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Provisional Rules on giving or changing Place Names
in China Promulgated by the State Council of the
People's Republic of China

(Submitted by the China Division)

**Provisional Rules on Giving or Changing Place
Names in China Promulgated by the State
Council of the People's Republic of China
December 25, 1979**

Chapter 1 General Principles

Article 1 These rules are drawn up with a view to strengthening supervision over the country's work relating to the designation of place names so that a good job may be done when giving or changing place names in the interests of socialist modernization.

Article 2 Giving or changing place names is a highly political, policy-sensitive and scientific job that bears on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China and its international relations, on China's economic development and national defence building, and on the solidarity of all our nationalities and the daily life of the people. The job must be approached in an earnest manner and done well.

Article 3 Places were named in the past for various reasons, and we must take a correct attitude toward these names, basing ourselves on the viewpoint of historical materialism. Only thus will place names retain a measure of continuity. Great care must be taken in giving or changing place names. Any decision in this regard should be based on the actual situation and after thorough investigation and the soliciting of opinions from the people. Clearance procedures must be strictly followed, and unauthorized decisions are forbidden.

Article 4 These rules apply to names of geographical entities, population centres, administrative divisions and train stations, harbours and airports used by various specialized departments.

Chapter 2 The Giving of Place Names

Article 5 When naming a place, care should be taken to choose a name that would reflect our achievements in socialist revolution and construction, or the history, culture and geographical characteristics of the place.

Article 6 As a rule, places are not to be named after individuals. It is forbidden to name places after any of our national leaders.

Article 7 As a rule, the names of administrative divisions below the provincial level and the names of bus and train stations, harbours and airports used by various specialized departments should coincide with the local place names, and derivative names should coincide with the original names.

Article 8 Duplication and even the use of homonymous Han characters should be avoided when giving names to places at the county level or above, or to rural people's communes within any one prefecture, or to production brigades within a single country, or to streets and lanes within a city.

Article 9 Rural people's communes, production brigades and production teams should normally be named after the local place names and not by serial numbers, (an exception being when there are several production brigades or several production teams within a natural village).

Article 10 The names given should be concise and exact. Rarely used words and words whose configuration and pronunciation might easily be confused with another word should be avoided.

Chapter 3 The Changing of Place Names

Article 11 Place names belonging to the following categories must be changed:

- a. Derogatory to China's sovereignty and national dignity;
- b. Discriminatory against fraternal nationalities and detrimental to national cohesion;
- c. Affront to the working people or extremely vulgar; or
- d. Contrary to the policies of the state in any other way.

Article 12 Place names not in accord with the provisions of Article 7, 8, 9 and 10 should, in principle, be changed.

Article 13 Changes should be made when a place has several names, or when a name is written with a number of different characters, or

when the Han transcriptions of minority place names are not accurate (or not yet in consistent use), or when the Han characters are badly chosen.

Article 14 As a rule, place names should not be changed to honour the memory of a martyr in the revolutionary cause. But place names already in use honouring the memory of martyrs need not be changed if necessary clearance procedures had been fulfilled and the names are widely accepted by the people.

Article 15 Place names should not be changed unless they fall obviously within the above listed categories.

Chapter 4 The Procedures and the Authorities

Empowered to Approve Requests for Giving or Changing Place Names

Article 16 The giving and changing of place names of geographical entities should follow the procedures listed below:

a. Decisions relating to the names of mountain ranges, rivers, lakes, islands, gulf and bays and straits situated in frontier areas or well-known at home and abroad should be submitted by the people's government of the province, autonomous region or municipality directly under the central government (hereinafter referred to as municipality) concerned for approval by the State Council. Copies should be sent to the China Geographical Names Committee, the Ministry of Civil Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

b. Decisions relating to the names of mountain ranges, rivers, lakes, etc. situated within the jurisdiction of two or more provinces, autonomous regions or municipalities shall be submitted to the State Council for approval either singly by a local people's government or jointly by the

people's governments concerned. Copies should be sent to the China Geographical Names Committee and the Ministry of Civil Administration.

c. Decisions relating to the names of mountain ranges, rivers, lakes, etc. situated within the jurisdiction of one province, or autonomous region or municipality that do not fall under the category of paragraph (a) of this Article shall be approved by the people's government of the province, or autonomous region or municipality concerned. Copies should be sent to the China Geographical Names Committee and the Ministry of Civil Administration.

Article 17 Decisions to give or change the names of administrative divisions shall follow the same procedures and be approved by the same authorities that had approved the change in the administrative divisions. Copies shall be sent to the China Geographical Names Committee.

Decisions relating to the giving or changing of place names at the county and city level or below situated in frontier areas which no new boundary treaty has been concluded since the founding of the People's Republic of China shall be submitted to the State Council for approval by the people's government of the province or autonomous region concerned.

Article 18 Appropriate names for the bus and train stations, harbours and airports to be used by various specialized departments shall be submitted to the competent authorities in charge of these departments for approval after the departments have canvassed the opinions of the people's government at the prefectural, county or city level and above in which the stations, harbours and airports are situated and the views of the leading bodies on place names in the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities concerned. The competent authorities in charge of

these departments shall periodically make a list of these names and send a copy to the China Geographical Names Committee.

Article 19 In submitting reports on the above categories of place names for approval, the people's governments at all levels and the specialized departments should state the reasons for giving or altering a name, including the meaning and origin of the name to be abolished and the recommended name.

Article 20 There must be adequate publicity about any changes in place names, and all departments concerned should be notified in time about these changes. As a transitional measure, the old name may be put in parenthesis after the new name to help the people get used to the new name.

Chapter 5 Supplementary Articles

Article 21 The people's governments of the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities may draw up concrete measures for implementation on the basis of these rules and in the light of actual conditions in their areas, and send a copy of these measures to the China Geographical Names Committee.

Article 22 Problems arising from the implementation of these rules shall be considered by the China Geographical Names Committee in consultation with the departments concerned, and a reply given.

Article 23 These rules take effect as of the date of their promulgation. They shall be followed in all cases where relevant stipulations in the past conflict with the present provisions.