India – China: Tawang Issue

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Why in news?

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- Government has decided to allow Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal Pradesh’s Tawang monestry in early April.
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Why the Tawang area is controversial?

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- **Tawang was historically part of Tibet.**
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- The 1914 Simla Accord defined the McMahon Line as the new boundary between British India and Tibet.
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- By this treaty Tibet relinquished some of its territories, including Tawang, to the British. But it was not recognised by China.
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- In 1950, Tibet lost its de facto independence and was incorporated into the newly established People's Republic of China.
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- Later, in 1959, when the current Dalai Lama fled Tibet, he came into India through Tawang.
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- During the **Sino-Indian war of 1962,** Tawang fell briefly under Chinese control, but China voluntarily withdrew its troops at the end of the war.
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- Tawang again came under Indian administration, but China has not relinquished its claims on most of Arunachal Pradesh including Tawang.
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What is the response from China?

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- China’s statement is, it is ‘gravely concerned’ as it would ‘seriously damage’ the bilateral ties.
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- Dalai Lama has not visited Arunachal Pradesh since 2009. On that occasion too, his itinerary had evoked threats from Beijing, but eventually **bilateral concerns outweighed them**.
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- The Chinese government would not allow tensions with India over the issue of Arunachal Pradesh to spill into other spheres of engagement.
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What India should do?

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- The bid for NSG membership and having Masood Azhar placed on the UN terrorists’ list have occupied much of the bilateral canvas, while the larger issue of the boundary resolution hasn’t been addressed adequately.
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- Recent developments, such as visits to Tawang by American diplomats, and an official dinner at the U.S. Embassy attended by leader of the Tibetan govt in exile, could be interpreted as messages aimed at China, even if they did not signify any policy change.
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- Thus, New Delhi must fine-tune its moves to **avoid misperceptions** that it is indulging in political power-play.
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Source: The Hindu

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