

# WILL DISCUSS ALL DISPUTED AREAS WITH CHINA: BHUTAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Wang Wenbin

A day after China repeated its claims over Eastern Bhutan, Bhutan issued a rare statement, asserting that “all disputed areas” will be discussed when the Bhutan-China boundary talks, which have not been scheduled for four years, are held again.

“The boundary between Bhutan and China is under negotiation and has not been demarcated. Twenty-four rounds of ministerial level boundary talks have been held,” a statement from the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Delhi, made available to *The Hindu*, said.

“The 25th round of boundary talks has been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. All disputed areas will be discussed during the next round of boundary talks, which will be held as soon as it is mutually convenient,” it added.

## Key statement

The statement is significant as Bhutan’s government rarely comments on foreign policy issues or gives details of its talks with China, that were started formally in 1984. It also indicates that despite China making new claims on Bhutan’s eastern boundary, and the Sakteng forest sanctuary on the border with Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan is prepared to discuss these in the dialogue between them.

On Tuesday, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) had responded to questions over its assertion that Sakteng was disputed, made at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) meeting first in early June. In response, the MFA had said Bhutan’s “Middle (Northern), Eastern and Western sections of the border are disputed”.

Reviving reference to an earlier “swap proposal” between the Northern and Western sections of Bhutan’s border, the MFA spokesperson Wang Wenbin had added, “China has proposed a package solution to these disputes. China is opposed to making an issue of such disputes at multilateral forums and China remains in communication with the relevant parties regarding this issue”.

The Ministry of External Affairs has made no statement on China’s claims on areas bordering Indian territory.

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