

# Rijiju turns up at last minute for security pact with China

## Intense drama as Minister was first told that meeting was called off

VIJAITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

There was intense drama at North Block on Monday when Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju was called at the last minute to participate in the formal signing of an internal security agreement with China by Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Zhao Kezhi, Chinese Minister of Public Security.

Mr. Rijiju is an MP from Arunachal Pradesh, which China considers a disputed territory.

A senior Home Ministry official said Mr. Rijiju was originally asked to be present at the signing of the accord at North Block around 3 p.m. on Monday. However, an hour later he was told that the meeting, scheduled a month ago, had been cancelled.

Subsequently, when presspersons started asking officials in the Home and External Affairs Ministries about the reasons for Mr. Rijiju's absence, word was sent to him seeking his immediate presence. "The Minister was told that the agreement had to be signed at



Kiren Rijiju

5.25 p.m., there was a lecture by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Vigyan Bhavan at 4 p.m. He was to attend it and then come to North Block," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"First, he got a call that the meeting with the Chinese has been cancelled, but, while the lecture was concluding, he got a call that he has to rush to North Block for the signing of the agreement."

The Minister, who was dressed in casuals, had to call his residence to have a jacket sent to him. He dispensed with security protocol and rushed out of Vigyan Bhavan. In 2014, Mr. Rijiju was absent during a state banquet hosted by

the then President, Pranab Mukherjee, for Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"The Minister was told that the talks had been called off, while the Home Minister held a meeting with the Chinese officials," said the official. After the signing of the agreement, Mr. Singh told *The Hindu* that a wide range of issues were discussed. "We signed the security cooperation agreement and expect better coordination with the Chinese in the coming days," Mr. Singh said.

Another Home Ministry official said India raised the issue of China blocking the designation of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as an international terrorist before a UN sanctions committee.

"During the meeting, the two sides discussed issues of mutual interest, including bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation, and welcomed increased cooperation between India and China in the area of security cooperation," the Home Ministry said in a statement.