

2. Arunachal Pradesh is an Integral and Inalienable Part of India

The ministry of external affairs (MEA) said that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India

Background of the Recent Incident

A. Detention of an Indian Citizen in China – A female Indian citizen was detained for 18 hours at Shanghai Airport by Chinese immigration officials. Reason given – Her passport listed Arunachal Pradesh as her birthplace, and the officials declared the passport “invalid.” China claimed Arunachal Pradesh is not part of India, asserting its “South Tibet” narrative.

B. India's Response – The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) strongly criticised China, calling the act “arbitrary detention” and a violation of international civil aviation norms. Violated frameworks referenced

1. Chicago Convention (1944) on International Civil Aviation

2. Montreal Convention relating to international air transport passengers

C. Larger Diplomatic Context – China frequently uses passport stamping, stapled visas, renaming places, and now immigration detentions as part of a broader grey-zone tactic to challenge India's sovereignty.

China's Claim Over Arunachal Pradesh

A. Geographic & Historical Background – Arunachal Pradesh was known as the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) until 1972. Borders –

1. China (Tibet) to the north
2. Bhutan to the west
3. Myanmar to the east

B. China's Claim (“South Tibet” Claim) – China claims entire Arunachal Pradesh, especially Tawang, as part of southern Tibet. The claim is politically motivated, aimed at controlling India's northeast strategic corridor.

Why China Claims Arunachal Pradesh – Detailed Factors

A. Tawang Monastery – Tawang Monastery is the second-largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the world. Established in 1680–81 at the direction of the 5th Dalai Lama. China claims Tawang belongs to Tibet on religious–cultural grounds. Tawang is central to the process of identifying the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, giving it political–religious significance.

B. Cultural & Ethnic Ties – Tribes in upper Arunachal (Monpa, Membas, Sherdukpens) share connections with Tibetans. China fears these ethnic links might fuel Tibetan pro–democracy movements, weakening China's authority in Tibet.

C. Dispute Over the McMahon Line – Border demarcation created under the 1914 Simla Convention between British India and Tibet. China disputes it because – It claims Tibet had no independent treaty-making powers. China was present at the conference but did not sign the final agreement.

Simla Convention (1914) – Expanded Points – Representatives – British India, Tibet, and China (observer status). Outcomes – Defined the McMahon Line as the boundary between India and Tibet.

- Tibet was divided into Inner Tibet (Chinese control) and Outer Tibet (autonomous).
- China refused to accept it; India recognises it as the legal boundary.

D. Dalai Lama's Flight to India (1959) – After China's military crackdown in Tibet, the Dalai Lama escaped via Tawang into India. His stay at Tawang Monastery remains a sensitive political marker for China.

E. Strategic & Military Considerations – Arunachal Pradesh provides India with mountainous terrain advantages overlooking the Tibetan plateau. Control over Tawang would let China –

1. Push PLA military positions southward
2. Strengthen defence of Lhasa and Shigatse
3. Create pressure on India during border negotiations

F. The Bhutan Factor – If China controlled Arunachal, Bhutan would have China as a neighbour on both east and west borders. This increases China's leverage over Bhutan and weakens India's influence in the Himalayan region.

G. Bargaining Tool in Border Negotiations – China uses its claim over Arunachal to bargain for concessions in Aksai Chin (Western Sector). China's narrative fluctuates depending on the strategic context.

India's Stand on Arunachal Pradesh

A. Full Sovereignty – India asserts that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral, inalienable part of its territory. The state functions under the Indian Constitution with democratic governments, judicial institutions, and administrative control.

B. McMahon Line as Legal Boundary – India recognises the boundary drawn in 1914 as legitimate and historically valid. China's objections do not alter India's legal position.

C. China's Claims Are Politically Motivated – India rejects China's issuance of –

1. Stapled visas
2. Invented Chinese names for Arunachal towns
3. Objections to Indian leaders' visits

These actions are termed meaningless attempts to alter facts on the ground.

D. Evidence of Effective Control – India has continuously administered the region since 1947 –

1. Elected governments
2. Police, judiciary, governance
3. Military presence
4. Infrastructure development

Local population identifies culturally and politically with India.

E. Infrastructure Development Will Continue – India rejects China's objections to projects such as –

1. Roads
2. Border outposts
3. Hydropower projects
4. Bridges and tunnels

India has asserted that development within Indian territory is an internal matter.

Strategic Steps by India

A. Massive Hydroelectric Project – India has begun an 11,000 MW hydropower project in Upper Subansiri district in Arunachal Pradesh. Purpose –

1. Strengthen India's infrastructure presence in disputed areas
2. Counter Chinese water diversion projects on the upper Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra)

B. Strengthening Border Infrastructure – Ongoing projects include –

1. Border Roads Organisation (BRO) roads
2. Tunnels (Sela Tunnel)
3. Forward airbases (Pasighat, Mechuka, Tuting)
4. Advanced landing grounds

C. Diplomatic Assertiveness – India's global partners (US, Japan, EU) increasingly recognise Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory, countering China's propaganda.

International Legal Position

A. Recognition – Arunachal Pradesh is internationally recognised as part of India. No major nation or international institution accepts China's "South Tibet" claim.

B. Violation of Aviation Conventions – China's detention of an Indian citizen violates –

1. Chicago Convention – Ensures respect for national passports and identity papers.

2. Montreal Convention – Protects air passengers from arbitrary discrimination or detention.

Conclusion

China's attempts to distort the status of Arunachal Pradesh involve a mix of historical revisionism, strategic motives, and political pressure tactics. India maintains an unambiguous position – Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India—historically, legally, culturally, and administratively. The recent immigration incident reflects China's aggressive stance but does not alter the ground realities. Strengthening infrastructure, hydro-power development, and diplomatic assertiveness will remain central to India's strategy in the Eastern Sector.

Source – <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/Nov/25/inalienable-part-of-india-mea-responds-after-china-defends-detention-of-arunachal-woman>

