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# CHINA INTERFERES IN INDIA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND WARNS THAT PROPOSED DAM ON SIANG RIVER WILL NOT LAST LONG

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Beijing has recently escalated pressure on India by suggesting it could interfere in India's internal affairs while reiterating its claim over Arunachal Pradesh. The move has coincided with the military pressure being exerted on the border with Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast. Troops of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) have since June this year attempted intrusions at multiple places in the areas around Taksing, Longju Maja etc. In an article published on November 10 in the Government-owned official 'Tibet Daily', Pasang Norbu, a retired 80-year-old cadre who has held senior positions, has now explicitly warned that China will interfere in India's internal affairs by extending support to people protesting against construction of the hydroelectricity project on the Upper Siang river.

2. Pasang Norbu's background is relevant to the article. He was born in November 1946 in Tsona County, Shannan City, adjacent to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. He graduated from the Xizang Minzu University (formerly Tibet Institute for Nationalities) and unlike purely academic researchers, Pasang Norbu held several high-ranking administrative, media, and legislative roles within the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government apparatus. Early in his career, he worked as a reporter for the People's Liberation Army Daily (PLA Daily) and served as Editor-in-Chief of the Tibet Militia magazine. He rose to become a research fellow and Vice President of the Xizang (Tibet) Academy of Social Sciences, the top government think tank in Lhasa. He also served as Deputy Secretary-General of the Standing Committee of the TAR People's Congress and Director of the Legislative Affairs Committee of the TAR People's Congress. Interestingly, Pasang Norbu's academic work centers on the history of the Sixth Dalai Lama.

3. The official newspaper Tibet Daily on November 10, published a "a solemn statement in his personal capacity" written on November 6, by Pasang Norbu, a Tibetan scholar, former Vice President and research fellow of the Xizang Academy of Social Sciences, and founder and first President of the Tsangyang Gyatso Cultural Research Association of Xizang. An Editor's Note that accompanied the article stated "According to foreign media reports, residents of China's Zangnan region have recently staged strong protests against the Indian government's Siang River hydropower project. The Indian government has taken coercive measures to crack down on residents of Zangnan".

4. The article stated:
I. The region where India is pushing forward the hydropower project is an inherent part of China's territory. This assertion is supported by conclusive historical and legal evidence. I have specifically documented and examined the historical and legal status of this region in my published works. The boundaries unilaterally delineated by India are entirely illegal and have no legal validity whatsoever. India has no right to undertake any development or construction activities on this land belonging to China without authorization.
II. India's forcible advancement of this hydropower project disregards the vital interests of the indigenous people who have lived here for generations and ignores their concerns regarding their homes, environmental protection, livelihoods and indigenous culture. I firmly support the protests launched by local residents to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests.
III. India's forcible advancement of construction projects on Chinese territory and its use of security forces to suppress the demands of local residents constitute blatant illegal acts and seriously violate the fundamental principles of international law. I strongly urge India to immediately cease all illegal development activities on this Chinese territory, stop suppressing local residents' efforts to safeguard their rights and interests, and take their demands seriously.
IV. No project pursued through illegal occupation or unilateral actions can alter the objective fact of territorial sovereignty, and such projects are doomed not to last. Safeguarding China's sovereignty and territorial integrity is my unwavering position".

5. Norbu's article not only reasserted Chinese claims and called the border "illegal", but on this occasion added that India has no right to undertake any "development or construction" activities in Arunachal Pradesh "without authorisation". This statement is an apparent reiteration of Beijing's stance in various forums where it is trying to have Arunachal Pradesh designated as "disputed". It has already succeeded in preventing international financial organisations like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank from sanctioning aid, loans or financial assistance to projects in Arunachal Pradesh. Even poverty alleviation projects are denied loans or assistance. These institutions do not even mention Arunachal Pradesh or Jammu and Kashmir in their official reports.

6. Emphasising China's territorial claim and so-called cultural links, Norbu described construction of the hydroelectric project on the Siang River as "forcible", in disregard of people's sentiments and tradition and "indigenous culture". It added that these are "blatant illegal acts" and stressed that they "seriously violate the fundamental principles of international law". In a thinly veiled warning, the author "strongly" urged "India to immediately cease all illegal development activities". Stressing Chinese sovereignty Pasang Norbu warned that "No project pursued through illegal occupation or unilateral actions can alter the objective fact of territorial sovereignty, and such projects are doomed not to last".

7. The Editor's Note confirms that Pasang Norbu's strongly worded article has obviously been vetted and officially approved by Chinese authorities. The support extended to the people protesting against the dam on the Siang River reasserts China's claim that Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory and seeks to point to Chinese claims that the Monpa people have close historical, cultural and ethnic ties to the Chinese. Publication of this statement marks a further hardening of Beijing's stance towards India and the deterioration in bilateral relations. It

coincides with the intrusions at multiple locations in areas of Taksing, Maja, Longju etc, the high incidence of denial of visas to Indian nationals, continuing denial of visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh and other economic pressures. The violation of Indian airspace over the Chicken's Neck area near Siliguri by a Chinese air force aircraft for nearly 20-25 minutes on November 12 is an additional indicator of China's attitude.

8. Chinese activities centered on Arunachal Pradesh would suggest a renewed interest in the Eastern Sector and raises the level of Chinese military threat. It also coincides with the crucial issue of the XIVth Dalai Lama's reincarnation and Beijing's determination to avoid the presence of two Dalai Lamas which would be problematic for it in the present international environment. From Beijing's perspective it could present the US with the opportunity to use it as a pressure point against China. Beijing apprehends too that the US and India would both use the situation to cause problems for China.

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