



TIBETAN BULLETIN

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JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2016

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(1926 - 2015)



Dr BP Singh, former of Governor of Sikkim and 2014 Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi with His Holiness the Dalai Lama before the 'Celebrating His Holiness' event in New Delhi, India on January 4, 2016. Photo/Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL

Artistes from the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) presenting cultural performances during Losar - Tibetan new year ceremony - at Tsuglakhang on 9 February 2016.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama with Tibetan school children on the final afternoon of his visit to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, India on January 1, 2016. Photo/Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL



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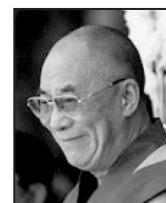
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Editor
Jamphel Shonu
Email: tibbul@tibet.net

Asst. Editor
Tenzin Yangchen

Layout & Design
Dorje Tsering

Circulation Manager
Tenzin Rabka
Email: circulation@tibet.net
Tibetan Bulletin is published by:
Department of Information and
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JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2016

Kalon Dicki Chhoyang Meets Canadian Parliamentarians



DIIR Kalon Dicki Chhoyang with Canadian Parliamentarians at Ottawa.

Ms Dicki Chhoyang, Kalon of the Department of Information and International Relations, visited Ottawa where she met Members of Parliament from all political parties. Her visit marked the first opportunity for the Central Tibetan Administration to present its policy positions to newly-elected members of parliament following the Canadian federal election in October 2015.

The visit was hosted by the Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Tibet (PFT) and its recently-appointed Chair, MP Arif Virani.

Addressing parliamentarians during a reception organised in her honour by the PFT, Ms Chhoyang provided an overview of the Middle Way Approach and urged MPs to promote the Tibetan administration's efforts to re-engage in constructive dialogue with the Government of China. She emphasised principled adherence to non-violent strategies as an important dimension of the Tibet struggle and a reason why resolution of the conflict in Tibet should be actively supported by world governments including Canada.

While in Ottawa, Kalon Dicki Chhoyang also met with representatives of non-governmental organisations working on issues related to human rights violations faced by Tibetans living in Nepal, the importance of addressing climate change on the Tibetan plateau, and efforts to document the Tibetan experience in Canada.

Rights Situation in Tibet did not Improve in 2015: TCHRD Annual Report

The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), a prominent Tibetan rights group based in Dharamshala, released its 2015 annual report on Friday, 19 February 2016.

The annual report, available in Tibetan, English and Chinese, documented two prime developments, namely China's attempt to include "legal justifications for repression" and the sinister effort of the Chinese government that "prioritised rhetoric over substance".

Addressing a press conference to mark the launch of the annual report, Ms Tsering Tsomo, Director of TCHRD, said: "In 2015, China passed laws on national security and counter-terrorism that appear to do little but provide China with a convenient pretext to continue violating human rights. Moreover, China failed to implement any measures that contribute positively to the already degrading ecosystem which many experts say is "irreversible" by pursuing a policy of prioritising rhetoric over substance."

TCHRD also condemned China's continued violation of international law, which as a result, led more and more issues involving Tibet to become issues of international concern in the last year.

"Religious figures were targeted for disappearance, detention, and, sometimes, death. Local Chinese police also detained monks and laypeople, and in many cases, they used pretense to detain community leaders, who are frequently religious leaders," a press release issued by TCHRD said.

It also added that the trend of abusing human rights to silence dissent was frequently used in Tibet where solo protesters were quickly arrested and artists, poets, and intellectuals targeted for arrest.

It further drew attention towards the accelerating environmental destruction and climate change taking place in Tibet. "The rate of China's use of coal as a fuel is more than the rest of the other countries using coal put together, yet the government during the COP 21 meet last year in Paris put forth resolutions for effective cutback of carbon emission only after 2030, until then they plan to look the other way," Ms Tsering Tsomo pointed out.

The 194-page report encompasses detailed research material with chapters on religious freedom, rights to privacy and chilling effects, environment, civil and political rights and international community.

TCHRD is a non-governmental organisation based in Dharamshala. It works to promote and protect human rights of Tibetans in Tibet and to educate the exile Tibetans on human rights concept and democratic principles.

Losar – Tibetan New Year Celebration at US State Department

The Office of the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues at the State Department hosted its annual Losar celebration this afternoon. This is the second Losar event organised under Under Secretary Sarah Sewall who also serves as the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

The Losar celebration within the State Department building follows the Losar greeting by Secretary of State John Kerry on February 10. In that press statement, Secretary Kerry said "on behalf of President (Barack) Obama and the people of the United States, I offer our warmest wishes to all of the peoples of the Himalayan region celebrating Losar for a joyful New Year. The United States joins you in celebrating the history and vibrant culture of the peoples of the Himalayan region, including those in Bhutan, Nepal, India, and Tibetan areas of the People's Republic of China."

At the State Department event, Under secretary Sarah Sewall greeted the attendees with Losar greetings and stressed that the event was organised to highlight and support the unique and rich Tibetan culture. She expressed her hope to continue this tradition at the State Department.

Members of the local Tibetan community, dressed in traditional attire, set up an altar and received Under Secretary Sewall with traditional offerings. Losar khapsays, chang (Tibetan wine) and Tibetan butter tea was served to everyone. Representative Kaydor Aukatsang and the staff of the Office of Tibet attended the event. Other guests included US State Department staff, Tibetan media staff from Radio Free Asia and Voice of America, staff of International Campaign for Tibet, Kasur Tenzin Tethong, members of the Capital Area Tibetan Association, and other guests.

Senior Monks Arrested for Holding Prayers for His Holiness the Dalai Lama



Abbot Ven Pagah (left) and Geshe Orgyen.

Two senior monks of Chogri monastery in Drango (incorporated into China's Sichuan Province) were detained by Chinese authorities in connection with a mass prayer ceremony held recently for the good health of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, according to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD).

The two monks, Ven Pagah, abbot of the monastery and Geshe Orgyen, were detained after a mass prayer ceremony

was organised on 25 January by both the monastic and lay community in Tehor Township, Drango County.

The prayer ceremony for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's health was held following the news of His Holiness' medical treatment at Mayo Clinic in the United States.

Local authorities have deployed heavy security forces to monitor and control both the monastic and lay community in Tehor following the arrest of the two monks.

Ven Pagah is almost 40 years old and hails from Tsogo Township in Drango County. Geshe Orgyen is about 50 years old and was born in Tehor Township. Both had completed their religious education in south India before returning to Tibet: Pagah from Drepung Monastery in Mundgod and Orgyen from Sera Monastery in Bylakuppe in the Indian state of Karnataka.

China Orders Tibetans to Handover Photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Chinese authorities in Drango county (incorporated into China's Sichuan province) have ordered Tibetan shopkeepers to handover all photos of Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama by 2 February, according to confirmed sources.

The enforcement was ordered on 31 January by three departments of the local Drango government namely the Office of Culture and Discipline, Office of Religious Affairs and the Public Security Bureau.

The enforcement also added that photos of His Holiness could no longer be sold or displayed in shops or stores serving the public.

The authorities have threatened severe punishment to those who fail to comply with the diktat.

"If any shop or store possessed photos of the Dalai Lama and displayed these before the date of this notice, these should be voluntarily surrendered to the Drago County Office of Culture and Discipline by Feb. 2," the notice says.

"Those who delay in handing these over, or who never turn them in, will be punished severely," the notice reads.

The notice also added that Tibetans are welcome to display photos of China's past and present leaders referring to the former heads of the Chinese Communist party.

The latest enforcement is widely perceived as a fresh attempt by Chinese authorities to suppress the Tibetan people inside Tibet's faith and devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is deeply revered by Tibetans.

Research Methodology Workshop for Buddhist Research Scholars

The Department of Religion and Culture, in collaboration with Central University of Tibetan Studies, organised a three-day research methodology workshop from 23 – 25 January for the second batch of Major Text Specialisation candidates at the Central University of Tibetan Studies (CUTS), Varanasi.

The chief guest at the opening ceremony of the workshop was Geshe Yeshe Thabkey (Retd. Professor) and Ven Losang Norbu Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Tibetan Studies (CUTS).

The three-day workshop focused on the techniques and approaches of research methodology including writing style, bibliography, citations, as well as the analysis of Buddhist and Bon canons.

The candidates of the workshop included research scholars and Geshe from the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion, selected in 2015 by the Department of Religion and Culture.

Sikyong Greet India on 67th Republic Day Celebration

Tibetan political leader Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay congratulated India on its 67th Republic Day celebration on 26 January. The brief ceremony to celebrate the occasion was held at the Kashag secretariat, attended by Kalons, Secretaries and senior officials of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Hoisting the Indian national flag, Sikyong greeted the people of India and said “Tibetans inside and outside Tibet, either in spirit or in person, joins in the celebration to mark the 67th anniversary of India’s Republic Day.”

Sikyong also expressed gratitude to the state and central government of India for extending continued support to the Tibetan people and for hosting Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama. “Incredible India has been a kind host to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Central Tibetan Administration and the largest population of Tibetans in exile. So, on behalf of all the Tibetans, I wish India and the Indian government our very best wishes,” he said, adding, no country has done more for Tibet than India.

Speaking on India’s freedom movement, Sikyong described the non-violent movement led by Mahatma Gandhi as the role model from which Tibetans derive inspiration for its peaceful and non-violent struggle for Tibetan freedom. “India has changed the course of history by showing that war and violence is not necessary to regain freedom and independence,” he added.

Sikyong also welcomed the visit of President Francois Hollande of France who is the Chief Guest at the grand Republic day parade at New Delhi.

Following the brief ceremony at Kashag, Sikyong took part in the official ceremony organised by the local Indian administration of Kangra district at the police ground in lower Dharamshala.

Sikyong, accompanied by Shri Kaul Singh Thakur, health minister of Himachal Pradesh, first visited the war memorial and laid a wreath in honour of Indian soldiers who have been martyred. Sikyong then proceeded to attend the ceremony at police ground, where a parade and cultural performances were held to celebrate the occasion.

US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Visits Dharamshala



Ms Sarah Sewall on her arrival at Gaggal airport, Dharamshala

US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Ms. Sarah Sewall, arrived in Dharamshala on 15 January for a two-day official visit to discuss issues of importance to the Tibetan refugee community. She is accompanied by an eight-member US delegation.

“Under Secretary Sewall, in her role as Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues, travels to India and meets Tibetans from all walks of life to discuss ways to preserve Tibetan culture and promote educational opportunities for all Tibetans,” a press release from the US State Department said.

Ms Sewall’s engagements at Dharamshala include a meeting with Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay and an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama among others. She will depart Dharamshala on 16 January 2016.

Ms Sarah Sewall is the United States Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, and the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. This is her second visit to Dharamshala since her appointment to the post on 20 February 2014.

She last visited Dharamshala in November 2014.

Home Kalon Meets New Chief Secretary of Karnataka

Home Kalon Dolma Gyari met Mr Arvind Jadhav, the new Chief Secretary of Karnataka Government on 19 January to congratulate him on his recent appointment and to discuss government policies regarding Tibetan refugees.

Mr Arvind Jadhav, a former Additional Chief Secretary of the state government, was appointed as the new Chief Secretary by Karnataka Chief Minister Shri Siddaramaiah in December 2015.

During the meeting, Kalon Dolma Gyari discussed the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy – 2014, established by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and examined how the policy could be successfully implemented in the Tibetan settlements in Karnataka.

Home Kalon also urged Mr Jadhav to convene and chair a joint meeting between the Secretaries of the Karnataka government and the authorities of the Central Tibetan Administration. The joint meeting has been tentatively scheduled for 7 February 2016.

Kalon was accompanied by Mr Karma Damdul, Chief Representative and Chophel Thupten, Deputy Secretary of the South Zone Chief Representative office.

Canadian MP Visits Tibetan Parliament

Mr Garnett Genius, a Member of Parliament from Canada’s Conservative Party visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on 15 January.

During his visit, he met with members of the standing committee of the Tibetan Parliament and discussed the proceedings and system of the Tibetan parliament, and the policies and structure of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Mr Garnett Genius is a first time member of parliament from Canada.

DIIR Holds Strategic Planning Workshop

Ms Dicki Chhoyang, Kalon for the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), inaugurated a three-day Strategic Planning workshop on 31 January for representatives and staff of the various Offices of Tibet based in Asia and Oceania at DIIR hall.

Addressing the inaugural session of the workshop, DIIR Kalon Dicki Chhoyang underlined the importance of strategic planning to achieve any long-term goal. Such workshops, she further stated, can increase effectiveness through clarity of desired results, better use of resources and consistency in the direction of different activities.

Workshop participants include Representative Lhakpa Tshoko from OOT Australia, Representative Lungtok from OOT Japan, Mr Tamdin Dorjee from OOT Nepal, Representative Tempa Tsering from the Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in New Delhi. Other participants include staff from India-Tibet Coordination Office (ITCO), DIIR's environment desk, and Ms Yeshe Wangmo, Additional Secretary of DIIR.

The three-day workshop was presided over by Dr. Peter Traub and organised by the Project section of DIIR.

Groundbreaking HIV Prevention Software Released in Tibetan Language

A collaboration between TeachAIDS and the Central Tibetan Administration has resulted in the production of culturally and linguistically appropriate HIV education materials for Tibetans around the world. Released in time for the Tibetan New Year (Losar), these materials were carefully designed to address the sharp increase in new reports of HIV in recent years and the "serious lack of localised HIV education materials available to educate the population"

identified by Health Kalon Dr. Tsering Wangchuk. The materials are available online for free and will be distributed to Tibetan schools, universities and health care facilities as early as this month.

The materials feature the universally respected Dr. Tsetan Dorji Sadutsang, personal physician to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Chief Medical Officer of the prestigious Delek Hospital as a wise doctor; and beloved singer and songwriter Phurbu T. Namgyal as an inquisitive student with many concerns about HIV transmission. During the research and testing phases, both cultural icons were identified as highly influential and deeply respected within the Tibetan community. Despite their intense work and travel schedules, both Dr. Sadutsang and Mr. Namgyal made huge efforts to devote significant time over months of work towards the development and high quality production of these animations.

Dr. Tsetan cited His Holiness the Dalai Lama's globally renowned kindness as his inspiration for becoming involved with TeachAIDS. He noted, "it's about a universal responsibility that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has always been talking about and that's just not about taking care of only yourself, but taking care of everyone else around you, including all living beings, your environment and the entire universe. Be kind to others and help anyone you can."

Phurbu T. Namgyal echoed these sentiments, reflecting that there has been a "need for social leaders to propel efforts to protect Tibetans from HIV". Namgyal went on to say that "these education materials will be extremely beneficial for my people, especially those inside Tibet", and added, "I am so happy to be a part of it!"

Sikyong Lobsang Sangay offered an impassioned Message of Hope to accompany these materials, reflecting on the lessons learned in the 34 years since HIV was identified and reminding Tibetans that "there is no cure for HIV and AIDS but it is preventable. We have learned that the single best way to stop the spread of HIV is through education". Health Kalon Dr. Tsering Wangchuk

complemented this message with an inspiring Call to Action urging Tibetans to learn to protect themselves and their loved ones and to treat people living with HIV with kindness, respect and dignity. The TeachAIDS materials have also been endorsed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who commended the compassion that guides the development of the HIV education software.

His Eminence Sakya Trizin Graces Tibet Museum's Exhibition



Mr Tashi Phuntsok, Director of Tibet Museum explaining the exhibit to Chief Guest His Eminence the Sakya Trizin, head of Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, at Tibet Museum's photo exhibition at Tso Pema, Rewalsar.

Tibet Museum of the Department of Information and International Relations held a three-day exhibition at Tso Pema during the Tsechu (Mahakumbh) Festival from 16 - 18 February.

His Eminence the Sakya Trizin, Head of Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism graced the exhibition with his blessings on the final day of the exhibition.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Shri Ravi Thakur, MLA from Lahual and Spiti.

The exhibition saw thousands of visitors including Tibetans, Ladakhis, Kinnauris, etc.

The first exhibition included 'The Biography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama' featuring extensive photographic and textual information on the life and messages of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, while the second exhibition "A Long Look Homeward" features photographic narratives on Tibet before the Chinese Occupation, Tibet Today and hope for its future.

Russian Clinic Honours His Holiness with Award

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was honoured with an award by Dugarov Bilikto, Director General of LLC Green Lotus, Moscow, through the Office of Tibet based in Russia. The award was presented to his Holiness "For outstanding Contribution to the Development of Tibetan Medicine", according to the medical center.

The award commission consisted of Dugarov Bilikto, General Director of green Lotus LLC, Badmaeva Elena Chief Doctor of clinic "Naran on Voikovskaya" Dambaeva Olga, CEO Green Lotus LLC, Austermonas Dolgor, Chief Editor of Tibetan Medicine Newsletter and Buyak Lina Chief consultant Clinic Naran on Voikovskaiya.

The silver medal is gold plated and adorned with a Russian flag and an image of Medicine Buddha in the middle. The statue was commissioned by world renowned Buryat sculptor Dashi Namdakov titled "The Little Buddha" symbolising His Holiness the Dalai lama as a young child riding the snow lion, which reflects the bond between H.H. the Dalai Lama and the land of the snow.

"As we celebrate H.H. the Dalai Lama's 80th year, we are grateful towards His Holiness the Dalai Lama's contribution and hard work for the preservation of Tibetan Medicine not only in India but beyond as well. Our people share the rich culture in the sphere of Buddhist philosophy, astrology, art and Medicine, says Dugarov Bilikto. "We congratulate H.H. the Dalai Lama on his accomplishments during his life time and want to wish H.H. Long, strong and healthy year ahead."

Due to certain circumstances the doctors of the Russian Medical centre were not able to make the visit to India to personally present the award to His Holiness. As a result, they have decided to present the award through Honorary

Representative Telo Tulku Rinpoche at the Moscow based Office of Tibet.

"Mentsekhang has sent Tibetan doctors to Russia for many years to offer not only consultations for patients but for offering lecture, workshops and seminars as well in the Russian Federation" Says Telo Tulku Rinpoche "The people of Tibet and Russia share many centuries link through Buddhism in the field of Religion, science and Philosophy and we are glad to be part of Russia revival, restoration and reintroduction to the Rich cultural heritage which was destroyed during the Communist regime and now Tibet in return is going through tremendous amount pain suffering just like the Russian people have gone through in the mid-20th century. We have every Moral responsibility to Support the Tibetan people and be the back bone of Tibet," said Telo Tulku Rinpoche.

TPI Holds Tibetan Language Conference on International Mother Language Day

Tibet Policy Institute, the research wing of the Central Tibetan Administration, organised a daylong comprehensive discussion cum conference on Tibetan language to mark International Mother Language Day on 21 February.

International Mother Language Day is a worldwide annual celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity, formally recognised by the UN General Assembly in its resolution establishing 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

Over eighty scholars, Tibetologists, journalists and teachers of Tibetan language attended the conference, which was held at DIIR's Lhakpa Tsering Memorial Hall. The chief guest at the conference was Mr Ngodup Tsering, Kalon of the Department of Education.

The conference began with an introductory remark by Ms Tenzin Pema, a researcher at Tibet Policy Institute, who spoke on the evolution of the anniversary.

The introductory remarks were followed by Education Kalon Ngodup Tsering who delivered the keynote address of the conference. He spoke about the importance of preserving the Tibetan language and called for activities and projects that will be conducive for the sustenance of the Tibetan language.

Education Kalon also called for prompt translation of certain terms and words that are currently not in the Tibetan lexicon to make the rich Tibetan language even richer and more expansive.

Others who spoke at the conference include Mr Tashi Tsering, Chairman of Amnye Machen Institute, Mr Rakdo Lobsang Tenzin, Professor at Central University of Tibetan Studies, Ven Lhakpa Tsering, Professor at Central University of Tibetan Studies, Mr Sangye Tendhar from the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Geshe Lobsang Monlam from Monlam Institute etc..

Mr Thubten Samphel, Director of Tibet Policy Institute, gave the concluding remarks of the conference.

Speaker Penpa Tsering Interacts with IAS Officials

A group of 16 officials from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) visited the secretariat of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on 9 January.

The Settlement Officer Mr. Sonam Dorjee accompanied the group to the Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat. Mr. Penpa Tsering, Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-In-Exile met with the visiting officials and gave a brief introduction on the organisational structure of the Central Tibetan Administration particularly the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and its proceedings.

For detailed news visit:
www.tibet.net

China: No End to Tibet Surveillance Program

- Human Rights Watch



A booth is seen in centre of the courtyard as a Tibetan woman washes clothes in Bakhor, in the old part of Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, China on November 16, 2015. In Bakhor, one of the hotbeds of dissent during the riots, the paramilitary presence has been replaced with booths, part of a “grid management” surveillance system aimed at managing society “without gaps, without blind spots, without blanks”, according to state media.

Chinese authorities have indefinitely extended an intensive surveillance program in villages across the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) that was due to end in 2014, Human Rights Watch said today. There are indications that the “village-based cadre teams” (zhucun gongzuodui) scheme, which is unprecedented in China, will become permanent.

In the TAR, where the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, religion and privacy are already highly restricted, the extension of this scheme signals authorities’ intention to suppress any signs of dissent or criticism among Tibetans. Since their deployment in 2011, the teams have carried out intrusive surveillance of Tibetans in villages, including questioning them about their political and religious views, subjecting thousands to political indoctrination, establishing partisan security units to monitor behavior, and collecting information that could lead to detention or other punishment. Official reports describe the teams pressuring villagers to publicly show support for the ruling Communist Party and to op-

pose the Dalai Lama.

“The Chinese government’s decision to extend its Tibet surveillance program indefinitely is nothing less than a continuous human rights violation,” said Sophie Richardson, China director. “The new normal is one of permanent surveillance of Tibetans.”

In 2011, the central government, in an effort to prevent a recurrence of the protests that spread across the Tibetan plateau in 2008, launched an Orwellian campaign known as “Benefit the Masses.” The campaign involved sending some 21,000 Communist Party cadres from townships and urban areas to live in teams of four or more in each of the 5,000 villages in the TAR. The scheme, which cost more than 25 percent of the regional government’s budget, was supposed to last for three years. It was unprecedented in terms of duration and relative size in China, where in the past full-time government and Party administrators have rarely if ever been stationed for extended periods below the level of the township.

The purpose of the village-based cadre teams was initially described as improving services and material conditions in the villages, but, according to the Party leader of the TAR in 2011, their primary requirement was to turn each village into “a fortress” in “the struggle against separatism,” a reference to support for Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama. This was done by setting up new Communist Party organizations in each village, establishing local security schemes, gathering information about villagers, and other measures. The teams were also required to carry out re-education with villagers on “Feeling the Party’s kindness” and other topics.

The village-based cadre teams are composed of Party officials, government officers, members of government enterprises and work-units, members of the People’s Armed Police and the Public Security forces, from township and urban areas of the TAR. Each team has included at least one Tibetan to translate for Chinese cadres in the team and each official remained on their tour of duty for about a year before being replaced. Routine coverage of the village-based cadre work teams in the official media states that the team members are required to carry out the so-called “five duties,” of which three are political or security operations: building up Party and other organizations in the village, “maintaining social stability,” and carrying out “Feeling the Party’s kindness” education with villagers. The other two duties involve promoting economic development and providing “practical benefit” to the villagers.

The official slogan used to describe the objective of the village-based teams is “all villages become fortresses, and everyone is a watchman.” The teams recruit and train new Party members and establish “grassroots stability maintenance” organizations such as “joint defense teams” or “patrol teams.” In the fourth year of the village-based cadre

scheme in Nagchu, one of seven prefecture-level areas in the TAR, the cadre teams held 1,686 political education sessions, made 45,903 “propaganda education visits to households,” and recruited 1,194 new Party members. Teams in Shigatse municipality over all four years of the scheme recruited 10,030 new Party members, while fourth-batch teams in Lhokha prefecture held 3,625 sessions “on exposing the heinous reactionary crimes of the 14th Dalai clique.”

The village-based teams also “screen and mediate social disputes,” which involves acting to settle and contain any disputes among villagers or families, because of official concerns in China that small disputes might lead to wider unrest or “instability.” One objective is to prevent villagers from presenting petitions to higher level officials.

The village-based teams also engage in “cultural activities” such as building meeting halls and reading rooms for the dissemination of officially approved literature, films and theatrical performances aimed at inculcating “core socialist values” and discouraging “bad old traditions.” Economic activities include poverty alleviation, social welfare provisions in monasteries, vocational training, small business loans, and the “finding of paths to enrichment.”

The program was due to end in October 2014, and no public announcement has so far been made about extending it. But in December 2014, the TAR authorities issued a communique that referred to the “mechanism of village-stationed cadres’ work” as “long-term,” together with “suggestions” of ways “to consolidate and expand the excellent initial results” of village-cadres work, and noted that there should be “no changes” to the cadres’ work in villages.

In August 2015, a statement posted on a government Tibetan-language website said that the TAR authorities had called for work teams “to be constantly stationed at their village committees.” It added that “on hearing that village-based-cadre work was to continue, the rural masses were overjoyed, saying that this was one of the Party and gov-

ernment’s best policies to benefit rural areas.”

Since that time, the state media in Tibet has published a series of reports referring to the “fourth batch” of village-based cadres and the “fourth phase” of village-based cadre work. In November 2015, at a meeting to award outstanding and progressive village and monastery-based cadres from the fourth batch, the departure of the “fifth batch” was officially announced. This confirmed indications that no end-date had been set for the program.

Separate reports in the official media about construction plans for TAR villages indicate that the village-based cadre scheme is intended to be permanent. These reports state that between 2014 and 2015, the TAR government constructed 20,092 new buildings for office or residential use by cadres working in villages and townships. A further 12,008

buildings for these cadres are due to be built by the end of 2016. The total cost of these buildings will be 5.265 billion yuan (US\$810 million) – the largest and most expensive project of its kind in the history of such building construction in the Tibet Autonomous Region, according to a report in the official media. The construction plan – which means there will be an average of six new government buildings in each village of the TAR – will radically change the nature of Tibetan villages, which until now have never had any government offices or resident officials.

“China’s surveillance scheme openly and massively infringes upon the basic rights of Tibetans protected under Chinese and international law,” Richardson said. “China’s central and regional authorities should end the repressive aspects of this scheme immediately.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama Expresses Condolences to the People of Taiwan

In a letter to Taiwanese President Ma Ying-Jeou, His Holiness the Dalai Lama expressed his sadness on learning of the powerful earthquake that struck Tainan, Taiwan.

He conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased and prayers for the well-being of those who were injured or lost their homes.

As a mark of his sympathy and solidarity with the people of Taiwan, he is making a token donation towards the relief and rescue work.

His Holiness also requested fellow Buddhists to recite The Heart Sutra for the people of Taiwan.

His Holiness also donated USD 50,000 towards relief and reconstruction efforts the city.

The amount was presented to Mr Li Jiang, the Mayor of Tainan city through Mr Dawa Tsering, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama based in the Office of Tibet, Taiwan.

The earthquake resulted in the death of over a hundred people and massive damage to properties. It was the deadliest earthquake in Taiwan since the earthquake in 1999.

Sikyong Speaks at Prestigious George W. Bush Presidential Center at Dallas



Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay giving his talk at George Bush Presidential Centre, Dallas, on 12 February 2016.

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay spoke at the prestigious George W. Bush Presidential Center at Dallas on Friday, 12 February. He spoke on the topic 'Why Tibet is important for our world'.

The talk was organised by George W. Bush Presidential Center in collaboration with John Goodman Tower Center for Political Studies at Southern Methodist University and Crow Collection of Asian Art.

Describing former US President George W Bush as a good friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people, Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay began his talk highlighting the importance of Tibet to the world from an environmental, natural resources and geo-political point of view.

Comparing Tibet's landmass to that of Western Europe or Texas and California combined, Sikyong spoke about the exploitation of Tibet's rich natural resources by the Chinese government through rampant mining and deforestation.

"Tibet is a huge country by landmass. And as per the Chinese government,

Tibet has 132 different kinds of minerals including copper, gold, borax, uranium and a little bit of oil," Sikyong said. "As a result, China refers to Tibet as 'Xizang' meaning 'Western Treasure House' due to its rich untapped natural resources," he explained.

Underlining the environmental significance of Tibet, Sikyong said that Tibet's glaciers are receding at an alarming rate, which could endanger the lives of hundreds of millions of people. "Even from an environmental point of view, Tibet is significant to the world as it is the source of Asia's major rivers and is home to the third highest reserve of ice after the two poles," Sikyong asserted.

"The difference between Tibet and the two poles is that, while the water from the melting of ice on the poles goes to the ocean, the melting of Tibet's glaciers feed the rivers on which more than a million people depend for livelihood," Sikyong added. On that note, Sikyong recalled a prediction made recently by environmental analysts prophesising that future wars could be fought over water resources just as current wars are being fought over energy and past wars over land.

Further emphasising the significance of the Tibetan plateau, Sikyong highlighted that China has 19% of the world population, but only 11 to 12% of freshwater, meaning 7 to 8% of China's population, equivalent to about 400 million people, particularly in north and northeast of China, are facing severe scarcity of fresh water which could prompt China to diversify Tibet's rivers leading to severe hardships caused by water woes in downstream countries like Bangladesh and India where the situation is even worse.

"What is even more alarming," Sikyong added, "is that almost 50% of the ice reserves and glaciers on the Himalayan and Tibetan plateau has already melted in the last few decades. And as far as NASA is concerned, by 2050, another 50% of the Tibetan glaciers will melt."

Speaking on the geo-political aspect of Tibet, Sikyong proffered that for centuries Tibet has effectively served as a buffer between India and China. However, it all changed after the invasion of Tibet by China, which brought two of the largest populated countries in the world face-to-face, resulting in a serious threat to India's borders.

"This confrontation has led to a military buildup and a rapidly accelerating arms race along the border, according to CIA reports," he said, adding that China's aggressive attitude is further complicating the political situation in Asia.

Sikyong also spoke about the historical independence of Tibet as evidenced by the treaties signed between a sovereign Tibet and China in the earlier centuries. However, he explained that the Central Tibetan Administration, as the leader of the Tibetan movement, seeks genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people based on the Middle Way Approach approach of the policy.

Sikyong Speaks on Impact of Globalisation to 10,000 Strong 6th Student Parliament at Pune



Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay speaking to over ten thousand Indian students at Pune during the annual conclave of Indian Student Parliament, 29 January 2016.

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay addressed over 10,000 students who have gathered to attend the four-day national conclave of Indian students, also known as Indian Student Parliament at MAEER's MIT campus in Pune, 29 January.

It was the 6th conclave of the student organisation, considered one of the largest of its kind in the world.

In his address, Sikyong spoke about the reality of globalisation and its impacts particularly with regard to environment and global warming. "Globalisation is a reality and India has to be a part of it. But then, if globalisation is a reality, there is another reality too. That is, we have only one earth, which we can call home. If we deplete all the natural resources including water and forests for globalisation, then we won't have a home anymore," he said.

Speaking on the ominous implications of global warming for the hundreds of millions of people who depend on water, Sikyong prophesied that wars in the future could be fought over water due to the impending scarcity of freshwater looming on the horizon.

"Earlier wars were fought over land and now wars are being fought over energy as is evident from the clashes in the Middle East. However, many experts believe future wars will be fought over water."

"China has 19% of the world population, but only 11 to 12% of freshwater, meaning 7 to 8% of China's population equivalent to about 400 million people are facing scarcity of fresh water. In South Asia, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the situation is even worse. The issue of farmer suicide is also intrinsically linked to water scarcity caused by drought like situations," he added.

"In such a context, the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau are of vital importance because after the two poles, the third highest reserve of ice is found only in the Himalayas or the Tibetan plateau with about 46000 glaciers and 150000 sq. kms of ice," Sikyong said.

However, Sikyong lamented that the ice reserves on the Tibetan plateau is also melting rapidly due to global warming which could lead to severe repercussions.

"Fifty percent of the ice and glaciers on the Himalayan and Tibetan plateau has already melted in the last few decades. As far as NASA is concerned, by 2050, another 50% of the Tibetan glaciers will melt. The glaciers in Tibet and the Tibetan plateau are the main source of fresh water for many of the major rivers of Asia from Brahmaputra, Yamuna, Ganga, Indus, Mekong to Salween, Irrawady, Yellow river," Sikyong said, raising the question, what would happen

to the farmers and fishermen who are dependent on these rivers for their livelihood.

Sikyong also spoke about the growing interest among the public particularly in India's northeast regarding China's construction of dams on Tibet's rivers. "I went to Guwahati three years ago. I spoke there and the response to what I spoke was lukewarm at that time. However, when I visited Guwahati again last year, the locals were deeply interested in what I had to say. Because what I spoke three years ago is now coming true. The Brahmaputra River has started receding, decreasing its water quantity due to building of dams and other mega hydropower projects in Tibet," Sikyong recalled.

Admitting the necessity of globalisation, Sikyong called for moderation in our daily utilization of resources to decrease our carbon footprint on the planet. Sikyong emphasized the wisdom propounded by the adage, 'Think Globally, Act Locally' to remind everyone of our duties to do our bid to safeguard the environment for the health and sustainability of the earth.

"If we don't act now, globalisation will not only be an impediment, but will also be the cause of global warning all over the world particularly in Asia and India," he concluded.

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay, who is also a governing member of the organisation, felicitated the other speakers including Shri Venkiah Naidu, Shri Sitaram Yechury, Shri Mahesh Bindra etc. with scarves and awards on behalf of the organisation.

Other speakers at the conclave include Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, Manohar Parrikar, Minister of Defense; Narayan Murthy, Founder of Infosys; Abhinav Bindra, Olympic Champion; Indra Nooyi, Pepsico Chairwoman, Leander Paes, Indian tennis player; etc.

UN Human Rights Chief Deeply Concerned by China Clampdown on Lawyers and Activists



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said on Tuesday, 16 February, he had raised concerns and sought clarifications from the Chinese authorities about the recent arrests of lawyers, and harassment and intimidation of Government critics and NGO workers.

“We are seeing a very worrying pattern in China that has serious implications for civil society and the important work they do across the country,” the High Commissioner said. “Civil society actors, from lawyers and journalists to NGO workers, have the right to carry out their work, and it is the States’ duty to support and protect them,” he said.

The High Commissioner said he appreciated the opportunity to raise such cases with Chinese officials in Geneva, and acknowledged their efforts to clarify the matters at issue. However, the responses he received indicate that the authorities “too often reflexively confuse the legitimate role of lawyers and activists with threats to public order and security.”

Police have detained about 250 human rights lawyers, legal assistants, and activists across the country since a nationwide crackdown began last July, although many were subsequently released. Last month, 15 additional human rights lawyers were formally arrested,

ten of them for the crime of “subversion of state power,” which carries a sentence of 15 years to life in prison.

Among those facing the ‘subversion of state power charge’ are leading human rights lawyers, Li Heping and Wang Yu.

“Lawyers should never have to suffer prosecution or any other kind of sanctions or intimidation for discharging their professional duties” Zeid said, adding that lawyers have an essential role to play in protecting human rights and the rule of law.

“I urge the Government of China to release all of them immediately and without conditions.”

At the same time, the High Commissioner welcomed news of the release of two labour activists detained in Guangdong in December 2015, but noted some of their colleagues remain in detention.

The UN Human Rights Chief said he was also concerned by recent cases of disappearances of booksellers from Hong Kong. Five people from “Causeway Bay Books” – a shop that publishes books critical of the Chinese government – have gone missing since last October.

Most recently, Lee Bo, a British national, went missing on 30 December 2015. In late January, the Hong Kong police said that Lee Bo’s wife had met with her husband on the mainland, and he told her he was assisting with an investigation. One of the other booksellers, Gui Minhai, who is a Swedish national, also reappeared last month when he was presented on China state television. Gui, who went missing while in Thailand last October, “confessed” to a crime in the city of Ningbo in 2003. Chinese authorities confirmed this month that the three other booksellers were also being held and investigated for “illegal activities” in China.

“I urge the Government of China to ensure a fair and transparent procedure for these cases,” Zeid said, adding that the men’s relatives and representatives should be given access to them.

The High Commissioner also expressed concern about the case of Peter Dahlin, a Swedish citizen and co-founder of the legal-aid NGO “Chinese Urgent Action Working Group.” He was detained in early January and was the first foreigner to be held on charges of “endangering state security.” In late January, Dahlin was expelled from China.

Like the bookseller Gui, Dahlin was presented on state television, where he “confessed” to having breached Chinese law. “I find this method of ‘confession’, extracted during incommunicado detention and publicized on national television, very worrying. It is a clear violation of the right to fair trial,” Zeid said.

The Government is currently drafting a new law which, if adopted, may have far-reaching implications for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is part of a series of new laws governing national security in China.

“I regret that more and more Governments around the world are using national security measures to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and as a tool to target human rights defenders and silence critics,” Zeid said. “Security and human rights do not contradict each other. On the contrary they are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Respect for human rights and public participation are key to ensuring rule of law and national security.”

At the same time, the High Commissioner welcomed the recent enactment of a nation-wide law on domestic violence as an important step in strengthening legal protections for women in accordance with China’s international commitments.

Tibet – Disneyland of Snows with Chinese Characteristics

- Claude Arpie



In this photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, phalaxes attend a grand ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region at the square of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2015. The banner reads: "Celebration for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region." AP/PTI

A few weeks ago, The New York Times published a stunning photo feature on a horse festival held in the Batang Grasslands, near Jyekundo in Eastern Tibet (today Qinghai province of China). Yushu, as the town is known in Chinese, is a special place. In April 2010, the Yushu earthquake made world headlines.

With a magnitude of 6.9 on the Richter scale, the quake killed nearly 3,000 people, while 12,135 were injured. Ninety percent of the houses and public buildings were destroyed.

Four years later, Yushu was rebuilt ... with Chinese characteristics. In April 2015, The Time noted that the price of recovery has however been a loss of identity for the Tibetans: "[as] the help was not offered without condition and has resulted in heightened state control."

The December horse race was attended by thousands of nomads, monks and traders; while many deduced that the high plateau was witnessing a revival of the Tibetan culture, others realised that it is just a clever move by the Chinese.

The New York Times saw the second facet:

"These days, horse festivals on the Tibetan plateau are not just about

equestrian prowess. They are political affairs with a propaganda goal — Chinese officials hold them to signal to people here and abroad that traditional Tibetan culture is thriving, contrary to what the Dalai Lama and other critics say."

Those who attended the race could not miss the heavy presence of the Peoples' Armed Police Force, constantly patrolling in the midst of the Tibetan crowds.

Though joy and excitement could be seen on the faces of the Tibetan participants and spectators, everyone knew that the festival was 'watched'.

But for outsiders, the festival showcased a new China promoting the culture of the ethnic minorities, "that of dancing, singing, happy-go-lucky, costume-wearing, loyal citizens of the nation," said The New York Times.

A Tibetan told the newspaper that Beijing wants to project itself as a benevolent state,

"Even as it restricts the teaching of Tibetan language, tries to control Buddhism and presses Tibetans to assimilate into the dominant Han culture."

The phenomenon is not new; it is in fact a conscious policy decided during the Fifth Tibet Work Forum held in Beijing in January 2010.

Work Forums are large meeting attended by several hundreds of officials, including all the members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, local satraps, senior PLA and PAPF officers, planners, etc.

During these Forums, China's Tibet policy is decided for the following 5/10 years. The most recent one, the Sixth Tibet Work Forum, was held in August 2015.

Addressing the gathering, President Xi Jinping stated that

"Efforts should also be made to incorporate education on 'socialist core values' into courses in schools at various levels, popularise the national commonly-used language [Mandarin] and script, and strive to foster Party-loving and patriotic builders."

However knowing that the imposition of Mandarin could have severe backlashes on the Tibetan plateau, as demonstrated by the unrest in March/April 2008, the Chinese government has decided that 'minorities' languages could be included in the curriculum in some cases. Similarly, Tibetan culture can be promoted under the Party's close watch, most of the time with Chinese characteristics.

A 'Cloud Tibet', China's first Tibetan search engine has the same objective; Xinhua recently reported its forthcoming release during the second half of 2016.

According to the head of the project, one Tselo, the database and the semantic unit function are already running. Xinhua said that the venture was launched in April 2013 and more than 150 people have been working on it at the Tibetan language research center in Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in

Qinghai Province. Tselo also affirmed: “The recognition rate is over 95 percent.” The project is part of a larger scheme: Beijing has decided to promote tourism on a mega scale in Tibet in order to ‘promote’ Tibetan culture, bring more revenue to the local population and assimilate Tibet once and for all, ... while providing entertainment to the Han masses. So many birds with one stone.

For centuries, Tibet has been the most isolated country on the planet. A few brave explorers managed to sneak in, most of the times illegally on the Roof of the World. Today, the Chinese propaganda thus describes the plateau:

“Tibet with its mystery is the spiritual Garden of Eden and is longed by travelers home and abroad. Only by stepping on the snowy plateau, can one be baptised by its splendour, culture, folklore, life, snow-mountains, saint-mountains, sacred lakes, residences with local characteristics and charming landscape”.

Tibet is fast becoming the largest entertainment park in the world, thousand times larger than Disneyland.

Beijing has decided to market the Land of Snows as the ultimate ‘indigenous’ spot for the Chinese people to spend their holidays.

In the process, Tibetan culture and language are sometimes promoted.

Tibet has two unique assets: first, its physical reality. The beauty of the landscape, the imposing mountain ranges, the purity of the air and the rivers, the dry blue sky (especially when compared to the dark sky of China’s great metropolis); Tibet is indeed the ideal place to have a break from the fast pace of the polluted mainland of China.

The second advantage is the rich historical past of the Roof of the World, the Land of the Lamas. In Tibet, you can find everything, says the Chinese propaganda: a beautiful Chinese princess falling for the powerful emperor and converting him to Buddhism;

monasteries and nunneries, seat of a wisdom lost; folkloric yak or snow-lion dances; ‘ethnic’ festivals; beautiful colourful handicrafts; exotic food, you name it, ...and thousands of Tibetans who can guide the crowds through the mega-park/region.

The most grandiose of these entertainment projects is the ‘Grand Princess Wencheng Opera’; an opera on the life of the Chinese wife of the Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo, who lived in the 7th century CE.

Staged at the outskirts of Lhasa, the opera has proved to be a stunning success with the Han tourists. It is said to be performed 180 times every season. Some 600 actors perform on a nearly-100 meters long stage, in front of a newly-built Potala Palace, a few kilometers from the real one.

Beijing uses China’s ‘historical records’ to tell the Han tourists the history of Tibet, as Beijing sees it.

The opera, watched by 300,000 visitors last year, brought 150 million yuan revenue; Xinhua asserted:

“The historic intermarriage presented in the drama symbolised peace and prosperity for the two areas.”

‘Two areas’ are Tibet and China, two separate entities at the time of Songtsen Gampo, who invaded China during his reign (this is of course forgotten by Beijing).

Can you guess in which language the opera is performed?

In Putonghua or Mandarin of course! It says it all.

Pouring 20 millions of ‘tourists’ (this is the official figure for 2015) into a relatively small place like the Tibetan Autonomous Region, requires to be ready to provide ‘good entertainment’.

That is why the local Tibetan government organizes ‘festivals’ such as the Lhasa Shoton (yoghurt) Festival or the Yushu Horse Racing Festival.

Xinhua explains that during the Shoton festival, “there are celebrations in the streets, squares and monasteries in Lhasa”, though the main venue is the Dalai Lama’s Summer Palace, the Norbulinka. At the same time, the ‘D’ word is banned on the plateau!

A few days ago, Xinhua announced that Tibet will have ‘20 distinctive towns’ in the next three years, “making them exemplary areas for comfortable living, work ...and tourism”.

Comfortable for whom? Undoubtedly for the Chinese tourists.

Early this month, the first of such cities was inaugurated in Gongkar County, near Lhasa, “[these] towns will stick to the principle of prudent cutting of trees, no digging of mountains, no filling lakes and little destruction of houses,” says Xinhua. Good, but Tibet has already become the Disneyland of Snows ... with Chinese characteristics.

This makes the situation far more dangerous for the future of the Tibetans, if they want to preserve their distinctiveness. Unfortunately, the Middle Way of the Dalai Lama does not cater for the new dangerous trend.



Thousands Pray for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Recovery at Dharamshala



Members of the public including Tibetans and devotees of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at a prayer service for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's recovery on 27 January 2016.

Residents of Dharamshala including monks, nuns and staff of the Central Tibetan Administration gathered at the Tsuglakhang on 27 January to pray for the quick recovery of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is undergoing prostate treatment in the US.

Over a thousand people attended the daylong prayer service, organised by the Department of Religion and Culture of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Addressing the prayer service, Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay called for calm and urged Tibetans not to be alarmed and worried at the news of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's medical treatment.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the irreplaceable spiritual leader and the jewel of refuge for the entire Tibetan people. Therefore, I understand the general public's anxiety regarding His Holiness the Dalai Lama's health," Sikyong said.

"However, as we have said a few days ago, there are no major concerns with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's health and he will recover fully after treatment. This has been confirmed by His Holiness himself as well as the doctors who are looking after His Holiness," Sikyong said, reassuring the anxious public.

"Prostate treatment is a common condition for people above the age of 60. Generally, doctors in the US advise public for regular prostate checkups after the age of 40. Therefore, considering His Holiness the Dalai Lama's age, who is undergoing prostate treatment at 80 years of age, is a sign of robust health," Sikyong added.

"Having said that, the Kashag is in constant touch with the Mayo Clinic where His Holiness is undergoing treatment for any updates on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's health. Therefore, I urge Tibetans inside and outside Tibet to remain calm and not to worry," Sikyong said.

Sikyong further called on the Tibetan public to preserve the sacred bond of Samaya between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people, and collect merit through prayers to ensure a swift recovery for His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama left Dharamshala on 19 January for prostate treatment at the Mayo clinic in Rochester, US.

His regular engagements are scheduled to resume from March following a month's rest, according to a notice

published by dalailama.com.

Tibetans inside Tibet Pray for His Holiness

Hundreds of Tibetans gathered on 25 January at Tehor, in the eastern Tibetan area of Kham and prayed for his long life, displaying large images of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Images and footage circulated on social media depicting more than a thousand monks, laypeople and children participating in a prayer ceremony in a monastery in Tehor township, Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) to pray for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as news reached there of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's medical treatment.

Video circulating online shows hundreds of Tibetan men, women and children seated before a large shrine at a monastery in Trehor, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous County in Kardze Prefecture, Sichuan, chanting prayers for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. A large image of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is placed on the shrine, surrounded in khatags (white blessing scarves) and offerings.

Similar incidents have also occurred before during the birthday celebrations of his Holiness the Dalai Lama inside Chinese controlled Tibet.



More than a thousand Tibetans gathered in a monastery in the Tibetan area of Kham to pray for the Dalai Lama's long life in response to news that he is receiving routine medical treatment in the US.

Tibetan New Year's Greeting from His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Here I am undergoing precautionary prostate treatment, and I want to take this opportunity to convey my greetings to our people, ordained and lay, young and old, especially those inside Tibet, as well as those in exile.

Since the Tibetan new year is approaching, I want to wish you 'Tashi Delek'.

One reason I want to tell you this today is that since I have been here undergoing treatment, many people in Tibet and in exile who have strong devotion and faith in me, have taken the responsibility of dedicating prayers and performing rituals for my well being. I want to thank you all. Today it's as if I am here meeting you all, and I want to tell you that I am doing very well. The treatment only takes few minutes everyday, but it will take time

to complete the treatment. Its nothing complicated nor serious. There's nothing to worry about. I am relaxed and taking it easy. Its almost as if I am taking rest. I spend my time doing my daily recitations in morning and evening and reading other scripture. I want to tell you to not worry at all.

During Tibetan New Year, it's our custom to greet each other and wish each other 'tashi delek'. This is not just an opportunity to offer 'chema', drink 'chaang', and gamble. According to 'Chanting the Names of Manjushri', 'Tashi' means, since everybody wants to be happy and no one wants to be miserable, the cause of happiness is giving benefit and joy to others. If you create the causes of happiness, and live your life benefitting others and not harming them, that's a meaningful life, a life that is essentially 'tashi'.

'Delek' is the result of creating the cause of happiness, 'De' meaning attainment of momentary happiness and 'lek' meaning attainment of ultimate enlightenment.

I want to wish all of you 'Losar Tashi Delek' and at the same time, request that please try to live up to the meaning of 'Tashi Delek'.

The hospital staff here are really looking after me with utmost care and attention. I am relaxed and calm and Besides that, many other people I know around the world, some of them spiritual, some of them not including many scientists, even young children have written to me wishing me well. I want to thank them all. I appreciate everyone who has prayed for me and exerted efforts on my behalf.

Losar Greetings from Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay

I, personally as well as on behalf of the Kashag, extend my heartiest greetings and wish a happy Tibetan new year (Losar 2143 – Year of the Fire Monkey) to our deeply revered spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama, heads of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion, Tibetans living inside and outside Tibet, the people and government of India, and friends of Tibet from all over the world.

Losar is an important traditional festival of Tibet. Tibetans should celebrate it wholeheartedly. Moreover, elder Tibetans should teach and explain the traditional religion and culture, and the ethical customs associated with Losar to the younger generation of Tibetans to preserve and promote the tradition for posterity.

Meanwhile, the situation inside Tibet continues to remain grim under repression and oppression, with no hope of improvement in the near future. On top

of that, Chinese authorities enforced an order restricting the display of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's photos in several Tibetan regions recently. Those of us who are in exile should be aware of such enforcement by the Chinese government to trample on the faith of Tibetan people.

Last year, the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people marked the year of gratitude for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It also organised a grand long-life prayer ceremony to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in honour of his 80th birth anniversary. During the long-life prayer offering ceremony, His Holiness the Dalai Lama affirmed the prayers of the Tibetan people and promised to live for over a hundred years. This is a huge blessing to the Tibetan people. On that note, Tibetans should express gratitude in their hearts and earnestly work towards fulfilling the aspirations of His Holiness.

As you are aware, His Holiness is cur-

rently undergoing medical treatment at a clinic in the US. The treatment is going well. Even the doctors have confirmed that there is no major health concern with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We assure the Tibetan public that there is no need to worry and that the Kashag remains in constant touch with the clinic for updates. However, what we – the Tibetan people – can do is stay united and accumulate collective merit through prayers for the swift recovery of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. If our collective merit is good, His Holiness the Dalai Lama will live long for the benefit of the Tibetan people.

In conclusion, expressing my profound prayers for the swift recovery and long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and hoping that peace and happiness prevails on all sentient beings, I once again extend my heartiest greetings on the Tibetan new year, and hope that Tibetans inside and outside Tibet reunite soon.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama Addresses IAS Association in Bengaluru



His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaking to a meeting of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Association (Karnataka) in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India on January 2, 2016. Photo/Jeremy Russell/OHHDL

Prominent Lamas like Ganden Tri Rinpoche, Sharpa Chöjey and Jangtse Chöjey and several Abbots waited in the Tashi Lhunpo Assembly Hall to bid His Holiness the Dalai Lama farewell on 2 January. When he stepped out into the sunshine, shielded by a large yellow ceremonial umbrella, the monks of Tashi Lhunpo were sitting on the monastery steps. He sat smiling among them as final group photographs were taken and then climbed into his car. Driving away from Tashi Lhunpo and Bylakuppe thousands of Tibetans lined the road, some holding flowers or incense, but nearly all holding white silk scarves that caught the early morning light as he passed.

At a certain distance from the settlement, His Holiness's car stopped and the Abbots who had followed it came to the door and paid their respects one last time. The motorcade drove on towards Bengaluru, stopping for a short break at Mandya where members of the local press were on hand to greet him. Before continuing the journey he spoke to them and the local police escort about the importance of inner peace and preserving the knowledge and values of ancient Indian culture. He arrived in Bengaluru in time for lunch.

In the early afternoon he was invited to address a meeting of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Association (Karnataka).

"Brothers and sisters," he greeted them. "I'm very happy to be able to meet with you today. We are all part of humanity, 7

billion of us who are fundamentally the same as human beings. Of course, there are differences among us of faith, colour of skin and colour of hair, some of us come from different countries and speak different languages, but these are secondary differences. The primary thing is that we are essentially the same. Many of the problems we face, we make for ourselves, based on our mistaken emphasis on these secondary differences between us.

"Seeing each other in terms of 'us' and 'them' and being motivated by a strong sense of self-centredness are the source of violence, killing and corruption in our world. Instead we have to make an effort to promote a sense of the oneness of all human beings. We have to think about the welfare of the whole of humanity. If humanity is happy, as individuals we'll all be happy. If humanity is wracked with fear and suspicion, we'll be unhappy."

Knowledge of the mind, emotions and their workings is something that can be studied on an academic level. It's on that basis that I have engaged in discussions with modern scientists over the last 30 years. The benefits have been mutual. I've learned, for example, that traditional Buddhist cosmology, depicting a flat earth with Mt Meru at its centre, is mistaken. On the other hand, the quantum physics assertion that nothing has objective existence seems to correspond with the Madhyamaka view that, since all things depend on causes and conditions, they only exist as designations."

His Holiness told his audience that having lived the last 56 years, the best part of his life, in this country, thoroughly educated by ancient Indian thought, he feels like a son of India. Wherever he travels in the world he shares the ancient Indian ideas of ahimsa and inter-religious harmony.

Asked for his advice to Indian civil servants he replied: "Be honest, transparent and truthful; that way you'll establish trust."

To a question about whether it is possible to preserve religious values without religion he said this is what he calls secular ethics. He conceded that some friends are wary of the word secular, but he interprets it to mean respect for all religious traditions and even the views of those who have no faith. He suggested that in a world of 7 billion people, where 1 billion express no interest in religion, there has to be a way of exchanging understanding of love, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness. That way is to cultivate secular ethics. His Holiness mentioned ongoing projects in North America, Europe and India to formulate a curriculum to incorporate secular ethics into the modern education system. He also noted the effectiveness of nearly a dozen US cities declaring themselves 'cities of kindness'.

A final questioner wanted to know what had happened when the Buddha achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. First His Holiness drew attention to the more than 300 volumes of scripture translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan that can be seen as answering this. Then he mentioned Buddha nature that refers to the fundamental mind, a mind that is naturally pure, that is free from anger, attachment and ignorance. Since these defilements or disturbing emotions are not a part of that mind, they can be eliminated. When that occurs, the Buddha's mind is revealed.

As the meeting came to an end, the conveners thanked His Holiness profusely for taking the time to talk to them and made him a gift of bonsai bodhi tree.



Indian Friends Host 80th Birthday Celebration for His Holiness the Dalai Lama at New Delhi



His Holiness the Dalai Lama holding the National Emblem presented by Former Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at the 'Celebrating His Holiness' event in New Delhi, India on January 4, 2016. Photo/Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was very welcomed in Delhi on 4 January by old friends who wished to celebrate his reaching his 80th birthday. The event included a vivid exhibition of photographs that His Holiness took interest and pleasure in viewing, as images reminded him of people he's met and places he's been. Likewise, after a leisurely lunch, when His Holiness joined the party he was pleased to spot and greet old friends in the audience.

Monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery opened proceedings by chanting the verse for taking refuge and generating bodhichitta, followed by a prayer for His Holiness's long life. The compere, Ms Komal GB Singh, briefly explained that since His Holiness had had a busy year, many in India had not had the opportunity to congratulate him and wish him well on his actual 80th birthday in July 2015. She called on the principal organiser Mr Analjit Singh to introduce the occasion.

"I'm sure many of you are familiar

with Winnie the Pooh and Piglet's asking him, 'How do you spell love?' and Pooh's reply, 'You don't spell it, you feel it.' That's what I thought when I first met His Holiness and he held my hand for almost our entire 40 minute meeting."

Ram Jethmalani, one of India's most celebrated lawyers, confessed he was a sinner who wondered why he'd been honoured with the opportunity to speak. He declared himself a great admirer of His Holiness who he sees as a living example of the practice of the Buddha's teachings.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Shri LK Advani arrived and in his recollections spoke of his surprise in observing a few years ago in Rishikesh that whether it was a swami, a sadhu or a sannyasin, His Holiness would not spare his beard. He affectionately tugged on them all and nobody minded. They seemed to welcome it, because here was someone who thought ill of no one.

Next, Dr Kailash Satyarthi, who shared

the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize with Malala Yousafzai, spoke of also being impressed by His Holiness when he was still a boy. He summarized his thoughts about him as four things beginning with the letter C – courage, which derives from morality, conviction and compassion, which is in each one us. Dr Satyarthi says that, like His Holiness, he has made it his mission to globalize compassion. The final 'C' was childhood, not in the sense of an age group, but as a value, a way of looking at the world. He suggested that in admiring His Holiness we celebrate a purity akin to that revealed by children.

Actor Sharmila Tagore paid tribute to His Holiness as the voice of reason and common sense, repeating one of his often cited quotations: 'There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.'

Scholar and very old friend of His Holiness, Dr Kapila Vatsyayan praised him for having "brought Nagarjuna back to



Members of the audience attending the 'Celebrating His Holiness' event in New Delhi, India on January 4, 2016. Photo/Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL

us” and for “embodying the compassion and altruism we celebrate”.

Historian Ramachandra Guha, who also takes an intense interest in the environment and cricket, told the audience he had not met His Holiness before. However, growing up in Dehra Dun, with its strong Tibetan presence, he has long been aware of him. He reported Ramachandra Gandhi's pointing out to him how His Holiness is in perfect alignment with Mahatma Gandhi because of his absolute commitment to non-violence, his deep concern to foster inter-religious dialogue and the importance of pluralism and because of his love for all creatures. Guha noted he is also like Gandhi in his mischief and humour reporting an incident over lunch when someone asked, “Don't you remember, we met when you came to visit Mother Teresa in Calcutta?” and His Holiness replied, “Well, I don't remember you, but I remember Mother Teresa.”

Scholar and senior Indian politician, Dr Karan Singh recalled that in 1956, in the company of Pandit Nehru, Zhou Enlai first introduced him to His Holiness and the Panchen Rinpoche. He praised several of His Holiness's qualities. His equanimity, which means that whatever happens he retains his sense of joy and the charismatic leadership with which he has kept the Tibetan community together despite great odds. Observing that His

Holiness has been giving blessings all his life, Dr Karan Singh said that as his older friend he would like to offer some blessings in return and recited a verse, first in English,

May Mahalaxmi reside in your house,
May Sarasvati reside in your voice,
May your fame spread from country to country like the full moon,
May you be surrounded by followers for a hundred years,

and then in resonant Sanskrit.

National Convener of the Core Group for the Tibetan Cause, RK Kirmey, an Arunachali politician, suggested that India should support the cause of Tibet in order that His Holiness can return there in his lifetime. He prayed that he may continue to live long and in the best of health.

When everyone returned after a short break for tea, they were regaled by Sarod virtuoso, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and his sons, playing Raag Shanti. A mesmerizing performance attracted hearty applause.

Distinguished jurist Fali Nariman observed two things about His Holiness, one, that he takes himself lightly and two, that he bears no enmity to anyone. He reported Bishop Desmond Tutu asking several years ago in London why

people like Gandhi, His Holiness and Mandela are so popular. In answer to his own question he said, “Because all of us have an instinct for goodness. We recognise it when we see it.”

Scholar and present Lt Governor of Delhi, Najeeb Jung remarked that in traditional India, people thought of the land as enriched by the presence of rishis. He asserted that like Gandhi by his firmly upholding the cause of peace, His Holiness has made the country a better place. Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram expressed admiration for His Holiness's description of himself:

“I'm a simple human being, a citizen of Tibet, who chose to be a Buddhist monk.”

At a time when there are 60 million displaced people in the world, His Holiness represents a group of such people and he constantly rekindles their hope with the determined advice that one day justice will prevail.

Social activist Aruna Roy echoed Bishop Tutu when she said of His Holiness, “There's goodness in you, there's truth in you, because you don't say one thing and do another.” She added that hope is as important to life as food, “May you keep giving us hope.”

A Jain Acharya voiced fulsome praise of His Holiness in Hindi. He was followed by former British High Commissioner Sir Richard Stagg who extolled the qualities of humility, humanity, humour and hope for which His Holiness is a beacon. Former Indian Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran reported seeing for himself in Tibet how strongly the people there hold His Holiness in their hearts, before he met him in person. He added, “Although His Holiness describes himself as fortunate in the welcome he has received in India, we, in fact, should be grateful that he turned to us.”

Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India 2004-14 referred to His Holiness as a gift of God to the world.

“My encounters with him have always left me more at peace with my life,” he

said. "Ours is a land of rishis and he is one of them helping guide the country on a righteous path. In these turbulent times, he teaches us to combine our spiritual values with our use of science and technology for material development. I can only pray that he lives long so the people of India, of Asia and the world may benefit from his blessings."

Finally, Ms Komal GB Singh requested His Holiness to address the gathering. He began in his customary way:

"Respected elder brothers and sisters, younger brothers and sisters, today you have held this event to celebrate my 80th birthday. I very much appreciate it. Some of you are among my oldest friends. I have spent the major portion of my life in India. Under difficult circumstances I have really come to value India's freedom and I appreciate your warm feelings towards me. However, in the face of what may sound like too much praise, I have to remind myself, 'I'm a monk, I'm a Buddhist monk.'

"I would like to take this opportunity to share with you my three commitments. I'm a human being, one of the 7 billion alive today. Because our own future depends on other people, we each have a responsibility to think about them and the world in which we live.

"Altruism doesn't mean that you neglect yourself or your own welfare. But we all need friendship and friendship depends on trust. Showing concern for others is what gives rise to trust. It's common sense, and something we can see for ourselves, that a wealthy man who trusts no one will never be happy, while a poor



Sarod virtuosos Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Amaan Ali Khan and Ayaan Ali Khan performing at the 'Celebrating His Holiness' event in New Delhi, India on January 4, 2016. Photo/Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL

man who is surrounded by friends is full of joy. Therefore, caring for others is the best way to fulfil our own concerns.

"This is linked to cultivating a sense of the oneness of humanity, which I talk about wherever I go. As a result I have friends in every part of the world. And in relation to that, many scientists are taking interest in how peace of mind contributes to our general well-being. The ancient Indian knowledge of the workings of the mind and emotions is profound. Ancient Indian psychology was advanced."

His Holiness spoke of the knowledge received from ancient India and kept alive in Tibet. He suggested that Tibetans have not only been chelas or disciples, but have been reliable chelas, because during the ups and downs of history they have kept this knowledge alive.

"This knowledge largely belongs to the Nalanda tradition. It is now time, my respected Indian brothers and sisters to pay more attention to your ancient heritage and combine its values with science and technology to ensure the greatest benefit. Ahimsa is not just a matter of being non-violent in our actions, but also of being compassionate in our hearts. Just as we observe physical hygiene to defend our bodily health, we need a sense of emotional hygiene to preserve our inner peace and overall well-being. A genuine sense of compassion is based on seeing all human beings as essentially the same."

His Holiness mentioned his commitment to promoting inter-religious harmony. He repeated his long-standing admiration for the way the indigenous religions of India, the various Hindu traditions, Jainism, Buddhism and so forth, live in harmony, side by side with traditions that originated elsewhere, like Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In ahimsa and inter-religious harmony India sets an example to the rest of the world.

Thirdly, His Holiness declared that he is of course a Tibetan. However, he made clear that he has not only retired personally from all political responsibility, but has happily and voluntarily brought an

end to the involvement of Dalai Lamas in political affairs. His concern today is for Tibet's ecology. Tibet's role in climate change is equivalent to that of the North and South poles, prompting some to refer to Tibet as a Third Pole. High altitude makes Tibet's ecology particularly fragile and once damaged harder to restore.

In addition, His Holiness regards Tibetan culture as a culture of peace and non-violence that can be of real value to the rest of the world. Therefore it is important to keep it alive. While its religious aspects are really only the concern of Buddhists, Buddhist science and philosophy can be studied under academic conditions, potentially of interest and benefit to anyone.

"The Buddha uniquely advised his followers not to accept what he taught at face value out of devotion, but to investigate and test it in the light of reason," His Holiness explained. "This healthy scepticism is attractive to scientists and has been a basis of the fruitful discussions we have held over the last thirty years.

"Please keep these three commitments of mine in mind and if they can be of any help to you, you are welcome to put them into effect. I appreciate all of you coming here today and would like to thank the organizers for all their efforts."

On behalf of the organizers, Dr Manmohan Singh presented His Holiness with a carved sandalwood replica of the Lion Capital that adorned the Ashokan Pillar in Sarnath. The four lions back to back represent power, courage, pride, and confidence and are now one of the emblems of India. Sarnath is where the Buddha first taught the Four Noble Truths.

Analjit Singh thanked all who had spoken and shared their reflections. On behalf of everyone who had taken part in what he called a very special day, he expressed prayers and good wishes for His Holiness's continuing good health, happiness and peace of more than a month that has taken him to Delhi, Bengaluru, Hunsur and Bylakuppe,

His Holiness the Dalai Lama Discusses Secular Ethics with Mayors



His Holiness the Dalai Lama with Mayors and other individuals concerned with building compassionate cities after their meeting in Rochester, Minnesota on February 11, 2016. Photo/Tenzin Taklha/OHHDL

On a cold sunny morning in Rochester, His Holiness met with Mayor Tom Tait of Anaheim, CA, Mayor Greg Fischer of Louisville, KY and Mayor Ardell Brede of Rochester, MN, along with several like-minded individuals who were working to build kind and compassionate cities. Anaheim had adopted the name ‘City of Kindness’ and Louisville had adopted the name ‘City of Compassion’.

In welcoming the group, His Holiness said, “We are witnessing lots of suffering in today’s world, including the recent refugee problem. We must question what is wrong in today’s world. I feel we are lacking a sense of respect for other’s life, a sense of concern for other’s well being, which is kindness. We only think of me, me, me! That is the seed of today’s problem”.

His Holiness admired the Mayors’ efforts in naming their cities as cities of kindness and compassion. He felt the time had come to begin a systematic effort to develop more kind-hearted people. This method should be able to encompass all seven billion human beings irrespective of whether they were believers or non-believers.

“All children receive immense affection and love from their mothers. This is a biological factor, not based on reli-

gion. We should be able to find a way to promote these values on this level, not based on religious faith. This is what I call secular ethics. Secular in the Indian context of respecting not only religious believers but also those who do not believe in religion.”

His Holiness stressed the importance of finding a teaching curriculum for secular ethics that would be able to fit in the secular education field. He informed the group that a draft curriculum on secular ethics has been developed with the help of Emory University. This secular education curriculum was based on scientific education in combination with our common sense and experiences. Further meetings and discussions in India and the U.S. were planned later in the year to finalize the draft curriculum.

In stressing his commitment to this endeavor, His Holiness said, “I remain committed till my death in the promotion of the oneness of seven billion human beings. Whenever I look at another human being I always see them as a fellow human being that automatically brings a strong feeling of closeness. If one considers secondary levels then you are enveloped by a feeling of loneliness.”

His Holiness said he was encouraged in

meeting people who showed real interest and began to realize the importance of kindness and compassion. He saw this as a hopeful sign. He also saw the United States as playing an important role in this regard.

“America is the most powerful economic country. That is commendable. Now the time has come to pay more attention about our inner richness, our inner value. I think the U.S. has great potential in this. If the U.S. is able to develop more cities of kindness and compassion and accordingly a practical human value based education curriculum, it will have an impact. Already many people realize that material progress by itself is not enough to develop a happy life.”

Mayor Greg Fischer of Louisville said that during His Holiness’ visit to their city in 2013, His Holiness requested him to try and introduce the concept of secular ethics in their community. Through his experience, the Mayor found that people were still a bit apprehensive when they used the word ‘secular’ as some people felt it was non-religious. He said that he used the word ‘human values’ or ‘universal values’ which people found much more accepting. He talked about kindness, love and compassion as basic human values.

He informed His Holiness that Louisville was implementing the teaching of these basic human values in their school system with their compassionate schools project. They had started with three schools where they were teaching young children social and emotional behavior centered around kindness, love and compassion, and mindfulness and meditation. These children came from difficult backgrounds and it was the first time in their life that they were able to slow their minds down and actually open their minds and begin learning for the first time.

After questioning whether they were bringing out any reports or carrying out any research on the effects, the Mayor Fischer informed His Holiness that they

were working with the University of Virginia and were planning to test ten schools using this scientific approach and another 10 schools not using this approach to compare each other and see if there was a permanent difference.

His Holiness said, "I have been having a dialogue with a number of scientists, educational professionals and others over the last ten years. Many of them agreed that the existing educational system was not adequate enough as it was focused on material values. So there was a need to add education on warm-heartedness. However, in the beginning stages this needed to be done on a small-scale level and once the positive results became clear, then it could be expanded to include more schools and places."

"Political leaders were too busy in today's existing problems. But this effort was the solution for future problems. I am confident that leaders in the latter part of the century who grow up with a human value based education system will be more compassionate. Then the 21st century can be one of peace and compassion."

Another participant talked about their efforts in developing a kindness program for schools in Canada. They were finding that students in these kindness programs were developing skills that went way beyond the classroom. They became life skills and also took them home to their parents. They were happy to receive calls from parents saying that their 10-year old child was talking about conflict resolution at the dinner table. Parents became interested since they saw a positive effect.

After hosting a simple lunch for the group, His Holiness thanked all of them for coming.

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama Congratulates Taiwanese President-Elect

In a letter to Ms Tsai Ing-wen, President-Elect of Taiwan, His Holiness the Dalai Lama congratulated her on her remarkable victory in the Presidential election. He wrote:

"It is indeed encouraging to see how firmly rooted democracy has become in Taiwan. It is a model and source of inspiration to those who aspire for freedom and accountable leadership. As someone dedicated to promoting democracy, I salute what the people of Taiwan have accomplished."

He added that during his visits to Taiwan, including that in 2009 when he met Ms Tsai Ing-wen, he was able to see for himself the progress the people of Taiwan have made in the fields of economics and education. Noting that business and trade are areas in which successful links have been established with mainland China, he wrote:

"It is important that such links should grow and be extended to include increased people to people exchanges."

He ended by wishing Ms Tsai Ing-wen every success in meeting the many challenges ahead.

Sikyong and Tibetan Parliament Congratulate Ms Tsai Ing-wen

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay and Mr Topgyal, Secretary the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile congratulated Ms Tsai Ing-wen, the new president-elect of Taiwan.

Sikyong wrote: "Your Excellency's personal victory and your party's victory are a reflection of the robust democratic institution that is in place in Taiwan and is a source of great inspiration for the Tibetan people."

"Your commitment, visions and willingness to serve the people of Taiwan have won the trust of the majority. As you embark upon the responsibility of the first female president of Taiwan, I wish you all the luck and success in your endeavors," he said.

"Moreover, as a longstanding friend of the Tibetan people, you have repeatedly expressed your concern at the deteriorating situation inside Tibet under Chinese rule for which we are truly grateful. We hope you will continue your pivotal support to peacefully resolve the Tibet issue as the President of Taiwan," Sikyong added.

"On behalf of all the Tibetan people in and outside Tibet, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile would like to heartily congratulate Your Excellency and your party on this historic victory," Mr Topgyal, the Tibetan Parliament secretary wrote.

"This is a victory of the people of Taiwan, who voted for Democratic Progressive Party under your dynamic leadership and it is an inspiration to all the democratic societies throughout the world."

"It is extremely important to note that Your Excellency had met our most beloved and dynamic leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the past and, your party had been very supportive to the just cause of Tibetan people. We are sure that this "New Era" under your efficient and dynamic leadership will bring freedom, prosperity and peace in Taiwan. We sincerely urge Your Excellency to consider the issue of Tibet as one of the core issues of new government in Taiwan under your leadership," he added.

Chinese Celebrities Warned Not to Mix with Exiled Tibetans

- BEIJING (AP)



FILE – In this April 26, 2012 file photo, Chinese pop singer Faye Wong, also known as Wang Fei, performs during the opening ceremony of the third World Buddhist Forum in Hong Kong. China's state media have criticized celebrities for attending an event on Feb. 14, 2016 in northern India with members of the Tibetan government-in-exile, adding to Chinese authorities' warnings about how actors and singers must behave. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung, File)

China's state media have criticized celebrities for attending an event in northeastern India with members of the Tibetan government-in-exile, adding to Chinese authorities' warnings that actors and singers must "serve the people and socialism."

An article on China Tibet Online this week that was widely carried by other state media said there was nothing wrong with Beijing singer and actress Faye Wong, Hong Kong actor Tony Leung and Beijing actor Hu Jun worshipping Buddhism and attending religious activities.

But it said that "meddling with the 'Tibetan-independence' clique leaders has gone far beyond the realm of 'freedom of religious belief.'"

The phrase is a reference to the government-in-exile and the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhists' spiritual leader whom Beijing accuses of campaigning to split Tibet from the rest of China.

The celebrities were attending an

event on Feb. 14 commemorating the 92nd anniversary of the birth of the late predecessor of the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Tibetan Buddhism's third-highest spiritual leader, said the Karmapa's office.

Karma Namgyal, secretary of the Karmapa's office, said the presence of the three along with one of the ministers of the Central Tibetan Administration and speaker of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile was "coincidental."

He said the celebrities were in Bodhi Gaya, a temple-dotted town where tradition has it that the Buddha reached enlightenment, to attend an annual weeklong prayer festival for world peace. They arrived a few days early, so attended the commemoration event as well, sitting on the side with all the laypeople, said Karma Namgyal.

Jamphel Shonu, a press officer for the self-claimed government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India, said the event was "purely religious" and had "nothing to do with politics or the Central Tibetan

Administration."

The state media commentary Wednesday said it would be "a pity if they lose their good reputations earned by hard work over so many years" by getting acquainted with people "on the wrong side of the state's major principle of right and wrong."

Representatives of Hu, Leung and Wong, also known as Wang Fei, did not respond to requests for comment.

Hu Jun said on his Twitter-like Sina Weibo account Thursday that he had gone to India to attend a prayer meeting with his family. "I was totally unaware of the presence of the so-called head of a separatist group as mentioned in some reports. I do not know any separatist and I solemnly declare that, as a Chinese, I oppose any words and acts that divide the country!!!"

Western movie stars, directors and musicians have fallen afoul of Chinese authorities over the years for perceived pro-Tibetan activism or remarks. Last year, performances in China by U.S. bands Bon Jovi and Maroon 5 were canceled, reportedly because they used a picture of the Dalai Lama in a previous concert or tweeted that they had met him.

In a speech made public in October, President Xi Jinping warned Chinese celebrities against pursuing commercial success rather than work that is "morally inspiring ... to serve the people and socialism." After that, dozens of official media and entertainment organizations signed a pledge to uphold self-discipline and professional ethics, which included supporting the leadership of the Communist Party.

For detailed news visit:
www.tibet.net

Tibet Closed to Foreigners Again But Tourism Booms

- By Kate Hunt, CNN

China has closed Tibet to overseas travelers from Thursday until the end of March, three travel agents told CNN, but with or without foreigners, tourism to the isolated mountain region is booming.

The closure has been an annual occurrence since 2008 when the Tibetan capital Lhasa was rocked by riots linked to the anniversary of an uprising against Beijing rule.

Authorities have also stopped issuing travel permits to foreign travelers at short notice during periodic unrest.

But tour operators and hotels say this matters little to their business, with domestic Chinese tourists eager to see the region's yak-filled grasslands and snow-capped peaks.

And authorities are equally keen to woo travelers less likely to pass on reports of protests or violence.

Chen Jianliang, a student from Shenzhen in southern China, spent 28 days cycling to Lhasa from the neighboring province of Yunnan in 2012 and loved it.

"Most people are tired of the cityscape; they go to Tibet for its serenity," he said.

Other travel for spiritual reasons.

Robert Zhao, from Beijing, said he started practicing Buddhism after making a trip to Tibet.

According to the Tibet Autonomous Region Tourism Development Committee, some 17.5 million tourists visited Tibet in the first nine months of 2015, 36% more than the same period last year.

It didn't break down the number of foreign and domestic tourists.

'Holy grail'

All foreign tourists need specific permits to enter Tibet, said Chloe Xin, an employee of Tibet Vista, which usually

schedules trips for 160 foreign clients a month.

She confirmed the five-week closure but said she wasn't clear why it was imposed.

She cited the cold weather and Tibetan new year, which falls in February and is when many drivers and tour guides take extended time off.

Another travel agency employee in the city of Chengdu who didn't want to give their name said it was for "political reasons."

Mei Zhang, the founder of travel agency Wild China, said the bans were initially disruptive but her company now routinely declines to take bookings for Tibet trips in March.

Most of her clients are from overseas but she says Tibet has become a "holy grail" for young Chinese travelers.

"It's the spirituality, the exotic culture and also the stunning landscape."

Who benefits?

Robbie Barnett, a Tibet scholar at Columbia University, says China has poured in huge sums of money to make the high-altitude region accessible for mass tourism.

"Many of the tourists travel in highly organized tour groups, which are several hundred strong and have no contact with any local person," he says.

"But others, usually from wealthier backgrounds, are interested in Tibetan Buddhism, and see it as filling a spiritual vacuum in their lives."

But he adds that Tibetans tend to benefit more from foreign tourists "since they want to be guided by Tibetans, want their money to go to Tibetans, and tend to prefer low-impact, sustainable forms of tourism."

"Chinese businesses appear to benefit

most from mass tourism, which mainly involves Chinese tourists," he says.

China announced plans this week to build a ski resort in Tibet.

Wider trend

The travel situation in Tibet encapsulates a wider trend — albeit for different reasons.

From Thai beaches to the Antarctic, Chinese travelers are discovering the globe in their tens of millions.

Outbound travel soared last year, with Chinese making 120 million trips overseas last year, 13 million or 12% more than in 2014.

But foreign tourist arrivals to China have been flat or falling for several years.

Some 8.2 million foreign tourists visited China in 2015, down 680,000 or 7.6% from 2014, according to government figures.

Travelers are put off by a variety of reasons, says Zhang including smog, escalating costs and China's reputation abroad.

"China is no longer a bargain destination and people ask me all the time about the air quality," says Zhang.

"For older clients in their seventies, they may completely abandon their dream of a China trip."

But smog is no problem in sparsely populated Tibet, another reason why it's become so popular with domestic tourists from China's polluted cities.

Chen relished the blue skies and clean air during his trek.

"The bike ride made me realize how much I could endure — both physically and mentally," he says. "The experience has kept my mind open since."

For U.S., Taiwan Vote Changes Calculus Over 'One China'

By Andrew Browne, The Wall Street Journal

TAIPEI—No dogma is more important to Beijing than “One China,” the concept that Taiwan is a part of a single Chinese nation—just temporarily estranged.

America and much of the rest of the world acquiesce to that position, denying the reality that Taiwan has set its course as an independent state. Last weekend’s vote, in which the Taiwanese electorate overwhelmingly endorsed a party that rejects Beijing’s “One China” formula, confirmed the direction in the most emphatic way to date. That not only puts China in a bind, but the U.S. too.

Like it or not, the political equation has changed, forcing Washington to look at Taiwan in a different light.

To be sure, an American challenge to the “One China” doctrine is unthinkable. It’s the one move that could realistically provoke a war between the world’s two strongest powers. Yet some diplomats and scholars think that a postelection Taiwan may get more sympathetic treatment in Washington.

“Taiwan occupies a bit of a different space now,” says Donald Rodgers, a professor at Austin College in Texas, who was in Taiwan observing the elections.

He predicts the U.S. will be somewhat less worried about offending China by opening more direct channels of communication with Taiwan on issues from security to the environment and health. Such dialogue must now be conducted in a cloak-and-dagger style lest it suggests state-to-state relations. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan routinely incur Beijing’s wrath.

Even before the elections in which the Democratic Progressive Party captured the presidency and, for the first time, the legislature, the pretense of “One China” was getting harder to sustain.

Taiwan has grown into a stable de-

mocracy. This was, after all, the sixth presidential election since the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, lifted martial law that had been in force since 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek and his defeated armies arrived at the end of the Chinese civil war. The first was in 1996.

More and more people on the island have become convinced they live in a sovereign state, not a “renegade province” of China.

The last time the Democratic Progressive Party held the presidency, from 2000 to 2008, Washington didn’t face such a dilemma.

Then-president Chen Shui-bian was a pro-independence firebrand who needlessly provoked China, creating endless headaches for Washington policy makers. Besides, his party didn’t control parliament.

Tsai Ing-wen, the incoming president-elect, is a very different personality. She’s a cautious lawyer who has promised “no surprises” in relations with China, and that’s won her a degree of trust in Washington. Like the vast majority of Taiwanese, she’s in favor of the status quo, which essentially means shelving the whole vexed issue of independence.

Why make a big fuss about it? Soon, she’ll be presiding over an island that fits almost any definition of a state.

The final blow to “One China” may have been the electoral destruction of the Kuomintang, which once ruled all of China and for decades regarded Taiwan as a temporary exile. That governing mind-set has changed. Yet a belief in “One China” clings to life within its ranks, and China did everything it could to encourage the faith by signing more than 20 trade pacts with outgoing President Ma Ying-jeou in hopes that economic integration would lead to the realization of “One China.”

The Kuomintang paid for these agreements with a crushing electoral defeat; ordinary Taiwanese saw them as a sell-out. The party may never come back.

If Washington, for pragmatic reasons, can’t simply dismiss “One China” as an anachronism, a relic of the days when cross-strait relations were defined by the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party, it might not feel such a need to indulge Beijing on the matter either. (As a matter of policy, America does not support independence for Taiwan.)

Mark Harrison, a Taiwan expert at the University of Tasmania, says that Washington’s response to the elections is likely to be conditioned by its growing strategic competition with China, highlighted by its “pivot” to Asia. Mounting political repression in China, in contrast to Taiwan’s thriving democracy, will also factor in.

“Washington is clearly in a different mode,” he says. “It doesn’t feel such a need to accommodate Beijing.”

Fears of Chinese economic sanctions to try to force Ms. Tsai onto the “One China” track are receding in Taiwan. Still less do people worry about military measures. The general sense is that Chinese president Xi Jinping has more pressing issues on his mind, like his sinking economy, and so long as Ms. Tsai doesn’t agitate openly for independence he’ll let things slide.

Washington is treading cautiously. A U.S. State Department statement congratulated Ms. Tsai on her win but noted America’s “profound interest in the continuation of cross-strait peace and stability.”

Still, Taiwan’s 23 million people have unambiguously passed their verdict on “One China.” America won’t back them, but it can’t ignore them.

European, US and Australian Lawyers Call for China to End Rights Crackdown

- The Guardian

Leading human rights lawyers from Europe, North America and Australia have called on Chinese president Xi Jinping to end an unprecedented crackdown by his security forces that has seen hundreds of attorneys and their relatives intimidated, interrogated, detained and forcibly disappeared.

A government offensive against China's "weiquan" or "rights defence" movement began on 9 July last year when police launched a sweeping round up of respected civil rights lawyers including Wang Yu, Wang Quanzhang and Zhou Shifeng.

Last week it emerged that some of the crackdown's targets – who have been held in secret detention for six months – are now facing political subversion charges meaning they could potentially be jailed for life.

Others, including Christian lawyer Li Heping, are still missing.

Writing in the Guardian, the group – which includes former French justice minister Robert Badinter as well as top British human rights lawyers such as Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Michael Mansfield QC and Clive Stafford Smith – urged Xi to prove China was a "respected global superpower" by freeing the lawyers.

"[We] write to express our deep concern about the scores of lawyers detained or intimidated in China," they wrote.

"None [of the 12 lawyers still being held] have so far been allowed access to counsel, friends or family, and they are effectively disappeared. In some cases there is good reason to fear that they were put under pressure to 'dismiss' their previously appointed lawyers. Some are not known to be suspected of any crime at all; and in the additional case of lawyer Li Heping, the Chinese government has so far declined to admit that he is being held at all."

The signatories – who also include the president of the council of bars and law societies of Europe, Michel Benichou, leading Australian civil rights lawyer, Elizabeth Evatt, and the former UN rapporteur on torture, Manfred Nowak – urged China to release the lawyers from custody in order to "vindicate its claim to be a responsible stakeholder in the international community".

The direct appeal to Xi Jinping comes after it emerged that authorities intended to bring political subversion charges against the detained lawyers that will not only end their careers but could also see them sentenced to life in prison.

Experts described that decision as a severe escalation in the crackdown that was intended to further ratchet up the pressure on Communist party critics and independent civil society.

Last week Beijing also admitted it was holding a Swedish activist, Peter Dahlin, whose group had worked with Chinese human rights lawyers. Dahlin was detained in early January on suspicion of endangering state security and China's government-controlled media has since

accused him of "making trouble in China".

In their letter in the Guardian, the lawyers said they feared those attorneys that remained in custody were "at high risk of torture or other cruel and inhuman treatment". Others had "effectively disappeared" after being denied visits by friends, relatives or lawyers.

They added: "[T]he state-controlled Chinese media have in a series of broadcasts denounced a number of detained 'suspects' as members of a crime syndicate engaging in 'rights-defence-style trouble-making', and paraded some of those detained 'confessing' to wrongdoing before they have even been publicly indicted."

Joshua Rosenzweig, a Hong Kong-based human rights expert, said that, under Xi, Chinese human rights lawyers were increasingly resigned to be seen as enemies of the state.

"A lot of them are trying simply to survive under those conditions, trying to operate as well as they can, because at this point things have gotten so bad for them that they have stopped being afraid of what might happen to them next."

34th Kalachakra To Be Held in January 2017

Expressing new year's greetings on 1 January 2016, His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced on the second day of the Sixteen Drops of Kadam Empowerment at Bylakuppe that the 34th Kalachakra initiation would be held in January 2017.

"Those of you who've come from abroad, tomorrow's the start of 2016 – a Happy New Year to you all," His Holiness greeted.

"Now you'll go home, but those of us who are still here will meet again when we hold the Kalachakra Empowerment in Bodhgaya in January 2017. We were supposed to conduct the 34th Kalachakra initiation in January 2016. However, due to my medical reasons and treatment, I had to postpone it. Anyway, what I have postponed last year, I will do it next year in the 11th month of the traditional Tibetan calendar which falls in January 2017," His Holiness said.

"In the meantime, the way to ensure a good rebirth is make your life meaningful now. Be happy and Tashi Delek," His Holiness added.

Why Are Tibetans Setting Themselves on Fire?

February 27, 2009, was the third day of Losar, the Tibetan New Year. It was also the day that self-immolation came to Tibet. The authorities had just cancelled a Great Prayer Festival (Monlam) that was supposed to commemorate the victims of the government crackdown in 2008. A monk by the name of Tapey stepped out of the Kirti Monastery and set his body alight on the streets of Ngawa, in the region known in Tibetan as Amdo, a place of great religious reverence and relevance, now designated as part of China's Sichuan Province.

At least 145 other Tibetans have self-immolated since then. Of these, 141 did so within Tibet, while the remaining five were living in exile. According to the best information we have, 125 have died (including 122 within Tibet and three abroad). Most of these individuals are men, though some are women. Many were parents who left behind young children. The oldest was sixty-four, and the youngest was sixteen. Seven underage Tibetans have either self-immolated or attempted self-immolation; two of them died, and two were detained and their fate is unknown. The numbers include three monks of high rank (tulku, or reincarnated masters), along with thirty-nine ordinary monks and eight nuns. But many were ordinary people: seventy-four were nomads or peasants; among the others were high school students, workers, vendors, a carpenter, a woodworker, a writer, a tangka painter, a taxi driver, a retired government cadre, a laundry owner, a park ranger, and three activists exiled abroad. All are Tibetan.

These events constitute the largest wave of self-immolation as a tool of political protest in the modern world—yet there is no such tradition in Tibetan history. How did we get here?

Recent decades have brought increasingly extreme oppression to Tibet's third generation under Chinese rule. This oppression is primarily manifested in five areas of Tibetan life. First, Tibetan beliefs have been suppressed, and religious scholarship has been subjected to political violence. The dispute over the reincarnation of the tenth Panchen Lama in 1995, in which Beijing

selected its own Panchen Lama and placed the Dalai Lama's chosen appointee under house arrest, created the world's youngest political prisoner and produced an irreparable break in relations between Beijing and the Dalai Lama.

A similarly paranoid decision in 2008 to expel all monks who were not born and raised in Lhasa from the city's three main monasteries (Drepung, Sera, and Ganden) was one of the main factors leading to the protests that spread throughout the region that March. After the 2008 protests, a "patriotic education" program, forcing monks to denounce the Dalai Lama openly, was intensified and expanded beyond Lhasa to cover every monastery across Tibet. Outside of the temples, the people of Tibet face regular searches of their residences: images of the Dalai Lama are confiscated from their homes, and there have even been cases of believers being imprisoned simply for having a photograph of His Holiness.

Second, the ecosystem of the Tibetan Plateau is being systematically destroyed. The state has forced thousands to leave behind the sheep, grasslands, and traditions of horseback riding with which they have practiced for millennia to move to the edges of towns, where they remain tied to one place. In their wake, a sea of Han workers has arrived from across the country armed with blueprints, bulldozers, and dynamite. They have immediately gone to work on the empty grasslands and rivers, mining copper, gold, and silver, building dams, and polluting our water supply and that of Asia as a whole (in particular, the upper reaches of the Mekong, Yangtze, and Yarlung Tsangpo rivers). The result of this "development" has been widespread pollution and increasing earthquakes, avalanches, debris flows, and other disasters.

Third, Tibetan-language education has been systematically undermined. Take the state's reform of Tibetan-language teaching in Qinghai Province, which stipulates that "Chinese shall be the primary language of instruction, and Tibetan a secondary language." Such educational reform, viewed as a "pressing political task" for the Tibetan regions, aims to accom-

By Tsering Woeser, NYR Daily

plish what the rulers of China have been unable to do by any other means over the past sixty years: making Tibet "Chinese."

Fourth, under the pretext of "developing" Tibetan regions and attracting new talent and investment, the government has provided preferential taxation, land, finance, and welfare policies for Han immigrants to Tibet. A new policy, initiated in 2008, recruits local police from the military and special forces stationed in Tibet, reaping the dual benefit of providing plenty of well-trained recruits for the mission of "maintaining stability" in Tibet while at the same time ensuring a stable population of colonizers.

Finally, the authorities have spared no effort in developing an Orwellian surveillance system, known simply as "the grid," that covers every inch of Tibet. The grid divides neighborhoods into multiple units with corresponding government offices, which are benignly advertised as expanding social services. In practice, however, these offices are used to monitor such "critical groups" as "former prisoners, nuns, and monks who are not resident in a monastery or nunnery, former monks and nuns who have been expelled from their institutions, Tibetans who have returned from the exile community in India, and people involved in earlier protests." According to the authorities, the grid "will cast an escape-proof net over Tibet for maintaining social stability" with "nets in the sky and traps on the ground."

What happened in 2008? On March 10 of that year, in his statement on the forty-ninth anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day, the Dalai Lama declared: "Since 2002, my envoys have conducted six rounds of talks with concerned officials of the People's Republic of China to discuss relevant issues. However, on the fundamental issue, there has been no concrete result at all. And during the past few years, Tibet has witnessed increased repression and brutality." The fundamental issue, according to the Dalai Lama, is China's lack of legitimacy in Tibet—a result of the state's apparent inability "to pursue a policy that satisfies the Tibetan people and gains their confidence."

His Holiness's words shocked Tibetans, who had been waiting patiently, year after year, for any sign of real progress. The Dalai Lama suddenly acknowledged what Tibetans living in Tibet had long known: not only had there been no progress, but life in Tibet had only become more oppressive. The monks of the Sera Monastery near Lhasa were among the first to hear the Dalai Lama's comments, and they immediately came to an agreement: "We must stand up!" They took to the streets, carrying the Tibetan flag and shouting slogans for freedom, launching the first stage of the protest movement that would rock culturally Tibetan regions in the coming weeks. That same afternoon, hundreds of monks from the Drepung Monastery—another of the capital's three historic monasteries—came down to the center of Lhasa from the hillside in protest. They were followed in the following days by monks and nuns from all of the monasteries across the city.

Once these protests had emerged, they grew and spread quickly. A common, cynical view of the events, which are known in China simply as the "March 14 Incident" and portrayed in social media as an unprovoked riot by ungrateful savages, blames protesters for all of the oppressive government actions that followed in their wake: the cruel repression, the tightening of security restrictions and expansion of police posts and checkpoints, and the transformation of Tibet into an open-air prison patrolled by omnipresent armed military police, armored personnel carriers, and surveillance cameras. But blaming protesters for state suppression is like arguing that the slave-driver uses his whip only because the slave has been disobedient; if we see the world through such a lens, the slave will always remain a slave.

Just as monks were integral in leading the struggles of 2008, they have also taken the lead in initiating and developing self-immolation as a form of protest. The first thirteen cases of self-immolation were all carried out by monks or former monks who had been driven out of their monasteries by the authorities. Only in December 2011 did a layperson first commit self-immolation, further expanding the scope of this protest movement.

In the first quarter of 2012, fifteen out of twenty self-immolators were monks; but

by the second and third quarters of 2012, the majority of self-immolations were carried out by laypeople. In the first seventy days of the fourth quarter of that year, forty-three out of fifty cases of self-immolation involved laypeople. In 2013, sixteen of the twenty-eight cases of self-immolation were also carried out by laypeople, as were seven out of eleven in 2014, and four out of six in the first half of 2015. With the passage of time, people from various walks of life and backgrounds across Tibet have become increasingly involved in this attempt to press for change.

Reviewing the events of the past six years, we find that the single month with the most incidents of self-immolation was November 2012, when a total of twenty-eight men and women, both young and old, engaged in this final act of protest. The month with the second-highest number of incidents was March of the same year, when eleven Tibetans set their bodies alight. Six were monks, while the other five included high school students and parents of young children. It is worth examining why there were spikes at these particular moments and what they might tell us about protesters' goals and demands.

Looking first at March 2012, we should note that March has long been a politically charged month in Tibet. March 5, for example, marks the anniversary of the suppression of protests in Lhasa in 1989, when People's Armed Police soldiers opened fire on peaceful protesters who had been gathering for weeks on the streets of Lhasa. March 10 is Tibetan National Uprising Day, commemorating the uprising of 1959 following the Dalai Lama's escape to India. March 14 is the anniversary of the beginning of the protests that spread across Tibet in 2008. March 16 is the anniversary of the state's brutal crackdown on protesters in Ngawa in 2008. And since 2009, March 28 has been designated by the Chinese government as Serfs' Emancipation Day—an official holiday meant to commemorate and "celebrate" the CCP's supposedly benevolent liberation of the Tibetan people. On account of this surplus of sensitive dates and the politically charged atmosphere they create, the authorities are reliably on guard for any signs of unrest every March. Indeed, the vast majority of protests in Tibet are concentrated in this month.

As for November 2012, the peak in self-immolations at this point coincided with the eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party, at which the new generation of state leaders was to take control of national policy. Twenty-eight Tibetans engaged in self-immolation, nine doing so in the days before and during the Party Congress. The revealing pattern of self-immolations at this politically significant moment clearly suggests that protestors hoped to press the new generation of leaders to change their policy in Tibet, and that they viewed self-immolation as a means of pressing for such change. An understanding of this point is essential to an understanding of the act of self-immolation itself.

In my interviews with international media on the topic of self-immolation, I have always tried to emphasize one area of frequent misunderstanding: self-immolation is not suicide, and it is not a gesture of despair. Rather, it is sacrifice for a greater cause, and an attempt to press for change, as can be seen in these two peaks in self-immolation. Such an act is not to be judged by the precepts of Buddhism: it can only be judged by its political results. Each and every one of these roaring flames on the Tibetan plateau has been ignited by ethnic oppression. Each is a torch casting light on a land trapped in darkness. These names are a continuation of the protests of 2008 and a continuation of the monks' decision that March: "We must stand up!"

Attempts to label these acts as suicide—or even, curiously, as a forbidden act of "killing"—are either a complete misinterpretation of the phenomenon or, more likely, the type of deliberate misrepresentation that we see all too often in Chinese state propaganda. A high-ranking monk once confided in me very clearly: "The cases of self-immolation in Tibet absolutely do not violate our Buddhist teachings on killing. They are not in any way opposed to Dharma, and certainly do not violate it. The motivations of self-immolators in Tibet, whether monks or laypeople, have nothing at all to do with personal interest.... These acts are meant to protect the Dharma and to win the Tibetan people's rights to freedom and democracy." Self-immolators are bodhisattvas sacrificing the self for others, phoenixes reincarnated from the flames of death.

H.E Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche (1926 – 2015)



His Eminence Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche

The Central Tibetan Administration mourned the demise of His Eminence Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, the head of Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche passed away in the early hours of Wednesday, 23 December at the holy city of Bodh Gaya. He was 89.

The Kashag of the Central Tibetan Administration led by Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay expressed its profound condolences and prayed for the quick rebirth of Rinpoche.

“I am extremely sorry to hear the demise of Rinpoche and offer my deepest condolences to all his followers and devotees. I hope our prayers comfort you and Rinpoche’s blessings continue to guide

us through eternity. May His Eminence be reborn soon,” Sikyong said.

His Eminence the 3rd Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche was born in 1926 to Namgyal Dorje and Dorje Dolma of Phunkhang household in central Tibet. He was recognised as an incarnation of the great master Ngok Chöku Dorje by the 9th Dorje Drak Rinpoche Thubten Choe-wang.

Rinpoche received his full ordination (Gelong) vows from Khenchen Ngawang Khentse Norbu Rinpoche. After his full ordination, Rinpoche underwent a rigorous study under the guidance of numerous scholars and teachers to learn the many aspects of Buddhist scriptures and practice, particularly specialising in the Ngagyur Nyingma tradition.

However, as circumstances worsened in Tibet after the Chinese occupation in 1959, Rinpoche escaped into exile via Bhutan to India. Rinpoche first reached Sikkim, where he was based for two years. Even under the hardship of the early years in exile, Rinpoche continued his study, going on to receive

various sacred teachings and transmissions from the renowned teachers of the time including the great 16th Gyalwang Karmapa Rinpoche, Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche among others.

Since the original Dorje Drak monastery in Tibet was completely destroyed by Chinese forces, Rinpoche was instrumental in rebuilding the Dorje Drak monastery in exile to preserve and expand the teachings of the Nyingma lineage.

In 2012, Rinpoche became the Supreme Head of Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism after the demise of His Eminence Trulsik Rinpoche in 2011.

Rinpoche was based primarily at his monastery in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir for most of his life in exile.

A steadfast practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, Rinpoche continued to give instructions, empowerments and transmissions to everyone until his journey into parinirvana on 23 December 2015.

Mr Karma Chopel, Former Speaker of Tibetan Parliament (1949 - 2016)

The Central Tibetan Administration expressed its deep sympathies and condolences at the demise of Mr Karma Chopel, a former Speaker and a serving member of the 15th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. He passed away on 29 January 2016 at the age of 67.

Mr Karma Chopel was born in 1949 at Labrang Kosa in Tradun region of Tibet to parents; Sherab Woesser and Jangchup. After coming to exile in India, he completed his schooling at CST Mussoorie (1960-70). He then acquired a BA degree from Delhi University (1970-73) and B. Ed. from Bangalore University in 1975.

Following the completion of his academic pursuits, Mr Chopel served as a teacher at CST Bylakuppe from

1975 to 1980, and later as Rector at the CST schools of Shimla and Mussoorie from 1981 to 1989.

A lifelong advocate of Tibetan freedom, he joined the Tibetan Youth Congress from a tender age, going on to serve two consecutive terms in the Central Executive Committee of the Tibetan Youth Congress from 1977 – 1983 and 1986 – 1989, including a brief stint as the president from 1982 – 83.

He was also the first President of the first Tibetan Political Party – the National Democratic Party of Tibet from 1994 – 96 and was re-appointed to the post from 2005 – 06.

In recognition of his service to the public,

he was elected to the 11th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, then known as the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies (ATPD) in 1991 with an overwhelming victory in the parliamentary election.

He went on to win the next five consecutive elections of the Tibetan Parliament, becoming one of the most respected and experienced members of the Parliament.

Meanwhile, he was also elected as the Chairman of the 13th ATPD from September 2001 to March 2002. He was re-elected as the Speaker of the 14th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on 31 May 2006, along with Mr Penpa Tsering, and served as the Speaker for the first half of its term.

TIBETAN MEDIA

Sheja (Official Tibetan monthly)
Department of Information & International
Relations, Dharamshala-176215, HP, India
Email: sheja_editor@tibet.net
Web: www.bod.asia

Tibetan Freedom (Official Tibetan weekly)
Department of Information & International
Relations, Dharamshala-176215, HP, India
Email: tibfreedom@tibet.net
Web: www.bod.asia

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241 E. 32nd Street
New York, NY 10016
Web: www.tibetoffice.org

Tibet Bulletin (Official Chinese bi-monthly)
Department of Information & International
Relations, Dharamshala-176 215, HP, India
Email: chinadesk@tibet.net
Web: www.xizang-zhiye.org
www.tibetonline.tv



TIBETAN BULLETIN

Contacts for the Central Tibetan Administration

INDIA

Department of Information & International
Relations, Central Tibetan Administration,
Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamshala - 176 215
H.P., India Tel: +91-1892-222510/222457
Fax: +91-1892-224957 Email: diir@tibet.net
www.tibet.net

Bureau of H.H. the Dalai Lama, 10-B Ring Road,
Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi 110 024, India
Tel: +91-11-26474798, Fax: +91-11-2646-1914
Email: rep.in@tibet.net www.tibetbureau.in

Chief Representative (South Zone), No. 7,
Sampangiramaiah Garden, Srinivagalu Tank,
Viveknagar Post, Bangalore-560047
Karnataka, India Tel: +91-080-5506842 / 5506843
Fax: +91-080-5506966
Email: chiefrep@bgl.vsnl.net.in

NEPAL

The Office of Tibet, Tibetan Refugee Welfare Of-
fice, Gaden Khangsar, Narayan Gopal Marg-270.
Lazimpat, Ward 2, P.O.Box No. 310,
Kathmandu, Nepal Tel: +977-1-4419903/4420799
Fax: +977-1-4411660 Email: rep.np@tibet.net

UNITED STATES

The Office of Tibet, 1228, 17th Street NW, Wash-
ington, DC - 20036, U.S.A. Tel: +1-212-213-5010,
Fax: +1-703-349-7444
Email: rep.us@tibet.net www.tibetoffice.org

BRAZIL

Tibet House
Alameda Lorena, 349 Jardim Paulista,
Sau Paulo, SP, 01424-001 Brazil, South America
Tel: +55(11)989635128
Email: latin@tibet.net

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO EUROPE

Office of the Special Representative of H.H. the
Dalai Lama, P.O.Box CH-8036 Zurich
Tel: +41-79-349-2448 Fax: +41-43-536-2909
Email: specialrep.eu@tibet.net
www.tibet-europe.com

SWITZERLAND

The Tibet Bureau, Place de la Navigation 10
1201 Geneva, Switzerland Tel: +41-22-7387-940
Fax: +41-22-7387-941 Email: rep.ch@tibet.net
www.tibetoffice.ch

JAPAN

Liaison Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama, Tibet House
Nishi Ochiai 3-26-1 Shinjuku-ku,
Tokyo 161-0031, Japan
Tel: +81-03-5988-3576, Fax: +81-03-3565-1360
E-mail: rep.jp@tibet.net www.tibethouse.jp

UNITED KINGDOM

The Office of Tibet, 1 Culworth Street, London,
NW8 7AF, U.K. Tel: +44-207-722-5378,
Fax: +44-207-722-0362 Email: rep.uk@tibet.net
www.tibet.com

FRANCE

Bureau Du Tibet, 84 BD Adolphe Pinard, 75014,
Paris, France, Tel: +33-1-46-565-453,
Fax: +33-1-41-170-014,
Email: tibetoffice@orange.fr

BELGIUM

Bureau du Tibet, 24 Avenue des Arts,
1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel: +32-2-280 4922
Email: rep.be@tibet.net

AUSTRALIA

Tibet Information Office, 8/13 Napier Close, Dea-
kin, Canberra, ACT 2600, Australia Tel: +61-2-6285-
4046 Fax: +61-2-6282-4301
Email: rep.au@tibet.net
www.tibetoffice.com.au

RUSSIA

Tibet Culture & Information Centre,
Korn # 110, POB # 7, St. Bolshaya Novodmitrovs-
kaya - 14 Moscow 127015, Russia
Tel: +7-495-786-4362 Fax: +7-495-685-11-32
Email: rep.ru@tibet.net
www.savetibet.ru

SOUTH AFRICA

Office of Tibet, P.O. Box. 16812, Lyttelton 0140,
Republic of South Africa. Tel: +27-12-664-1193
Fax: +27-12-664-1194
Email: rep.sa@tibet.net
www.officeoftibet.com

TAIWAN

Tibet Religious Foundation of H.H. the Dalai Lama
10th Fl. 4 & 5, No. 189, Sector - 2, Keelung Rd.,
Taipei, Taiwan (ROC)
Tel: +886-2-2736-0366 Fax: +886-2-2377-9163
Email: rep.tw@tibet.net/www.tibet.org.tw

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QUOTES

“All children receive immense affection and love from their mothers. This is a biological factor, not based on religion. We should be able to find a way to promote these values on this level, not based on religious faith. This is what I call secular ethics. Secular in the Indian context of respecting not only religious believers but also those who do not believe in religion,” - His Holiness the Dalai Lama at a meeting with US Mayors on 11 February 2016.

“Earlier wars were fought over land and now wars are being fought over energy as is evident from the clashes in the Middle East. However, many experts believe future wars will be fought over water. From Maharashtra to all over India, there is a crisis of fresh water. Therefore, the Tibetan plateau is hugely significant for global stability,” Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay during an address to 10,00 Indian students at the 6th Student Parliament in Pune.

“The Snowland of Tibet, which is known as the roof of the world, is the reservoir of the largest concentration of glacial ice after the two poles of the globe. Its environment in general and especially the fact that it is a critically important source of rivers that flow into many countries of Asia makes the situation there an area of major international concern,” - Speaker Penpa Tsering in the statement of the Tibetan Parliament -in-Exile.

“We are seeing a very worrying pattern in China that has serious implications for civil society and the important work they do across the country. Civil society actors, from lawyers and journalists to NGO workers, have the right to carry out their work, and it is the States’ duty to support and protect them,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein at Geneva.

“Anger is something negative, but it can bring a source of energy to bear on a particular situation. That energy can be transformed into something positive, but I don’t know if anger itself can ever be positive,” His Holiness the Dalai Lama during a discussion on Atlas of Emotions with Dr Eve Ekman, daughter of Dr Paul Ekman, an American psychologist who is a pioneer in the study of emotions and their relation to facial expressions.