

Beyond Encroachment: Understanding the Taksing Border Controversy in Arunachal Pradesh

July 13, 2026



In the last week of June, reports emerged of a prominent civil society group (Nah Welfare Society) flagging legacy and recent ‘encroachments’ by China on land ‘along the border’ in the Taksing circle/area, gravely affecting the local tribal community’s access to lands traditionally used for hunting, cattle grazing, and extraction of forest produce. The group provided details of the encroachment (roads, bridges, and military camps) in a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Upper Subansiri district.

The NWS identified five locations—Oying (2445) in Asaphila area, Paniar in Chujarta, Marpan (Marnafe), Potrang Lake and Tindingtang—as areas now allegedly under Chinese occupation. According to the NWS, these sites were “firmly within Indian territory” before 2020, with some of them holding religious

significance as sacred pilgrimage sites in the Tsari region.

In the days that followed, there has been much discussion on the veracity and scale of the allegations as well as larger questions whether India is doing enough to offset such seemingly inevitable PRC infrastructure build-up in sensitive areas.

Notably, the Indian [army rejected the claims strongly](#) on 29 June, “We have seen some media reports alleging recent encroachment by the Chinese PLA and the setting up of camps in Arunachal Pradesh. These reports are incorrect and without any basis.”

In contrast, the state administration’s response has been more cautious. Home Minister Mama Natung announced that the state would seek a report from the district administration to verify the claims and that the option of forming a committee to examine the matter remains open. The local MLA Nakap Alo also urged official confirmation before reaching conclusions, and the Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee has called for a central probe. The contrasting responses, in turn, [have angered various other civil society groups](#) leading them to seek clarification in light of conflicting claims.

The Challenge of Border Management in the Eastern Sector

The claims in the letter and the divergent responses point towards the complexity of the LAC as well as border management in what is known as ‘Rest of Arunachal Pradesh’ within the Eastern sector. The grey areas across this 1100 km border are marked by thick forests, hard to access border villages and outposts, and daunting mountain ranges. At a higher and more strategic level, the area has been witnessing a race between outmigration from border villages and the [Indian state’s attempts](#) at delivering the fruits of development to extremely remote areas before it is too late.

Caught between the limits of the Indian state on the one hand

and Chinese slow-moving territorial expansion on the other, many border tribes and villages are at the risk of gradually losing access to crucial forests, passes, and hills.

In some sense, this still nascent trend mirrors what has been [occurring more prominently](#) in the western sector in Ladakh. For decades, strategic analysts have been concerned about depopulation in border areas leading to a 'Kargil-type' incident i.e., PLA forces encroaching and then holding ground in key areas without detection. Hence, the Indian state will be very circumspect about dismissing the concerns of tribal organizations as well as frontier villagers – widely seen as the Indian state's first line of defense.

The McMahon line, the LAC and the gap

It is worth noting that the international boundary separating India and China (known as the McMahon Line) has never been jointly delineated by both sides. This factor, along with differences of perception in some key areas, mean that there are two boundaries governing relations in this region: the McMahon Line, and the LAC that is defined by each sides' extent of patrolling access and rights. Both lines can be said to be nebulous in different ways.

The area of Taksing lies firmly in Indian territory (south of both the McMahon line as well as the LAC). However, it is likely that local villagers may have lost access to land that lay within the McMahon line but short of the LAC. China has remained in control of these areas since 1959, but perhaps without instituting area denial to villagers on the Indian side of the LAC. Hence, reports of 'encroachment' in this area may be much closer to the lived experience of locals, but could still remain 'distant' and illusive to officials in Delhi and perhaps even in Itanagar.

The Tsari Region: Sacred Geography and Strategic Significance

Moreover, the area has always had a special place in the

India-China dispute over the McMahon Line. Even in the 1930's and early 40's, British Indian officials had provided verbal assurances to their counterparts in the independent Tibetan government that the McMahon Line may be readjusted in the region of the Tsari pilgrimage—an ancient, highly sacred Tibetan Buddhist journey that circumambulates Dakpa Sheri/the Pure Crystal Mountain—in order to defer to the religious sentiments of Tibetan Buddhists. Some Indian strategic analysts as well as officials have [pushed the idea in recent years](#) that the traditional *yatra* (pilgrimage) could be reinstalled through coordination between India and China, potentially serving as a confidence building measure as well as reciprocation for China's grant of access to Indian Hindu pilgrims travelling to Mansarovar in Tibet.

In more recent years, there has been an effort by the Arunachal Pradesh state government to promote the region's status as a sacred site for Tibetan Buddhists, and as part of the subterranean contest between India and China for influencing the future political trajectory of Tibetan Buddhism.

In February this year, [CM Pema Khandu inaugurated the Tsari Taksing Gajang Shedup Dargeyling Monastery at Taksing](#) and proclaimed that 'such a large public congregation' was being witnessed for the first time in Taksing's history. He also announced that Taksing would be developed as a tourism circuit in view of its historical and religious significance. Efforts are underway, he said, to revive the Tsari pilgrimage in a regulated manner in consultation with the Army and the central government.

Simultaneously, the Indian army has stepped up its efforts in the region in recent years. This has resulted in upgradation of public health clinics and services, the construction of tourism-seeking homestays, and sports facilities. Connectivity to Taksing itself has seen significant improvement since 2019.

Looking ahead

It is more than plausible that the Indian Army's claims are accurate. However, it is also as likely (if not more so) that there have emerged new restrictions for Indian villagers in the area in the midst of expansion of border villages (*Xiaokangs*) and military camps. The Taksing-Limeking axis served as one of the main points of entry for the PLA during the 1962 war.

Since 2014, reports of encroachments, stand-offs and kidnapping of 'trespassing' locals have featured regularly every few years. Interestingly, this region as well as nearby Asaphila were [mentioned in reports in 2024](#), as part of a quid pro quo in exchange for China restoring a modicum of patrolling rights to Indian personnel in the Depsang region in eastern Ladakh.

The present controversy animated national discussions for almost a week. However, its echoes are likely to percolate within Arunachal Pradesh and in key areas for much longer. Arunachal Pradesh has a strong culture of independent journalism as well as civil society participation in policy-making. The concerns of border villages are unlikely to be dismissed easily.

As China continues its consolidation of areas under its control (but still within the McMahon Line), more villages along the border are likely to see their freedom to access traditional environmental resources come under strain.