That Could Lead to Foreign Aggression

09 January 2025, [The Diplomat](#), Irene Chou

An uptick in “revenge on society” attacks demonstrates the growing discontent at home. The CCP might seek to channel that anger to another target.

In November 2024, China experienced its deadliest known instance of public violence in a decade. A man, upset over his divorce settlement, plowed an SUV into a sports complex in the southern city of Zhuhai, killing 35 people and injuring over 40 others.

The incident followed a string of indiscriminate mass attacks in China. Known as “revenge on society” crimes, they have surged with alarming frequency as perpetrators who saw no alternative channel to vent their grievances lashed out at innocent bystanders. In 2024, 63 people were killed in these mass attacks, while 166 were injured.

Although Beijing has characterized these incidents as “isolated,” the spate of recent tragedies sheds light on a confluence of systemic factors that culminate in mass violence: inadequate social welfare, a slowing economy, and austere censorship. China's continued internal instability could have crucial geopolitical implications for Taiwan, specifically on strategic maneuvers in the Indo-Pacific.

While China does have social welfare programs, the current economic system provides insufficient resources for the working class and unemployed individuals. First, the *hukou* (户口) system prevents rural migrant workers in the urban workforce from obtaining urban residency, leading to much lower pay. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) especially exacerbate income inequality. Many migrant workers also work without social security coverage, which is a requirement for receiving a pension upon retirement. Second, the rural minimum living standard guarantee, or *dibao* (低保) program, has suffered from inconsistent eligibility standards, with only 20 to 30

percent of eligible households receiving the benefit. Migrant workers are also ineligible for *dibao*. Medical insurance likewise undergoes opaque distribution. With services purposefully stratified, government officials and urban employees receive outsized benefits.

Third, unemployment insurance provides minimal benefits and limited coverage. In 2020, for instance, out of over 25 million unemployed workers in one quarter, only 2.3 million received benefits. As of last September, Beijing reported that 245 million people were covered by unemployment insurance, rising 25.5 percent from the year before. Yet, as the Ministry of Civil Affairs asserted last month, assistance to unemployed people who have not received their unemployment insurance has to be improved.

Ultimately, the porous social safety net suffers from a lack of investment. Public welfare investments in China lag behind those of other industrial economies like Mexico, and local governments are left responsible for financing over 90 percent of social services. Yet, they are only given half of their tax revenue and struggle with mounting debt burdens, with many cities bound to interest payments that comprise over a third of their annual revenue. In sum, social services cannot improve when current maintenance is already a local challenge. Social welfare benefits remain inaccessible for many blue-collar workers and unemployed people, with resources focused on urban workers and state officials. The biased allocation of resources demonstrates a structural cause of widespread discontent.

Without an efficient social safety net, many are left with a sense of economic alienation, made worse by the country's economic slowdown. Following a tumultuous series of events in recent years – draconian pandemic lockdown measures, mass protests, and the property sector crisis – the Chinese economy has stagnated, taking an immense toll on a rising number of university graduates entering the workforce. In 2023, one in five 16- to 24-year-olds in urban areas was unemployed.

In the face of climbing youth unemployment figures and declining consumer confidence readings, the government did what it knew best – suppress and erase. New figures were not released until early 2024 and were published with a reformulated methodology that excluded students, creating an illusion of improvement. Nonetheless, China's youth unemployment figure has continued to grow and remains at 16 percent.

China's GDP, the second largest globally, has also been growing more slowly, increasing by only 4.6 percent in the third quarter of 2024 and falling short of the country's 5 percent target for the year. Although China has implemented stimulus packages entailing sizable mortgage and interest rate cuts, they have yet to

improve flagging economic growth. This economic downturn has resulted in public disillusionment and a shared sentiment of fatalism.

In contrast to two decades ago, people in China are now more likely to think that structural factors decide how rich or poor a person becomes and much less likely to believe that hard work guarantees reward. Dissatisfaction began to manifest in public sentiment, such as in the passive resistance of the "lying flat" movement, the outrage against shrinking medical insurance coverage manifested in the White-haired Movement, and online lamentations about getting stuck in the "garbage time" of history.

As social unrest grew, revenge on society crimes also increased in number. These trends can likewise be traced back to the helplessness felt by individuals in the face of systemic barriers against socio-economic advancement. A small but climbing number of people have turned to violent demonstrations of anger and frustration.

Further compounding the issue, the Chinese public cannot openly discuss these incidents nor examine the underlying societal stressors motivating the perpetrators.

At the promptly sanitized sites of these killing sprees, police and plainclothes officers removed flower bouquets placed by the public and dispersed onlookers and foreign journalists. Hospitalized victims were kept away from reporters. China's strictly monitored online search engines were scrubbed clean of videos capturing the incidents, eyewitness accounts, and trending hashtags relevant to the events. On social media, calls to address immediate needs (like increasing psychological counseling resources) and structural changes (such as improving individual rights) are quickly removed. Worse still, there is a lack of comprehensive data on mass killings in China, which hinders analyses of trends and effective prevention.

The official crisis response to these killings presents a grim pattern of censorship – removing online discussions and delaying news reports, erasure of grief and trauma, and intensifying surveillance against possible dissenters. This mechanism of repression, in and of itself, exposes structural flaws in China's political system. When the public cannot openly discuss these incidents, people cannot examine the underlying societal stressors motivating the perpetrators. Individuals cannot participate in addressing and resolving the systemic injustices they have experienced, and censored public discourse could only lead to further uncertainty, fear, and isolation. As media suppression has grown increasingly heavy-handed, so has the corrosion of people's trust in government.

As mass assaults more than tripled compared to previous years, Chinese leader Xi Jinping called for

local governments to prevent future mass killings more vigilantly. However, instead of countering civil unrest by improving transparency and opening channels for communication, local officials are beginning to enhance surveillance on families, marriages, and neighborhoods in small towns and large cities. This is likely to continue the cycle of repression, resistance, and retaliatory violence, prolonging an era of domestic instability amid the public's increasing weariness toward public safety and the government's crisis management.

Domestic instability in China could prompt more significant geopolitical disruption abroad, particularly for Taiwan. Historically, struggling economies and worsening geopolitical relations in rising great powers are indicators of heightened foreign aggression. In China, the suppression of domestic dissent could be complemented by the rallying of nationalism that stabilizes public sentiment and distracts from internal declines. With China also establishing its most potent military capability so far, some analysts believe that a war over Taiwan is most likely to take place this decade.

Notably, China could employ gray-zone tactics that fall just below the threshold of war, minimizing U.S. involvement. After President Lai Ching-te visited Hawai'i and Guam in late 2024, the Taiwanese military observed the largest Chinese naval deployment in nearly three decades, which included both the People's Liberation Army Navy and the Coast Guard stationed across the East and South China Seas and Western Pacific far off the east coast of Taiwan. The expansive venture shows how China could lock down the First Island Chain, stretching from the Philippines to Japan, to cut Taiwan off from assistance. Given Xi's reported unease with China's status quo, demonstrating nationalism toward what Chinese popularly deem a renegade province could help redirect public focus from the country's economic downturn and strengthen support around the Chinese Communist Party.

In a deeply flawed economic and political system, it remains to be seen whether China can overcome economic strife. If not, the CCP may resort to military adventurism. As China grapples with its internal challenges and seeks to divert attention from domestic turmoil, the possibility of external aggression, particularly toward Taiwan, grows more likely. If China fails to address the foundational causes of instability at home, including the CCP's suffocating repression of dissent, the consequences will be felt far beyond its borders.

## How China is Erasing Tibetan Culture, One Child at a Time

09 January 2025, The New York Times, Chris Buckley and Isabelle Qian

**Across China's west**, the party is placing children in boarding schools in a drive to assimilate a generation of Tibetans into the national mainstream and mold them into citizens loyal to the Communist Party.

Tibetan rights activists, as well as experts working for the United Nations, have said that the party is systematically separating Tibetan children from their families to erase Tibetan identity and to deepen China's control of a people who historically resisted Beijing's rule. They have estimated that around three-quarters of Tibetan students age 6 and older — and others even younger — are in residential schools that teach largely in Mandarin, replacing the Tibetan language, culture and Buddhist beliefs that the children once absorbed at home and in village schools. When China's top leader, Xi Jinping, visited one such school in the summer, he inspected a dormitory that appeared freshly painted and as neat as an army barracks. He walked into a classroom where Tibetan students, listening to a lecture on Communist Party thought, stood and applauded to welcome him.

Mr. Xi's visit to the school in Qinghai Province in June amounted to a firm endorsement of the program, despite international criticism. Education, he said, must "implant a shared consciousness of Chinese nationhood in the souls of children from an early age." Chinese officials say the schools help Tibetan children to quickly become fluent in the Chinese language and learn skills that will prepare them for the modern economy. They say that families voluntarily send their children to the schools, which are free, and that the students have classes in Tibetan culture and language. But extensive interviews and research by The New York Times show that Tibetan children appear to be singled out by the Chinese authorities for enrollment in residential schools. Their parents often have little or no choice but to send them, experts, parents, lawyers and human rights investigators said in interviews. Many parents do not see their children for long stretches.

Dozens of research papers and reports from experts and teachers within the Chinese system have warned about the anxiety, loneliness, depression and other psychological harm of the schools on Tibetan children. The Times reviewed and analyzed hundreds of videos posted to Chinese social media sites by Tibetan boarding schools, state media and local propaganda departments that showed how the schools operate and serve the party's objectives.

Student life is heavy with political indoctrination. Schools, for instance, celebrate what China calls "Serfs' Emancipation Day," referring to the anniversary of the

Communist Party's full takeover of Tibet in 1959, after a failed Tibetan uprising and a Chinese crackdown that forced the Dalai Lama into exile. The party accuses the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, of having ruled over a slaveholding society.

The Times also found video accounts of boarding school teachers and travelers that showed how some schools are underfunded and overstretched. We are not crediting some of the accounts by name to avoid drawing a backlash against them.

China has been expanding its boarding schools for Tibetan children even as countries like the United States, Canada and Australia have been grappling with the trauma inflicted on generations of Indigenous children who were forcibly removed from their families and placed in residential schools. (President Biden in October apologized on behalf of the U.S. government for the abuse of Indigenous children in residential schools from the early 1800s to the late 1960s, calling it a "a sin on our soul.")

China has been eager to show that happy, well-fed Tibetan children are proudly declaring that they are Chinese.

### **Strangers in Their Own Homes**

Gyal Lo, a Tibetan education researcher, became alarmed by the boarding schools in 2016, when he saw that his two preschool-aged grandnieces, who were attending one in his hometown in northwestern China, preferred to speak Mandarin, not Tibetan.

When the grandnieces, then ages 4 and 5, went home on the weekend, he said in an interview, they appeared withdrawn and spoke awkwardly in Tibetan with their parents, much changed from when he saw them in the previous year. Now they behaved "like strangers in their own home," he said.

"I said to my brother, 'What if you don't send them to the boarding school?'" Gyal Lo said. "He said he had no choice."

Gyal Lo set out to investigate the changes that families were going through as the schools expanded across Tibetan regions in China. Over the next three years he visited dozens of such schools, and saw that many Tibetan students spoke little of their mother tongue and were sometimes only able to see their parents once every several weeks or even months.

Children as young as preschool age were being sent away, he said, and parental visits were limited. The Times talked to three Tibetan parents with children of elementary-school age in residential schools who said that they had no choice and that they were not allowed to visit their children at will.

Many Tibetan parents accept that their children should learn Chinese for a chance at better jobs, said Gyal Lo, who now lives in Canada and is an activist working to draw attention to the schools. But most also want their children to first gain a strong grounding in their mother tongue.

"Children should learn from their grandparents, their parents, about their local language, about the names of things, about their traditions and their values," Gyal Lo said in an interview. "Boarding schools create a physical and emotional distance from their parents and family members."

Under Mr. Xi, such schools have sharply cut classes in Tibetan. Instead most classes are taught in Chinese, a language unfamiliar to many rural Tibetan children, who mix little with the Han Chinese majority.

Chinese officials insist that enrollment is voluntary. In reality, the government has closed village schools and privately run Tibetan language schools, while strictly enforcing mandatory education laws.

"One can hardly speak of any choice if local schools are all closed down," said Fernand de Varennes, a human rights expert.

He and two other independent experts with the United Nations investigated the boarding schools and expressed alarm in 2023 at what they said appeared to be a "policy of forced assimilation of the Tibetan identity into the dominant Han-Chinese majority."

### **At Risk of Abuse and Neglect**

The text messages and voice memos trickled in, carrying urgent questions from Tibetans in China seeking legal advice about the treatment of children in boarding schools.

One man wrote to ask about what redress to demand for a child who suffered permanent injury from a classroom fight while the teacher was absent. Another said that a child was found dead in the bathroom of a boarding school, of unclear causes, and that the child's parents wanted answers. The questions had been sent over the past three years to volunteers offering online legal advice to Tibetans. Times reporters reviewed several such messages, which were shared with us, but were unable to independently verify the accounts.

In 2021, a video surfaced online showing an elementary schoolteacher in eastern Tibet beating a child with a chair in his classroom. The video circulated on the internet in China more than 1,000 times before it was taken down. The school at which the beating took place has been described in state media reports as having students who lived on campus.

The video set off a public outcry. In response, the local government conducted an investigation and said in an official statement that the beating had left a three-inch-long wound on the child's forehead and that the teacher had been suspended.

Physical punishment is outlawed in Chinese schools, but studies by Chinese academics have found that the practice persists in Tibetan boarding schools. A 2020 study by Chinese researchers on boarding schools for children from ethnic minorities said that some teachers "lacked concern for the students," treated them roughly and were "even resorting to physical punishment."

Local legislators and researchers in Tibetan areas have reported that the already overcrowded schools face serious shortages of teachers and support staff.

A 16-year-old living in a Tibetan village in Sichuan Province told *The Times* that beatings by teachers were a constant at the residential school he attended. He said that over the years he had accumulated several scars on his back from beatings by teachers, sometimes by hand and other times with a wooden ruler.

#### **A Generation of Cultural Erasure**

**The Chinese government** does not say how many Tibetan children are in boarding schools. The Tibet Action Institute, an international group that has campaigned to close the schools, estimates that among children aged 6 to 18, the figure is at least 800,000 — or three in every four Tibetan children.

The group arrived at its estimate, which it published in a report in 2021, based on local government statistics. Lhadon Tethong, a co-founder and director of the group, likened the Chinese schools to the colonial residential schools in Canada, Australia and the United States.

“Different time, different place, different government, but same impact,” she said, “in the sense of breaking cultural and familial bonds and roots, and psychologically damaging and traumatizing kids at their foundation.”

Statistics collected by *The Times* from local government documents across Tibetan areas show similar numbers in boarding schools, with some areas notably higher than others.

In Golog, a Tibetan area of Qinghai Province, 95 percent of middle school students were in such schools, according to a study published in 2017 in China’s main journal on education for ethnic groups. A report from the local legislature in 2023 said that 45 of the 49 elementary schools in Golog were residential.

The expansion of boarding school enrollment in Tibetan areas runs counter to the national trend. Chinese government guidelines issued in 2018 say that elementary school children should not, in general, be sent to such schools.

But children from ethnic minorities in border regions seem to be treated as an exception. In the far western region of Xinjiang, children of the Muslim Uyghur ethnic group have also been sent to residential schools in large numbers.

Chinese officials say such schools help children in the Tibetan region avoid long commutes. But official websites also promote instructions from Mr. Xi on minority education, arguing that youth in ethnic minority regions were at risk of having “erroneous” ideas about religion, history and ethnic relations.

To counter those threats, Mr. Xi said in 2014, children of the right age should “study in school, live in school

and grow up in school.” The government’s hope is that those children will then become champions of the Chinese language and the party’s values.

In one video, which appears to be filmed and uploaded on social media as part of a school assignment, a Tibetan fourth-grader at a boarding school described how she saved the day when a Chinese cashier could not understand the girl’s mother, who spoke only Tibetan. She then called on other students to teach their parents Mandarin. “Be a Civilized Person, Speak Mandarin,” the video was titled.

#### **Warnings From Within China**

China’s drive to assimilate the Tibetans echoes history elsewhere in the world where Indigenous people were seen by their foreign occupiers as savages who needed to be civilized with boarding schools, causing trauma and abuses. It’s a parallel that Chinese officials reject. But some of the starkest warnings about the toll that boarding schools are taking on Tibetan children come, strikingly, from within China’s education system.

Teachers, education researchers and local legislators in China have written reports describing Tibetan children as suffering from being separated from their families and from being largely confined within their schools.

In education journals, teachers have shared advice on helping Tibetan children cope: Create a homier feel by decorating dorm rooms and cafeterias, and be ready for students to be anxious about when they could return home.

Many boarding schools in more remote Tibetan areas appear to be underfunded and lacking in facilities, teachers and trained counselors. Local lawmakers found in 2021 that one school for elementary children in Golog, the Tibetan area of Qinghai, had no tap water or power connection for its cafeteria until they complained.

“Because boarding schools lack staff like dormitory supervisors, security guards and medical carers, the teachers must take on 24-hour duty weeks while also fulfilling their daily teaching duties,” said a 2023 survey conducted by the Golog legislature.

In video diaries uploaded to social media, teachers in Tibetan regions have described days in which, on top of teaching, they must also deliver food to students, show them how to make beds and tuck them in at night.

A teacher at an elementary school in Tibet, who goes by Ms. Chen on social media, posted a series of video blogs in 2022. In one, she documented a typical day that started with a morning study session before dawn and ended with her checking on the children before bedtime.

Another teacher, who identifies himself as Mr. Su on social media, says he teaches at an elementary and secondary school in Ngari, Tibet. He shot a video while patrolling the dormitories of younger students while on duty one night in 2023.

“All of us are basically standing in as their parents,” he wrote in one social media post.

Videos from Chinese travelers show how difficult it can be for rural schools to meet the needs of their students. In 2021, a traveler who recorded a visit to one school in Garze, a Tibetan area in Sichuan Province, said that the dorms looked nice but that there weren’t enough beds. Two children shared a bed and huddled to keep each other warm in the winter, as there was no central heating.

Some teachers defend the schools as ultimately for the good of children. Others described encountering widespread opposition to the policy.

A 2023 study from Garze concluded that parents, teachers and school administrators were reluctant to send young children to boarding schools. Many parents, the study said, conveyed “helplessness, worry, incomprehension and an inability to speak out” about the changes.

Education, especially in minority areas, is a politically sensitive topic. Tibetans who oppose the boarding schools risk imprisonment if they protest. Tashi Wangchuk, a Tibetan businessman who petitioned the government to preserve schooling in Tibetan and spoke to *The Times* about his efforts, was sentenced to prison for five years in 2018.

Yet, some still voice their worries. On Douyin, China’s version of TikTok, parents lamented the diminishing role that the Tibetan language plays in their children’s lives.

“After just one month in kindergarten, my child basically no longer speaks Tibetan. Now when we speak to our child in Tibetan, they only respond in Mandarin,” one person wrote in a comment.

“No matter how we try to teach Tibetan now, they won’t learn it. I’m really heartbroken.”

### **The Journey of Tibet from Exile to Diaspora**

08 January 2025, [Global Asia](#), Tsering Namgyal Khortsa

FOR MANY YEARS, the Tibet issue seemed dead in the water. The Chinese economy and its soft power were ascendant, everybody was busy cutting deals with or appeasing Beijing, and few governments were willing to touch Tibet for fear of retribution or ostracism from an increasingly influential China. This seems to be changing. Several new bills signed by the US government have brought the issue of Tibet once again to the fore, giving hope to Tibetans in exile, or so they say.

In July, President Joe Biden enacted the Resolve Tibet Act, which advocates for a peaceful resolution of the Tibet-China conflict in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter, emphasizing dialogue without preconditions. This legislation marks the third significant action taken by the US

government concerning Tibet over the past couple of decades, following the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 and the Tibetan Policy & Support Act of 2020. The new legislation, officially named the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act,” aims to create a legal definition of Tibet that encompasses not only the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but also Tibetan areas located within the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan. This expanded definition diverges from the Chinese government’s typical reference, which is limited to the TAR, and corresponds with regions historically acknowledged as Tibetan.

#### **Dalai Lama Reincarnation**

A particularly significant element of this provision is the assertion that the reincarnation process of the Dalai Lama should be determined solely by the preferences of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community. It also specifies that any interference by China in this process will lead to sanctions. This directly contests one of Beijing’s core assertions regarding Tibet. Chinese officials have long maintained that only the Chinese Communist Party, which they claim is the legitimate successor to historical dynasties, has the authority to determine the next Dalai Lama. The bill also urges China to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders to amicably resolve matters related to Tibet’s status and governance.

There has been no communication between Tibetan and Chinese officials since 2010, let alone discussions on the future of the Dalai Lama. Many are skeptical that the new act will help nudge the two sides into dialogue, given Beijing’s track record.

In his book, *The Dalai Lama’s Special Envoy: Memoirs of a Lifetime in Pursuit of a Reunited Tibet*, the late Lodi Gyari, Tibet’s foremost negotiator with Beijing, observes a recurring trend regarding the Chinese government’s engagement in “dialogue.” Its interest tends to arise whenever there is a notable increase in international backing for Tibet. Subsequently, after guiding the Tibetan people into a false sense of hope and skillfully redirecting global attention, the situation returns to its previous state of normalcy.

On June 18, a high-profile bipartisan delegation from the US Congress visited Dharamshala, India, the *de facto* capital of Tibet in exile, to meet the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetan community, to inform him and the Tibetan leaders in exile of the US Resolve Tibet Act. The same group also met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. As the former Indian official in charge of Tibetan affairs, Amitabh Mathur, noted in an interview with *The Diplomat*: “Not only was the delegation officially hosted, but subsequent meetings with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval

suggested a nod to the message the delegation came to convey. Some interpreted it as going beyond India's positions on matters pertaining to the Tibet issue."

### **Exodus**

It has been 75 years since the Communist Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1949. After a failed uprising by the Tibetans in Lhasa in March 1959, the Dalai Lama and hundreds of thousands of his followers fled the Tibetan plateau into the South Asian countries of India, Nepal and Bhutan. Tibetans in India initially worked on backbreaking road construction projects in the Indian Himalayas before they were sent to newly built refugee settlements around India where they mainly worked in agriculture. The Indian government was generous with its humanitarian assistance and helped build, along with Western donors, a network of schools in India for Tibetan children. That strategy helped preserve the Tibetan language and culture and instilled in these youth a strong sense of Tibetan national identity. Even after six decades or so in exile, activism for Tibetan freedom remains strong and vibrant. In fact, it has gone global with the growing migration of Tibetan refugees to North America and Europe over the past 20 years. As a result of this exodus, Tibetans have become members of a true global diaspora. Various protests by Tibetans are held around the world on a weekly, if not daily, basis. Tibetan identity too, though endangered, is showing remarkable resilience despite China's efforts to "Sinicize" Tibet by forcibly admitting Tibetan students into Chinese boarding schools and even changing the very name "Tibet" to the Chinese-word "Xizang." The Tibetan language is also showing signs of revival in the age of social media.

### **Statelessness**

In addition to economic hardship, one of the primary reasons behind the Tibetan refugees' migration to the West is their lack of citizenship in India. India is not a signatory to either the 1951 Convention on Refugees or the 1967 Protocol on Refugees. The legal status of refugees in India is governed primarily by the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Citizenship Act, 1955. Tibetans in India have to live with a "Registration Certificate," which they are required to renew every year. Without proper citizenship, it is hard to obtain jobs in the formal economy. Many Tibetans are either employed in the informal economy or remain unemployed. Tashi Phuntsok, an economist at Vidyasagar College of Calcutta University, estimates based on research conducted in 2020 that nearly one in five Tibetan adults is unemployed.

Even more significantly, Tibetan refugees are also required to travel on an "Identity Certificate" (IC), a travel document issued by India in lieu of a passport. It is a difficult document to travel on and it is, of course, off limits in countries friendly to China. For instance, Tibetans wishing to go to Nepal for a

religious pilgrimage or to meet relatives can only cross the border by road, a grueling two-day journey by bus, which can be dangerous, especially for the elderly.

Ethnographic research by sociologist Joanna Pereira Coelho, of Goa University, has revealed that while a December 2010 Delhi High Court judgment allows Tibetans born between 1950 and 1987 to apply for Indian passports, which many have successfully done discreetly, they are frowned upon by mainstream Tibetans. Applying for an Indian passport is considered taboo among many Tibetans and is seen as compromising allegiance to the fatherland to which they hope to "return" once Tibet gains freedom. Yet according to most experts, the lack of valid documentation in India is one of the most frequently cited reasons for the limited social mobility in India, not to mention the accompanying sense of displacement. "Being stateless and recognized as a foreigner from birth, one finds it difficult to belong anywhere, and [it] always keeps you on your toes. How long can someone be a foreigner from birth?" asks Dharamshala-based Tibetan poet and activist Tenzin Tsundue.

According to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), in 2009, there were 128,014 Tibetans in exile: 94,203 in India, 13,514 in Nepal, 1,298 in Bhutan and 18,999 spread across the rest of the world. However, a "baseline study of the Tibetan diaspora community outside South Asia" conducted by the CTA in 2020 estimated that 62,477 Tibetans were then living outside the three traditional exile community areas of India, Nepal and Bhutan. These figures, based on research conducted by doctoral candidate Kalyani Yeola at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, would indicate that roughly half of the Tibetan refugees in South Asia have left for the West in the past decade, although it does not account for Tibetans born abroad or those who have died in India. But one thing is sure: As youths migrate and elders pass away, this trend will accelerate to a point where a majority of the diasporic population will soon be found outside India.

Paradoxically, the Identity Certificate, a symbol of statelessness in India, has given Tibetan refugees the wherewithal to seek citizenship in Western countries. As foreigners in India, they do not have much inheritance to speak of, nor are they allowed to legally own property, which means Tibetans, while being grateful for the Indian government's hospitality and largesse, have little stake in the future of the country, making it natural for them to want to move on.

This is not to say, however, that their living conditions have not improved over the years. Though many still live near poverty levels, a select few have thrived by operating small businesses such as restaurants and cafes, and many still survive by selling garments in Indian cities in the winter or making handicrafts such



as carpets. While some still live in original refugee shacks, many have now built comfortable houses with the proceeds from their businesses along with foreign remittances from relatives abroad. Meanwhile, generous donations from India and abroad, including Buddhists of the Chinese diaspora, have done wonders for the prosperity of monasteries, many of which, replicas of the originals in Tibet, are beautifully built. Tibetan “settlements” — many of which have become popular tourist destinations for Indians — remain a reservoir of sustainable living and are well-managed with hospitals, community halls, monasteries, stupas, cemeteries and administrators of their own. Research has shown how techniques preserved in these “Little Tibets” make people more compassionate and mindful.

### **No New Refugees**

To compensate for the dwindling population, a growing number of young children from the Buddhist regions of India such as Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim are being trained as monks in the Tibetan monasteries in exile. They are proving to be instrumental in preserving Buddhist knowledge and the Tibetan language that refugees brought to India.

Even in Tibetan schools, local Indians and Nepalese make up the bulk of students, as Tibetan youths, though decreasing in numbers, are increasingly sent to more expensive and prestigious Indian schools. Adding insult to injury is the fact that the number of Tibetan refugees crossing from Tibet via Nepal to India has ground to a complete halt. During the 1990s, there used to be about 2,000 Tibetan refugees, many of them young children, coming to India every year. Schools run by the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) — a charitable organization working for the education of Tibetan children — in the state of Himachal Pradesh have seen a major decline in enrolments arriving from Tibet, and in 2024, most of the five TCV schools in the state reported nearly zero such admissions, according to *The Hindustan Times*.

Overseeing the development of Tibetans in India is the Central Tibetan Administration based in Dharamshala. The head of the CTA is called “Sikyong,” or president, and is elected by Tibetan exiles based around the world, a process that has been hailed as a model for how governments in exile can be run democratically. The Sikyong (currently Penpa Tsering) is perpetually on the road, meeting his constituents, drumming up support for the Tibetan cause and boosting the morale of the diaspora around the world and in India. Given the nature of his job, he is a cross between an activist, an orator and a fundraiser.

### **India-China Realpolitik**

Inevitably, India-China relations impinge heavily on Tibetan politics. The relationship between India and China has somewhat thawed since the border clashes

in the Galwan Valley in Ladakh in 2020-21. Before the Chinese invasion of Tibet, there was no such thing as the India-China border — it was always the India-Tibet border — as the name of the Indian security unit “Indo-Tibetan Border Police” testifies. India shares a long border with Tibet, and Sikyong Penpa Tsering has said that there will be no permanent peace between India and China as long as the Tibet issue remains unresolved. Tibetans, especially the Dalai Lama, remain highly popular with the larger Indian populace even though there is no notable shift in the stance of the Indian government when it comes to the issue of Tibet.

In a recent book, *Imperial Games in Tibet: Tibet’s Struggle for Statehood*, former Indian diplomat Dilip Sinha criticizes the Indian government’s position on Tibet. The newly independent nation, which inherited its treaties and relations with Tibet from the British Raj, did not support Tibet during and after the Communist Chinese occupation and instead accepted the latter’s rule over Tibet. There is “no endgame in sight for Tibet,” Sinha says, though Tibetans “have defied China’s military by clinging to their faith and endured their misfortune with stoic resilience.”

### **Conclusion**

While Tibetans have drawn resilience from their faith, their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, will turn 90 next year. Though he has assured his followers that he will live to 113, the reality of his eventual departure remains a profound concern. He has said he will deliberate on the issue of his reincarnation once he turns 90. The process of reincarnation is not likely to be as smooth as it has been in the past with the cases of other high-ranking Tibetan Buddhist monks such as the Panchen Lama and the Karmapa Lama. This is an issue in which the US, China and India have a great stake and they know it. Beijing will most likely come out with its own reincarnation, which will be rejected by Dharamshala and the US, and most likely India, though the latter has not said anything concrete on how it will respond to China’s choice. Already, numerous proposals regarding the method of his eventual reincarnation — some quite innovative, such as selecting an “emanation” before his passing — have been discussed. At this moment, the question of where the Dalai Lama, a key symbol of Tibet, will be reborn, and how he will be recognized, remain critical issues for Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet.

## Why China wants control over a vital Indian resource

07 January 2025, [India Today](#), Shashank Mattoo

China's new \$137 billion dam in Tibet raises concerns for India

India and China, already at odds over various geopolitical and territorial issues, could soon face a new frontier of conflict—water.

A massive \$137 billion dam that China plans to construct on the Brahmaputra River has sparked fresh concerns in India, highlighting a long-standing fear of water being weaponised.

The Brahmaputra River originates in Tibet, controlled by China, before entering India through Arunachal Pradesh and flowing into Bangladesh. Millions in India's northeastern regions depend on the river for drinking water, agriculture, fishing, and more. However, the river's flow gives China a strategic upper hand. With its control over the river's origin, China can manipulate water flow, impacting downstream countries like India.

China's new dam, planned for the Great Bend of the Brahmaputra in Tibet, is set to be the world's largest and most expensive infrastructure project. It is expected to generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, triple the output of the Three Gorges Dam—currently the largest dam in the world. While this promises significant benefits for China, it raises alarm in India due to the potential for water flow manipulation.

China's history with the Mekong River provides a cautionary tale. In 2019 and 2020, Beijing restricted water flow to Southeast Asian nations like Thailand and Vietnam, causing droughts, devastating fisheries, and sparking international criticism. This precedent fuels fears that China could employ similar tactics with the Brahmaputra.

India has reason to worry about both environmental and geopolitical consequences. Chinese dam-building could disrupt the Brahmaputra's ecosystem, possibly triggering earthquakes or altering water flow. Furthermore, during past geopolitical tensions like the 2017 Doklam standoff, China withheld critical hydrological data, illustrating how water can become a geopolitical tool.

Experts argue that climate change exacerbates the issue, with both India and China facing water shortages. While some suggest that diverting the Brahmaputra's waters within China would be prohibitively expensive and complex, others caution that even "run-of-the-river" dams can store significant amounts of water and disrupt downstream ecosystems.

India has consistently called for transparency in China's hydroelectric projects and respect for its interests. However, efforts to establish a transboundary water-sharing agreement have made

little progress. Some Indian officials have proposed building dams in Arunachal Pradesh to assert territorial claims, but such measures don't address the larger strategic imbalance.

Military options appear unlikely, leaving diplomacy as India's best course of action. Experts like Dr. Mirza Zulfiqar Rahman advocate for India to lead a coalition of regional countries to promote cooperative management of shared water resources. This would mark a shift from viewing water as a contested resource to treating it as a shared necessity, China's dam-building efforts threaten to escalate tensions in an already fragile region. Beyond jeopardizing India's water security, these projects could harm the region's ecology and raise the specter of a full-blown conflict. To prevent this, India must take the lead in fostering regional cooperation and sustainable water management.

As a rising global power, India's ability to navigate these challenges and build alliances will be critical. The stakes are high, and the need for a peaceful, cooperative solution has never been greater.

## Why airplanes face difficulty flying over the Tibetan plateau

07 January 2025, Times of India

The Tibetan Plateau, also known as the "Roof of the World," stands at an average elevation of about 14,800 feet. This vast and rugged region, that stretches approximately to 2.5 million square kilometers, is not only one of the highest places on Earth but also presents serious challenges to those who dare to cross its

skies.

The Tibetan Plateau is surrounded by some of the world's highest mountain ranges, including the Himalayas to the south and the Kunlun Mountains to the north. The plateau's climate is equally harsh, with temperatures that can go to extreme lows and sudden changes in weather that can include severe storms and high winds. These conditions create an environment that is both completely inhospitable, for living and also makes it a difficult area for aviation.

### Higher altitude also impacts the aircraft's performance

Challenges posed by the Tibetan Plateau are huge for a modern aircraft. One of the biggest challenges is the thinness of air at such high altitudes, atmospheric pressure decreases, which affects the performance of aircraft engines that depend upon combustion on their intake of air. Less air is available for producing the same power, therefore the engines push harder, which lowers efficiency and may stress the engines.

The aerodynamics of the aircraft, however, are also concerned. Lift from wings decreases, so pilots have to change their lines of flight and altitude slightly. The

thin air also means that the same lift must be generated with higher speed. This can be a huge energy consumer and could also increase the operational costs of moving a flight.

#### **There is shortage of emergency landing sites**

Another critical factor that prevents airlines from crossing the Tibetan Plateau is the scarcity of emergency landing sites. In the light of an in-flight emergency, having accessible airports or flat terrain for emergency landings is also important. The plateau's rugged and mountainous terrain offers few suitable locations for such landings, which also increases the risk for aircraft that encounter technical issues or medical emergencies.

#### **There are innumerable weather challenges and lots of turbulence**

The weather of the Tibetan Plateau is completely unpredictable. The turbulence in this really harsh region makes flying often quite scary, if not dangerous. High winds, sudden temperature drops, and frequent violent storms can be experienced, these increase the risks of flying within the area lined with any kind of aircraft. To experience this extreme environment usually requires lots of planning, discussion and contemplation of the standards required by pilots when flying in these conditions.

#### **What do the aviation rules say?**

Most airlines have chosen to fly around the Tibetan Plateau rather than over it because of the problems it presents. Instead, they select longer paths that allow them to fly through safer and therefore more predictable conditions. All this is really designed for passenger safety and ultimately means that a flight can fly in lower risk exposure conditions. But after all the technological advances made in aviation, and despite a better understanding of the weather systems that pervade the area, certain flights can even operate at the fringes of the plateau. Advanced navigation and weather monitoring systems have made high-altitude performance aircraft more adaptable to the conditions of this region.

### **'A History of Kham' and China's colonial rule over Tibet**

07 January 2025, [ICT](#)

Yudru Tsomu's meticulously researched new book, *Chieftains, Lamas, and Warriors: A History of Kham, 1904-1961*, provides a welcome addition to narratives on Tibetan history by framing Tibet's eastern province not as a remote periphery but instead as a crucial zone of contestation between Central Tibet and China.

In doing so, Tsomu shows a line of continuity between successive governments of China that otherwise have little in common: namely, how swiftly each one

resorted to violence in their efforts to extend sovereignty over non-Chinese lands.

The more things change...

*A History of Kham* begins in 1904 during the waning years of the Manchu Qing empire. It then follows developments in Kham during the founding of the Republic of China, the Warlord Era, the Nationalist government, and finally through the rise of the Communist Party and the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

Each of these regimes attempted to take control of Kham with varying degrees of effort and success. Over the span of a few decades the Khampas were subjected to incursions by murderous Manchu bannermen, despotic Sichuanese warlords, and the People's Liberation Army, which relied on brutal violence to secure an occupation that continues to this day.

Despite the wildly differing ideologies of these governments, each one reached for the same set of tools upon encountering Tibetan resistance to their rule; the Qing general Zhao Erfeng (1845-1911) earned the title "Zhao the Butcher" for slaughtering Tibetan villagers and burned down monasteries in 1905, the warlords who succeeded the Qing dynasty used their armies to punish Tibetans for resisting, and in 1956 Mao's China employed methods of destruction Zhao Erfeng could have scarcely imagined when they used Tupelov Tu-4 bombers to assault Lithang Monastery.

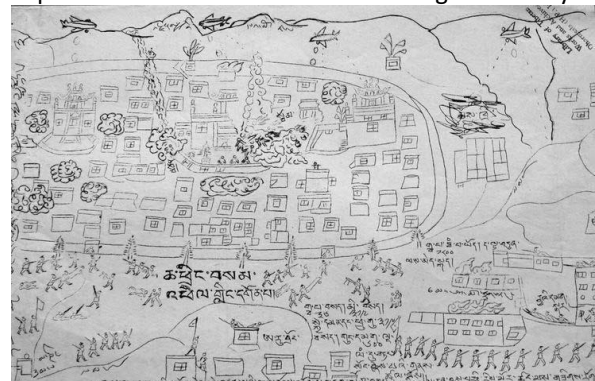


Illustration of the aerial bombardment of Chatreng Monastery, another major monastery in Kham.

Zhang Yintang, a Chinese official who served in the Qing and Republican eras, expressed this philosophy succinctly. "China should rule Tibet as Britain ruled India," he said as he unveiled a campaign of forced assimilation which serves as a prequel to the CCP's current effort.

... the more they stay the same

Consider some of the incidents detailed in *A History of Kham*.

- In 1904, the Qing Empire's Sichuan Governor-General Xiliang ordered the provincial commander-in-chief to embark on a punitive expedition in Kham after the monks of Gartar Monastery and local Tibetans attempted to

disrupt a Chinese mining operation that had been established in Tibet.

- In 1912, Tibetans in Drakyab revolted against Chinese rule, and a general serving Yuan Shikai's Beiyang government brutally suppressed the revolt and burned down Yemdo Monastery.
- In 1920, Tibetans in Bathang rose up to expel Chinese commander Yang Dexi and his garrison. Their attempt to restore Tibetan leadership in Bathang failed, and Yang executed the leaders of the uprising.
- In 1932, Chinese warlord Liu Wenhui dispatched a regiment for a punitive expedition against Gara Lama in the town of Tawu, which had thrown off Liu's control.
- In 1936, Red Army units on the Long March entered Kham. Tsomu notes that despite disciplinary measures, Communist troops still went on rampages.
- In 1937, Guomindang commander Zeng Yanshu violently suppressed a Tibetan rebellion in Gangkar Ling.
- In 1956, Tibetan revolts against Chinese rule occurred in 18 of the 21 counties of Kardze prefecture. The Chinese People's Liberation Army used overwhelming force to quell the uprisings, including the aforementioned aerial bombardment of Lithang Monastery.

Over this period empires, warlords, republics, and people's republics came and went, but Chinese forces securing control of parts of Kham through violence remained a constant.

The targeting of Tibetan monasteries continues to the present. The CCP justifies their ongoing efforts to restrict, control, and eliminate Tibetan Buddhism according to their own principles, but these assaults on monasteries are consistent with prior regimes which held completely opposite principles. Only the justifications change: "disobeying the emperor" for the Qing, "securing the border" for Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists, and "smashing the reactionary upper class" for the Communists.

In reality they have always been, first and foremost, efforts to break down centers of Tibetan nationalist power in order to subjugate Tibetans to Chinese power instead. Modern Chinese propaganda on the subject is shaped by Beijing's persistent efforts to frame Tibetan resistance as a class issue, but their true motivations clearly line up with those of previous Chinese governments trying to impose their rule on an unwilling Tibetan population.

Dargye Monastery provides an instructive example of this continuity in action. A large institution located in Kham with close ties to the Tibetan government in Lhasa, it was assaulted by Chinese forces in a 1930

punitive campaign and then ransacked again and burned down in 1932. Under Communist rule – theoretically the antithesis to the Guomindang – the monks would be forced to leave the monastery in 1958, and it would be completely demolished during the Cultural Revolution before later being rebuilt.



Dargye Monastery today (Photo: Andelicek.andy) Kham since 1961

Tsomu's book ends in 1961, but the story doesn't stop there.

Dargye Monastery, for example, remains a center of both Tibetan resistance and Chinese repression to this day. In 2008 a Dargye monk named Kunsang Tsering staged a peaceful protest and was shot by members of the People's Armed Police, while in 2011 two Dargye monks were arrested for shouting slogans in Lhasa's Barkhor district, including "We want freedom and human rights in Tibet." Five years later, Chinese authorities cancelled a religious gathering and horse race festival organized by Dargye Monastery after monks and local residents refused an order to fly the Chinese flag at the two events, at the monastery, and from residents' homes.

Efforts for forcibly converting Tibetans into Chinese culture have continued as well. As part of their linguistic repression of Tibetan, in recent years Chinese authorities have been busy forcibly closing Tibetan schools and replacing them with a system of colonial boarding schools.

Some of the figures mentioned in *A History of Kham* have received something of a recent reappraisal. The Chinese Communist Party would never endorse the Qing Empire's methods of rule over China, but how about in Tibet? Tibetan writer Woeser noted that Zhao the Butcher, a certifiable homicidal maniac, has been given the seal of approval by from current Chinese leaders and nationalist voices:

*Many Chinese mention that Zhao Erfeng killed Han Chinese people, which they consider the "dark spot in his life," but his evil behavior in Tibet is endlessly being praised; one finds headlines such as "the misunderstood national hero of the last century," "the historical contributions of the great Qing minister Zhao Erfeng who led an army into Tibet to put an end to the rebellions," "cherish the memory of the national hero Zhao Erfeng," or "recapturing a Tibetan hero." This*

*very clearly shows that killing Han Chinese is cruel and mean, whereas killing Tibetans is an act of patriotism. Ruling Tibet like the British ruled India, indeed.*

### **Setback In Sino-Indian Relations Due To Fresh Territorial And Water Disputes – Analysis**

07 January 2025, [Eurasian Review](#), P.K. Balachandran

Recent cartographic changes by China and its decision to dam a river in Tibet have raised the hackles in New Delhi putting recent arrived détente under strain.

Last year, regional rivals India and China reached an agreement on border patrolling, reducing tension in the Eastern Ladakh sector. Prior to that in July, the Indian government's *Economic Survey* said that "to boost Indian manufacturing and plug India into the global supply chain, it is inevitable that India plugs itself into China's supply chain. Whether we do so by relying solely on imports or partially through Chinese investments is a choice that India has to make."

The border détente and the idea to allow Chinese investments were interpreted as early signs of a rapprochement between the two countries that were involved in an interminable border dispute and relentless jostling for supremacy in South Asia.

But as 2025 dawned, cracks appeared in the relationship. China decided to form two "Counties" called He'an and Hekang, in the Xinjiang province, parts of which fell in the Indian territory of Ladakh. India conveyed its protest to China about the establishment of these Counties on its territory. For India this was yet another case of China's cartographic aggression. China had earlier given its own names to various places in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh which it claims is "Southern Tibet" and, therefore, a part of China.

#### **Controversial Dam**

China also announced that it would build a gigantic dam, the biggest in the world, on the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet, which flows into Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India and then into Bangladesh. The Yarlung Zangbo of Tibet becomes Brahmaputra in India and Jamuna in Bangladesh.

China's dam project is seen in India as threatening the livelihood of people in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam whose farmers depend on assured flows in the Brahmaputra. It is feared that China could weaponize [water](#) from the dam by withholding or releasing water in ways that could harm these Indian States. Similarly, Bangladeshi farmers will be affected by changes in the flow in the Jamuna due to manipulations at the dam in Tibet.

The dam, which will cost US\$ 137 billion, is located on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo river at the U bend in Medog Country in Tibet. It will have the capacity to generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours of

electricity annually. China says that the project is expected boost engineering industries and create employment in Tibet. But given the low industrialization in Tibet, the bulk of the beneficiaries will be in the already industrialised parts of China east of Tibet.

#### **India Protests**

Disturbed about the possible deleterious effects of the dam, the Indian External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said last Friday: "As a lower riparian state with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed, through expert-level and diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory. There is a need for transparency and consultation with downstream countries. The Chinese side has been urged to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas. We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests."

In response, China's foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, said that China had always been responsible for the development of cross-border rivers and the hydropower development in Tibet had been studied in an in-depth way for decades and safeguard measures had been taken for the security of the project. She added that China will continue to maintain communication with countries in the lower reaches through existing channels and step up international cooperation on disaster prevention and relief.

Indian commentators point out that there is an India-China Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that requires China to provide hydrological information on the Brahmaputra River during monsoon season from May 15 to October 15 each year. Data includes water level, discharge, and rainfall. The data helps India with flood control and disaster mitigation. The MoU was renewed in 2008, 2013, and 2018, but expired on June 5, 2023. The two countries are currently renewing the MoU through diplomatic channels.

#### **Differing Views**

Be that as it may, views differ on the impact of the dam on India. The general Indian nationalist opinion is that it will be disadvantageous and harmful to India both economically and strategically. The matter was reportedly raised with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan by his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval in their meetings in New Delhi on January 5 and 6.

News reports said that on March 1, 2012, the Brahmaputra had run completely dry at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh. But after a few hours, Pasighat got inundated! It indicated that water in the upper reaches was first released and then suddenly shut at a dam in Tibet.

World music streaming service

Nilanjan Ghosh of the Observer Research Foundation, recalled that in 2020, there was an increase in turbidity and blackening of the [water](#) in the Tsiang river, as the Yarlung Tsangpo is called in Arunachal Pradesh. There was also a temporary stoppage of data sharing by China over the high season flows during the 2020 Doklam military standoff between China and India. Hence the need for an agreement and strict adherence to it.

Geologists point out that the Chinese dam projects are very close to the geological fault line where the Indian Plate collides with the Eurasian Plate. The area is therefore prone to earthquakes. Indeed, a study conducted by the China Earthquake Administration found that in the six years after the construction of the giant “Three Gorge Dams” over the Yangtze river in the Hubei province in 2003, there were 3,429 earthquakes along the reservoir. But between 2000 and 2003, before the dam was constructed, there were only 94 earthquakes. Eighty large cracks appeared on the Three Gorges Dam’s concrete face, just days after the reservoir was filled for the first time in 2003.

These raised concerns about the dam’s safety. In 1975, 62 dams had collapsed in Henan due to heavy downpours during a typhoon. That event killed more than 26,000 people by the official count – though other estimates were several times higher.

#### Contrary View

However, some experts on water resources management feel that the Chinese dam will not make a difference to Assam because the water in the Brahmaputra is not so much from Tibet but from tributaries and rainfall on the Indian side. The tributaries which contribute significantly to the Brahmaputra are Luhit, Dibang, and Dihang, near Sadiya on the Indian state of Assam.

The rainfall on the Tibet side is less than on the Assam side. A large part of the Tibetan component of the basin, i.e. the longer stretch of the Yarlung Zangbo river is located in the rain-shadow north of the Himalaya, and is therefore a recipient of much less rainfall as compared to the south.

While the average annual precipitation in the trans-Himalaya is around 300 mm, the average annual precipitation (that includes mainly rainfall) touches 3,000 mm in the south. The foothills are frequently fed by anomalous precipitation of a magnitude that is capable of causing great floods, experts note.

While the peak flows at Nuxia and Tsel Dzong measuring stations at the great bend in the Tibetan plateau are about 5,000 and 10,000 cubic metres per second (cumecs), the peak flow at Guwahati in Assam is approximately 55,000 cumecs. The lean season flow in Nuxia is in the range of 300-500 cumecs, while the lean flow at Pasighat in India is to the tune of 2,000-plus cumecs, the one at Guwahati is around 4000-plus cumecs.

According to Dr. Nilanjan Ghosh, Director at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in India, given the precipitation, run-off and sediment flow regimes, it is unlikely that any intervention on the Yarlung Zangbo in Tibet by China will cause any substantial harm for downstream economies in India and Bangladesh.

#### Roads to Tibet dragging in the slow lane

06 January 2025, [The Kathmandu Post](#), Krishna Prasad Gautam

Years of delays and funds crunch have left Dunai-Lasikyap-Sisaul-Dho-Tinje road in Dolpa and Gamgadhi-Nakchenagla road in Mugu incomplete.



An excavator works on a hillside for the construction of the Dunai-Lasikyap section of the Bheri corridor road, which will connect to Tibet’s Marimla border point. Even three years after the contract for the section was awarded, progress stands at just 15 percent. **RSS**

Sanduk Tamang from ward 3 of Dolpobuddha Rural Municipality has to walk three days to reach Dunai, the district headquarters of Dolpa. The return journey takes just as many days or even more. Although the 56-year-old could reach Marimla on the Nepal-China border in a day, he has no choice but to climb down to Dunai to buy food grains and other essentials as the Chinese border remains closed.

“Our village is very remote. We risk our lives walking through narrow trails to reach Dunai. There is no alternative to carry goods by using mules as the village does not have roads. This makes transportation nearly double the price of goods,” said Tamang.

According to him, the local people in Dolpobuddha grow only one crop a year due to the cold climate and lack of irrigation. The villagers grow Uwa, a barley variety, and the local production hardly lasts three months. “The villagers have to import food from other places for the rest of the year. Life in our remote village is quite difficult without transport facilities,” said Tamang.

Tasi Lama, a resident of Mugamkarmarong in Mugu district, dreams of a better future, devoid of hardships, if a road network connects the area.

“We have spent our lives in hardship and scarcity. I hope our children and grandchildren will not face the same problems once the road is built in our village,” said Lama. “I heard years ago that a road linking Tibet would be constructed through our village, but it has not yet reached us,” he lamented.

Residents of Dolpobuddha, Chharkatangsong and Sheyphoksundo rural municipalities in Dolpa district and Mugamkarmarong Rural Municipality in Mugu district have endured hardships for generations due to lack of transportation. It is uncertain when the areas will be connected with the national road network as Bheri corridor road and Gamgadhi-Nakchenagla road have been left incomplete mainly due to lack of budget.

The federal government planned to construct Dunai-Lasikyap-Sisaul-Dho-Tinje road in Dolpa under the Bheri corridor and Gamgadhi-Nakchenagla road in Mugu. But both the road projects are in limbo as the government did not allocate any budget for them in the current fiscal year 2024-25.

“Villagers have to walk two days to Dunai, Dolpa district headquarters, to buy essentials, and then four days to bring them back. A road in the village would make our lives easier,” said Paljor Tamang of ward 1 of Chharkatangsong Rural Municipality, Dolpa.

The government allocated a budget of Rs1.4 billion for the Jajarkot-Dunai section of Bheri corridor. “The budget is being used to upgrade the road from Tallu to Tripurakot this year.

Small amounts have been released for upgrading existing road sections. But no funds have been released for opening new passages for the past three years” said Sunil Ranjitkar, senior divisional engineer at Bheri Corridor Road Project.

The contract for opening a 25 km passage [locally known as track] along the Dunai-Lasikyap road was awarded to Surya-Shreya-Shantidevi JV three years ago. “The project deadline is a year away but only about 15 percent of the work has been completed. If the contractor doesn’t expedite the work, we will take action,” said Ranjitkar. According to him, passage opening for the 35 km Lasikyap-Sisaul section has yet to start. “The area has hard rock cliffs. Preparations are on to hand over the road project to the Nepal Army,” he added. The road project has already opened a passage along the 40 km Marimla-Tinje-Dho section. The progress on the 68 km Gamgadhi-Nakchenagla road is no different. Only around a 16 km passage has been opened so far. “This year, Rs40 million has been released for upgrading the passage, but no budget has not been released to open new sections,” said Dipendra Kumar Chaudhary, chief of the Road Division Office in Jumla. According to him, the Gamgadhi-Nakchenagla road is the shortest road in Karnali Province to connect with Tibet.

“We have to walk for two days to reach the nearest road. Life will be much easier once the project is completed,” said Dhanar Golbu Lama of Kimre village in Mugamkarmarong Rural Municipality. He expects that trade between Nepal and Tibet would also flourish once the road is completed.

### ***China pursues futile strategy against the Dalai Lama***

05 January 2025, [The Sunday Guardian](#), Khedroob Thondup

*China’s strategy revolves around controlling the succession of the Dalai Lama.*

China’s relationship with the 14th Dalai Lama has been fraught with tension and political manoeuvring. Beijing views the Dalai Lama as a separatist threat, while the Dalai Lama himself has long advocated for genuine autonomy for Tibet rather than outright independence. As the spiritual leader ages, China appears to be waiting for his demise, hoping to exert control over the selection of his successor. However, this strategy may prove to be a long and ultimately futile wait.

The 14th Dalai Lama, now 89 years old, has reassured his followers about his health, predicting that he may live to be 110 years old. Despite recent health concerns, including knee surgery, he continues to engage with his followers and maintain his spiritual duties. This expected longevity means that China could be waiting for another two decades before the Dalai Lama passes away, a period during which significant political changes could occur both within China and globally.

China’s strategy revolves around controlling the succession of the Dalai Lama. Beijing insists that it has the authority to approve the reincarnation of Tibetan spiritual leaders, a claim rooted in its broader policy of controlling religious practices within its borders. By positioning its own Panchen Lama and preparing for the selection of the next Dalai Lama, China aims to ensure that the next spiritual leader is aligned with its political interests.

However, this approach faces several challenges. Firstly, the Tibetan community and the global Buddhist diaspora are unlikely to accept a Dalai Lama appointed by Beijing. The legitimacy of the Dalai Lama comes from spiritual recognition and the acceptance of the Tibetan people, not from political decrees. Secondly, the current Dalai Lama has suggested that his reincarnation could occur outside of Chinese control, possibly in India, where he has lived in exile since 1959.

Over the next two decades, China itself could undergo significant political changes. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has maintained a tight grip on power, but internal and external pressures could lead to shifts in

its policies and governance. Economic challenges, social unrest, and international dynamics could all influence China's political landscape. A more open or reformist leadership in the future might adopt a different approach to Tibet and the Dalai Lama, potentially easing tensions and seeking a more conciliatory path. China's wait for the demise of the 14th Dalai Lama is a strategy fraught with uncertainty and potential pitfalls. The Dalai Lama's expected longevity and the possibility of political changes within China suggest that Beijing's current approach may not yield the desired results. Instead of waiting for an uncertain future, China could benefit from engaging in meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community, fostering a more harmonious and stable relationship.

### **China carrying out compulsory army conscription of India-border Tibetans?**

05 January 2025, [Tibetan Review](#)

China has invoked its military service law to mandate Tibetan males in the India-border county of Ruthog (Chinese: Ritu) in Ngari (Ali) prefecture, Tibet, to report for military conscription, reported the Tibetan-language *tibettimes.net* Jan 4, citing a source with knowledge of the situation there.

Although China's Military Service Law has created a system of compulsory military service, mandatory service has not been enacted since 1949 due to sufficient volunteer recruitment.

However, now, in the case of Ruthog, China is said to have invoked Article 15 of its Military Service Law, which says "male citizens who have reached the age of 18 before Dec 31 every year shall register for first-time military service in that year in accordance with the arrangement of military service organs."

Ruthog is the county that borders India's Union Territory of Ladakh, where intruding Chinese troops clashed with their Indian counterparts in mid-2020, plunging relations between the two countries to a state from which they are still struggling to recover.

The report said the authorities have not only issued a proclamation requiring such male Tibetan youths to report for conscription, but also contacted them as well as their parents individually to ensure compliance.

The proclamation is stated to require male Tibetan youths in this India-border county who would attain 18 years of age on Dec 31, 2024 to register for recruitment by Jun 30, 2025.

The source has also said Chinese authorities have enhanced the level of security alert in the county, adding that a number of new activities were being initiated in its military camps.

The Chinese military was stated to have been repeatedly encouraging the youths in this county to join its border security force each year and there has been no let-up in this drive this year too. Some parents in the county were stated to have received phone calls, promising great financial rewards both for themselves and their children in future for joining the border security force.

Over the past several years, the local county government and the area's army unit have been acting jointly to make the local Tibetans celebrate events like China's National Day and the border guards day. Officers of the border guard units were stated to repeatedly lecture the local villagers under a campaign that encourages them to join the border guard military.

A number of new projects are also being carried out in the county with building of new border villages, and these have include a new photovoltaic power station, the report said.

### **India must seek a water treaty with China, brace for hard bargain**

04 January 2025, [Deccan Herald](#), Mohan V Katarki

Expectedly, New Delhi has expressed concerns over the proposed project, which would have three times more installed capacity than China's own Three Gorges Dam, hitherto the world's largest hydroelectric project.

The recent military disengagement in Ladakh raised hope for a thaw in Sino-Indian relations. However, disregarding the downstream riparian rights, Beijing Mandarins have provoked hostility on another front, by unilaterally deciding to build a mega hydroelectric project on the lower reaches of Tibet's longest river Yarlung Tsangpo, which flows as Siang and Brahmaputra into Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in northeastern India respectively. Expectedly, New Delhi has expressed concerns over the proposed project, which would have three times more installed capacity than China's own Three Gorges Dam, hitherto the world's largest hydroelectric project.

The rivers are natural but mysterious. If each river is *sue generis*, Brahmaputra is no exception. Chandan Mahanta of IIT (2006) says the Brahmaputra is "perhaps the most complex of all". Downstream India and Bangladesh face challenges that are probably absent in the Danube, Nile or Tigris.

The Brahmaputra basin is perennial and sourced from monsoons and melting snow. A 2014 study shows that the average yield of the river is about 537.24 BCM. The flow is 25 times more than Cauvery. Nonetheless, the utilizable yield is about 24 BCM, and, out of this, a crucial 20% is from China in the non-monsoon period.



How will China's mega hydroelectric project hurt India? The bone of contentions is the transboundary harm to the acquired historic rights in non-monsoon or summer flows; harm to the fragile ecology of the Himalayas, irreparable loss from flooding if the dam breaks due to earthquakes; and, of course, the threat arising out of likely weaponization during the time of hostility.

The race for hydropower generation to achieve decarbonization under the Paris Climate Agreement is apparent in the plans of Asian giants. China has planned to generate 60,000 MW by building the mega-dam. India also has plans to tap 57,000 MW hydropower potential in Arunachal Pradesh with several projects to exploit historic rights in Brahmaputra and reduce its dependence on fossil fuel by increasing its hydropower share from 12% to 50% to comply with commitments made at COP26 in Glasgow in 2022.

The threat of mega-dam to geopolitical threat. India fears that the Chinese military may weaponize the mega-dam at the border by unleashing flash floods. If this happens, Assam will be in the water!

How can India protect its rights? India and China are not parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Water Courses (1997). However, there is no legal vacuum. The customary rules of international law do apply. The equitable utilization doctrine has evolved as a customary rule of international law after rejecting the Harmon doctrine, which gave unlimited rights to the upstream State, and the natural flow theory, which benefitted the downstream State. The Helsinki Rules of 1966 and Berlin Rules of 2004 codify the law by balancing equity and protection of historic rights. However, the challenge comes in the application of rules to complex techno-legal issues.

While exercising the riparian right to use water in its territory, the States are under an obligation not to cause significant harm as pronounced by the International Court of Justice in the Gabčíkovo case (1997) and the Pulp Mill case (2010). As a precautionary step, China is under a threshold obligation to conduct a transboundary environment impact assessment before beginning the negotiations.

India cannot invoke the adjudicatory process directly. The compulsory adjudication is still alien to international law. If the States consent, the world court may adjudicate as happened in the Gabčíkovo case (1997). However, a treaty is the preferred approach in water conflicts rather than adjudication by applying hard and fast rules.

If China goes ahead disregarding international norms, India may have to consider countering its communist neighbour with a physical solution by erecting a dam downstream to absorb floods and provide non-

monsoon releases. India must brace for hard bargain with China.

### Here's why India is worried about the approval of the world's largest hydroelectric dam

02 January 2025, [Factor This](#), Paul Gerke and Sean Wolfe

China, which already boasts the world's largest hydroelectric project, is preparing to up the ante. The Chinese government recently approved the construction of what would be the **new** world's largest hydroelectric dam at the Yarlung Tsangpo River in the Tibet autonomous region.

If constructed, the dam would generate up to three times more energy than the current heavyweight champion Three Gorges Dam, BBC reports. The government has already set aside one trillion yuan (US\$137 billion) for the project.

Yarlung Tsangpo River, considered a sacred body of water, flows through the Tibet autonomous region of China and Arunachal Pradesh of India. It is the longest river in Tibet and the fifth-longest in China. The river also features the deepest canyon on Earth with a drop of 25,154 feet. Thus, China says, the project could generate 300 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) annually. Authorities have previously said that the river's lower reaches have a vertical drop of over 31 miles, which alone could provide up to 70 million kilowatts, Interesting Engineering reports.

Chinese officials said the project would require drilling tunnels between 2.5 miles and 12.5 miles long in the Namcha Barwa mountain in order to divert half of the river's flow around 2,000 cubic meters per second, Interesting Engineering reports.

Officials have not yet announced when construction would start, or the exact location of the project.

### Concerns around displacement, environmental impacts

The project will be located on the boundary of a tectonic plate, which poses the risk of earthquakes. Chinese researchers have previously warned that the excavation and construction required for the project could result in increased landslides in the area, BBC reports.

BBC News says the announcement has stoked concerns about the displacement of communities in Tibet, as well as the potential environmental impacts downstream in India and Bangladesh.

Earlier in 2024, the Chinese government rounded up hundreds of Tibetans who had been protesting against another hydropower dam. It ended in arrests and beatings, with some people seriously injured, the BBC learned through sources and verified footage.

India's concerns are centered around China's potential control over the flow of the river, which flows into

India, BBC reports. After China announced plans for the project in 2020, Reuters reported that India was considering developing its own hydropower project "to mitigate the adverse impact of the Chinese dam projects."

China has a questionable record when it comes to building and maintaining giant dams. In August 1975, the Banqiao Dam and 61 others throughout Henan, China collapsed following the landfall of Typhoon Nina. The dam collapse created the third-deadliest flood in history, with estimates of the death toll ranging from 26,000 to 240,000. The flood also caused the collapse of 5 million to 6.8 million houses.

And, while the Three Gorges Dam was an engineering feat, Britannica.com says it has also been fraught with controversy. Construction of the dam caused the displacement of at least 1.3 million people and the destruction of natural features and countless rare architectural and archaeological sites.

Human rights groups and experts have raised concerns about the development's knock-on effects. China has built several dams in Tibetan areas — a contentious subject in a region tightly controlled by Beijing ever since it was annexed in the 1950s.

### **Guest Opinion: Xinjiang deserves to be seen with open eyes**

02 January 2025, [Xinhua](#)

**While the EU promotes the slogan "unity in diversity," China embraces the philosophy of "harmony in diversity." This approach has successfully created a soft, seamless mosaic -- not through domination but by integrating everyone into the vibrant fabric of Chinese society.**

by Biljana Vankovska

This is just a brief reflection on my second visit to China. Still tired from the long journey, I'm slowly adjusting to our time zone and trying to focus on the tasks waiting for me. But a flood of impressions keeps swirling in my mind, making it impossible for me to rest, especially after realizing how much Western propaganda had shaped my expectations. I thought I was heading to a brutal and backward corner of China, only to find myself utterly enchanted by what I encountered.

Xinjiang is at the center of ongoing accusations against China -- claims of massive human rights abuses and even genocide, particularly targeting the Uyghur population. Sinophobia has various sources, triggers, and motives, and the narrative surrounding China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region plays a major role in shaping perceptions.

What I find truly absurd is the eagerness to condemn so-called genocide in Xinjiang while turning a blind eye to what is happening in Palestine. Fact-checkers and

so-styled truth-verifiers operate with a clear agenda, often acting to meet the requirements of Western grants.

Xinjiang is an incredible destination for anyone who prefers to experience a place firsthand, different from the interpretations of fact-checkers or NGOs who have never set foot there. This region has a remarkable tourism story to tell: in the first nine months of 2024, it welcomed an astounding 250 million visitors!

I hope I don't come across as an arrogant representative of developed Europe or, to put it bluntly, the West. I'll admit that I was initially caught up in the Western narrative myself. I expected to find a remote, desolate area which is essentially "the middle of nowhere." This assumption wasn't rooted in ignorance, but rather in preconceived notions.

However, during my first visit to China, I was struck by its diversity and depth. I quickly realized that even a lifetime wouldn't be enough to fully appreciate all its richness and nuances. Whenever I mentioned to my Chinese hosts that my next stop was Urumqi, they would light up and say, "Ah, that's such a different place! Expect to see new things!" And they were absolutely right -- it was unlike anything I had ever experienced!

Like a modern-day Marco Polo or Sinbad the Sailor, though traveling by plane in the 21st century, I was excited for a "different" experience in Urumqi. What I discovered, however, was more of a continuation of the familiar China, but with a surprising twist. The real surprise came from the scents, colors, and sounds that reminded me of my homeland. It was an unexpected and fascinating blend!

As I boarded the flight to Urumqi, I noticed just as many passengers as I had seen on the flight from Frankfurt to Beijing. "Ah," I thought, "after all, this is China!" When we landed at Urumqi's airport, I was amazed by how modern and bustling it was compared to Skopje's modest terminal. Urumqi had spacious, functional facilities for both domestic and international flights.

The bus ride to the hotel took place at night, providing me with a glimpse of the illuminated city, massive boulevards with four to six lanes in each direction, towering skyscrapers, brightly lit intersections, and iconic landmarks.

Another striking impression was the seemingly endless construction -- buildings going up everywhere, with no end in sight! The city is clearly booming. We later witnessed the fruits of this economic growth during our visit to the China Energy Group and an electric car factory.

During our free time, we ventured out to explore the city on our own. I'll save the story of Urumqi's phenomenal museum for another time -- it was so rich and exciting that it even evoked memories of Balkan

history, where civilizations, cultures, ethnicities, and languages intersect in a beautiful tapestry.

One thing I'll emphasize is this: while the EU promotes the slogan "unity in diversity," China embraces the philosophy of "harmony in diversity." This approach has successfully created a soft, seamless mosaic -- not through domination but by integrating everyone into the vibrant fabric of Chinese society.

At times, I genuinely felt at home -- whether through the intricate embroidery patterns, the carpets and crafts, or the traditional music and food. Xinjiang's natural beauty is hard to capture in words, with its breathtaking blend of mountain ranges, rivers, lakes, and deserts. Yet, every now and then, I would spot familiar elements that reminded me of home -- like Radika, Lake Ohrid (which has its own "Heavenly Lake," Tianchi), the peaks of Korab and Sar Mountain, or the horses of Mavrovo.

This region has been serving as a crossroads for various peoples and cultures. It lies at a central point of the ancient Silk Road. Today, the modern Belt and Road Initiative follows these same routes but with cutting-edge infrastructure for connection.

It's heartwarming to realize that many musical instruments, traditional costumes, and more have traveled from this place to reach us. This experience underscores the idea that the world is both vast and small, and that we, too, are a part of it.

I'm not claiming to be an expert on China or its complexities. But my experiences have turned me into a modest and curious explorer -- someone eager to learn more, not just about China, but also about the connections between our civilizations and the potential for collaboration in creating a peaceful world.

We often hear that we stand on "opposite sides," even unfriendly ones. However, it's essential for us to set aside stereotypes and explore every opportunity for closer cooperation across various fields. There's so much to learn from these people, not only about them but also about ourselves as part of the global community.

I hope I shall return to China. I want to write about the Grand Bazaar in Urumqi, the fascinating stories in the museum, and how they helped me better understand the complexities of the Balkans, where diverse influences have intersected and continue to shape the lives of our ancestors, contemporaries, and future generations.

It's true that China faces internal challenges, but not all stem from ethnic or religious diversity. Many arise from far more complex historical and external influences, issues we know all too well from personal experience. Yet, China addresses these challenges through investments, compromises, diplomacy, gentleness, and relentless development.

In just a few days in Xinjiang, I gathered countless stories, inspired by the rich cultural tapestry and intellectual challenges I encountered. It was worth the exhaustion and effort.

As for the critics, they can keep complaining. If I have the chance again, especially now as I navigate life's final stretch, I would gladly return and experience the "most notorious" places for myself. No one else will define who my friends are or are not.

For now, China feels like a warm and familiar place -- it even smells like home, reminiscent of the bread from the Grand Bazaar in Urumqi.

