



TIBETAN BULLETIN

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China Attempts to Mislead International Community on Human Rights

Despite the large-scale violation of human rights by the Chinese government, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi was invited to address the 46th session of the United Nations' Human Rights Council on 22 February. In the address, Wang Yi proposed a 'people-centered' approach to human rights and described Tibet and East Turkestan as 'shining examples' of human rights progress in China. This address at the UN Human Rights Council, the highest pedestal of global human rights, by a Chinese state official is not only a mockery of the UN's ideals but his statement also belies the real human rights situation inside Tibet and other parts of China.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the issue of human rights have bedeviled the Chinese government. China's brutal suppression of human rights in its minority regions like Tibet and East Turkestan, and lately in Hong Kong, have made China into a constant target of global human rights organizations and the international community. In order to avoid this international condemnation, China has lately tried to redefine human rights in a Socialist formulation. In this formulation, economic prosperity is described as the fundamental pursuit of human rights, taking precedence over everything else.

This attempt at redefining human rights by putting an economic spin by China is deeply problematic and misleading. Human rights is a set of values derived from international consensus, and economic development is just one among the cluster of values that constitute human rights. China's selective interpretation of 'human rights' to suit their political agenda is an attempt to mislead the global community from the stages of the highest and most reputable liberal organization in the world. This politically-motivated attempt at redefining human rights should not disguise the essential fact that in international law, human rights should constitute the whole spectrum of political, civil, social, economic, and cultural rights.

If the whole set of values that constitute

human rights is applied to China, China falls woefully short of the international standard. Even in the case of the International Bill of Rights, of which China is a signatory, it is still far from being implemented in any of China's provinces let alone the ethnic minority regions. Tibetans and Uyghurs continue to face individual as well as collective human rights abuses in terms of faith, language, as well as basic political rights like equality before the law. For the Chinese government, legality is governed less by legal codification but by extralegal norms such as ideology, party and the continuing policy of state intervention in personal and cultural domains instead of judicial action.

As such, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi's address at the UN Human Rights Council is an affront to the genuine aspirations and sufferings of the Tibetans, Uyghurs and other oppressed people in China and elsewhere. Rather than being shining examples of human rights progress, Tibet and East Turkestan are shining examples of human rights violation with complete disregard to international law and liberal values.

Clubhouse Moment: A Brief Crack in the Great Firewall of China

Another event in the last two months that drew attention towards China was the sudden popularity of Clubhouse, an invite-only app that briefly connected netizens from inside and outside China. This moment signified a brief crack in China's massive censorship wall.

One of China's most effective tool to control its citizens has been the Great Firewall of China, otherwise known as the Golden Shield Project. The Great Firewall is a digital wall that prevents China's 1.4 billion people from speaking freely online. Due to this lack of authentic voice from inside China, Chinese people are often misrepresented by the state media as a giant monolith, without any diversity of opinions or nuances in aspiration.

However, in February 2021, there appeared a small crack on this digital wall. The crack, albeit brief and temporary, revealed the diversity of opinions and the compassionate nature of China's everyday citizens toward the brutal policies of the Communist party.

This crack on the digital wall appeared after Clubhouse, a new social media app arrived on the tech horizon. The popularity of the app in China and in the rest of the world was so sudden and rapid that the censorship machinery in China couldn't respond swiftly. This allowed a few days of uncensored communication between Mandarin Chinese speakers from the mainland and those from the rest of the world to speak their minds.

The app saw people from the Chinese mainland join those from Taiwan, Hong Kong, the global Chinese diaspora and anybody else who was interested in discussing diverse topics ranging from the politically charged to other mundane topics. The app became so popular in China in such a short span of time that on multiple Chinese ecommerce sites, invite codes were reportedly being sold for as much as 400 Yuan.

This brief crack on the wall, unsurprisingly, came to an end after a few days. However, for that brief moment, Chinese people within China proved that they are as diverse and dynamic in their aspirations as well as expressions as any other. It was reported that while some argued for the rights of the people to express their opinions, some expressed sympathy for the situation in East Turkestan.

The main takeaway from this whole Clubhouse episode was that it helped debunk the image of the Chinese public as a servile monolithic mass that is in complete agreement with the Chinese government's repressive policies. It exposed the possibility that even within China, there is strong opposition among Han Chinese citizens to China's repressive policies.

Jamphel Shonu
Editor

EU Calls Upon China to Ensure Tashi Wangchuk's Release is 'Unconditional'

After Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk's release from five-year imprisonment arbitrarily imposed by the Chinese government, the European Union issued a statement calling upon "the Chinese authorities to ensure that Mr Wangchuk's release is unconditional and that he is able to enjoy his fundamental freedoms, including freedom of movement and residence."

The EU has also urged the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into allegations of mistreatment, torture and abuses on Mr Wangchuk while in detention."

The statement further said: "The EU calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all those currently imprisoned in connection with the exercise of their rights and fundamental freedoms. Those in detention have a right to a fair trial and due process, and to decent treatment, free from torture and ill-treatment while in prison. The European Union will continue to engage with China on human rights issues."

Tashi Wangchuk was wrongfully sentenced to five-year imprisonment for giving an interview to The New York Times about the Chinese policies of Sinicization of Tibetan language and the need to protect the Tibetan language, has been released after completing his term. In January 2016, he was arbitrarily detained following the release of a documentary by The New York Times. While in detention, he was subjected to torture and repeatedly beaten during interrogations.

In January 2018, the 35-year-old Tibetan human rights defender was falsely charged with "inciting separatism" after being arbitrarily detained for more than two years. Representatives from the United States, Canada, the European Union and the United Kingdom were all denied entry to the trial held behind

closed doors. In May 2018, a Chinese court in Yulshul sentenced Tashi Wangchuk to five years in prison and an additional five years of deprivation of political rights.

Information on Tashi Wangchuk's health could not be ascertained at this moment except for his lawyer's tweet.

Despite the Chinese Constitution guaranteeing the right to use and develop minority languages and as enshrined in the international human rights law, to ensure the protection of native languages critical to maintaining culture and identity. In practice, Tibetans face restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of education in a minority language. It often incurs punishment in the form of detention, disappearances and deaths in detention.

Asian Buddhist Conference Endorses Incumbent Dalai Lama's Sole Authority on Next Incarnation

The Executive Council meeting of Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP) which was held in Sri Lanka in January passed a resolution for the future status of the Dalai Lama institution.

Kalon Karma Gelek Yuthok, raised the issue of the Chinese government's interference on the recognising of reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the meeting.

Following three points with regard to the future status of Dalai Lama Institution have been unanimously supported by members of ABCP's executive council:

- (i) To continue the Institution and Reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the future;
- (ii) The incumbent XIV Dalai Lama to be the sole authority of how the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should return, and the Tibetan people never to recognize any Dalai Lama reincarnation candidate chosen and installed by the Chinese government; and

(iii) To employ the eight centuries old unique Tibetan traditional method in searching and recognizing the next Dalai Lama.

Exile Tibetans Hold Preliminary Election for Sikyong and Members of 17th Tibetan Parliament



Incumbent Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay cast his vote in the 2021 Sikyong and 17th Tibetan parliamentary elections at Gangchen Kyisong, Dharamshala, 3 January 2021. Photo/Tenzin Jigme/CTA

The Tibetan exile community came out in droves to vote for their next Sikyong and members of 17th Tibetan parliament in the preliminary elections of 2021 held on Sunday, 3 January.

Across Dharamshala, the capital of the Tibetan diaspora, a total of 14 polling stations were set up in accordance with the Covid-guidelines.

Despite the ensuing challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, the preliminary round of the 2021 general elections reflected an extraordinary level of participation, most notably among the younger generation of Tibetans.

Soon after the polls commenced in Tibetan communities across the globe, selfies of voters with their inked fingers and posts encouraging eligible voters to exercise their rights swamped social media platforms.

The 2021 general election for Sikyong of the 16th Kashag and members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament is the third direct election of the Tibetan leadership since the complete devolution of political authority by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2011.

“The Tibetan democracy-in-exile reflects the true aspirations of our brothers and sisters inside Tibet,” said the incumbent Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay.

“By this, we are sending a clear message to Beijing that Tibet is under occupation but Tibetans in exile are free. And given a chance, an opportunity, we prefer democracy.”

Despite the hardships faced by the exile Tibetan community including an increasingly scattered population, the Tibetans under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration has over the last six decades successfully transformed into a fully functioning democracy that is lauded by many as a paragon of virtue for exile communities.

In what could be viewed as an extraordinary trajectory of the young Tibetan democracy in exile, tens of thousands of Tibetans worldwide came out to exercise their franchise to elect their future political leaders. The democracy in effect is truly a testament to the vision and farsightedness of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who progressively distanced himself from the political role, stewarding the Tibetan exile community into a thriving democracy.

Tibet Policy Institute Convenes Roundtable Discussion on “Foregrounding Tibet”



TPI Director Tenzin Lekshay introduces the objective of the programme. Photo/Tenzin Dalha/TPI

The Tibet Policy Institute (TPI), the premier research institute of CTA organised a roundtable discussion on 24 February on the theme “Foregrounding Tibet” based on its English-language journal published in December 2020. The journal is a compilation of articles

from research fellows on a variety of topics centred on the Tibetan issue from international current affairs to the Indo-China conflict and its relevance to the Tibet cause.

Information Secretary Ms Chime Tseyang, and TPI Director Mr Tenzin Lekshay presided over the discussion, attended by the head of Human Rights desk, China desk, concerned staff from the Department of Security, representatives from Sarah College of Higher Tibetan Studies and various Tibetan NGOs in adherence to the local COVID-19 guidelines.

TPI Director Tenzin Lekshay explained the objective of the programme which is to foreground the Tibetan issue and bring together the authors of the 9 articles from the journal to elucidate on their writings and promote further discussions among the research fellows.

He added that due to the pandemic restrictions, the invitation had to be limited to relevant departments, organisations and research institutes. “Foregrounding Tibet” seeks to highlight the Tibetan issue as much as possible, and offers a platform to Tibetan scholars to pool their resources, and promote discourse on Tibet and international perception.

He urged Tibetan research scholars everywhere to send their writings on the Tibet issue in the relevant areas of religion and culture, language, tradition and history for publication by TPI. In addition, he stressed the quality of writing, sharing that TPI was engaged in efforts to distribute the journals at schools and libraries in colleges, research centres based in India and abroad.

Annually, TPI publishes 2 journals, one each in English and Tibetan. Writers are responsible for the contents published without external influence from TPI head. In conclusion, Director Tenzin Lekshay said Tibetan scholars writing from the cultural insider’s perspective help push forward the Tibetan movement and honours the distinct culture to be passed down to the future generations therefore Tibetan youth are urged to produce writings on the Tibetan issue.

Parliamentary Delegation Meets BJP National President J.P. Nadda



Tibetan Parliamentary delegation meets BJP President J.P. Nadda

A Tibetan Parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Speaker Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok, and comprising of Parliamentarian Serta Tsultrim, Parliamentarian Khenpo Kada Ngodup Sonam, and Parliamentarian Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende met the National President of the Bharatiya Janata Party Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda on 18 February.

The BJP National President J P Nadda has come to attend the BJP state executive meeting at D’Polo hotel in Dharamshala. This is his first visit to Dharamshala after his appointment as the President of BJP.

Over the past few years, the 16th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has had several meetings with Shri J. P. Nadda who has been a firm supporter of Tibet.

A Tibetan Tour Guide Dies from Prison Injuries in Driru, Tibet



Kunchok Jinpa, aged 51.

A Tibetan tour guide serving a 21-year sentence in Chinese jail died in early February due to prison injuries, reported

Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Kunchok Jinpa, 51, passed away on 6 February in a hospital in Lhasa after being transferred there from prison. He had suffered a brain hemorrhage and was paralyzed. According to HRW, Kunchok Jinpa was detained by the Chinese authorities on 8 November 2013 without his family's knowledge. In 2013, hundreds of Tibetans were detained from Driru county after a series of peaceful protests against China's compulsory flag-flying campaign where the local Tibetans were forced to fly Chinese flags from every house. Kunchok was one of those detained. He was later convicted of leaking state secrets for sharing information to foreign media on protests in his region and sentenced to 21 years in prison.

Expressing deep sadness and concern, President of Central Tibetan Administration, Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay remarked, "the tragic news of Kunchok Jinpa's death due to torture and mistreatment while in Chinese prison comes barely a month after a similar death of 19-year-old Tenzin Nyima. China's pervasive use of torture on prisoners of conscience is not unknown to the world. There are hundreds of Tibetans illegally held and tortured for their defiance of China's rule over Tibet." Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay urged for international intervention and said, "The international community and UN human rights experts must intervene and investigate these cases of arbitrary detention, conviction without due process, torturing and killing of Tibetans by the Chinese government".

According to HRW, in November 2020, the authorities moved him from prison to a hospital in Lhasa in serious condition. On 29 January, his family members learned of his serious condition when six of his family members were called to the hospital to donate blood, according to our source. However, they were not allowed to meet him in the hospital.

Kunchok Jinpa died on 6 February. He was a resident of Village No. 5 in Chaktse township in Driru county, about 300 kilometers north of Lhasa. He

was a former monk at the Gom Gon-sar monastery (Chokor Jampaling) in Driru. After traveling to India in October 1989, he studied at the Jangchubling monastery in Dehradun for 18 months. Later, he studied at Tibetan Children's Village School, Suja, and graduated in 1996. He returned to Tibet in about 1998. Proficient in four languages; Tibetan, English, Hindi and Chinese as well, he worked as a tour guide. He was a strong advocate of education and economic development.

According to Human Rights Watch, his final communication on WeChat was in April 2013 where he wrote: "I am now at the bank of a river. There are many people behind me watching me, and I am sure to be arrested. Even if they arrest me, I am not afraid, even if they kill me, I have no regrets. But from now on, I will not be able to give reports. If there is no word from me, that means I have been arrested."

Last month, Tenzin Nyima, a teenage monk from Dza Wonpo, Serushul county, Karze (Ch: Ganzi) died on 19 January after he was severely beaten and tortured by the Chinese authorities.

In August 2020, Lhamo, a 36-year-old mother of three from Driru county, Nagchu died due to torture in Chinese custody.

Young Tibetan Monk Dies from Beatings in Chinese Custody, Six Others Sentenced in Dza Wonpo, Tibet



19-yr-old Tenzin Nyima before his imprisonment in Chinese jail.

A 19-year-old Tibetan monk from Dza Wonpo has died on 19 January, after being severely beaten and tortured by the

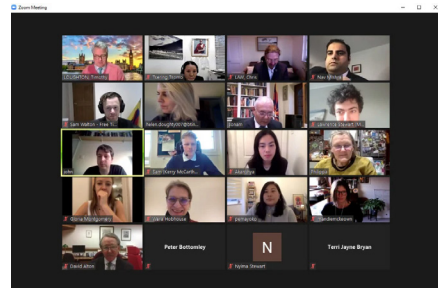
Chinese authorities for peaceful independence protests in November 2019.

Six other Tibetans, including four monks and two laymen, have been sentenced up to 5 years in prison for the same protests that occurred in Dza Wonpo town, Serushul county, Karze (Ch: Ganzi) Prefecture in Tibet's traditional Kham province.

Tenzin Nyima, also called Tamey, was initially detained along with three other monks Kunsal (20), Soetra and Tsultrim (both around 18) two days after hundreds of hand-written leaflets calling for Tibet's independence were found scattered outside a local government office on 7 November 2019. On 21 November, Yonten and Choegyal, two other young men from Dza Wonpo were detained after staging a similar protest and posting related videos on WeChat. Choegyal's younger brother Nyimey was detained on 18 November 2019 for expressing his solidarity with the 7 November protest by fellow monks from Dza Wonpo Gaden Shedrup Monastery, and online post criticising Chinese policies in the region.

The protests took place as the forcibly resettled nomads and local Tibetans in the area were pressured by the local officials to acclaim the Chinese government's "poverty alleviation" program.

UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet Discusses Tibet at Virtual Meeting



All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet in the UK's virtual meeting.

A virtual meeting of All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet in the UK Parliament hosted and chaired by honourable RT. Tim Loughton, MP and Co-chair of APPGT UK was held on 22 February.

Various UK Parliamentarians like Chris Law, MP and Co-chair of APPGT, Navendu Mishra, MP, Lord Alton of Liverpool, Sir Peter Bottomley MP, Wera Hobhouse MP, representatives from the Tibet support groups, and chairperson of the Tibetan Community in Britain joined the virtual meeting.

The meeting saw the re-election of officers of APPGT UK. MP Chris Law MP and Chair Tim Loughton were elected as Co-Chair and MP Navendu Mishra MP was elected as the Vice-Chair of APPGT. The chair then invited John Jones from Free Tibet to give an overview of the current situation in Tibet. Mr. Jones reported about the current situation of Tibetan political prisoners in Tibet and particularity highlighting in detail the recent death of Kunchock Jinpa, a tour guide in Tibet, who died in a Chinese prison after spending 7 years imprisonment and tortured. MPs raised questions about the current situation of Tashi Wangchuck, Tibetan language rights advocate in Tibet, and how they get access to information inside Tibet.

The chair RT. Tim Loughton updated on Tibet (Reciprocal Access Bill) and informed about producing the bill again in the House of Common in May and the possibility of introducing a broader bill to invite more support and pass government legislation. Members raised questions and discussed the bill.

Representative, Mr. Sonam Tsering Frasi reported that the upcoming 10th March Tibetan national uprising day will be commemorated online given the ensuing pandemic. He said that Tibetan Community in Britain with Free Tibet and other Tibet support groups are organising recorded and online virtual programme this year and urged the MP's to include their statements and recorded video messages in the programs.

Mr. Frasi then updated news on Tibet

and activities of the Office of Tibet. He spoke on the recent passage of the Tibet bill and added that Tibetans all over the world are grateful for that. He informed about him attending a virtual meeting organised by APPGT, Lithuania on 5th March 2021.

He also informed the meeting about Office of Tibet along with Tibet support groups are preparing for COP26 conferences and invite Mandie from ITSN to elaborate on this. All MPs presented in the meeting were very supportive of this considering the importance of Tibet's environment conservation. MP Chris Law suggested ways to access space during the COP26 and advised to contact him later.

Mr. Frasi also talked briefly about the ongoing general election of Tibetans and about the ending of Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay's tenure in May. Hon. RT. Tim Loughton and hon. Chris Law expressed due respect and appreciation Sikyong for his hard work and for their friendship. They expressed their wishes to meet Sikyong before the end of his tenure to convey best wishes for the future.

Finally, Mr. John Jones reported the meeting about the Tibet support group's campaign: Diplomatic boycott of Beijing 2022 Olympic and support they are receiving from MPs and government officials and meanwhile he requested support from the members.

MP Wera Hobhouse conveyed her support and suggested a lobby link with IPAC would be beneficial.

**Compassion is the
radicalism of our
time.**

**- His Holiness
the Dalai Lama**

China Sentenced a Tibetan to 13 years in 2013, News Emerges amid Clampdown



An undated photo of Namdak who has been serving 13 years prison sentence since 2013.

More than seven years ago, a Tibetan man from Kham Driru in Nagchu, "Tibet Autonomous Region" was sentenced to 13 years in prison. Namdak was sentenced around July 2013 for aiding Tibetans escaping to India. He has been imprisoned in Chushul prison located less than 50 km from Tibet's capital Lhasa. The news got out only now.

According to our source, at that time, there were six-seven more Tibetans from Driru were sentenced along with Namdak, all to 13 years imprisonment. However, details including their names and charges are not clear at the time.

Namdak was the last known to be suffering from appendicitis but the Chinese authorities have told his family that they will look after his condition. The Chinese authorities then barred his family members and relatives from visiting him in prison for the past two years, most likely to conceal details of his medical condition from getting out.

Namdak, aged around 34, is suspected to be in a serious health condition. He hails from Meri village, Tsala township, Driru county, Nagchu prefecture.

Japanese Parliamentarians Reaffirm Support to Tibetans at General Meeting



Executive members of the All Party Japanese Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet meeting in Tokyo, Japan, 19 February 2021

Japan's All-Party Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet convened its general meeting at the House of Representatives' office auditorium to discuss the Tibet issue and to strengthen its support to the Tibetan peoples' struggle for justice and human rights in Tibet. 49 Japanese parliamentarians attended the meeting.

In his opening remarks, Mr Nagao Takashi, General Secretary and Member of House of Representatives announced the good news that the world's largest parliamentary support has now reached 99 members with an increase of 6 new Japanese parliamentarians.

Mr. Shimomura Hakubun, Chairman of the Parliamentary Support Group and Member of House of Representatives established the members' responsibility to act on the issue of Tibet and human rights.

The Chairman announced the Government's fund of 29.60 million Yen as a part of ODA (Overseas Development Aid) to India which will benefit the welfare, water and sanitation and other health projects in Tibetan refugee settlements in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs official confirmed that it was a part of an ODA to improve living conditions in rural India.

He said while working in close coordination with parliaments around the world to support the cause of freedom, democracy, rule of law and human rights, he

strongly feels the issue of Tibet must be brought to the international level.

Veteran journalist and president of one of Japan's influential think tanks, Ms Sakurai Yoshiko, commended the US government's adoption of Tibet law and added that Japan too should stand against China's hegemony and intrusion into Japanese territory.

She said the Japanese parliamentarians must act to fulfil the obligation to protect the values of democracy, freedom, human rights that the people of Japan cherish and uphold.

Dr. Arya Tsewang Gyalpo, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Japan, briefed the Law Makers on three major points: 1) Current situation in Tibet; 2) the US Tibetan Policy and Support Act, and 3) the future action plans. He spoke on the Chinese government's policy to ban the Tibetan language in the schools, meddling in the administration of the monasteries, increasing restrictions and surveillance on the movement in Japan, arbitrary arrest, torture and death of Tibetans.

Dr. Arya apprised the Japanese parliamentarians on key points of the passage of the 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act by the US government.

He spoke on eight priority action plans to deal with pressing issues facing Tibet and the international community such as the threat of climate change in Tibet, a threat to the protection of universal values like freedom, human rights, democracy and rule of law as a result of the Chinese government's policies.

After a brief question and answer session, the Law Makers further deliberated on the need to raise awareness on the Chinese government's human rights violations in Tibet, Mongolia, Uyghur and Hong Kong at international level.

The Japanese version of CTA's White Paper titled 'Tibet was Never a Part of China, But Middle Way Approach Remains a Viable Solution' was distributed to all the Japanese parliamentarians and the staff during the meeting.

OOT Taiwan Celebrates Losar with a Book Launch by Kyabje Kirti Rinpoche



Kyabje Kirti Rinpoche and Representative Dawa Tsering launch a book composed by Representative Dawa Tsering.

The Office of Tibet, Taiwan headed by Kyabje Kirti Rinpoche commemorated the Tibetan New Year with a book launch composed by Representative Dawa Tsering.

The book titled 'The land in my dream and conscience' published by Gangjong Publication is a compilation of compositions written by Representative Dawa Tsering. The book aims to deconstruct China's false narrative on Tibet and offers a series of speeches and clarifications issued at various conventions on Tibet. The book also introduces the unique Tibetan culture and religion with historical facts.

Addressing the gathering of some 70 Tibetans, Kyabje Kirti Rinpoche said, "The only proper way to celebrate Losar is by committing ourselves to fulfil the wishes and aspirations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to cultivate his teachings into practices".

Rinpoche advised the Tibetans to promote the teachings and the core commitments of His Holiness Dalai Lama to the people of Taiwan. He further congratulated Rep. Dawa Tsering on the book launch.

In conclusion, Representative Dawa Tsering extended his appreciation to all those who supported and contributed during his service and urged for continuous cooperation and support.

For detailed news visit:
www.tibet.net

New US Administration Affirms Timely Appointment of a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues

Secretary of the US State Department, Antony Blinken on Thursday, 4 February affirmed his commitment to appoint a Special Coordinator for Tibetan issue in an exclusive interview with Radio Free Asia's Tibetan Service.

When questioned about the new US Administration's role by Radio Free Asia, Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that the Special Coordinator for Tibetan issue will be appointed in a timely manner and it will be committed to empowering allies to press Beijing for engaging in dialogue with His Holiness's representatives. The spokesperson also stated that the US is committed to support human rights for Tibetans living under Chinese rule, promote religious freedom, and advocate for Tibet's environment.

"We urge Chinese authorities to respect the human rights of Tibetans, and the preservation of Tibet's environment as well as the unique cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of Tibetan traditions," the State Department spokesperson said.

The spokesperson further stated, "The United States supports meaningful autonomy for Tibetans" and all appropriate tools (such as visa restrictions and financial sanctions) will be utilized to hold any relevant Chinese officials accountable. The new administration under President Biden will also push for access to Tibetan areas.

Representative Ngodup Tsering welcomed the statement as extremely positive and thanked the new President and Secretary of State on behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration. All the major points that have been taken up with the US Administration are being addressed, stated the Representative. Rep-

resentative Tsering sent a felicitation letter to Secretary Blinken on January 28th upon his nomination and urged him to appoint a Special Coordinator with at least an Under Secretary's rank as soon as possible.

Czech Parliamentary Group for Tibet Reaffirms Continued Support for Tibet on Tibetan New Year



Czech Parliamentary Group for Tibet

The Czech Parliamentary Group for Tibet reaffirmed its continued support for Tibet while conveying greetings for Tibetans on Losar (Tibetan New Year), year of Iron-Ox 2148.

On behalf of the Czech Parliamentary Group for Tibet, Honorable Senator Premysl Rabas and honorable Frantisek Kopřiva, Chamber of Deputy, the Co-chairs of the Parliamentary Group for Tibet, send the groups' Losar greetings for all Tibetans. The group wished "success for the cause of Tibet" and reaffirmed their commitment to extending continued support for Tibet. The group assured their support until Tibetans are allowed to have a genuine autonomy as proposed in the Middle Way Approach.

The Parliamentary Group also congratulated Tibetan leadership and people for the successful passage of the US Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020. This achievement will be "instrumental for the Tibetan cause", said the Parliamentary Group.

Czech Parliamentary Group for Tibet was officially reinstated in 2018, and currently, it is the largest group in the Czech Parliament as well as the largest parliamentary group for Tibet in Europe.

CTA Commemorates India's 72nd Republic Day

The Central Tibetan Administration congratulated India and its people on the 72nd anniversary of its Republic Day celebrations. Keeping Covid 19 protocols and social distancing measures in mind, a brief ceremony was held at the Kashag secretariat on Tuesday, 26 January. The ceremony was attended by Kalons, Secretaries, and senior leadership of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Officiating Sikyong Kalon Ven Karma Gelek Yuthok, greeted the people of India on the occasion and said:

"On behalf of the Tibetan people inside and outside Tibet, I would like to congratulate and extend our warmest greetings to the government and people of India on the 72nd Republic Day of India"

"It is a great achievement for a large populace country like India to go on the path of Republicanism and to be relatively very successful so far. India sets a great example for the rest of the world".

Kalon expressed his appreciation and gratitude to India for its generosity and consideration rendered toward the cause of Tibet for more than 61 years. He wished success and development for India and its system of governance.

Kalon further added, China is neither a democracy nor a republic although they claim to be the People's Republic of China.

"I don't think China is a republic country in any way because a minimum condition for being a republic is the power should lie with the people and people's representatives should be running the country. Since there is really no elected representative in China so I doubt whether China is truly a republic", he said.

For detailed news visit:
www.tibet.net

Sikyong Welcomes Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act of US

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay, the democratically elected political leader of the Tibetan people welcomed the US' renewed bill to ban forced-labour products from Xinjiang on 22 February.

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, a bipartisan bill-prohibiting imports of goods made with forced labour in China was introduced on Thursday by Congressmen James P. McGovern, Chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, Chris Smith, Thomas R. Suozzi, Vicky Hartzler, Tom Malinowski, Mike Gallagher, and Jennifer Wexton.

Welcoming the landmark bill, Sikyong thanked Congressman McGovern and the co-sponsors for reintroducing the bill in the House that not only prohibits imports from Xinjiang but ensures China's accountability in its long-standing repression of Uyghur Muslim minority and Tibetans who have been forced into a network of mass labour camps.

Besides recognising a system of illegal mass internment camps targeting Uyghurs and Muslim minorities, the bill recognises the 'military-style education' and 'vocational training' that the Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) are forced into in the name of 'poverty alleviation' before being trans-

ferred to job postings. It also mentions the 'the similarity of the Tibet Autonomous Region system to that in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region' and the 'coercive practices or rights abuses' that are taking place in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

As such, the bill mandates a "rebuttable presumption" that the goods imported from Xinjiang are made with forced labour and thus are strictly prohibited from entering the US unless evidence to the contrary is presented. The bill also gives the US President full authority to sanction anyone found responsible for labour trafficking in any part of the People Republic of China.

According to the press release of Congressman McGovern's office, the legislation is an updated version of H.R. 6210 that passed in the House of Representatives on 22 September 2020, by a vote of 406-3.

Bill Summary

The legislation would:

- Prohibit all imports from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China unless the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection can certify that the goods being imported to the U.S. are not produced, either wholly or in part, with forced la-

bour and the Commissioner submits to Congress a report outlining such a determination;

- Authorize the President to apply targeted sanctions on anyone responsible for the labour trafficking of Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities;

- Require financial disclosures from the U.S. publicly traded businesses about their engagement with Chinese companies and other entities engaged in mass surveillance, mass internment, forced labour and other serious human rights abuses in the XUAR;

- Directs the Secretary of State to submit to Congress a public determine whether the practice of forced labour or other human rights abuses targeting Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the XUAR constitute crimes against humanity or genocide, and directs the Secretary to develop a diplomatic strategy to address forced labour in the XUAR; and

- Require a strategy report from the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (established by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement Implementation Act) and regular updates on the steps taken to enforce the import prohibition on forced labour made goods from the XUAR.

First Phase of COVID-19 Vaccination Rolled Out

Various Frontline Healthcare workers from Tibetan health care centers across India have started to get the vaccination after India began its vaccination drive on 16 January 2021.

On 18th January 2021, Nine Tibetan Frontline Healthcare workers of Delek Hospital and one from the Department of Health, CTA became the first Tibetan batch to get the first shot of the Covid-19 vaccine at Zonal Hospital, Dharamsala. Thereafter health care workers and front liners of Tibetan health care centers at, Mundgod, Odisha, Bir, and Miao received the vaccination.

A total of 81 Healthcare Frontline workers of Mundgod DTR Hospital, Ganden Jangtse, and Loseling Hospital got their first shot on 20th January 2021 at Pala Primary Health Centre.

On 21st January 2021, 10 Frontline workers of Miao hospital and 11 health workers of Odisha, Menlha hospital got vaccinated at Miao Community Healthcare Centre and Chandragiri, Community Health Center respectively. And 11 Frontline Healthcare workers of TPHC Bir received their first shot at Bir Community Health Centre on 22nd January 2021.

Election Commission Declares Result of Preliminary Election of Sikyong and Members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

In a press conference chaired by the Chief Election Commissioner Wangdu Tsering, and additional commissioners, Geshema Delek Wangmo and Sonam Gyaltsen, the Election Commission declared the results of the preliminary round of election for the Sikyong and members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on Thursday, 18 February.

As enshrined in Article 67 (3) of the Election Rules and Regulation, that “the Election Commission, after giving twenty days to withdraw candidature, should shortlist not more than six candidates for Sikyong from the preliminary election” and “Article 49 (1) (A) of the electoral rules and regulation,” which states that “the election commission after giving 30 days to withdraw candidature, should shortlist candidates not less than thrice the number of stipulated seats in the respective constituents of the Tibetan Parliament from the preliminary election”, the Election Commission declared 30 shortlisted candidates each from the three traditional provinces of Tibet, 5

candidates each from four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion, 6 from North & South America, and Europe & Africa. 3 candidates are shortlisted from Australasia (excluding India, Nepal and Bhutan). See the results below.

The Election Commissioner further announced that Sikyong candidates should confirm their candidature between 8 – 15 February 2021 by submitting a letter of confirmation to the Election Commission through the local Election Commission. The letter of confirmation should contain the candidate’s name, age, date of birth, Green book number, brief biography in Tibetan Himalayan font 16 (not exceeding 18 Lines) with a recent passport-sized photo in colour.

Candidates of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile should submit their letter of confirmation from 8 February 2021 and not later than 15 February 2021. The letter of confirmation should contain the candidate’s name, age, date of birth, Green

book details including copies of the first and last page, brief biography in Monlam 2 font 14 (not exceeding 300 words) with a recent passport-sized photo.

Those seeking to withdraw their candidature may do so by writing to the Election Commission by 16 February. Withdrawal of candidature won’t be allowed once the final list is announced. Click [here](#) to read the original announcement in Tibetan. In case of discrepancies, treat the original in Tibetan as authoritative.

The electoral process for the final round of election for Sikyong and members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will be announced on 21 March 2021.

According to the Chief Election Commissioner, the preliminary election in January saw a record voter turnout of 76.78 per cent, which he said was the highest turnout rate till date. Tibetans from 26 countries went to the polls through the facilitation of 57 local Election Commissions around the world.

Chief Justice Commissioner Greets Tibetans on Losar, Tibetan New Year 2148

Chief Justice Commissioner Sonam Norbu Dagpo, greeted Tibetans on Losar, the Tibetan New Year which fell on 12 February this year. He said:

As we welcome Tibetan new year, Losar 2148, the year of Iron-Ox, I on behalf of the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission express our fervent greetings to the most revered leader of Tibet, His Holiness the Great 14th Dalai Lama, religious leaders and representatives of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetans in and outside Tibet.

I also extend greetings to our brothers and sisters in the Himalayan region who are also celebrating the new year.

May this year brings prosperity, good health and realisation all the noble aspirations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

May the cause of Tibet be resolved to the just aspirations of Tibetans inside Tibet. Once again, I extend my heartfelt greetings on Tibetan new year. Losar Tashi Delek.

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay-led CTA Grateful to the United States for Enactment of Landmark Tibetan Policy and Support Act 2020



Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay and members of the 15th Kashag.

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay convened a gathering of CTA officials including Chief Justice Commissioner, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Tibetan Parliament, Kalons; heads of autonomous bodies, Members of Tibetan Parliament, and senior staff to explain the lobbying process that culminated in the passage of the landmark Tibetan Policy and Support Act which was signed into law by US President Donald Trump.

In September and November, President Dr Sangay left for the US with the sole purpose to lobby the US Congress to push the bill which had been stuck at the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee since May 2020. After much deliberation and effort, the bipartisan bill was unanimously passed by the US Congress on 21 December 2020.

Built on the historic Tibet Policy Act of 2002, the bipartisan Act reaffirms the rights of Tibetans to choose a successor to their spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama, sending a clear message that Chinese officials who interfere in the succession or reincarnation process will be subject to targeted financial, economic, and visa-related sanctions, including those contained in the Global Magnitsky Act.

The Act commends His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his decision to implement democratic governance and also commends the Tibetan exile community for successfully adopting a system

of self-governance with democratic institutions to choose their leaders.

Another historic development in the bill is the formal acknowledgement of the CTA as the legitimate representative reflecting the aspirations of Tibetan people around the world. TPSA explicitly states "...as of the date of the enactment of this Act, the Central Tibetan Administration is the institution that represents and reflects, to the greatest extent, the aspirations of the Tibetan diaspora around the world, and the Sikyong is the President of the Central Tibetan Administration."

Less than a week after the unanimous passage of the bill by Congress, US President Donald Trump signed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 into law, a historic move that forged a new era in the US Tibet policy. Read more about the bill here.

Most importantly, as President Dr Sangay noted, the enactment of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 amid the alarming situation inside Tibet sends a powerful message of hope and justice to the six million Tibetans inside Tibet like never before. Military drill in Tibet's capital Lhasa days after the US enacted the TPSA bill was indicative of the fact that the message of the bill was heard loud and clear by the top echelons of China.

"The Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 is a tribute to the great legacy

of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to the courage and solidarity of six million Tibetans inside Tibet. We have been pushing for this for the last few years. This historic win for Tibet and the Tibetan people wouldn't have been possible without the steadfast support and contribution of key sponsors, co-sponsors and everyone who has been in this journey throughout and beyond", said Dr Lobsang Sangay and went on to list the names of the individual who has helped turn the vision into a reality.

The President, as well as the entire CTA's officials and staff, express its gratitude and appreciation to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Minority leader of Senate Senator Chuck Schumer for their constant support and Rep. Jim McGovern, Co-sponsor Chris Smith, Senator Rubio and Co-sponsor Ben Cardin for their 'extraordinary leadership'. Likewise, Senator Jim Risch, Chair of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Bob Menendez, Representatives Eliot L. Engel and Michael McCaul, Chair and Co-Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Committee for equally assisting in pushing the bill.

In addition, President Dr Sangay expresses his appreciation to key staffers involved who provided significant help and support throughout the process. The staffers include Reva Price of Speaker Pelosi's office — Senior Advisor to Speaker Pelosi, Jennifer Hendrixson-White — Senior House Foreign Affairs Committee Staffer, Brian of House Foreign Affairs Committee, Bethany Poulos-Foreign Affairs Advisor for Senator Rubio's office, Michael Schiffer-Senior Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffer, among others.

President Dr Sangay also acknowledges the ICT, RTYC, SFT, Tibetan-American associations, particularly in New York and New Jersey, and all community members who vigorously lobbied on the Hill to gain support for the bill over the years.

OOT, Washington-DC and Finance Department Hold E-chatrel Workshop



The virtual workshop in progress.

As per the notice issued by the Finance Department, CTA on 15 December 2020, the Office of Tibet, Washington DC and the Finance Department jointly held a virtual workshop for Greenbook duty bearers from Tibetan associations.

On the morning of 24 January, Greenbook contributors from 32 Tibetan associations and 4 others participated in the 3-hour long virtual training and Q & A session.

At the outset, Representative Ngodup Tsering, Office of Tibet-DC, addressed the participants and said that the initiative is in keeping with the times, and it strives to connect the government with the people while making it more efficient for both. At present, merely 10,000 of the total population of 30,000 Tibetan Americans make Greenbook contributions, therefore he stressed the need to drive it up to at least 50% in the future and thanked all the members for their tireless efforts and urged them to continue to strive harder than ever going forward.

Further, he introduced the background of the project which had first started in 2003 with TCRC's work on the application led by Director Namgyal Lhekshay and had gained momentum in 2013-14 under the then NA Representative Kel-

sang Dorjee Aukatsang's direction as well as public opinion. A joint initiative of the Finance Department and TCRC, it was finalized in 2020 and is operational now.

It was followed by the Finance Department staff's briefing on the greenbook update process and accounts-related details. Participants raised their doubts and clarified them and expressed their satisfaction with the workshop.

The virtual workshop was arranged by the Office of Tibet's Tibetan Liaison Officer Deputy Secretary(CTA) Tenzin Tsepak.

It is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest potential for doing good, both for oneself and others.

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Rights of Tibetans in Nepal Raised at Nepal's Third Universal Periodic Review

In the 37th session of Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council that began on 18th January, the UN member states on Thursday, 21 January reviewed the human rights situation in Nepal making it Nepal's third review.

During the session that was held virtually, the status of Tibetan refugees in Nepal was raised amongst other human rights issues in Nepal. The delegation from the United States raised and urged the government of Nepal to "register and verify" all Tibetans "followed by the issuance of identity documents with the formal rights to work and access to services".

The delegate further urged Nepalese government to "implement" and uphold Gentlemen Agreement and ensure "safe passage" of Tibetan new arrivals "through its territory" and "implement any legal agreements with China consistent with the principle of non-refoulement".

Responding to comments and recommendations placed by the member states, a delegate from Office of Prime Minister and Council of Minister of the Government of Nepal, Mr Shanker Das Bairagi, reaffirmed that Nepalese extradition lawfully ensures the principle of non-refoulement.

While referring to the status of refugees in Nepal, he said refugees are "treated well" on the basis of Nepalese "humanitarian tradition", and Nepal will "continue to display" the humanitarian tradition.

In his final remarks, Mr Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Government of Nepal's Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressed Nepal's commitment in addressing the genuine concern and implementations of UPR recommendations in a "coordinated, cooperative and result-oriented manner."

China Warns Tibetan Internet Users of “Strike Hard” Campaign for Dissenting Acts

In a recent notice, the Chinese authorities in “Tibet Autonomous Region” announced criminal prosecutions against individuals who use online communication tools to engage in activities against the Chinese Communist Party.

The notice dated 24 November was publicly posted about a week ago, on 24 December 2020, which said that the authorities would “strike hard” against offenders “in accordance with law”.

An English translation of the notice is as below:

Notice of the Tibet Autonomous Region on not using information networks to implement activities to split the country and undermine national unity

In order to further advance the governance of the Internet according to law, and severely crack down on the use of information networks to split the country and undermine national unity, illegal and criminal activities, in accordance with the “Criminal Law”, “The Law on Public Security Management Penalties”, “The Cybersecurity Law”, and “Computer Information” in accordance with the “Notice on the Twenty Prohibitions of Network Communication Activities in the Tibet Autonomous Region” and other laws and regulations, such as the Measures for the Administration of the Security Protection of Networks and International Networks, it is now prohibited to use information networks to implement prohibited activities that split the country and disrupt national unity as follows:

1. It is prohibited to publish and spread information that distorts history, downplays national consciousness, uses religious content, religious activities, etc. to attack the party and state policies, and slander the socialist system.

2. It is not allowed to provide virtual private network (VPN) and technical support or help for others to visit or browse overseas websites that promote, instigate the secession of the country, or

undermine national unity.

3. It is not allowed to join network groups that organize, plan, and implement secession, undermining national unity and national unity, and other illegal and criminal activities, and make, copy, review, and disseminate information that promotes, incites secession, and undermines national unity.

4. It is not allowed to use instant messaging tools, social forum software, etc. to contact organizations or persons that endanger national security to carry out activities that split the country or undermine national unity.

5. Do not engage in supporting activities that endanger national security, such as providing funds, state secrets, and intelligence information.

6. Do not accept tasks from organizations or personnel that endanger national security to carry out separatist and sabotage activities.

7. Do not promote or support organizations or personnel that endanger national security in various forms.

8. Do not distort facts, spread rumors, or spread false information to provoke ethnic relations and undermine ethnic unity.

9. It is not allowed to distort hype, attack and defame the party and the government by creating various social conflicts or using hot and sensitive events, and inciting disturbing public order.

10. All other activities deemed by laws and regulations as being aimed at splitting the country and undermining national unity are not allowed.

For those who commit the above illegal and criminal activities on the Internet, the criminal offender shall be held accountable in accordance with the law.

Notice is hereby issued by

Tibet Autonomous Region Public Se-

curity Department, Tibet Autonomous Region Internet Information Office, and Tibet Autonomous Region Communications Administration

November 24, 2020

The restrictions are also imposed in other Tibetan areas.

China, the world’s worst abuser of Internet freedom, has imprisoned a number of Tibetans living inside Tibet for using the online platform to share their opinions in the past. Tibetans are under surveillance at all times both online and offline. Any talk of politics or critique of state policy is considered an act of separatism; any post related to His Holiness the Dalai Lama are grounds for a charge of religious extremism. Tibetans are also strictly discouraged from contacting the outside world.

The Chinese party-state, with the aim of maintaining “social stability”, outlawed many social media platforms and search engines such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter which allowed for more freedom of speech and information. In contrast, China has created its own platforms such as WeChat and Weibo, where the search results are restricted to match Party lines. Suspicious individuals are reported if they engage in activities such as critiquing the party, debating human rights, or advocating for Tibetan culture.

“A truly compassionate attitude toward others does not change even if they behave negatively or hurt you.”

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Central Tibetan Administration Strongly Rejects Chinese Government's False Accusations Against the Landmark Tibetan Policy and Support Act 2020

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) strongly rejects the false accusations made by the so-called “People’s Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region” on the landmark Tibetan Policy and Support Act 2020 of the United States government.

Days after the United States government enacted the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, China’s state media reported that this rubber-stamp body “expressed its strong indignation and firm opposition to the passing of the US act on Tibet”. The “People’s Congress” alleges that the Tibet bill “grossly interferes in China’s internal affairs and gravely violates the fundamental principles of international laws and basic norms governing international relations” and “maliciously distorts Tibet’s social development, makes groundless accusations, denigrates China’s ethnic and religious policies, and interferes in the normal reincarnation procedure of living Buddhas under the pretext of human rights and religion”.

Forefronting “People’s Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region” to condemn TPSA 2020 is nothing but a frail attempt to represent the voice of the people as is practised in a true democracy which in the case of China is widely known to be farcical. It is a common fact that the Tibetan people have no meaningful participation in the deliberations of “People’s Congress of TAR” or its decision making. On the contrary, Tibetans are afforded such positions only to rubber-stamp Communist Party decisions.

Secondly, the Tibetan Support and Policy Act of 2020, which is a major revision encompassing substantive issues of Tibet to the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, addresses the urgent, deteriorating human rights, religious freedom, and environmental and other challenges faced by the Tibetan people inside Tibet. The deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet amounts to cultural genocide and suppression of rights under the guise of developmental policies such as urban-

isation, economic and environmental development, and the politicisation of the sacred traditional system of the reincarnation of religious leaders, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama. These exacerbated conditions in Tibet and China’s failure to solve the fundamental problem facing its illegal occupation of Tibet in over more than 60 years have compelled the enactment of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act. Just to set the record straight, it is important to iterate here that Tibet historically was never a part of China and remained an independent nation until the invasion by troops of the People’s Liberation Army of China in 1949/50. There can be no argument that on the eve of China’s military invasion, which started at the close of 1949, Tibet possessed all the attributes of independent statehood recognised under international law: a defined territory, a population inhabiting that territory, a government, and the ability to enter into international relations. The Chinese military takeover constituted aggression against a sovereign state and a violation of international law. Today’s continued occupation of Tibet by the PRC government, with the help of several hundred thousand troops, violates international law and the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people.

As such, China’s attempt to discount the importance and purpose of the US act fails to convince the international community and more importantly the Tibetans inside Tibet who continue to remain the direct victims of China’s iron-clad rule. If anything, China’s own atrocious track record in trampling upon the human rights of the Tibetan people, the increasing attempts to undermine the Tibetan religious freedom and the appalling state of language rights is a testament to its misrule in Tibet. This naturally invalidates its own arguments.

The TPSA simply demands that the Chinese Communist Party act as every other responsible ruling regime, that is to address problems faced by its people

and respect fundamental freedoms, human dignity, religious freedom for every one of their citizens. Moreover, through the enactment of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, the US has made a global statement that the international community will not accept China’s interference in the selection of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s succession and will oppose China’s human rights abuses in Tibet for as long as they continue.

In view of this, it is in China’s own interest to accept the Middle Way Approach envisioned by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and adopted by the CTA as the official policy towards restoring freedom for Tibetans in Tibet. Through dialogue, the MWA seeks to achieve a coexistence between the Tibetan and Chinese people where Tibetans enjoy genuine self-rule within the constitutional framework of the PRC and are able to restore and preserve the unique Tibetan language and cultural heritage as well their once-pristine environment. There is a growing chorus of support from all corners of the world for the nonviolent and solution-oriented approach of the Tibetan people and their legitimate rights to chart their own future and to pursue their aspirations. With the inclusion of the Middle Way Approach in the TPSA, the US has set an important precedent for other countries to address the Tibetan people’s struggle for freedom.

The historical truth and current reality of Tibet cannot and will not be distracted by the cacophony of Chinese propaganda and political machinations. In light of the urgent need to preserve the Tibetan culture, heritage and identity, we remain committed to combating these disinformation efforts with facts and truths.

We felt it necessary to address these issues in a concise report shedding light on the traditional origins of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation system, the rampant human rights violations in Tibet and the ongoing destruction of Tibet’s ecology. The ongoing global pandemic has

exposed that China's restriction on free flow of information and lack of transparency is not a mere "internal matter", but has consequences of global magnitude.

This report serves as a reminder, once again, to the PRC government that the CTA will continue to speak truth on behalf of the Tibetans inside Tibet whose voices remain muzzled by its repression.

The Spiritual and Traditional Authority over Tibetan Buddhist Reincarnation System Rests Solely with the Tibetan People

The Chinese government's so-called People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region's (TAR) recent claim over Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation system, particularly on the selection of the next Dalai Lama, is completely baseless and condemnable. The onus of selecting Tibetan Buddhist Tulkus, including the next Dalai Lama rests solely on the Tibetan Buddhist people and institutions. No other government or entity, least of all the Chinese Communist Government, can claim to determine or interfere in the selection process of the next Dalai Lama or any other Tibetan Buddhist Tulkus. This sacred and unique Tibetan Buddhist tradition should be carried forward based solely on the centuries-old spiritual tradition of the Tibetan people, as it has been since its inception.

The PRC government bases its claims on the Tibetan reincarnation system on the rare political interference of the Qing emperors in the selection of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnations. However, this claim belies historical reality. The reincarnation system is a centuries old Tibetan tradition that has existed in Tibet since the Second Karmapa of the Karma Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism was recognised as the reincarnation of Karmapa Du-sum Khenpa in the 13th century. The role of the Qing in the selection process as claimed by the PRC is highly exaggerated. The Golden Urn system (Ser-bum) was imposed on the Tibetans by the Qing in the late 18th century. Since it lacks Buddhist spiritual

quality, it was never accepted by the Tibetans in reality.

The PRC government's repeated insistence on interfering in the Tibetan reincarnation system is not only irrelevant but also without historical basis. Its claims over the reincarnation system is politically-motivated to provide a pretext for controlling the selection of spiritual leaders of Tibetan Buddhism and to appropriate their legitimacy in traditional Tibetan society. As a self-proclaimed atheist and materialist regime, it has no justifiable reason to interfere in the Tibetan reincarnation system.

The PRC government has destroyed almost 90 percent of more than 6,000 Tibetan monasteries and has forced to disrobe thousands of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns. It also refuses to allow Tibetan Buddhist monasteries to function in traditional ways by instituting state-sanctioned "Monastery Management Committees". Regulations such as the infamous "Order no. 5" which requires reincarnated lamas to be registered and certified by the Chinese government is one such attempt by the Chinese government to coerce Tibetan Buddhist Tulkus to achieve their political goals. It is a clear indication of China systematically undermining Tibet's age-old culture and traditions to sinicise Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture.

Regarding the next Dalai Lama, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama himself has stated clearly in a promulgation made in September 2011 that the Chinese government has no right to meddle in the reincarnation system.

"It is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists, who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives, let alone the concept of reincarnate Tulkus, to meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas. Such brazen meddling contradicts their own political ideology and reveals their double standards. Should this situation continue in the future, it will be impossible for Tibetans and those who follow the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to acknowledge or accept it," His Holiness

has said.

His Holiness has instead clarified that high lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, will decide whether the Dalai Lama institution should continue or not.

"When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. On that basis we will take a decision. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognised, responsibility for doing so will primarily rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should seek advice and direction from these concerned beings and carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition. I shall leave clear written instructions about this. Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognised through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China."

After China's invasion of Tibet, almost all of Tibet's spiritual leaders including Bon religion came to exile following His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Over the years, the spiritual heads hold regular conferences to discuss the state of Tibetan religion inside and outside Tibet. Successive conferences of the Tibetan spiritual heads have unanimously rejected the Chinese government's interference in the selection of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnations. In the last conference of Tibetan spiritual heads in 2019, the spiritual heads of all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon have unanimously passed a resolution stating:

“The authority of decision concerning the way and the manner in which the next reincarnation of the XIV Dalai Lama should appear solely rests with His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama himself. No government or otherwise will have such authority. If the Government of the People’s Republic of China for political ends chooses a candidate for the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan people will not recognise and respect that candidate.”

The Conference of the Tibetan Spiritual Heads also passed resolutions stating:

“this Special General Meeting prays with a single-minded devotion, and in a single voice, that for as long as sentient beings remain extant on the Snowland of Tibet, the lineage of successive reincarnations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama may continue with imperativeness for the sake of the dharma and the sentient beings of this land.”

“That this Special General Meeting is of the position that with regard to the process for the discovery and recognition of the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the entire task and power lies in His Holiness Himself and the duly empowered responsible officials of the Gaden Phodrang Trust of the Dalai Lama and in no way in any other entity, be it any nation, any government, any organisation of whatever description, or any private individual.”

“That this Special General Meeting is resolute in rejecting outright the efforts made and still being made by the government of China in the process for the discovery and recognition of reincarnations in Tibetan Buddhism in general and especially its coercive Order No. 5 declared in 2007 on the question of the recognition of reincarnations of tulkus and lamas in Tibetan Buddhism through which it sought to plot its interference in the recognition of the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and this resolution has been unanimously so adopted.”

The statements of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan spiritual heads

indicate that China has no role in the selection of the next Dalai Lama or the Tibetan reincarnation system. The only reason that a self-proclaimed atheist government is interested in the Tibetan reincarnation system is because of the fact that the Chinese government knows that it cannot rule Tibet without the legitimising influence of the Dalai Lama over the Tibetan people. Their claims over the Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation system is purely motivated by political ambitions. It knows that to effectively control the heart of Tibet and the soul of its people, it needs to occupy and colonise the Tibetan people’s spiritual realm in addition to its control of territorial Tibet. By making a claim on Tibetan spiritual authority, China is trying to wrest control over the soul of Tibet. Therefore, the recent Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA) made into law by the United States which bars the interference of the Chinese government in the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders is an early indication of how the world would react to China’s interference in the spiritual tradition of Tibet. The law is a timely reminder that the spiritual authority over Tibetan Buddhist traditions including the Tibetan reincarnation system lies solely with the Tibetan people and not the Chinese government.

China’s Continued Grave Human Rights Violations in Tibet

China’s claims of Tibetans enjoying social and economic progress is not supported by facts. As a matter of fact, the prevailing situation inside Tibet is one of ever-increasing repression where freedom of religion, expression and other fundamental human rights are increasingly threatened. This is evident from the continuing crackdown in Tibet, and more recently the 155 known self-immolation protests by Tibetans in Tibet.

The constant assertion of its Sinicisation policy in every aspect of Tibetans’ lives in Tibet has aggravated the human rights violations. In fact, all that China has been doing in the last several decades is attempting accelerated Sinicisation of Tibet, be it Tibet’s religion and religious

traditions – most evidently the system of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation – language, culture, environment, and even marriages.

B.1 Freedom of Religion

The Chinese constitution guarantees the right to freedom of religion and prohibits any discrimination based on one’s religion. However, such rights exist only on paper as the ground reality showcases the actual opposite in Tibet. Like many other fundamental human rights, the Tibetan people are not only deprived of religious rights but are persecuted for exercising their freedom of religion and beliefs, religious practices, observation of religious festivities and customs.

The Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism has been a top priority and rule by controlling the reincarnation system serves as a master plan for China. The Chinese government’s assertion of its role in the recognition of the Eleventh Panchen Lama more than 25 years ago attests to this political ambition. More recently, passing regulations on “ethnic unity” requiring religious institutes to “persevere on the path of sinicising religion” and criminalising expression with sanctions for those who have “irresolute stances and attitudes on the fight against separatism”.

B.2 The Continued Enforced Disappearance of the Eleventh Panchen Lama

When Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was recognised as the Eleventh Panchen Lama at the age of six, he and his entire family were abducted by the Chinese government on 17 May 1995. Chadrel Rinpoche, the head of the Search Committee appointed by the Chinese authorities, was also detained, and his fate remains unknown. This year marks the 26th year of enforced disappearances of Tibet’s Eleventh Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, his family members and Chadrel Rinpoche. The United Nations’ human rights experts and government officials have repeatedly called on China over the years to reveal the whereabouts of Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima,

but have only received non-committal responses. On several occasions, including at the United Nations, China has made tacit admissions. For instance in a statement given by Baima Wangdui, representative of “TAR” delegation at a hearing held on 8 May 2018 at the Canadian Parliament’s Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, said, “he and his family members do not want to be interrupted by an external environment.” For more than 25 years, Tibetans, their supporters, and international human rights groups, including the UN Committee Against Torture, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Working Group on Enforced Disappearance, have called for information on the Panchen Lama’s wellbeing and whereabouts but no verifiable response has been provided. The Panchen Lama remains one of the world’s longest-serving political prisoners.

More recently, five UN independent experts issued a joint letter in June 2020, expressing concern over “the continued enforced disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and the regulation of reincarnation of Tibetan living Buddha against the religious traditions and practices of the Tibetan Buddhist”. The UN experts demanded China to “provide prompt and detailed information” on Panchen Lama while endorsing “to allow an independent monitor to visit him to confirm his whereabouts and the extent to which he is able to enjoy and exercise his rights.”

The Chinese authorities’ direct interference in the management of Tibetan monasteries and nunneries through “Monastery Management Committees” have further intensified China’s control over the monks and nuns’ daily routine and religious practices, as well as its suppression of their freedom of movement, privacy and security among others.

The demolition of the world’s largest Tibetan Buddhist institutes such as the famous Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, while forcefully evicting thousands of practitioners and putting them in internment camps to undergo “political

re-education” are stark violations of religious freedom. A case of a suicide of a nun who was evicted in May 2019 to avoid undergoing “patriotic education” emerged in early 2020. During the state-led demolition of Larung Gar in 2016, three nuns committed suicide in protest to the forced eviction and demolitions.

Elderly and retired Tibetans are restricted to go on kora, a religious circumambulation of holy sites. Tibetan children are also restricted to participate in religious activities during their school breaks, and the admissions of novices to monasteries and nunneries are highly curtailed. Authorities in Tibet also enforced restrictions on religious observance and expressions of faith, including prohibition on participating in religious events. Even celebrating holidays such as Losar, the Tibetan New Year, are also truncated of its religious significance. Instead, Tibetans are compelled to display portraits of Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders on their altars and forced to make offerings and prostrate, a religious practice of reverence reserved only to Buddha and high lamas.

B.3 Bilingual Policy and the Onslaught on Tibetan Language

China claims that Tibetans who are considered as one of the 55 “ethnic minorities” under PRC enjoy language rights. Yet through China’s bilingual policy, Tibetan language has been replaced by Chinese Mandarin as the medium of instruction in schools in Tibet. China implements policies such as the bilingual education policy that systematically target the Tibetan language, further suppress the learning and teaching of Tibetan language and hence marginalises the Tibetan language. Tibetan monasteries which are secondary sites for learning Tibetan language have been banned from receiving Tibetan students to teach Tibetan language. In 2018, the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination expressed concern that “Tibetan language teaching in schools,” in Tibet has “not been placed on an equal footing in law, policy and practice with Chinese, and that it has been significantly restricted.” The UN

Committee called on China to preserve Tibetan language by encouraging its use in education and other fields.

In most cases, Chinese language is a prerequisite in acquiring a respectable job. Tibetan students graduating with specialisation in Tibetan language are deprived of any job prospects. Many young Tibetan graduates remain unemployed as recruitment examinations in Tibet require a good command of the Chinese language. Basic public services, including bank transactions or travel tickets are printed in Chinese, making travel difficult for Tibetans even within Tibet. The systematic onslaught on the Tibetan language is targeted towards destroying the identity of the Tibetan people. Resistance to discriminatory language policy results in persecution. Those who voice concerns over such state policies and advocate for the conservation of Tibetan language are arrested and sentenced, as was the case in Tashi Wangchuk and Sonam Palden who were arrested in 2016 and 2019 respectively. In February 2019, Tsering Dorjee was arrested for talking about the importance of Tibetan language education over the phone with his brother in India.

Tibetans in Tibet have absolutely no freedom of expression. Expressing any disagreement or grievances against the authorities result in them being detained, tortured, falsely charged with “separatism” and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. In the last decade, at least 155 Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against China’s repressive policies in Tibet. The Tibetan self-immolators have called for freedom, human rights and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

B.4 “Interethnic” Marriage

China’s promotion and incentivising of marriages between ethnic Chinese and Tibetans seek “assimilation” of Tibetan identity, language and culture through marriages. In August 2014, Chen Quanguo, the highest Chinese official in charge of the “Tibet Autonomous Region” at the time ordered a run of stories in local newspapers promoting mixed marriages. For weeks, government-run

newspapers in the “TAR” featured stories and images of happy mixed marriages in which the children are shown to love both cultures and speak in both Tibetan and Chinese. A 2014 report by the Communist Party’s research office in “TAR” said mixed marriages had increased annually by double-digit percentages for the past five years, from 666 couples in 2008 to 4,795 couples in 2013. Chen Quanguo, then the Party Secretary of “TAR” who chaired Ethnic Intermarriage Family Forum on 18 June 2014 implored party and government officials to act as “matchmakers.”

The “Ethnic Unity” regulation passed in January 2020 requires “all levels of government, companies, community organisations, villages, schools, military groups and religious activity centres [to] be responsible for work on ethnic unity,” while the Seventh Tibet Work Forum in August 2020 emphasised on national unity as well. As the “Ethnic Unity” regulation states, those “harming ethnic unity” by “taking part” or “discussing separatism” and jeopardising “social harmony” will face criticism and punishments. These policies and regulations are solely aimed at diluting Tibetan unique culture and identity.

B.5 Economic Development and “Poverty Alleviation”

The Chinese government’s statistical claims of “poverty alleviation” and “development” do not present the current reality of Tibetans inside Tibet. China’s promotion of “right to development” is prioritised over other human rights, mainly civil and political rights. The development projects in the so-called “TAR” and other Tibetan regions as administered by PRC are carried out at the cost of Tibet’s ecology and people. The so-called poverty alleviation that has been forced on Tibetans has caused great misery and resentment among the local population. Tenzin Nyima or Tamey, a 19-year-old Tibetan monk from Dza Wonpo in Sersbul died on 19 January 2021, due to the local Chinese authorities’ beatings and torture. Tenzin Nyima was detained on 9 November 2019 after pro-independence protests erupted in

Dza Wonpo, along with several others. The protests took place as the forcibly resettled nomads and local Tibetans in the area were pressured by the local officials to endorse the Chinese government’s “poverty alleviation” program. Further, the demolition of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar and the ensuing expulsion of over several thousands monks and nuns was carried out to make way for tourist attraction projects.

Under the guise of “poverty alleviation”, over half a million Tibetans were put through coercive military-style labour training and labour transfer policy in the “TAR” in just the first seven months of 2020. These rural Tibetans, mainly nomads and farmers were subjected to “centralised military-style vocational training”. Forced to move away from their centuries-old sustainable livelihood style, Tibetan nomads and farmers are made to hand over their herds and land to government-run cooperatives and then turned into wage labourers. In the forced relocation and mass housing programs from 2006-2012, Chinese government has pushed over 2 million Tibetan nomads into concrete housing. With no socio-economic support to sustain them in the long run, this drives many young people to lead a lifestyle fraught with criminal tendencies and poverty.

While there is some degree of economic development, the situation inside Tibet is far from the “socialist paradise” that China presents to the world. Moreover, Tibetans are not the true beneficiaries of the various development projects and implementations in Tibet. On the contrary, these “development” projects are to serve the Communist Party of China’s own interests. The infrastructure development in Tibet that the PRC has trumpeted facilitated effective political control over Tibet and ushered in the mass migration of Chinese people to Tibet, threatening the Tibetan culture, language, identity, environment and the very existence of the Tibetan people.

B.6 Surveillance and Censorship

The Chinese government’s intensive

surveillance and censorship policy continue to upgrade in response to the crisis inside Tibet. Technologies such as the facial recognition and profiling obstruct free flow of information through censorship, this is aimed to monitor Tibetan people and their online activities. Every contact made between Tibetans inside Tibet and abroad are closely surveilled. Any “sensitive information” posted on social media such as issues concerning language rights, devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Covid-19 pandemic, and others which the Chinese state deems as “illegal” and “separatist” are punished. In one such known case, 10 Tibetans in Lhasa were arrested for alleged spreading of “rumors” about the Covid-19 breakout in March 2020 on WeChat. Tibetan singers Khando Tseten, Tsego and Lhundrup Dakpa were sentenced in 2020 while Lhamo was tortured to death for sending money abroad and for possessing a picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

In a recent report, Chinese government has announced criminal prosecutions against internet users in Tibet for dissenting activities online. According to the notice, internet users are only allowed to use the online platform to praise the Chinese government’s policy and propaganda. Any online activities aimed “to split the country” are bound to be penalised.

Lack of Environmental Justice in Tibet Undermines People’s Ecological Protection Efforts

The increasing rate of environmental degradation and the scale of ecological destruction in Tibet is largely due to lack of proper Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) prior to any major mineral resource extractions, hydropower dam building and road or railway line construction activities in the region. The Chinese government’s inability to understand local ecological conditions, unwillingness to listen to local environmental concerns and blatant disrespect for local traditional belief in the sacredness of mountains and lakes have made

Tibetans in Tibet utterly helpless.

Such a sense of helplessness simmering from continued refusal to acknowledge Tibetan people's wishes and griefs by the Chinese government has forced many Tibetans to take desperate measures, particularly since 2008 as the Chinese government increased its repression across Tibet.

There were at least three reported self-immolations (Tsering Dhondup on 20 November 2012, Konchok Tsering on 26 November 2012 and Tsultrim Gyamtso on 19 December 2013) in Amchok in Northeastern Tibet between 2012 and 2013 as a desperate measure to protest against mining on their sacred mountain Gong Ngon Lari. They have, in letters left behind, expressed "unbearable sense of agony" caused by mining on their sacred mountains as the reason for their sacrifice.

A similar desperate measure was taken on 16 August 2013 during a large peaceful protest against mining on sacred mountain Garwa Choejad in Zatoe, in northern Tibet. Sokpo Choedup, who was part of the peaceful protest gathered at the mine site, stabbed himself in an instant and frantic reaction to an excessively brutal suppression by Chinese paramilitary forces. According to people who visited him in the hospital, Sokpo Choedup said, "I felt a sense of helplessness, as there was no one we could go for justice."

The prevailing sense of helplessness and lack of institutional mechanisms to seek justice in Tibet under Chinese occupation has forced many Tibetans in Tibet to look for justice and support from outside China. Tibetans in Tibet are making enormous sacrifices for the ecological protection of the world's highest and largest plateau — a plateau which not only feeds and sustains almost all of Asia's largest rivers but also greatly influences the global climatic conditions. The Central Tibetan Administration and Tibetans spread across over 40 countries have been trying to bring to light the immense risks and efforts Tibetans in Tibet undergoes to seek environmental justice and protect the Tibetan Plateau from fur-

ther degradation and destruction.

The historical enactment of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 (TPSA) is a clear recognition of the global ecological importance of the Tibetan Plateau as well as an acknowledgement of the lack of environmental justice in Tibet under Chinese occupation.

The Section 4 of the Act – Policy Regarding the Environment and Water Resources on the Tibetan Plateau— begins by highlighting the global and regional ecological importance of the Tibetan plateau. The policy states:

The Tibetan Plateau contains glaciers, rivers, grasslands, and other geographical and ecological features that are crucial for supporting vegetation growth and biodiversity, regulating water flow and supply for an estimated 1.8 billion people.

The policy also adds:

Traditional Tibetan grassland stewardship practices, which can be key to mitigating the negative effects of warming on the Tibetan Plateau, are undermined by the resettlement of nomads from Tibetan grasslands.

This rightly condemns the Chinese government for their lack of respect for Tibetan Nomads and their traditional way of life and its positive role in environmental conservation. The Chinese government has removed more than two million nomads from their land and pushed them into large-scale settlements with limited medical, educational or business opportunities to support a dignified and sustainable life. Tibet's rangeland covers approximately 70 percent of its total area. The alpine grassland at high altitude covers, in turn, 60 percent of the total Tibetan rangeland. Pastoralism on the Tibetan plateau involves adaptation to a cold environmental condition at elevation above the limit of cultivation. Nomads have not only prospered but protected the plateau from further degradation by living an eco-friendly and sustainable life for more than 8,000 years. They are the actual stewards of the vast grassland.

Another extremely important issue the TPSA highlighted is the possible impact of an increasing number of large dams in Tibet in recent years. The policy warns:

The construction in Tibet of large hydro-electric power dams intended to be used in part to transmit power to Chinese provinces outside of Tibet, as well as other infrastructure projects, including the Sichuan-Tibet railroad, may also lead to the resettlement of thousands of Tibetans and transform the environment.

A new trend of fervent competition to build ever bigger dams in Tibet in recent years is threatening both the river ecosystem on the Tibetan Plateau as well as the lifeline of 1.8 billion people in Asia. There is an obvious but a well-disguised nexus between the Chinese Communist Party leadership and dam construction companies in China, which both fuel and sustain a new trend of building mega dams in Tibet, despite its immense ecological risk and social cost.

The year 2021 will see the completion of 1.2 GW Suwalong Hydropower Dam, the largest hydel dam in Tibet, and also the partly completed 295-meter tall Lianghekou (3000 MW) Hydropower Dams. Lianghekou would emerge as the tallest embankment dam in Tibet and the third highest earth-filled dam in the world.

The Suwalong hydropower dam, the biggest in Tibet, officially began its construction in 2016 and is expected to be completed by 2021. The dam built by China Huadian Corp is located on the border between Markham and Bathang in southeastern Tibet, at the lower range of the Driчу (Yangtze River) before it flows into China. The location of the dam has historically seen many earthquakes and landslides. The devastating landslide in Bolu in South-eastern Tibet on 3 November 2018, which blocked the Driчу, the longest river in Asia for 10 days, is only about 215km upstream of the Suwalong dam site. The river blockage from the landslide quickly led to inundation of much of Bolu in Palyul and caused flash floods in many regions located along the river.

Tibet has seen an unprecedented number

of floods and landslides simultaneously occurring across the region since 2016. The increased cases of natural disasters are partly due to continued rise in temperature and increase in precipitation, but the situation is greatly aggravated by excessive construction and resource extraction activities. The intensity and the frequency of such disasters is most likely to increase in the coming years, putting immense risk on any major dam projects.

The Lianghekou Hydropower dam is currently being built on the Nyakchu (Yalong River) near Nyakchukha town in eastern Tibet. Even though the dam construction officially began in 2014, the preliminary constructions were carried out as early as 2009. A recent video clip, verified from local sources, clearly shows that people of Nyakchukha were in horror as they saw the river going completely dry near Nyakchukha Town. The partly-completed Lianghekou Hydropower dam, located only a few kilometres upstream from Nyakchukha town, is blamed for the sudden drying up of the river as the dam likely has begun storing water for operation of its first generator. Even though a paper published in 2014 by Ertan Hydropower Development Company, which constructs the dam, has officially stated that about 4,925 people would require to be resettled due to the dam construction, but local Tibetans claim that the actual forced relocation of Tibetans in the region is much greater. Homes in Drong-

nyi, Ngonde, Dragtog, Jathang, Drugal Chukha in Tawu and Nyakchukha were seriously affected. A local resident of Nyakchukha said in his statement in 2015 that the dam construction company provided no work opportunity for the local residents and that the Tibetans were prohibited from wandering anywhere near the dam construction site.

The immediate effect of the dam construction was the loss of thousands of homes, but the long-term impact could be even greater as the dam would gradually inundate vast areas of fertile farmlands, grazing areas, forest, sacred sites and disturb local ecological balance.

Unlike in the 1960s, the large Hydropower Dams are no longer considered eco-friendly and sustainable. According to a paper published on 5 November 2018 by Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), countries in Europe and North America stopped building large dams since 1975 due to its negative social and environmental impacts. The paper also stated that such dams have damaged river ecology, displaced millions of people, and have both contributed to and impacted by climate change.

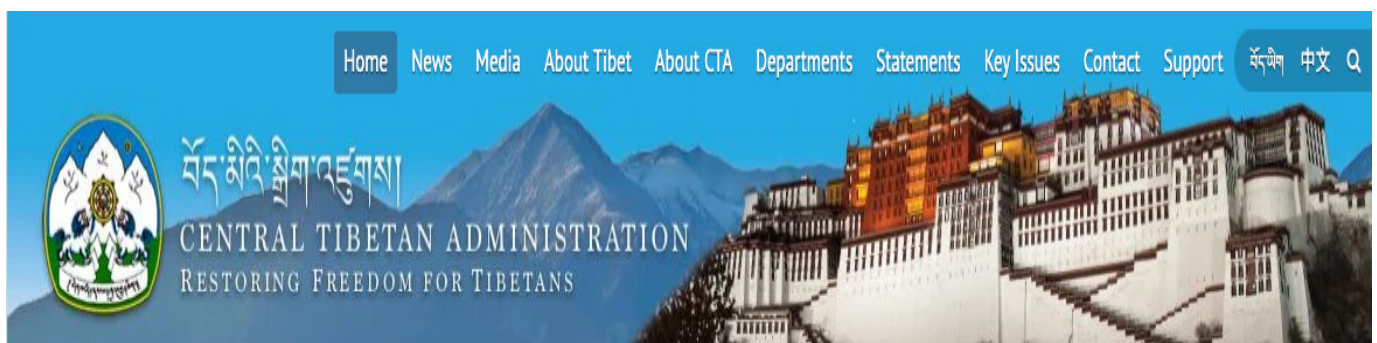
However, in Tibet, the Chinese government is on a dam-building spree on most of the major rivers in Tibet such as Gyalmo Ngulchu (Salween), Zachu (Mekong), Drichu (Yangtze), Nyakchu (Yalong) and Yarlung Tsangpo. A total of 11

hydel dams were planned on the 1600km stretch of Yarlung Tsangpo before it enters into India with Zangmu (510MW) and Gyatsa (320MW) already completed, Dagu (640MW) and Jeixu (560MW) under construction, Lengda received permission recently and more to begin soon as part of China's 14th Five Year Plan.

The alarming pace of issuing permits as well as constructing mega dams in Tibet without any public participation and consultation is apparently in stark contrast to the official rhetoric about green development being propagated in Tibet.

Large dams inevitably lead to inundation of vast areas of land around it for water storage, leading to massive loss of vegetation and wildlife habitat. Dams also induce seismic activity, landslides and sudden change in local ecosystem.

Consequently, the rapid pace of building mega dams in Tibet in recent years will not only affect the Tibetan people and its fragile environment but will also have catastrophic consequences for 1.8 billion people in Asia, whose lives depend on a healthy flow of the Tibetan rivers. With the impending threat in sight, the Tibetan Policy and Support Act 2020 rightly calls for a "collaborative effort with Chinese and international scientific institutions to monitor the environment on the Tibetan Plateau" as well as to encourage formation of "a regional framework on water security".



His Holiness the Dalai Lama Holds a Virtual Conversation with Mayors on Kind and Compassionate Leadership



Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, moderator for the conversation on Kind and Compassionate Leadership welcoming His Holiness the Dalai Lama joining online from his residence in Dharamsala, HP, India on January 27, 2021. Photo by Ven Tenzin Jamphel

Source: dalailama.com

His Holiness the Dalai Lama participated in a virtual conversation on ‘Kind and Compassionate Leadership’ as invited by Sasha Havlicek. As CEO, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, she explained that the organization she leads has been working to oppose hate and misinformation.

With this in mind it launched the Strong Cities Network (SCN) to work to overcome polarization and extremism. It has delivered training to city officials, civil society leaders, company leaders and faith leaders in deradicalization and re-integration, particularly aiming to break down the concept of ‘othering’, the habit of seeing people in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

This event was the result of partnership between SCN and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) led by Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer. Havlicek thanked His Holiness for his participation today and introduced Mayor Fischer as today’s moderator.

Mayor Fischer professed it was an honour to be with His Holiness once more. He thanked Sasha Havlicek and Tom Tait, former Mayor of Anaheim for

bringing together 74 mayors representing 19 countries. He stated that we can rise above challenges when we embrace compassion.

With his opening words, His Holiness declared that, whenever he can, he emphasizes the oneness of humanity. “We are all the same as human beings,” he went on. “Scientists recognise that we are social animals with a strong sense of community. We depend on each other and we take care of each other for our very survival.

“We face many problems, many of which are our own creation. But we limit ourselves by thinking too much of me, of my needs, my family’s needs, the needs of my community and the needs of my nation. However, since we are responsible for so many of the problems that confront us, it’s reasonable to think that we can also solve them.

“Above all, we must cultivate a sense of the oneness of all human beings. We must recognise that in comparison to that, differences of faith and of nationality are secondary.

“Like other animals we have an array of sense consciousnesses, but what sets us apart is our intelligence. We can con-

sider and plan for the future. Today, we are all part of a global economy and, because of technological developments, the world is becoming smaller. We have to consider the needs of the whole world and the whole of humanity because we are all the same in being human. And we have to live together.

“I feel I am just another human being, a part of the world in which I live. Therefore, I’m never lonely. I think of whoever I meet as being the same as me. We don’t need to be introduced. If they have two eyes, one nose and a mouth, I think of other people as being human like me.

“When I first came to India, I reflected on the close links between this country and my homeland. As the Prime Minister has said, India is the land of the Buddha. And even today, we can benefit from adopting the tried and tested ancient Indian principles of ‘ahimsa’ and ‘karuna’, non-violence and compassion, as the basis of a more peaceful world.

“As I often say, to achieve world peace, we need peace of mind within ourselves. However, destructive emotions disturb our peace of mind. Those who concern themselves predominantly with material development think of happiness and well-being only in terms of physical health and yet our mental health is crucial too. Ancient Indian tradition acquired a rich understanding of the workings of our minds and emotions and we can still call on this knowledge today.

“It recommends first examining what disturbs the mind and then considering what counters those disturbances. It turns out that self-centred attitudes and misconceptions about the nature of self are at the root of the destructive emotions that disturb our minds. So, when we see, as quantum physicists have also observed, that things do not exist as they appear, our misplaced thoughts are reduced. And although this information is to be found in religious texts, it can definitely be redeployed in a secular,

academic context. We can all learn how to tackle destructive emotions and cultivate positive qualities.

“We must try to incorporate understanding of the workings of our emotions and the ways to tackle them into our education system. If we are kind and compassionate, we’ll be honest. That leads to trust, stability and friendship. Now, do you have any questions?”

Mayor Fischer introduced Mayors of North American cities, as well as from other parts of the world who put their questions to His Holiness. Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles, began by asking how to heal division. His Holiness told him it’s important to focus on our feelings of closeness to one another. He noted that since America is regarded as leader of the free world, and has special relations with Europe, to think of ‘America first’ is inappropriate. America should take the whole world into account.

Mayor Maria Isabelle Climaco, Zamboanga, Philippines wanted to know what lessons we can learn from the pandemic. His Holiness told her first of all that he is very concerned about it and prays every day that the pandemic should come to an end. “I really admire the researchers who are investigating the virus, as well as the doctors and nurses who are caring for the sick, often putting their own health at risk. We have to learn from what the experts tell us. We have to follow their advice to be cautious, to wear masks and observe social distancing.”

His Holiness told Mayor Andy Berke, Chattanooga, USA that people in local communities should work together. He mentioned his admiration for the spirit of the European Union (EU) where historic enemies have put the past behind them and chosen to cooperate with each other instead. He suggested that the rest of the world can learn from the EU’s experience and emphasize closeness rather than distance. The time has come to work together, to meet and discuss what needs to be done.

Councillor Sarah Hamilton, Edmonton, Canada sought guidance on ways to



Mayor Maria Isabelle Climaco, Zamboanga, Philippines, playfully putting on her mask as His Holiness the Dalai Lama recommends following the advice of experts, including wearing masks, as he answers her question during their online conversation on Kind and Compassionate Leadership from his residence in Dharamsala, HP, India on January 27, 2021. Photo by Ven Tenzin Jamphel

bridge the divides that have opened up in many places. His Holiness stated that biased views should give way to feelings of harmony and respect. He pointed out that all the world’s major religious traditions flourish peaceably, side by side in India. He added that as contact increases, the tendency towards isolation breaks down. He voiced a sense of optimism, suggesting that if religious and civic leaders, scholars and scientists met more often they could contribute to making things better.

Mayor Visar Ganiu, Skopje, North Macedonia asked how local government can help dispel disinformation about covid-19. His Holiness told him how necessary it is for experts to explain the situation in a truthful way. As the world becomes smaller, holding meetings for this purpose becomes easier.

Mayor Naheed Nenshi, Calgary, Canada sought advice about helping people live together better and also mentioned that this year will mark the 50th anniversary of the first Tibetans coming to Calgary. His Holiness acknowledged the need to address racism and rising hatred. He pointed out that when you look at things from a wider perspective it’s easier to focus on unity.

“Things are improving,” he declared, “but efforts to correct misunderstandings must continue through education and personal contact. The time for use of

force has gone. Since no one can completely eliminate their enemies, we have to learn to live together. And it’s better that we live together happily with smiles on our faces.

“Canada was one of the first countries to accept a group of Tibetans and they are happy and well settled. People tell me that, in general, the local communities where Tibetans live admire them for their humility and hard work.”

Councillor Jørgen H. Kristiansen, Kristiansand, Norway enquired about links between war, conflict and poverty. His Holiness told him he thinks wars take place less for economic reasons than for political and ideological ones. He cited the Vietnam war as an example.

Although military conflict is reducing, His Holiness pointed out that poverty is not. He stressed the urgency of reducing the gap between rich and poor on both local and global levels. He mentioned a growing trend in support of denuclearization. Many people now envisage a world without nuclear weapons and the threat they present.

His Holiness told Mayor Bill Peduto, Pittsburgh, USA that wider contact was the only way to heal the divisions caused by self-righteous anger and hatred. Some foolish people may cling to divisive attitudes. They need to be helped to understand the reality of what we all have

in common. His Holiness reiterated that frustration and confusion arise because of ignorance and that can be dispelled by education and sound information.

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His Holiness agreed with Mayor Leoluca Orlando, Palermo, Italy about the importance of compassion and fraternity. So many problems humanity faces are rooted in a sense of 'us' and 'them'. He observed that theistic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam consider that we all come from one creator so we are all like brothers and sisters. It's a powerful idea linked to a message of loving kindness.

Non-theistic religions like Buddhism, Jainism and some Hindu traditions emphasize instead the importance of compassion. His Holiness remarked that we all need compassion because we all have to live together and help each other.

Mayor Greg Fischer thanked His Holiness for the inspiration he always provides. He also thanked Sasha Havlicek and the Mayors who had taken part in the conversation. He ended with something he's learned from His Holiness: "If you want others to be happy, practise compassion. If you want to be happy, practise compassion."

"I very much appreciate the work you are doing to promote compassion," His Holiness responded. "Compassion is indispensable. We must also continually consider the oneness of humanity. I appreciate all the mayors who have joined us today. Although one individual's ability to change the world may be limited, mayors, as community leaders can bring change about. This is a cause for hope. We must keep up our efforts. I look forward in this 21st century to seeing a happier world where everyone wears a joyful smile. Thank you."

"If you can cultivate the right attitude, your enemies are your best spiritual teachers because their presence provides you with the opportunity to enhance and develop tolerance, patience and understanding."

— His Holiness the Dalai Lama

His Holiness the Dalai Lama Offers Sympathy and Support to the People of Uttarakhand

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written to Shri Trivendra Singh Rawat, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand to tell him that how sad he is about the loss of life, and also how concerned he is about those who are still missing, as a result of the recent glacial burst in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.

He wrote, “I offer my condolences to those who have lost loved ones, and pray for them. I also pray for the safety and well being of those who are still missing.

“I understand that both the Central and the State Governments are engaged in rescue work and are doing their utmost to provide relief to people affected by this calamity. As a gesture of solidarity with the people of Uttarakhand, I have asked the Dalai Lama Trust to make a donation towards the relief and rescue efforts.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama Congratulates President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris



His Holiness the Dalai Lama offered his congratulations to US president Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote to President Biden on 21 January to offer profound congratulations on his becoming President of the United States of America.

“As someone deeply concerned with the ecological crisis our planet faces,” he wrote, “I am so pleased that you are elevating the issue of climate change to your highest priority and that the United States is rejoining the Paris Climate Accord. Global warming is an urgent threat to the whole world and to the survival of our species.

“May I also commend you for other measures you are taking towards the betterment of the United States of America. I have long been an admirer of your great country, the bastion of liberty, democracy, religious freedom and the rule of law. The whole world places its hope in the democratic vision and leadership

of the United States. In these challenging times, I am confident that you will contribute to shaping a more peaceful world in which those suffering from hunger, disease and violence may find help. The need to address these issues is indeed pressing.

“Once again, I take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your long-standing support for the Tibetan people. It has been our good fortune to have enjoyed the friendship and encouragement of the American people and their leaders in our endeavour to protect and preserve our ancient Buddhist culture, a culture of peace, non-violence and compassion.”

His Holiness concluded, “I pray for your success in meeting the challenges that lie ahead in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of all Americans and in contributing to a more peaceful and harmonious world.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama also wrote to Vice-President Kamala Harris to offer his congratulations to her.

“I have no doubt that your commendable background in public service will enable you to make valuable contribution to the people of America.

“I am particularly pleased that you are the first woman in the history of your country to be holding this position. It is a tremendous source of inspiration not

just to people in your country, but also to many others who look to the United States for leadership.

“Madam Vice President, I hold the firm conviction that women are more empathetic and sensitive to the feelings of others, qualities I first learned from my loving mother. There is also scientific evidence that when it comes to compassion, women are more sensitive to others’ pain. It is inspiring that there is a growing recognition of the importance and value of women’s leadership. I feel that if more of our leaders were women the world would be a more understanding and peaceful place.

“Since my childhood I have admired the United States of America, a nation that has been a beacon of hope for so many around the world in their wish for liberty, democracy, religious freedom and the rule of law.”

His Holiness ended his letter by telling the Vice President that he prays for her and for President Biden as they undertake the enormous task of fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people of their great nation.

For detailed news visit:
www.tibet.net

The United States and China Are Fighting Over the Dalai Lama's Reincarnation Plans

By Kelsang Dolma, published in Foreign Policy, 23 February 2021



Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama (center) is helped as he walks on a visit to the sacred Bodhi tree at the world heritage Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya, India, on Dec. 25, 2019.

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

For Westerners, the Dalai Lama is a Nobel Peace Prize winner. For Tibetans, he's a spiritual leader. But for the Chinese government, he's a "wolf in monk's robes" and a "splittist." Those insults have sped up since this past December, when it was reported that the contentious omnibus U.S. spending bill included a peculiar provision: the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 (TPSA).

Introduced to their respective legislative bodies by Democratic Rep. James McGovern and Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, the TPSA supplants the similarly bipartisan Tibetan Policy Act of 2002. The new act is an overdue update. It covers a range of issues, including emphasizing environmental protection of the fragile Tibetan plateau, which is often referred to as the Third Pole because of its massive ice fields; encouraging the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for American businesses engaged in Tibet; conditioning the establishment of new Chinese consulates in the United States on an establishment of a U.S. consulate in Lhasa; and acknowledging the role of the Central Tibetan Administration.

But the most politically significant provision is the assertion that the Dalai Lama's reincarnation process should be left solely to the Dalai Lama's and Tibetan Buddhist community's wishes, and that Chinese officials who interfere in the process will face Magnitsky sanctions.

That strikes at the core of one of Beijing's political-theological claims over Tibet; the argument, repeatedly made by Chinese officials, that only the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), cast as the legitimate successor of earlier dynasties, can determine the Dalai Lama's successor. In the same way as China claims that its territorial boundaries are defined by the furthest reach of the Manchu-ruled Qing Empire, it argues that it is the successor of the role that Qing emperors, looking to legitimize their own relationship with Buddhism, played in recognizing Tibetan leaders.

When then-U.S. President Donald Trump signed the omnibus spending bill, the TPSA became the new main legislative measure guiding U.S.-Tibet policy. Zhao Lijian, a bellicose Chinese

foreign ministry spokesperson, immediately released a statement admonishing the United States for interfering with China's "internal affairs." Zhao cited the CCP's Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas, otherwise known as State Religious Affairs Bureau Order No. 5, to justify China's outrage; the CCP in 2007 issued the Kafkaesque "Order No. 5," a decree that dictates that Buddhist temples must file a reincarnation application and obtain approval from several government agencies for upcoming reincarnations—all in the name of protecting religious freedom. China demonstrated further insecurity when the Chinese Embassy in India, inflamed by the triumphant Indian media coverage of the TPSA, sourly accused the Indian media of advocating the new act.

The dalai lama lineage spans centuries, but the power and status of the role exponentially increased through formal relationships between Mongol rulers beginning around the 16th century. Through these alliances, both parties found mutual benefits; the dalai lama gifted Mongol rulers culture and prestige, and the Mongol rulers allowed the dalai lama to amass political clout in Tibet. By wielding a role that interred spiritual and political aplomb, the dalai lama played a significant role in the cultivation of Tibetan Buddhism in the domestic and international sphere.

The fifth Dalai Lama, known as "The Great Fifth," oversaw the construction of the Potala Palace and the consolidation of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. In the power struggles among the clashing empires of the Qing dynasty and Central Asian leaders in the 18th century, the seventh Dalai Lama was established as the head of the Tibetan government. Manchu ambans—an official role somewhere between regional commissioners and ambassadors—were stationed across Tibet, but they largely acted as observers, not governors. When

the Qing dynasty collapsed in the early 20th century, the 13th Dalai Lama expelled the Manchu observers and formally declared Tibetan independence.

Of course, Tibet was not Shangri-La. Internal politics involving the lamas, ministers, and monasteries created a cloud of distrust in the central government. And the hesitance of Great Britain, India, and Russia to fully recognize Tibet as an independent government helped embolden China to invade Tibet in the 1950s. The powerful monastic community, determined to prioritize the cultivation of Tibetan Buddhism and their own power, eschewed the creation of a Tibetan military. So when the People's Liberation Army stormed in from eastern Tibet to Lhasa, the imbalance was palpable. Tibet's status rapidly deteriorated—under duress, the 14th Dalai Lama's representatives signed off Tibet's de facto independence in China via Mao Zedong's Seventeen-Point Agreement, a document that promised religious freedom, the authority of the dalai lama, and gradual CCP reforms. Mao swiftly reneged on these policies among many others.

Tibetans resented their loss of freedom and the devastating Maoist policies. Fights erupted between Tibetans and Chinese soldiers, which led to the massive 1959 uprising, when Tibetans gathered around the Dalai Lama's palace and loudly called for Tibet's independence. The escalating violence concerned the Dalai Lama and his advisors. After consulting with an oracle, the young Dalai Lama fled Tibet and into exile in India.

Though the CCP disparages the Dalai Lama as a “splittist,” he and his representatives have repeatedly and explicitly stated that they merely desire self-determination for Tibetans in Tibet while remaining under China's rule. The Dalai Lama's representatives have met with Chinese representatives nine times. But in the face of preconditions imposed by the CCP, such as the requirement that the Dalai Lama “admit” that Tibet has always been an integral part of China, a stalemate has ensued; Tibetan leaders will do anything save concede to ahistorical drivel. After establishing the Ti-

betan government-in-exile in Dharamshala, the 14th Dalai Lama relinquished his political role to the democratic institution in 2011. Despite his political abdication, the Dalai Lama remains both an enemy of the Chinese government and an icon for Tibetans and non-Tibetans, due to his legacy of nonviolent, compassionate struggle.

In the past few years, many have speculated on the Dalai Lama's next reincarnation, or whether he would have one at all. Supporters worry about the Dalai Lama's aging, as he is currently 85, but he has promised he will try to live as long as 113 years—a particular age that was prophesied by an 18th-century lama. Though the Dalai Lama has not yet completely confirmed the reincarnation question, evidence points that the dalai lama tradition will endure. Throughout the years, the Dalai Lama has stated that the next reincarnation will likely be born outside of Tibet, and he has suggested the possibility of a female dalai lama. The 14th Dalai Lama has affirmed that the dalai lama lineage will continue if the majority of Tibetan people wish for it to continue. At the 14th Tibetan Religious Conference in November 2019, Tibetan religious leaders and representatives of the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism adopted a unanimous resolution urging the Dalai Lama to continue the reincarnation tradition.

The Chinese government will try to appoint a puppet dalai lama. The Dalai Lama has not been the first major Buddhist figure whom the CCP has tried to co-opt—the Chinese government kidnapped Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama (a lama rank that is only second to the Dalai Lama's), when he was just 6 years old in 1995. His whereabouts today are unknown. The Chinese government's replacement Panchen Lama serves as a saccharine figurehead, and Buddhists have rejected his appointment.

The CCP's efforts to interfere in the 14th Dalai Lama's reincarnation are more than a power play—this is a one-sided antagonism, in which China is attempting to undermine the Dalai Lama. The CCP is attempting to control Tibetan

Buddhism in order to destabilize the diaspora Tibetan communities, for disruption would weaken morale; disunion of diaspora Tibetans would give China the chance to elevate its propaganda. Nevertheless, 340 Tibetan community leaders and representatives at the 3rd Special General Meeting, which was hosted by the Tibetan government-in-exile in 2019, passed resolutions resoundingly rejecting any Chinese interference in Tibetan reincarnation. In the future, the CCP will bombastically parade around its artificially ordained dalai lama, but it will be a weak farce.

Before the TPSA passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 392-22, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi gave a speech on the House floor. She remarked that, “If we don't speak out for human rights in China because of commercial interests, then we lose all moral authority to speak out for human rights in any other place in the world. And I've said on this floor, ‘To those who take the repressive Chinese government's side, we ask: What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul?’ I urge a strong vote for this legislation and support the Tibetan people as they seek to defend their culture, their identity and their pursuit of a future of freedom and dignity.”

The desire for religious freedom transcends borders. The U.S. government's support for the TPSA is profound for Tibetan Americans, and that sentiment also resonates for Buddhists at large and non-Buddhists around the globe. Time and time again, Tibetans have unwillingly become the canary in the coal mine of Chinese totalitarianism; the U.S. government's decision to emphatically support the Dalai Lama's true reincarnation process exemplifies solidarity that should be replicated by other countries.

Choose to be optimistic, it feels better.

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The Cost of Celebrating Mother Language Day in Tibet

By Karma Tenzin, Asia Times. February 22, 2021.



Chinese paramilitary police patrol near the iconic Potala Palace in Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region. Photo: AFP / Johannes Eisele

On February 21, 1952, in what was then East Bengal (renamed East Pakistan in 1956 and Bangladesh in 1971), many students were martyred for voicing their concerns and the protection of mother language, Bengali, under the government of the Dominion of Pakistan. Bengali students sacrificed their lives for language protection and for the sake of future generations in their own homeland.

Five decades later, February 21 was declared International Mother Language Day by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It was a tribute to the language movement started by Bengalis and the ethno-linguistic rights of people around the world.

In Tibet, however, a person called Tashi Wangchuk was sentenced in 2018 to five years in prison for speaking up on the protection of his mother language, which is in fact enshrined in the Constitution of the People's Republic China.

The Chinese government has used many strategies to Sinicize Tibetan people's identity. During the Cultural Revolution, thousands of sacred texts were

burned and reading and learning of the Tibetan language was considered backward. This led to 10 lost years in Tibet as teaching the language was banned.

Finally, schools in Tibet were reopened, but much of the curriculum was on the life of Chairman Mao Zedong and the greatness of Communism. Those years were marked by a deliberate marginalization of Tibetan tradition and culture.

Teaching of Chinese language was made compulsory in almost every corner of Tibet. The brightest Tibetan students were selected to travel to China. They were chosen for further studies and considered the foundation for Tibetan society. Later they returned to Tibet with limited skills in their mother tongue.

For the past few years, thousands of teachers (Han Chinese or other non-Tibetans) have been sent to teach in Tibetan areas without any knowledge of the Tibetan language and traditions. People who had knowledge of the Tibetan language and traditions were not given any proper teacher's training.

The so-called Bilingual Education Policy in Tibet led to introduction of two models, the first focuses on the Tibetan

language the second on Chinese language. The Model 1 education system lacked proper facilities, trained teachers and resources. This policy is implemented during the primary grades and after that all subjects are taught in Chinese.

A wave of resentment against this education and language policy has been expressed on the streets by students and in articles written by many Tibetans.

In Tibet, parents face the dilemma of choosing between the Chinese language and the Tibetan language. While the former provides greater survival opportunities for a child, the latter is about the survival of their identity and preservation of the linguistic culture of Tibet.

For the past 70 years, the Chinese government has employed every possible trickery to destroy the Tibetan language environment and to build a more Sinicized population who are loyal to the Communist Party regime.

Denying Tibetans the use of their mother tongue is against international human rights. As a member of the world community, the Chinese government needs to reconsider its policy on the Tibetan minority and protection of its language.

Tsering Shakya, in his 1999 book *Dragon in the Land of Snows: The History of Tibet Since 1947*, clearly captured the situation during the Cultural Revolution. He writes, "On the surface it seemed that Chinese had succeeded in assimilating the Tibetans: All expressions of Tibetan identity and culture was forbidden with the exception of the language, now the only marker of Tibet's separateness from China."

Currently in Tibet, the only marker of Tibetan identity is the Communist Party's onslaught against the Tibetan language, and as in the case of Tashi Wangchuk, voicing one's concerns and even celebrating Mother Language Day could land one in prison.

Time to Stop Tibet From Being a Taboo Word

By Claude Arpi, Daily Guardian, 4 February 2021



The Potala Palace in Lhasa, Capital of Tibet.

In 1998, when George Fernandes, then Defence Minister, affirmed that “China is India’s enemy number one”, he was politely asked by his own government to keep his thoughts to himself; the last thing that the Vajpayee government wanted was to get “bad relations” with the powerful northern neighbour. The policy then was to “engage” China.

Twenty years of the engagement policy have not paid any dividends. However, since the beginning of the confrontation in eastern Ladakh and the spread of the Chinese virus all over the planet, the ‘official’ mindset has started to change, including in India. Experts and thinkers now believe that one should study China; it is happening late in the day, but as the saying goes ‘better late than never’.

Addressing the 13th All India Conference of China Studies, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar recently admitted: “There is no question that we need to invest more deeply in the study of China. It’s salience in the global order is self-evident; and recent decades if anything have only heightened that prominence. That it is a proximate neighbour of India only makes stronger studies an even more compelling case.”

The minister added; “it is naturally to our advantage that there is solid exper-

tise on China in India.”

Let us hope that it translates into ‘solid’, not hazy academic studies, like the ones of the past.

In the meantime, the Indian Army, always more down-to-earth than the mandarins of South Block (though the Army HQ is also located in South Block), is working on a ‘Tibetology’ programme for its officers. According to The Times of India, the top brass is studying “a proposal for its officers to study Tibetan history, culture and language on ‘both sides’ of the Line of Actual Control and the international boundary as part of the measures being discussed to counter the propaganda and spread of influence by China.”

This is a most welcome move, though it should have taken place several decades ago. It appears that it was initiated during the Army Commanders’ Conference last October; it will now be taken by the Army Training Command (ARTRAC) in Simla. An Army official told The Times of India: “Army officers are generally well-versed with Pakistan. But similar expertise in China and the Chinese psyche is lacking. Officers who really understand China are very few in number. Tibetology fares even worse. These deficiencies need to be plugged.”

While working on this subject for a new website, I realised how much effort the British invested in Himalayan and Tibetan studies. One can find hundreds, if not thousands of research papers, exploration reports, maps, notes, books, etc. on the geography, history, anthropology, culture, religions as well as strategic studies of the mountainous northern frontiers of India; this includes the remarkable studies of the borders by botanists Frank Kingdon-Ward and naturalists Frank Ludlow who drew maps for their government.

The arrival of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army on the plateau in 1950-51 and the ‘ratification’ of the Communist presence in Tibet in April 1954 (through the infamous Panchsheel agreement) put a stop to all these researches (academic or otherwise); it was/is an unnoticed tragedy.

In March 1959, the Dalai Lama took refuge in India and he was told by the Prime Minister: “No politics on Indian soil!” No question of studying Tibet anymore.

In 1962, the ‘silk roads’ across the Himalayan passes were closed, not reopened till today (except for three minor land ports in Nathu-la, Shipki-la and Lipulekh-la). As a result, no serious studies were undertaken, or even encouraged; the leitmotiv being: “We should engage China, not upset Beijing”. Hopefully something will change now with ARTRAC’s initiative.

However, there are several difficulties. The first one is that there is a dearth of scholarship on the subject due to the ‘black-out’ put in place by India’s diplomacy. Nobody has been encouraged to study Tibet and the Himalaya, other than on the question of refugees’ rehabilitation or human rights.

After being involved in the issue for decades, I feel that the new scheme should

be called “Himalayan and Tibetan Studies”; there are many reasons for this. One is that for millennia, the Himalaya has been a bridge between the Indic and Tibetan civilisations with the great physical barrier witnessing constant contacts between two cultures which shared an aspiration for deeper values in life. Is not the blue-throated Shiva still living on Mount Kailash?

Contacts between the Tibetan plateau and the subcontinent existed in an ancient past. Unfortunately, scientific interdisciplinary studies are mainly being conducted in China, which has its own ideological bias. Very little is done on the Indian side, with many government restrictions due to the proximity of the border; will it be now encouraged?

There are many others reasons for linking the Himalayan and Tibetan studies: Whether historical, anthropological, spiritual and perhaps more importantly today, strategic.

The most serious problem is the taboo around the ‘T’ world (‘T’ for Tibet). For decades the word could not be pronounced by well-thinking politicians and babus; it has translated into the complete confiscation of the history which remains locked up in the vaults of South Block.

Shockingly, the records of the relations between India and Tibet have disappeared; all the historical records kept in Gangtok between 1889 and 1975 in the Office of the Political Officer for Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan cannot be traced.

A few months after the merger of the Himalayan state with the Union of India, four lakhs of files, pertaining to the period between 1890 and 1975, were dispatched to Delhi. In early 1976, six truck-loads arrived in Delhi under CRPF escort. Since then, nobody wants to know where these Sikkim Papers are or if this archival treasure still exists; for some, it may represent something which should be eradicated from the collec-

tive psyche, though it would have an immense historical value today to show that India and Tibet had a different relation than the one being portrayed by China.

The Political Officer (PO) was the Government of India’s eye over the entire Himalayan region. From the seasonal Indian Trade Agency (ITA) in Gartok in Western Tibet, to the ITA in Gyantse and Yatung, the Indian Mission (and later Consulate General) in Lhasa, all correspondence passed through Gangtok.

Though South Block probably has copies of some of the Sikkim Papers, the entire set is not traceable. It is a tragedy for researchers and it would undoubtedly help strengthen India’s case in the present circumstance; it should be the basis of any serious ‘Tibetology’ studies.

The question is: Can the mindsets change and the ‘T’ word stop being taboo? Let us hope for the best.

China Tries to Disrupt Tibetan Parliamentary Elections

In 2011, the Dalai Lama moved to transform the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) into a full-blown democratic government. Tibetans who are able to register and vote—currently, those residing abroad, hopefully one day those in Tibet too—elect 45 members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE). The president of the CTA, called Sikyong, is also elected directly by Tibetans abroad.

The TPiE includes ten members from each of the old Tibetan provinces—U-Tsang, Dhotoe, and Dhomey—; two for each of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism—Gelug, Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya— and two for the pre-Buddhist Bön religious community; five from the diaspora outside India, Nepal, and Bhutan, i.e., from Europe, the Americas, Australia-New Zealand, and the Asian countries not part of the Indian subcontinent.

The Sikyong can remain in charge for a maximum of two terms. This means that

the current Sikyong, the highly respected Harvard scholar Lobsang Sangay, cannot seek a third term. Sangay will be remembered for his activity in the United States, which led to the passage and signature by President Trump of the Tibet Policy and Support Act (TPSA) in 2020. The TPSA provides inter alia that the United States will oppose any attempt by China and the CCP to choose the next Dalai Lama and claim he is the reincarnation of the current one, will impose sanctions on the Chinese officers involved, and will only accept a Dalai Lama recognized by the Tibetan Buddhist community and its elected political representatives.

The first round of the Tibetan elections has been completed, and results will be announced on February 8. The second round will be on April 11, and the TPiE will gather on May 14 and elect its head.

In India and other countries, the elections went on smoothly. However, in

- Marco Respinti, Bitter Winter.org
several countries Tibetans reported to Bitter Winter that they do have evidence that Chinese spies tried to watch the process and note the names of those who voted.

The most serious disruption of the elections happened in Nepal, after a Chinese high-level delegation visited the Himalayan country on December 27, allegedly to help resolving problems between the different factions of the local Communist Party.

After this visit, the Nepalese police tried to prevent the elections by confiscating the ballots and arresting five Tibetans, including a journalist of Radio Free Asia.

Clearly, whoever wins, the elections deliver a powerful message in favor of democracy and freedom, which the CCP cannot tolerate.

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QUOTES

“We face many problems, many of which are our own creation. But we limit ourselves by thinking too much of me, of my needs, my family’s needs, the needs of my community and the needs of my nation. However, since we are responsible for so many of the problems that confront us, it’s reasonable to think that we can also solve them.”

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama During a Virtual
Conversation with US Conference of Mayors’s 89th
Winter Meeting on 26 January 2021.

“Religious traditions, local communities, different languages and modes of writing are all recognized and the people they belong to are happy to be part of India. This sets an example to the whole world. People with different languages and cultures can all live together and the Indian Police are protectors of the ‘ahimsa’ and ‘karuna’ that underlie this sense of belonging.”

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama During a Virtual
Conversation with Indian Police Foundation (IPF)
on 17 February 2021.

“We always accept that India has done the most for Tibetans because the largest number of Tibetans are here, all the monasteries and cultural institutions that were destroyed in Tibet were rebuilt here, and we have revived our civilisation here.”

- CTA President (Sikyong) Dr Lobsang Sangay
During an Interview WION TV News Channel on
4 February 2021.