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## Mains Practice Questions

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**Q.** 'There has been a shift in India's Tibet Policy.' Discuss the statement in the event of increasing tensions between India and China. (250 Words)

10 Aug, 2021 GS Paper 2 International Relations

### **Approach**

- Introduce by writing about the increasing tensions between India and China.
- Discuss India's Tibet policy and recent trends and challenges associated with it.
- Give a way forward.

### **Introduction**

Recently, there has been an increased tension in the India-China relations, due to the Chinese transgressions into Indian territory, across the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

This has led to a rise in the intensity of troop concentration, which has aggravated the current face-off in eastern Ladakh becoming a bigger military confrontation.

### **Body**

#### **Background of India's Tibet Policy**

- For centuries, Tibet was India's actual neighbour, as most of India's boundaries and the LAC is with the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and not the rest of China.
- After China's full accession of Tibet in 1950, the McMahon line divided the two countries.
- In 1954, India signed an agreement with China, agreeing to recognize Tibet as "**Tibet region of China**".
- In 1959, following the **Tibetan uprising**, the Dalai Lama (spiritual leader of Tibetan people) and many of his followers fled to India.
- The then Indian government gave him and Tibetan refugees shelter, and helped in setting up the Tibetan government in exile.
- The official Indian policy is that the Dalai Lama is a spiritual leader, and the Tibetan community in India, with more than a lakh exiles, is not allowed to undertake any political activity.

#### **Shift in India's Tibet Policy**

The shift in the Tibet policy, earmarks the Indian government actively managing with the Dalai Lama in public forums. For Example,

- In 2014, Prime Minister of India (PM) had invited the head of the Tibetan government in exile in India, Lobsang Sangay, to his swearing in ceremony.
- Recently, the Prime Minister of India (PM) wished the Dalai Lama in the first such public acknowledgement since 2013, the first time as PM.
- India celebrated the Dalai Lama's birthday. Some Chinese nationals protested against the celebration of the birthday of the Dalai Lama in India.

#### **Challenges Associated with India's Approach to Tibet Policy**

- **Changes in Tibetan Demography:** Over the past few decades, China is promoting people from mainland China to migrate into Tibet.
  - China is increasing suppression of the Tibetan populations' links to the Dalai Lama and pouring in investment, infrastructure projects in the region.
- **Tibetans Against Each Other:** As India-China tensions grow and turn violent after the Galwan valley clash, China has begun to raise Tibetan Militia groups.
  - Further, the Indian Army trains the Tibetan Special Frontier Force, which could lead to Tibetans fighting each other in the future.
- **Issue of Tibetan Citizenship:** The Indian government doesn't give citizenship to Tibetans born in India after the cut-off year of 1987.
  - This has created a sense of dissatisfaction amongst the youth of the Tibetan community.
  - Further, in the past few years, the US has also increased its role, by accepting more Tibetan refugees. This will impact India's role as a sole entity arguing about the future of Tibetan refugee.
- There's Chinese dams on the upper riparian areas of the Brahmaputra, and construction of Tibetan villages along the LAC which can prove to be a future flashpoint.
- **Question of Dalai Lama's Succession:** The 86 years old Dalai Lama is not only the spiritual leader, but the political leader of the community worldwide.
  - China has made it clear it intends to announce its own Dalai Lama and try to control the succession.

## Conclusion

India currently has an executive policy (not a law) on Tibetans in India. While the current policy was a significant development for Tibetans' welfare in India, it is devoid of legal backing on core issues of Tibet.

It is high time now that India should also adopt a more assertive stand on the Tibet issue in dealing with China.

Further, India should avoid a situation where it has a young and restive Tibetan population that resides in India, but looks outside of India for its leadership and command structure after the Dalai Lama has passed.