India’s Stance on Tibetan Refugees

What is the issue?

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- Indian government has planned to shun Tibetan community in India, to ease tensions with China.
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- Indian foreign policy establishment should reassess seeing the Tibetan population in India as a strategic tool.
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What are the recent irritants in India-China ties?

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- India-China ties have deteriorated over the past few years.
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- These have notably been for a number of reasons unconnected to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan population in India.
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- It includes border incursions, including the standoff at the part of Doklam claimed by Bhutan.
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- India’s strategic shift in line with the U.S.’s Indo-Pacific pivot that targets China is another irritant.
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- China constructs ‘deep-pocket’ inroads into South Asia.
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- Besides, the differences on the international stage, including over the India's Nuclear Suppliers Group membership and terror designations to Masood Azhar are some of the other concerns.
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What is India's plan in this regard?

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- India has planned to stay away from events that commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Dalai Lama’s 1959 flight to India.
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- This has led to the cancellation of several public events related to Tibet.
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- This is seen as a bigger error as the government has planned to use Tibetan refugees in India as a card in its relations with China.
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What are the concerns of Tibetan population?

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- China is investing huge sums of money for infrastructure investments in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) albeit at the cost of its **environment**.
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- Tibet’s downtown Lhasa has all the trappings of a modern city.
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- But this is by destroying the unique Tibetan **culture** and mainstreaming Chinese culture into the region.
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- These are notably leading to significant **demographic shift**.
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- The outflow of refugees from Tibet has been curtailed by the Chinese authorities by convincing Nepal to close a popular route.
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- Many third generation Tibetans settled in India have no idea about their **motherland** and India’s attitude towards giving them citizenship has been stern.
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- In recent times there is also a rise in the younger and more radical “Rangtsen” **(freedom) groups** demanding an independent Tibet.
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- The primary concern that looms over the community is that of its **future leadership**.
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- This is because the present Dalai Lama is getting older and there is no firm announcement about their next leader.
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What should India do?

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- India must refresh its overseas China policy and its domestic engagement with the Tibetan community
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- India needs to take a proactive policy that takes into account these new realities.
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- There is an urgent need for community outreach, surveys and a referendum.
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- If necessary, mapping what the Tibetan community in India wants in its future could be considered.
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- In this context, India must reconsider its citizenship laws, specially for those who want to make India a permanent home.
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Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

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