



TIBETAN BULLETIN

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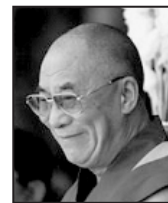
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CTA Commemorates 34th Anniversary of Nobel Peace Prize Conferment on His Holiness the Dalai Lama



Heads of the three democratic pillars of the Central Tibetan Administration applauding a cultural performance.

The Central Tibetan Administration celebrated the 34th anniversary of the conferment of the Nobel Peace Prize on His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamshala on 10 December 2023. The courtyard of Thekchen Choeling Tsuklakhang (monastery) saw the attendance of hundreds of people participating in the celebration.

The Kashag and the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, in their statement, extolled His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visionary leadership in practising compassion and His lifelong commitment and contribution towards efforts in resolving conflicts and promoting human rights.

Delivering the statements, Sikyong Penpa Tsering and the Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel noted that the day also marks the occasion of 75th Human Rights Day. Tibetan leaders objected to the recently released China's 'White Paper' on Tibet and strongly condemned the claims made by the Communist Party of China regarding the social and economic progress of Tibet.

Both Kashag and the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile explicated Beijing's vigorous

extermination of the Tibetan identity in the name of "forging a strong sense of the Chinese national as one single community", regulation and surveillance of every aspect of the management of monasteries and religious activities in the name of "Democratic Management Committees", systematic eradication of the Tibetan language behind the façade of "building solid foundation for a sense of community for the Chinese nation" and extensive Sinicisation of Tibetans under the pretext of "inter-ethnic exchanges, communication and integration".

The Tibetan leaders illuminated that the sole objective of the PRC in replacing Tibet with the term "Xizang" in the 'White Paper' is to 'wipe out' Tibet from the world map, make Tibet fade away from the memories of people of the world and subsequently assert its (PRC's) 'unfounded legitimacy'.

The event witnessed the felicitation of three staff who have extended 25 years of service towards community healthcare. The Tibetan Settlement Office, Dharamshala, was awarded the Target Achiever Award for achieving

the target mark for Tibetan Medicare System registrants. The event also saw the launch of TIPA's Yarkyi musical series and a Compilation of Substitute Glossaries on Materia Medica in Tibetan Medical Science.

The event was interspersed with riveting cultural performances by the TIPA artistes, and school children from schools based in Dharamshala.

The CTA leadership, including the Justice Commissioner Tenzin Lungtok of Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra of the Department of Education, Kalon Norzin Dolma of the Department of Information and International Relations, members of the Tibetan Parliament's Standing Committee, Election and Public Service Commissioner Wangdue Tsering Pesur, Secretaries along with the representatives of Tibetan NGOs attended the event.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama for advocating peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the Tibetan people.

Of the prizes provided in the will of Alfred Nobel, the Swedish industrialist and inventor of dynamite, the Peace Prize is the only one that is awarded in Norway instead of Stockholm.

The day also commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1948.



Department of Home Convenes 15th Administrative Conference of Tibetan Settlement Officers

The Department of Home, Central Tibetan Administration, convened 15th Administrative Conference of the Tibetan Settlement Officers (TSOs) on 6 November 2023 at Gangchen Kyishong.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the incumbent Kalon (Minister) of the Home Department, attended the inaugural of the four-day (6-9 November) convention as its chief guest, along with Kalon Dolma Gyari from the Department of Security. It was also attended by Cabinet Secretary Tsegyal Chukya Dranyi; Secretary of the Department of Religion and Culture, Chime Tseyang; Secretary of the Home Department, Palden Dhondup; Additional Secretaries Tenzin Norbu and Jampa Phuntsok; and 45 participating Tibetan Settlement Officers, including Chief Representative Officers of South Zone, Shimla and Ladakh.

Secretary Palden Dhondup, in his opening remarks, apprised the gathering about the purpose behind hosting successive Administrative Conferences. He said, “The meetings aimed to gather briefings on Settlement Officer’s undertakings and deliberate thoroughly on proposed agendas concerning the welfare of exiled Tibetans in order to implement them later in their respective settlement.”

He additionally underscored the importance of TSO’s role as a bridge between the general Tibetan public and central administration. He added that raising the welfare status of Tibetans and promoting His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s visionary guidance among inhabitants of respective settlements is the primary obligation of TSOs while commending all the TSOs of past and present for making Tibetan diaspora one of the most successful refugee community in the world. At the same time, he implored TSOs in the gathering to perform their responsibilities

dedicatedly and efficiently, given the unprecedented challenges arising regarding the continued sustenance of Tibetan settlements.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering addressed the conference on issues pertaining to current Kashag’s welfare policies. He stressed that TSOs refer to 16th Kashag’s Vision Paper as a guideline for CTA civil servants and hence briefly talked about its core ideas. He emphasised truthfulness, transparency, and working in compliance with provisions of the Charter to be predominant principles for TSOs to conduct their responsibilities. Furthermore, he implored TSOs to regularly remind their people, especially the younger generation, about the benevolent contributions made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and older generations for establishing this thriving community.

Furthermore, regarding the functioning of TSOs, the head of CTA also emphasised the need to keep strong ties with members of the Local Tibetan Assembly and carry out project plans in accordance with the Office of the Auditor General’s regulations to avoid complications.

A vote of thanks was conveyed by Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok before concluding the opening ceremony of the 15th Administrative Conference of the Tibetan Settlement Officers.



Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the incumbent Kalon (Minister) of Home Department, speaking during the 15th Administrative Conference of the Tibetan Settlement Officers.

16th Kashag Convenes 5th Permanent Strategy Committee Meeting

The 16th Kashag of the Central Tibetan Administration convened its 5th Strategy Committee Meeting on 8 November 2023.

This three-day bi-annual Strategy Committee Meeting followed up with the implementation of measures chalked out at the previous four meetings, discussed the progress of the ongoing strategic programs, and deliberated on future advocacy initiatives as per the committee’s objectives.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering chaired the meeting that was attended by members of the committee comprising former Kalon Tempa Tsering, former Kalon Dongchung Ngodup, and former envoy Kelsang Gyaltzen. In attendance were also Kalon Dolma Gyari, Kalon Norzin Dolma, Security Secretary Karma Rinchen, DIIR Secretary Karma Choeying, TPI Secretary Dawa Tsering, political secretary Tashi Gyatso, and Secretary Ngaba Tsegyam from Gaden Phodrang office.

“In addition to reviewing and discussing the strategic programs, this meeting will deliberate on the prevailing situation in Tibet concerning China’s colonial boarding school and the mass DNA collection, the changing political landscape of China vis-a-vis its influence in the global community”, said Secretary Karma Choeying of the Department of Information and International Relations when speaking to reporters before the meeting. He also added that the committee will discuss official meetings held between Sikyong and global leaders, lawmakers and intellectuals in 2023.

The Permanent Strategy Committee was established by the 16th Kashag in August 2021 following the dissolution of the previous Task Force on Sino-Tibetan Negotiations.

UK Parliament Debates Persecution of Buddhists in Tibet

A parliamentary debate on the persecution of Buddhists in Tibet was secured by the Honourable Member of Parliament Jim Shannon who is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Freedom of Religion and Belief, Shadow DUP Spokesperson for Human Rights and a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet. His initiative was supported by four other parliamentarians – Fiona Bruce, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Kerry McCarthy and Catherine West, who spoke during the UK Parliament session on 14 December 2023.

As part of his opening presentation on the grave situation of freedom of religion in Tibet, MP Jim Shannon said that “the Chinese Communist Party tries to take control of all religious affairs of Tibetan Buddhists”, the “people of Tibet are dear to me, so I find the topic to be of special importance”, “this House will not be silenced” and “let us be a voice of the voiceless in Tibet”. He asked the “Minister how we can help to accomplish” the many appeals that were forwarded to him, including:

1. protect the rights of the Tibetan people and His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama to follow their own religious tradition in the selection procedure of the 15th Dalai Lama,
2. free the Panchen Lama,
3. release all Tibetan prisoners of conscience, the majority of whom are from the monastic communities,
4. freedom to practice religious traditions without fear of state persecution and
5. freedom to learn Tibetan language which holds the key to accessing the complete Buddhist canons of Kangyur and Tengyur.

All the speakers highlighted the deterioration in the human rights situation in Tibet year after year and in addition to the grave religious freedom raised environmental concerns with potential to sour Indo-Chinese relations, forced boarding schools, weaponization of the Tibetans’ cultural heritage by the

Chinese Government, self-immolation cases etc. Speakers quoted from ‘Tibet in 2023’ published by the Tibet Advocacy Section of DIIR as well as from other reports and submissions, including from Free Tibet, ICT, CPHRC etc. as well as the innate peaceful nature of Buddhism that plays against them receiving the international attention they deserve.

There was also stress on the inadequate and disproportionate response of the UK Government on Tibet so far. While acknowledging the difficulty in monitoring the situation “because of China’s strict hold on communication flow in the region”, it was pointed out that the UK has a moral obligation “in addition to its legal requirements under international law commitments” “to call out these abuses and to work for change”.

UK Minister for Indo-Pacific, Anne-Marie Trevelyn answered on behalf of the government and concluded that “the UK will continue to hold it [China] to account—in public, in private and in concert with our international partners. We will continue to stand up for our values, and to promote and protect human rights in Tibet and around the world. Members’ concerns about the forcefulness of messaging about and

criticism of suppression from Chinese authorities are well heard today. We shall continue to press for stronger language and the continued use of sanctions tools to express the disgust and righteous anger that colleagues have set out so eloquently today.”

On the question of China’s efforts to erase the name “Tibet” and replacing it with the Chinese name, the Honourable Minister answered that “absolutely we continue to use the name Tibet ... and if that is a developing narrative we must pay close attention and counter it”.

Representative Sonam Frasi of the Office of Tibet, London, attended the event to follow the parliamentary proceedings in person. Also in present to show support were Dr Desmond Biddulph, President of The Buddhist Society and Tenzin Kunga, who is both the Advocacy Officer of Free Tibet and the Chairperson of the Tibetan Community in Britain.

MP Fiona Bruce, who was until recently the Chair of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, shared that this international body which has 42 member countries has selected the 11th Panchen Lama Gedun Choekyi Nyima as the prisoner of conscience for the month of December to champion.

On the occasion of World Children’s Day, Hon’ble Els Van Hoof, President of the External Relations Committee of Belgian Chamber of Representatives, condemns the forced assimilation of one million Tibetan children in Chinese state-run boarding schools.

“The forced assimilation of nearly one million Tibetan children in Chinese state-run boarding schools, separated from their families, is a violation of international human rights. The United Nations has confirmed this figure. The boarding schools are just the latest act perpetrated by Beijing on Tibetans with the aim to eradicate Tibetan language, culture, religion and identity. These policies are not acceptable.

Unfortunately, the issue is getting too little attention in Europe. Action is needed in order to prevent a whole generation of Tibetan children to be lost inside the Chinese system.

Tibetans remain subjected to a highly sophisticated surveillance and monitoring system, even collecting their DNA including from children without proper consent from their parents evidenced by reports from Citizen’s lab, Human Rights Watch etc.

I, therefore, condemn this action in the strongest possible terms and call on the PRC authorities to end the coercion of Tibetan children into state-run boarding schools, to cease repressive assimilation policies and to comply with the PRC’s obligations under international law.”

CTA Welcomes House Foreign Affairs Committee's Approval of the Resolve Tibet Bill

The Central Tibetan Administration welcomes the House Foreign Affairs Committee's (HFAC) approval of the Tibet bill, H.R. 533 Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act. The HFAC voted unanimously at a markup hearing on 29 November 2023 to approve the bipartisan "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act", also known as the Resolve Tibet Act.



House Foreign Affairs Committee approves Tibet-China Conflict bill (Resolve Tibet Bill)

The HFAC-approved bill is an amended House version of the legislation introduced earlier by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, alongside Senators Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Todd Young, R-Ind. The bill is a reiteration of the US official policy of supporting direct negotiation between the People's Republic of China and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's representatives or with democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan people, without preconditions, in order to resolve the Tibet-China conflict.

Following nine rounds of dialogues between China and His Holiness's representatives from 2002-2010, Beijing

has stalled the dialogue and instead conducted a series of colonial policies and programs in Tibet to annihilate the Tibetan language, religion, culture, and way of life posing an existential threat to the very identity of the Tibetan people.

The bill dismisses the People's Republic of China's (PRC) claim of Tibet being a part of China since ancient times as historically inaccurate, and it empowers the State Department to actively counter China's disinformation about Tibet's history, culture and institutions including the institution of the His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Washington, DC from 16 to 20 October

2023 in an effort to move forward the Resolve Tibet Act and he expressed high hopes for the passage of the Tibet bill in the 118th US Congress. Sikyong says, "The PRC's claim over Tibet as a part of China is fictitious as it lacks historical truth. We Tibetans have suffered enormously under the PRC government over many decades, yet we have always sought to settle our differences through nonviolent and peaceful dialogue."

Sikyong further asserted, "This bill will allow the United States to address its consistent calls for dialogue with more force and urgency while giving voice to Tibetans in their own country. This will not only help the cause of Tibetans, but also champion democracy, dialogue, and the cause of peace around the globe. Therefore, we are confident that this bill will advance through both houses of Congress and onto the President's desk."

"We thank HFAC Chair Michael McCaul, ranking member Gregory Meeks, and all the members of the committee for approving the Tibet bill, which builds on the incredible bipartisan support that the United States has always shown for our just cause."

European Parliament Adopts Resolution on Forced Assimilation of Tibetan Children in the Chinese State-run Colonial Style Boarding Schools

The European Parliament on 14 December 2023 adopted with a large majority, a resolution condemning the repressive forced assimilation of Tibetan children in Chinese state-run boarding schools in Tibet. This resolution comes at the helm of a robust debate held by the European lawmakers. The resolution was adopted by 477 votes in favour, 14 against with 45 abstentions.

Although the resolution focuses on the case of forced assimilation of nearly 1 million Tibetan children, it also raises the continuously deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet under Xi Jinping.

The resolution calls on the Chinese government for the immediate abolishment of the boarding school system in Tibet and urges the Council and member states to adopt targeted sanctions against Chinese officials for their involvement in the boarding schools.

The motion for the resolution was proposed by MEP Salima Yenbou from Renew group who was part of the

European Parliament delegation visiting Dharamshala in March this year and was supported by other political groups.

Representative Genkhang of the Office of Tibet, Brussels, welcomed the resolution and expressed appreciation to the European Parliament for the timely resolution on the forced assimilation of nearly 1 million Tibetan children in Chinese state-run boarding schools. The resolution shines a spotlight on the continuous and severe violations of the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people, including the right of the child, by the Chinese government.

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Kashag's Statement on 34th Anniversary of Conferment of Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama



Sikyong Penpa Tsering delivering Kashag's Statement on 34th Anniversary of the Conferment of the Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

On this special occasion of the 34th anniversary of the conferment of the Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Kashag offer its deepest gratitude and reverence to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Kashag also wish to extend its warm welcome to the dignitaries and guests who are present with us on this momentous occasion. We would also like to convey our hearty greetings to all the diaspora Tibetan communities and in particular the Tibetans inside Tibet.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his extraordinary leadership in advocating world peace and promoting universal values for a happy life. His Holiness accumulated all these qualities based on his consistent and exemplary practice of compassion and altruism from a very young age. The Award was also in recognition of the Tibetan people's steadfast commitment to the non-violent freedom struggle under the guidance and visionary leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Alfred Nobel, the founder of the Nobel

Prize and renowned scientist, was credited with inventing dynamite during the advent of the Industrial Revolution. He was deeply regretful and saddened at the misuse of his scientific invention for destructive ammunition and war. Therefore, he established the Nobel Prize foundation with a major part of his wealth to honour men and women from around the world for their outstanding achievements in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature and for work in peace. The conferment of Nobel Prizes in these fields began in 1901.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has emphasised that the practice of compassion and wisdom is useful to all of humanity, especially to those responsible for running national affairs, in whose hands lie the power and opportunity to create the structure for a peaceful world. His Holiness has also emphatically stated over and over again that every human being wishes to live peacefully without conflict and hatred. His Holiness has also reiterated that problems can be successfully resolved with a clear and calm mind; whereas hatred, jealousy, and anger cloud our sense of judgment.

The previous century is said to be a century of war and bloodshed. More than 200 million people were killed in conflicts including the First and Second World Wars. It is the common aspiration of humanity to make the present century a Century of Dialogue and Peace. The simultaneous celebration of the Nobel Peace Prize Day and International Human Rights Day on 10th December reflect humanity's common aspiration for the realisation of peace and human rights across the world. However, this aspiration is becoming more distant from us. There is no end in sight to the ongoing devastation in the Middle East conflict and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, among other violent conflicts are matter of grave global concern. Moreover, nations are increasing their military budget in the name of national security, forming blocs and boosting military strength. The communist and authoritarian states are perpetrating and propagating genocidal governing policies by blatant violations of humanity's fundamental freedom and human rights.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said the conflict between Palestine and Israel in Gaza is unimaginable and expressed deep concern over why such sort of violence takes place among those people who claim to hold religious principles. Just four days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, His Holiness said our world has become so interdependent that violent conflict between two countries inevitably impacts the rest of the world, and emphasising that war is outdated and non-violence is the only way, His Holiness has stressed the need to develop a sense of the oneness of humanity by considering other human beings as brothers and sisters.

Last month, the People's Republic of China's government released its white paper titled "CPC Policies on the Governance of Xizang in the New Era: Approach and Achievements". It claims that "the social and economic

progress of Xizang epitomizes the nation's outstanding achievements in development, created on the roof of the world through the Chinese path to modernization".

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is now vigorously carrying out the extermination of the Tibetan identity in the name of "forging a strong sense of the Chinese national as one single community, promotion of the Chinese language, Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and developing socialist values". Such infliction of suffering and oppression on the Tibetan people by the CCP authorities is unparalleled and unprecedented.

In 1935 and 1936, the Communist Red Army defeated by the government of Republic of China led by Chiang Kai-shek fled for their lives by retreating from Chaksam and Karze in Kham to northward along Ngaba, Barkham, Kakhog, Trochu, Sungchu, Dzoegge and Thewo in Amdo. The hunger-stricken Chinese army looted food and properties from the Tibetans and plundered religious artefacts from the monasteries. Mao Zedong later admitted to journalist Edgar Snow that this is our only "foreign debt" referring to Tibet. Moreover, many Tibetans were killed when they revolted against the marauding Chinese army. For instance, 118 Tibetans from 27 families in Muto Village in Sungchu were massacred when they protested against the Chinese army for looting their grains. The Tibetan areas falling in the way of the three invading Red Army suffered calamitous famine unheard of in their history.

PRC's invasion and occupation of Tibet resulted in the death of an estimated 1.2 million Tibetans and the destruction of over 6,000 monasteries until 1980. This is more devastating than the Armenian genocide of the early 20th century.

The white paper talks only about the "Tibet Autonomous Region" "(TAR)" and nothing about the situation in the Tibetan areas incorporated into the Chinese provinces. However, the policy of exterminating the Tibetan

race is being enforced all across Tibet. The ploy applied in the name of inter-ethnic exchanges, communication and integration, is firmly to Sinicise Tibetans extensively in every section of the community, including rural and pastoral communities, schools and monasteries.

There has been a sharp increase in the appointment of Chinese cadres in the Tibetan areas. Although the white paper mentions a mere figure of "over 10,000 officials dispatched to assist Tibet", it has not made public the number of appointments made in specific areas or in other forms. The Chinese government has highlighted its efforts in establishing job placement centres in 17 provinces in mainland China to employ around 95% of college graduates from the "TAR", to integrate the younger generation of Tibetans into Han Chinese.

Likewise, the white paper touched upon measures to encourage inter-ethnic marriage in the name of ethnic unity as a legal obligation under the Five-Year Plan. But they have failed to mention the large-scale forced resettlement of Tibetans carried out under the pretext of environmental protection, infrastructure development and poverty alleviation. It claims that more than 200,000 people were lifted out of poverty and are supposed to have found jobs outside their hometowns. Reports of a considerable number of young Tibetans taken away to China in groups continue to emerge. For example, as part of a project to assist 40,000 workers in agricultural and pastoral areas in Tsochang Tibet Autonomous Prefecture to find employment, the Chinese government itself reported that a loan of 1 million yuan was doled out to help 640 workers open noodle restaurants in different parts of mainland China.

The Chinese government is vigorously accelerating the Sinicisation of Tibetan Buddhism. It forces Tibetan clergy to strictly adhere to socialist values

and enhance the five identifications to represent the great motherland, the Chinese nation, the Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party and Socialism with Chinese characteristics. This is targeted at eroding the foundation of the study of Tibetan Buddhism based on Nalanda tradition to enable the promotion of the study of the Chinese language and ingrain communist ideology among Tibetan monks and nuns. The publication of "books on the interpretation of Tibetan Buddhist sutras" over a decade under the direction of the United Front Work Department is, in fact, a distortion of the Buddhist canons to fulfil the communist's political objectives.

The "Democratic Management Committees" have established Communist Party Branches in Tibetan monasteries and nunneries in Tibet to regulate and surveil every aspect of the management of monasteries and religious activities. The monks are being indoctrinated with national consciousness, citizenship consciousness and rule of law consciousness in Tibetan society to "forge the consciousness of the Chinese nation community. Tibetans are coerced into hoisting the Chinese flag on the rooftops of monasteries and houses. Likewise, the photos of the five Chinese leaders from Mao to Xi are forced to be displayed in monasteries, public halls and houses.

The white paper says that "the reincarnated Tibetan living Buddhas, including Dalai Lamas and Panchen Rinpoches must be looked for within the country, decided through the practice of lot-drawing from the golden urn, and receive approval from the central government". The official propaganda by the PRC is nothing but the absurdity of the Chinese leaders under the delusion of political paranoia. It is also a brazen rejection of the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation, trampling of objectives of Trulku reincarnating to serve the Dharma, and ignorance of the present state of Tibetan Buddhism flourishing worldwide.

The Chinese government claims that

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the promotion of the common spoken and written Chinese language is aimed at protecting the “fine traditional Chinese culture and developing the spirit of communism, which has helped build a solid foundation for a sense of community for the Chinese nation”. However, behind this façade of propaganda, the Tibetan language is being systematically erased. The mass transfer of Tibetan students has accelerated from Kham and Amdo regions to schools in mainland China. Alarming, around one million primary Tibetan school children in Tibet are forcibly taken into boarding schools away from their families and their religion, their culture, their language, and their way of life.

Similarly, Tibetan language test in the recruitment exam for government posts in Tibet has been abolished and the medium of official communication among the administrative departments has been changed from Tibetan to Chinese. Moreover, those involved in initiatives to safeguard the Tibetan language are labelled political criminals and punished with imprisonment. Reports also indicate “Karze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture” has issued a notice to ban the Tibetan language classes in primary to secondary schools in the region from next year. Since the teaching of the Tibetan language in schools is forbidden and staff recruitment exams in the Tibetan language are abrogated, there is no space for using the Tibetan language. The intent, therefore, is to erase Tibet as a race from the face of this earth.

The white paper talks about so-called achievements in literary and artistic works such as forging ahead in the New Era, radio, TV, exhibitions and museums

as educational bases for patriotism, and protection of Chinese culture in the name of cultural and ethical development, that has nothing to do with the preservation and promotion of Tibetan religion, culture and tradition. Rather it clearly shows how Tibetans are forced to praise and imbibe communist ideology. Despite the CCP’s claims about economic investments in a plethora of projects and results achieved, these are not intended for the well-being of the Tibetans, but to facilitate the Chinese government to easily control Tibet, exploit Tibet’s natural resources and surveil Tibetans. The building of the so-called nature reserves and national parks, which cover over one-third of the Tibetan area, is akin to colonial powers seizing land from the natives.

As part of its broader Sinicisation policy, the term Tibet is being replaced with “Xizang” in pinyin in the white paper. Moreover, the names of places between cities such as Lhasa to villages are being changed from Tibetan to Chinese. The sole objective of the PRC in replacing Tibet with the term “Xizang” is to wipe out Tibet from the world map and subsequently hope that Tibet will fade away from the memories of people in the world to assert its unfounded legitimacy.

China’s Tibet policies are aimed at obliterating the nearly 1,400 years rich Tibetan language; Sinicise Tibetan Buddhism founded on Buddha’s teaching on equality without discrimination based on caste, power and territory; eradicating Tibetan culture ingrained with compassion and non-violence; and assimilating the distinct Tibetan race into the majority Han. Such miscalculated strategies and misguided policies are untenable and bound to

fail. When the Tibetans were faced with choosing the Nalanda tradition of Indian Buddhism and Chinese Hoshang’s meditative practice that has penetrated the upper echelons of King Trisong Detsen’s court that infringes on the regulation and practice at Samye Monastery, the decision of the emperor to follow the Indian tradition has helped Tibet to preserve the Buddhist faith in its pristine form and quality.

The extermination of Tibetan identity under Mao’s repressive policies marks the darkest period in our history. Notwithstanding utter destruction, under His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s extraordinary leadership and with the perseverance of Tibetans in exile and the unshakable determination of our brethren in Tibet, not only the Tibetan culture and religion been preserved and promoted within a short time but also continues to remain alive and flourish worldwide including in the Himalayan regions.

We call upon the Chinese Communist Party to immediately end its blatant violation of the Law on Regional National Autonomy guaranteed in the Chinese Constitution and cease policies and programs aimed at extermination of the Tibetan identity. If the Chinese government does not put an end to these policies, it will cause irreparable wounds in the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people that will impact the harmonious relationship between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples as neighbours since ancient times. Being a signatory to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the United Nations 75 years ago on 9 October 1948, the CCP should be held accountable for violating the terms of this international law.

Finally, we hope and pray that peace prevails around the world and everyone enjoys freedom and human rights across humanity. We pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama so that He can spend the rest of his life for the promotion of world peace and moral values. May truth and the non-violent cause of Tibet prevail.



Statement of TPiE on 34th Anniversary of Nobel Peace Prize Conferment on His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Thirty-four years ago to this day – on the 10th of December in 1989 – the Nobel Peace Prize, which is renowned across all the ten directional spheres of this world, was conferred on His Holiness the Great 14th Dalai Lama, the master of the entire corpus of teachings of the Buddha, the apex ornamental pride of all spheres of existence including the heavenly realms, the most exalted noble one who manifests as a lotus-holding being, who exudes great motherly affection for all sentient beings despite the absence of any prior intimacy, who is the very embodiment of compassion, a champion of world peace, the destined patron deity of the Snowland of Tibet, the unsurpassable protector and guide of all beings in all lifetimes, an edifying guiding light, and whose full name is Jetsun Jampal Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso Sisum Wanggyur Tsungpa Mepey-de Pel-Sangpo. And so, on this momentous occasion of the 34th anniversary of that great event, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile wishes to pay solemn homage to His Holiness for His kindness with joy, faith and sense of gratification on behalf of all Tibetans in Tibet and in exile, greeting Him with infinite utterances of words of auspiciousness and wellbeing.

In this connection, it is worth recalling what Tertön Nyima Drakpa's catalogue of prophets, the Great Compassionate One, Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance, says: "Through the powerful force of the aspirations of this Dharma King, a son of a courageous bodhisattva, a refuge and protector of beings, a sole ally of the teachings, will appear from the centre and will uphold the teachings of sūtra and mantra. And the deeds of one named Gyatso will spread in all ten directions." It is thus seen that His Holiness the Great 14th Dalai Lama was clearly prophesied by name long ago as a reincarnation of the Dharma King Trisong De'u-tsan and as someone whose deeds for the sake of sentient beings will spread far and wide across all the ten



Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel delivering Statement of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on 34th Anniversary of Nobel Peace Prize Conferment on His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

directional spheres of this world. From a tender age, His Holiness the Dalai Lama arrived in Central Tibet. He assumed temporal and spiritual leadership of Tibet of great weightiness at a time when the situation in the country was such that it was teetering on a critically endangered interregnum which threatened its very survival. Ever since that moment, His Holiness has devoted himself entirely for the wellbeing of others in general, but particularly after coming into exile when He committed himself to helping and benefiting people across the world by means of promoting and reviving, as the case may be, the culture of the Tibetan people with its great potential to serve humanity. For this purpose, He relied solely on the method of non-violence based on the profound Buddhist religious teachings and Mahatma Gandhi's principles while directing His efforts towards realizing the just cause of Tibet. Furthermore, acting on the basis of mutual respect, friendship, fairness, and kindness, His Holiness has made fruitful positive contributions while making efforts directed at helping to resolve international conflicts, promote human rights, and protect the natural

environment with the aim to achieve meaningful peace and wellbeing across the world. His marvellous efforts in these endeavours have earned him admiration from people all across the world, and it led to Him being honoured with the global renown of the Nobel Peace Prize.

His Holiness has travelled to countries and regions across the world in order to carry out deeds of unsurpassable merits. That is why even to this day, prominent people as well as others from everywhere across the world – East as well as West – irrespective of the question of whether or not they are believers in the Buddhist religion, keep coming to Dharamshala to meet with Him and seek His guidance whenever they can find the opportunity. He treats them all without any attitude of favouritism or partiality while interacting with them with compassionate concern and providing them with the nectar of His words of advice. These have had great transformative effects on the mental attitude of many people, leading to positive developments in their day-to-day lives and enabling them to adopt an approach to helping other living beings. His engagements in activities directed

at helping others in these and numerous other ways in efforts directed at ensuring the wellbeing of all sentient beings have proceeded like the continued waxing of the moon to attain a level of fullness where He has come to be recognized as a champion of world peace. Not only that, His Holiness has also become an eminent leader who is greatly admired and held in high esteem by people and organizations in countries across the world, both in the East and West. His Holiness the Dalai Lama frequently reiterates that He has dedicated His life to carrying out four principal commitments: The first is to make efforts to realize the commonality of the happiness of all human beings by means of promoting human values; the second is to promote harmony among the different religions; the third is to uphold, preserve and impart Tibetan culture and spirituality; and the fourth is to restore classical Indian culture and secular ethics in conjunction with modern education. We all should engage in studying these four commitments with the objective of internalizing and adopting them in our day-to-day conduct on the basis of the ideas and guidance provided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This is the best grand offering of gratitude we can make to please Him.

The Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2023 has been awarded to Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi. She has been awarded the prize for her indefatigable courage in fighting against the oppression of women in Iran and for her resolute adherence to her vow to fight to promote human rights and freedom for all. Therefore on behalf of the Tibetan people in Tibet and in exile, the Tibetan Parliament in Exile wishes to express its admiration for her remarkable accomplishments while extending its congratulations to her. Likewise, the Parliament-in-Exile also wishes to express its admiration and offer congratulations to the other distinguished winners of this year's Nobel Prizes in the fields of literature, economics, physics, chemistry, medicine and so forth.

Today is also observed as the World Human Rights Day. Sadly, to the people

inside Tibet, even the most fundamental of human rights exist only in absolute denial. What is more, far from making any move to relax the hard-line policy it has continued to pursue so far, the government of China keeps adhering to its routine, single-minded practice of distorting the truth and lying about the real situation in its relentless efforts to delude people inside the country as well as governments and peoples across the world.

On the 10th of November this year, the State Council Information Office of the government of China publicized in Tibetan and English languages a white paper titled "CPC Policies on the Governance of Xizang in the New Era: Approach and Achievements." Since 1992, the government of China has already released a total of 16 white papers on Tibet alone. The essence of the contents of these so-called white papers is to try to establish as existent what does not exist in Tibet and that which is not true as true about the situation there. Even more than that, to whitewash the hidden reality of its policies and so forth in Tibet has been the sole objective behind the issuance of those white papers.

The content of the latest white paper on Tibet is seen to be filled mainly with nothing but brazen lies about the achievements of the government of China since its takeover of the country. It is obvious that the survival or extinction of the Tibetan people rests on the lifeblood of their culture and religion. But on these matters, there has not been any meaningful achievement. Rather, China has politicised issues concerning them under slogans and rhetorics such as "Suffering turned into happiness with the arrival of the Communist Party!" "Motherland, Welcome!" "The hearts of the Tibetan children are with the Communist Party!" and so forth, to cite just a few examples. From the point of view of "achievements" in the field of religion, the Chinese government slogans and rhetorics included one which said that "As of the end of 2022, 164 monks had been accredited as Geshe Lharampas ... ranking", to cite just one

example taken from the white paper itself. This figure is seen to be cited as the number of Geshe Lharampa degrees awarded thus far since the revival of this religious academic award system in Tibet. Continuing its distortion of reality, the white paper has continued that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Rinpoches "must be looked for within the country, decided through the practice of lot-drawing from the golden urn, and receive approval from the central government." Such a method can never be acceptable to the Tibetan people or followers of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Not only does it not accord with the established Tibetan Buddhist traditions, but it is also nothing more than a reiteration of China's old and distorted narration of the history of Tibet. The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile wishes to again remind the government of China that the discovery and recognition of the reincarnation of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama should be based on respect for the wishes of the Tibetan people, on whatever decision His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama himself may make, and the decision of the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust. No country or group has any power whatsoever to interfere in it. In particular, 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. The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile wishes to make it absolutely clear that any such politicization of this reincarnation issue will not lead to any reposing of faith in or recognition of any candidate chosen in such a manner.

It bears pointing out that organs of the United Nations Organization, the United States of America, as well as countries in Europe, Asia and so forth, have been continuously criticizing the government of China for its record on the human rights situation in Tibet and in calling for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Thinley Pal-Sangpo (Gedhun Choekyi Nyima) as well as other Tibetan people who have been imprisoned for political reasons and who therefore continue to be subjected to all manners of cruelty.

Likewise, they have also criticized and called for an end to the government of China's ongoing programme of using coercive means to put Tibetan children in colonial-style boarding schools for the ulterior purpose of assimilating them. And they continue to extend support to the Tibetan people by means of calling on the government of China that it must grant those in Tibet their right to learn and use or practice their own language and script, religion, and culture. Additionally, during their meeting on the sidelines of the recently concluded summit of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders, held in the United States city of San Francisco, US President Joe Biden raised concerns regarding the People's Republic of China's human rights abuses, including in Tibet, with President Xi Jinping of China. The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile wishes to express its appreciation for this gesture. Besides, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile wishes to take the opportunity provided by this occasion to again remind the government of China that it has become a matter of utmost importance for it to make efficient use of the current moment as regards the issue between the peoples of Tibet and China. In view of this fact, the government of China must review its stand on the issue of Tibet on the basis of the ground reality, bear accountability in the international community, pay heed to the actual feelings of the Tibetan people in Tibet, and make efforts to resolve the Sino-Tibetan dispute through a negotiated settlement based on the proposal made by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

In addition, governments, peoples, parliaments, and leading figures and officials of groups and associations in countries that included the United States of America and those in Europe have provided solid support on the issue of Tibet on the international stage. To all of them, and especially to the most gracious people and government of India, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile wishes to express its heartfelt gratitude.

In conclusion, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile wishes to pray that the supreme leader of the Tibetan people, His

Holiness the Dalai Lama, may remain as the protector of all sentient beings throughout the three realms of the universe, and especially those of our Land of Snows, for a hundred aeons; that all His wishes may be fulfilled with

spontaneity, unhindered by obstacles; that all the violent conflicts in this world may subside so that all beings find peace; and that on this basis the truth of the Tibetan cause may come to see its daylight in all speediness.

DIIR's Statement on 75th Anniversary of International Human Rights Day

On 10 December 1948, 75 years ago, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a landmark document that enshrines the inalienable rights of all human beings, which everyone is entitled to without any pre-conditions. A precursor to the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UDHR along with these two international covenants, forms the International Bill of Human Rights. This has resulted in strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world.

China's volitional and ongoing systematic abuse of Tibetans' basic rights since its illegal occupation displays a total disregard for international human rights law and the mechanisms designed to promote and protect people's rights, which China is bound to respect and comply with.

Widespread human rights violations by the People's Republic of China (PRC) government in regions under its illegal occupation of Tibet, and others including, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia, Hong Kong, Macau were evident during its Third Periodic Review by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in March this year. China was questioned on various allegations of human rights violations in Tibet including but not limited to the persecution of Tibetan human rights defenders, the forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads, forced labor, discrimination in the workplace, the

lack of religious freedom and language rights, assimilation of Tibetan children in boarding schools, etc. However, the Chinese delegation either denied all charges or provided blanket self-laudatory responses without providing clarification or any data to back them.

In 2023, Freedom House ranked Tibet as the least free region in the world for the third consecutive year. In Tibet, the PRC government continues to operate colonial boarding schools, separating nearly one million Tibetan children from their families and depriving them of the opportunity to learn their mother tongue, the Tibetan language, and get acquainted with Tibetan culture and traditions. A significant majority of Tibetans, specially writers, intellectuals, environmentalists, community leaders, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and artists are unlawfully arrested, imprisoned, tortured and subjected to enforced disappearance for months before being brought for sham trial. A group of six UN Special Rapporteurs questioned China on the whereabouts of Lotse and Samdup, as well as the arrest of Rachung Gendun, Sonam Gyatso, Zumkar, and Youdon, all of whom were illegally arrested for their religious activities. Police assaults and beating of Gonpo Kyi on multiple occasions for her protest against the PRC government's unjust life sentencing of Dorjee Tashi showcase PRC's suppression of the right to protest for free and fair trial. The recent sentencing of Tibetan singer Palden to three years in prison for posting a Tibetan patriotic song on social media serves as an example of the dire condition under which Tibetans live and how no space is left for their freedom of

expression. For the ninth straight year, China is ranked highest among abusers of internet freedom, as evidenced by a comprehensive surveillance system and persecution of Tibetans for asserting national identity, such as sharing religious books, patriotic Tibetan songs, pictures of His Holiness, and writings critical of Party ideology. Chinese police have taken DNA samples from 1.2 million Tibetans, including five-years-old children, without consent, raising grave concerns regarding the existence of a right to privacy as well as putting their families at risk of being arrested by the Chinese police. Custodial deaths of Chukdhar (in August 2022) and Geshe Phende Gyaltzen (in February 2023) highlights the extensive and systematic human rights abuses in Tibet with near-total impunity, including the use of torture and ill-treatment against Tibetans on a routine basis. Tibetans are particularly repressed in their religious rights, with lay Tibetans and children forbidden from participating in religious activities, while monks and nuns are subjected to political indoctrination sessions and barred from religious teachings and discussion in public or on the internet. China refuses to enclose any credible information on the whereabouts of Tibet's 11th Panchen Lama following 28 years of enforced disappearance despite multiple inquiries from the UN Working groups as well as international community. The self-immolation of at least 157 Tibetans till now highlights the dire and worsening human rights situation in Tibet.

Transnational repression by the PRC government has led to self-censorship among Tibetans diaspora, who live in constant fear and have, as a result, been

forced to sever contact with family members in Tibet to protect them from potential PRC reprisals. Over two million Tibetan nomads and farmers have been forced to relocate from their traditional grasslands without proper compensation. The vast vacated land has been illegally claimed and later used for military training camps, mining activities, and large-scale government projects, including hydropower plants on transboundary rivers, that benefit the PRC government at the expense of local Tibetans and the environment.

The DIIR extends its sincere appreciation for solidarity efforts from the various governments, officials, parliamentarians, UN Special Rapporteurs, human rights defenders, Tibet supporters and non-government organizations that have expressed grave concerns about China's human rights violations in Tibet, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia, and elsewhere and called for the protection of human rights defenders. China's fourth cycle of the UN Universal Periodic Review in January 2024 is a significant occasion to raise and challenge China's atrocious human rights conduct and serious violations of its national and international obligations in countries under its illegal rule. We urge governments, member states, and the international community to hold the PRC government accountable for its acculturation and assimilation policies to eradicate Tibetan identity through the implementation of unlawful regulations and inhuman treatment of Tibetans both in prisons and on a daily basis. China must oblige the demands of the UN experts and remedy its repressive policies in Tibet and guarantee genuine universal human rights for Tibetans.


“China’s Tibet policies are aimed at obliterating the nearly 1,400 years rich Tibetan language; Sinicise Tibetan Buddhism founded on Buddha’s teaching on equality without discrimination based on caste, power and territory; eradicating Tibetan culture ingrained with compassion and non-violence; and assimilating the distinct Tibetan race into the majority Han. Such miscalculated strategies and misguided policies are untenable and bound to fail.”

- Sikyong Penpa Tsering, CTA

“We talk about building peace in the world, but we human beings tend to create divisions among us, seeing other people in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Consequently, we fight and waste precious resources on inventing ever more powerful weapons. If we’re really interested in building peace in the world, the way to begin is by cultivating peace of mind.”

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama Confers Teaching on Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas in Gangtok



A view from the back of Paljor Stadium during His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teaching in Gangtok, Sikkim, India on 12 December 2023.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama arrived at the Paljor Stadium in the morning of 12 December 2023, he was received at the door by Shri Sonam Lama, Hon'ble Minister of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Department. When he reached the pavilion from which he would teach, he was welcomed once again by H.E. Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Sikkim and Shri Prem Singh Tamang (Golay), Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim.

Tschokling Rinpoché spoke a few words of welcome to the dignitaries seated on the stage and to the estimated 40,000 people assembled in stadium, some of whom had arrived before 4:00 am. He invited the Chief Minister to speak.

"Namo Buddhaya," he began and proceeded to welcome His Holiness, Rinpoché, the Hon. Governor of Sikkim, the Hon. Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Sikkim Legislative

Assembly, Ministers and other esteemed dignitaries. Addressing representatives of the media and members of the public, he said:

"I welcome each and every one of you on this auspicious occasion.

"I welcome His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the manifestation of Avalokiteshvara to the beautiful, green state of Sikkim.

"Today, we are in the presence of one of the world's most respected spiritual leaders. His message regarding the oneness of humanity inspires people around the world. He has come all the way from Dharamsala to speak to us, for which I express a great debt of gratitude. Our spirits will be lifted by his words; our intentions will become pure. Listening to his explanation of Gyalsey Thogmé Sangpo's 'Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas' will help us find the path of peace as we negotiate our way through modern life. I am honoured once again, on behalf of the people of

Sikkim, to express our gratitude." His Holiness offered the Chief Minister a statue of the Buddha.

"Today, the disciples are mainly people from Sikkim and its neighbours," His Holiness began, speaking in Tibetan that was translated into Nepalese and other languages. "Many people have come here out of regard for me; I welcome you all.

"Most of you have a religious practice and many of you have an interest in the teaching of the Buddha. We human beings, from the moment we're born, do not want to suffer; we want to be happy. This is a natural instinct that we share even with birds and animals. All living beings simply want to be happy, and human beings are able to articulate this wish. Nevertheless, we persist in engaging in activities that bring us sorrow.

"We see other people as somehow different from us; as people who have

different beliefs from us. However, I respect all religious traditions, and wherever I go, I visit other people's places of worship, churches, mosques and temples, and pay my respects there.

"People create divisions on the basis of religious faith when what we need is harmony and friendship. Here in India, the Land of the Noble Ones, we find all our religious traditions, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and so forth and they co-exist in harmony. They may adopt different philosophical points of view, but they share a common message about the need to cultivate a good heart, a warm heart. And it is for this reason that all these religious traditions deserve our respect.

"Religion should be able to help us resolve our problems, but instead we too often create problems in the name of religion. Within Buddhist tradition we have four schools of philosophical tenets: Particularists (Vaibhashika), Sutra Followers (Sautrantika), Mind Only (Chittamatra) and the Middle Way (Madhyamika), but they all share a common emphasis on cultivating warm-heartedness.

"We should not let religion divide us. As I've already mentioned, I respect all religious tradition because they all advise us to be honest and warm-hearted. Some faiths believe in a creator god, others do not. But, as I usually say, religious faith is a personal matter. However, it remains the case that all human beings need a good heart, which is why I consider secular ethics to be so important.

"Essentially, all human beings want to be happy, but when we look back at history, we see how often wars have been fought in the name of religion. This approach is out of date. It's the responsibility of each and every one of us to work to create a peaceful, harmonious world."

His Holiness declared that we have enough trouble dealing with natural disasters and so forth, without adding to it by squabbling in the name of religion. When we were born we had no religion. Having given birth to us,

our mother cared for us with love and affection. Without that we would not have survived. This is true of all human beings and is a good reason why we should help each other. His Holiness reiterated that we need to help one another with a keen sense of the oneness of humanity. If we can do that, he said, we'll be able to build a happier world.

His Holiness drew attention to the tremendous resources employed to make ever more powerful weapons whose use is only destructive. He repeated that wherever he goes, he points out that we are all the same, we all want to be happy, therefore we need to be friendly to each other.

"Many people died in the recent floods here in Sikkim. We should pray for everyone who was affected, those who died and those still living. We'll say one round of a 'mala' of 'manis' together. People in Tibet and the neighbouring Himalayan region have a close connection to Avalokiteshvara. We have a custom of saying Om mani padme hung, so today we'll recite a round together for those who suffered as a result of the recent disaster. We can dedicate whatever merit we create to achieving the state of Avalokiteshvara.

"The Thirty-seven Practices begins by paying homage to Avalokiteshvara who is praised by all the Buddhas and has accomplished all qualities and who 'while seeing that all phenomena lack coming and going, makes a single-minded effort for the good of all living beings'.

"Whatever exists does not do so from its own side. Things exist by way of designation. People and things are dependently arisen and it's because of that that it's important that we live in harmony with each other.

"The text tells us to listen to explanations of how people and things lack inherent existence, to reflect on what we've learned and meditate on what we've understood. I make the awakening mind of bodhichitta and the wisdom understanding emptiness the core of my

practice. Consequently, when I think of the trouble people in Tibet have been put to because of communist ideology, I'm not angry or moved by hatred. I feel compassion for those who have made things difficult for us.

"If you can, when you wake in the morning, generate bodhichitta. Then your negative thoughts will subside, and you'll find peace of mind. Bodhichitta brings happiness and well-being to others and to us. I find that training my mind to cultivate bodhichitta not only brings peace of mind, but enhances my sense of physical well-being.

"Bodhichitta makes you relaxed and able to sleep soundly; it sets your mind at ease. You'll no longer be jealous or competitive.

"I grew up basking in my mother's loving kindness and later learned formally about cultivating bodhichitta. Now, I'm 88 years old, almost 90, and I have a calm, relaxed mind. Of course, accumulating merit and wisdom ultimately takes us to enlightenment, but in my experience, we can also feel the effect they have on our day-to-day lives. There are several explanations about how to generate bodhichitta, but even if you can't think deeply about them, if you can cultivate a warm-hearted attitude towards others, it will bring you peace of mind."

His Holiness took up the 'Thirty-seven Practices' and read through the verses highlighting the advice to give up your homeland; cultivate seclusion; let go of this life; give up bad friends; cherish the spiritual teacher; take refuge in The Three Jewels; never do wrong; aspire to the never-changing supreme state of liberation and develop the altruistic intention—these are the practices of Bodhisattvas.

The text goes on: exchange your own happiness for the suffering of others; dedicate your body, possessions and your virtue, past, present and future to those who steal from you; take all the other's misdeeds upon yourself. When someone disparages you, place them,

as you would your spiritual teacher, on the crown of your head; take on the misdeeds and the pain of all living beings; see all worldly fortune as without essence; subdue your own mind; abandon clinging attachment, and do not take to mind (inherent) signs of subject and object—this, His Holiness remarked, refers to emptiness.

Don't regard things as real and give up attachment; see them as illusory, and safeguard your ethical discipline. Along with skillful means cultivate the wisdom which does not conceive the three spheres (as real). His Holiness mentioned that with regard to emptiness, it's important to study the Middle Way (Madhyamika) treatises such as Nagarjuna's 'Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way', Aryadeva's '400 verses' and most especially Chandrakirti's 'Entering into the Middle Way'.

The text continues: examining your own errors, rid yourself of them; don't mention the faults of those who have entered the Great Vehicle; give up attachment to the households of friends, relations and benefactors; give up harsh words; destroy disturbing emotions like attachment as soon as they arise; whatever you are doing, ask yourself 'What's the state of my mind?' and finally, dedicate the virtue from making such effort to enlightenment—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

Having completed his reading of the teaching on the Thirty-seven Practices His Holiness reminded his listeners that the essence is to have a good heart and to be determined not to part from the wish to benefit sentient beings. To have an altruistic mind is what's most important.

With regard to wisdom His Holiness recommended reading and reflecting on a series of verses from chapter six of Chandrakirti's 'Entering into the Middle Way'. He stated that he recites and reflects on these verses every day and he recognises what a deeply positive effect this has had on his mind. Things may appear to exist inherently, but in fact they only exist by way of designation.

If the intrinsic characteristics of things were to arise dependently, things would come to be destroyed by denying it; emptiness would then be a cause for the destruction of things. But this is illogical, so no real entities exist. 6.34

Thus, when such phenomena are analyzed, nothing is found as their nature apart from suchness. So the conventional truth of the everyday world should not be subjected to thorough analysis. 6.35

In the context of suchness, certain reasoning disallows arising from self or from something other, and that same reasoning disallows them on the conventional level too. So by what means then is your arising established? 6.36

Empty things dependent on convergences, such as reflections and so on, are not unknown. And just as from an empty thing like a reflection a perception can arise that bears its form, 6.37

likewise although all things are empty, they do arise from emptiness in a robust way. Since no intrinsic nature exists in either of the two truths, phenomena are neither eternal nor annihilated. 6.38

"With that," he said, "were done."

There followed a short ceremony on behalf of the people of Sikkim. On the basis of a few short verses they made fervent prayers for His Holiness's long and healthy life. They requested him to live for aeons for the benefit of all sentient beings. Visualizing the entire world as a Buddha-field, they offered it to him.

"May you live until cyclic existence comes to an end. May the sound of the Dharma drum dispel all suffering. May you live long to liberate beings from misery.

"You who clarify the teaching combining emptiness and compassion, Lord and Protector of the Land of Snow, Avalokiteshvara in person, may all your aspirations be fulfilled."

A series of cultural presentations was performed to celebrate today's happy occasion. First a team from the Sikkim Cultural Department sang and danced. They were followed by a group of women and men from the Tibetan community, apparently representing the



Sikkim Chief Minister Shri Prem Singh Tamang presenting a statue to His Holiness the Dalai Lama during the Long Life Prayer offering at Paljor Stadium in Gangtok, Sikkim, India on 12 December 2023.

three provinces of Tibet, as indicated by their costumes. They sang and danced with exuberant joy while His Holiness looked on and smiled in appreciation.

As proceedings came to an end, Tsewang Doma, Additional Secretary of the Home Department requested His Holiness to inaugurate two projects virtually from where he sat. First, he was invited to lay the foundation stone of the Karmapa Park Project at Rumtek, a project organized by the Tourism Department. Next, he was requested to lay the foundation stone of the Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo Statue to be erected in the Simick-Khamdong Constituency, East Sikkim at the behest of the Culture Department.

Shri Sonam Lama, Hon'ble Minister of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Department of the Government of Sikkim offered words of thanks. He began by observing that Sikkim is a hidden land blessed by Guru Padmasambhava. He thanked His Holiness for the teaching and significant advice he had given the people of Sikkim today. He thanked the dignitaries who had attended today's celebrated event and expressed gratitude to Tsechokling Rinpoché and his team for their good organisation.

“The Chief Minister and I went personally to Dharamsala to invite His Holiness to our state,” he recalled. “Since the time of Gyalwa Lhatsunpa, the first Chögyal, and the Great Fifth Dalai Lama there have been strong connections between the Dalai Lamas and Sikkim. For us His Holiness represents both Guru Padmasambhava and Avalokiteshvara and it has been our great good fortune to invite him here. Once again I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to this great event.”

The day's program was completed with the recitation of auspicious verses.

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama Inaugurates First International Sangha Forum



His Holiness the Dalai Lama posing for a photograph with participants of the International Sangha Forum in Bodhgaya, Bihar, India on 20 December 2023.

On 20 December 2023, His Holiness the Dalai Lama drove the short distance from Ganden Pelgyeling Monastery to the International Convention Centre, Bodhgaya, where he was to take part in the inaugural session of the first International Sangha Forum (ISF). The members of the organizing committee welcomed him at the door. Before going inside, he took a moment to enjoy a group of Mönpas from Arunachal Pradesh dancing on the lawn in celebration of his arrival.

Once His Holiness had taken his seat on the stage between the Ganden Tri Rinpoché and the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri Pem Khandu, the moderator, Ven Mahayano Aun paid homage to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, saluted His Holiness and greeted all the representatives of Buddhist traditions in this most auspicious place. He declared the aim of the Forum was to hold a dialogue on role of Buddhism in the 21st century and to discuss how to create understanding and cooperation among the array of Buddhist traditions. He announced that there would be three days of discussions, followed on the fourth by prayers for peace in the world in the vicinity of the Mahabodhi Temple. Siling Tongkhör Rinpoché translated

this introduction in English was into Tibetan.

To begin with, a group of Theravadin monks recited the ‘Karaniya Metta Sutta’—‘The Buddha’s words on loving-kindness’—in Pali. They were followed by a group of monks from the Sanskrit University in Varanasi who chanted the Mangala Sutra—the Sutra of Auspiciousness—in Sanskrit.

The moderator requested His Holiness and other leaders to press buttons before them to light a lamp of wisdom and open proceedings. As they did so, a bright multicoloured electric lamp appeared before them, and on the large screen behind them, to great fanfare.

Secretary of the International Sangha Forum Ms Wee Nee Ng welcomed His Holiness, Chief Minister Pema Khandu and all the guests to this first meeting of the ISF. She reiterated that the purpose was to establish collaboration between the Buddhist Pali and Sanskrit traditions and to discuss what it means to be a Buddhist in the 21st century. She expressed the hope that the conference would contribute to making the world a better place,

Director General of the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) Abhijit Halder disclosed that it was an honour for him to speak before such an esteemed gathering. He predicted that the message of this conference would have significant impact. He mentioned that humanity has recently seen an increase in flooding, drought and earthquakes. The oceans are rising, while snowfall in the mountains is declining. We must ask, he said, what we have done to make nature so angry with us. It makes us pause to ask where we've gone wrong and what we have to do.

He quoted what His Holiness had said at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992:

"I believe that to meet the challenge of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Each of us must learn to work not just for his or her self, family or nation, but for the benefit of all mankind. Universal responsibility is the real key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace, the equitable use of natural resources and, through concern for the future generations, the proper care of the environment."

At a time when warfare has broken out in several parts of the world, Halder noted, the primary focus of the Dharma is to develop compassion and wisdom. The Buddhadharma is part of the world's culture, he went on, it teaches us how to live in peace with prosperity and compassion. We need to shift our attention to what will make human beings more compassionate and peaceful. The teachings of the Buddha, intended to relieve suffering, show us how to live at ease in peace and harmony. These were the instructions that the emperor Ashoka encouraged to spread across Asia.

Halder ended by quoting a verse, so favoured by His Holiness, from Shantideva's 'Bodhisattvacharyavata',

As long as space endures,
And as long as sentient beings remain,
Until then, may I too remain
To help dispel the misery of the world.

Moderator Ven Mahayano Aun then

asked His Holiness, who he referred to as the inspiration for everyone present, to give the conference's opening address.

"I pay homage to the Buddha with my body, speech and mind," he began. "Today, we are gathered in this sacred place where Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment. And although we are living in a degenerate era, the Dharma he taught still shines bright.

"The Buddhas do not wash away unwholesome deeds with water, nor do they remove the sufferings of beings with their hands, nor do they transplant their own realization into others. It's by revealing the truth that they help beings to become liberated.

"We make suffering for ourselves due to our destructive emotions. Because of ignorance we create negative karma. This is why the Buddha taught, 'Do no wrong; cultivate virtue.' So, we need to generate a good heart and avoid doing others harm. Instead of ill-treating them, we should help people and bring them benefit. Doing that will bring us peace of mind, which, in turn, will enhance our physical well-being.

"To act out of anger or attachment is a mistake. The essence of Dharma is to study what is taught, to reflect on what you've learned, and to apply what you've understood within yourself. If you cultivate an altruistic attitude, the awakening mind of bodhichitta, you'll be able to fulfill the goals of yourself and others. "Thinking, may I generate bodhichitta, call on all sentient beings as your guests at the feast of enlightenment. Cultivating bodhichitta is a powerful practice. Along with it we can engage in the six perfections and the four ways of gathering disciples. The focus is serve other sentient beings. Do that and the world will become a friendlier, more peaceful place."

His Holiness harked back to the time of the Tibetan religious king, Songtsen Gampo in 7th century. He caused a Tibetan system of writing to be devised, based on the Devanagiri alphabet.

Consequently, when Shantarakshita came to Tibet in the following century he advised Tibetans not to rely on the Pali and Sanskrit languages, but to translate Buddhist literature into Tibetan. The Kangyur and Tengyur collections of scripture and treatises are something we can be proud of. Our having preserved them has not only been good for us but can be of benefit to the world at large.

His Holiness remarked that people are becoming tired of materialism. Under these circumstances, if can cultivate warm-heartedness, we'll not only feel physically at ease, but our minds will be full of joy. What's more this will be a cause for being more warm-hearted in life after life.

"Bodhichitta is a precious practice. I've found it's been very helpful for me," His Holiness revealed, "so I ask all of you too to keep it mind. Help other beings; become a Buddha for them. By cultivating peace of mind within ourselves we'll make a practical contribution to peace in the world.

"I have observed the advantages that cultivating bodhichitta and the wisdom understanding emptiness can bring and I can attest to their practical value from my own experience. I haven't developed single-pointed concentration, but if I had, I think I would make great progress. In the meantime, bodhichitta brings inner strength and confidence. It gives us the courage to work for all sentient beings."

His Holiness commented that the mantra of the 'Heart Sutra' indicates the step-by-step path to Buddhahood. When Avalokiteshvara recites it, "Tadyata gaté gaté paragaté parasamgaté bodhi svaha" ("It is thus: Proceed, proceed, proceed beyond, thoroughly proceed beyond, be founded in enlightenment"), he is advising followers to proceed through the five paths. His Holiness also mentioned how useful it can be to study the great treatises: Nagarjuna's 'Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way', Shantideva's 'Entering into the Way of a Bodhisattva' and Chandrakirti's 'Entering into the Middle Way'.

“In order to share experience with others,” His Holiness noted, “you have to have experience to share. These two principles, the awakening mind of bodhichitta and the wisdom understanding emptiness are the core of my practice. I invoke them every day from the moment I wake up. This way I gather merit and purify mental defilement. I continuously make a prayer to be of service to others as long as space endures. Being of benefit to others is the way to lead a meaningful life.

“If you wish to help others, you need to discipline your own mind. I ask my Dharma friends to take this to heart. I was born in far-off north-east Tibet and was brought to Lhasa to study as a small child. Now I can feel the impact these practices have had on me, which is why I’m able to share them with you. I urge you to reflect on bodhichitta and the wisdom understanding emptiness.

“The essence of both the Pali and Sanskrit traditions is altruism. The most important thing is to cultivate bodhichitta.”

Representatives of the several Buddhist traditions came forward to address the assembly. Ven Ru-Jing, Abbot of the Bliss and Wisdom Monastic Community, Taiwan offered his greetings to the forum. Phra Dhambodhivong, Chief Abbot of the Royal Thai Monastery, Bodhgaya, representing the Thai Sangharaja and the royal family, Thailand, greeted His Holiness and prayed that the Three Jewels bless the forum and its proceedings.

Ven Khenpo Sonam Bhumden, Chief of Research and Translation, Office of Jé Khenpo, Bhutan, praised the opportunity the forum presented to conduct a thorough-going dialogue about Buddhism today. May all beings be blessed with peace and prosperity, he prayed.

Preah Iddhimuni Moeng Sang, the President of the Cambodian Buddhist Monk Society, USA, stated that it was an honour to be here in the presence of His Holiness and the Mahasangha. He

mentioned that his group had recently completed chanting the entire Tripitaka here in Bodhgaya.

His Eminence Khambo Nomun Khaan, Geshé Jetsun Dorje, Abbot of Ganden Thekchenling Monastery, Mongolia, sent a message that was read on his behalf. He congratulated the organizers for bringing together such an assembly to discuss the role of Buddhism in the 21st century.

Ven Kumdin Na, Member of the State Sanghamahayanayaka, Yangon and Deputy Sangharaja of Myanmar, offered his greetings.

Shadjin Lama, Geshé Lobsang Chödak, Head Lama of the Kalmyk Buddhists of Kalmykia, Russia, whose words were translated by Telo Tulku, offered his greetings and stated that it was an honour for him to take part in this forum in this extraordinary place.

The Ven Tri Mingzen a representative of the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha invoked the Enlightened One saying “Namo Shakyamuni Buddha” and remarked that the key teaching about impermanence means that things are always changing. He paused for a minute’s meditation before continuing to comment on the significance of observing the precepts.

Most Ven Dr Warakagoda Gnanarathana Mahayanake Thero, the Mahayanake Thero of Asgiriya Chapter of Siyam Maha Nikaya, Sri Lanka, observed that religious conferences are held all over the world. What distinguishes this one is the opportunity to discuss the Buddha’s teaching of harmlessness and kindness here in the birthplace of Buddhism. And in this way, we try to preserve what the Buddha taught.

Shri Tashi Namgyal, Hon Executive Councillor, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh, offered greetings on behalf of the people of Ladakh and encouraged spirited dialogue between the Pali and Sanskrit traditions.

Shri Pema Khandu, Hon Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, India, saluted His

Holiness, as well as scholars, monks and nuns.

“I thank His Holiness for blessing this assembly by his presence and for setting us an example,” he said. “I’m grateful that forums like this, that fulfil His Holiness’s vision of bringing the Pali and Sanskrit traditions together, are being held. And I’m happy to be able to take part in this sharing of knowledge and wisdom. We try not only to cultivate the Buddha’s teachings within ourselves, but also attempt to make them the basis of policy. May His Holiness live long.”

His Holiness asked to be able to add to what he’d already said.

“On this auspicious occasion, in this sacred place, I’d like to mention that when it comes to preserving the Buddha’s teachings, we should not be satisfied with merely wearing monastic robes. We must study and practise. We need to learn about the workings of our mind and emotions. Today, even scientists are interested to learn about the mind and the means for finding peace within.

“There are also different levels of subtlety in the mind, such as the waking state, sleep and dream. I’ve known people who have generated a dream body enabling them to go here and there at will. Practice of the Dharma is not only about conducting rituals and reciting prayers. It entails techniques for training our minds and tackling our emotions.

“The Tibetan tradition encompasses the entire teachings of the Buddha from both the Mainstream and Mahayana traditions, which include explanations of the subtlety of the mind. Thank you.”

Ven Khensur Jangchub Choeden, Secretary General IBC offered words of thanks.

“I pay homage to the Holy Sangha led by the great 14th Dalai Lama,” he began. “I’m delighted to express gratitude to everyone who has spoken this morning, to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the

Ganden Tri Rinpoché, the Arunachal Chief Minister and representatives of many Sangha communities. As we gather here in this most sacred place, we must be thankful for the insight contained in the Holy Dharma and for the sense of belonging and purpose it

instills in our lives.

“Let us pause to recognise the diversity of this meeting. Let us use this gathering to learn, share and improve our mutual understanding. Let us open our hearts to each other. I thank all who have given

support to this forum. Also, thanks to those who have provided accommodation for members of the Sangha. Thanks to all the tireless volunteers. And thank you all for coming. I hope you will leave Bodhgaya energised and inspired.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama Participates in World Peace Prayer Session with International Sangha Members

Following the successful conclusion of the three day International Sangha Forum, delegates gathered on the morning of 23 December 2023 beneath the Bodhi Tree to make prayers for world peace. His Holiness the Dalai Lama came from the Tibetan Monastery, Ganden Phelgyeling to join them. Reaching the west side of the Mahabodhi Temple, he greeted Sakya Gongma Rinpoché and Jangtsé Chöjé Rinpoché, who were seated to his right. He waved to the crowd and then greeted the Ganden Tri Rinpoché who was seated to his left.

Welcoming His Holiness, the eminent guests and respected Sangha members Siliing Tongkhör Rinpoché declared:

“We have gathered here in the shade of the Bodhi Tree recalling that this is where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Let us draw strength from the teachings he gave, which remain relevant and timely today. Amidst the unending challenges facing the world, let us focus on the shared purpose of bringing solace, compassion and a sense of oneness to all in need.

“In the hallowed vicinity of this ancient temple may our prayers transcend borders resounding as a call for peace, compassion and healing. Bodhgaya where enlightenment took place centuries ago is a beacon to a brighter future and a more compassionate world.

“As we join our hands in prayer may this gathering bring humanity enduring strength, and may the blessings we invoke today bring comfort to many and spread like ripples around the world.

May our prayers be filled with the wisdom that originated here.”

Ven Mahayano Aun announced that on this occasion prayers would be chanted of by representatives of 11 Sangha communities from the Pali and Sanskrit traditions. “We are all followers of the same Buddha,” he added, “May our prayers contribute to peace and harmony among all living beings.”

First His Holiness and then Sakya Gongma Rinpoché, Jangtsé Chöjé Rinpoché, the Venerable Abbot of the Royal Thai Temple, Bodhgaya, Ganden Tri Rinpoché and the Deputy Sangharaja of Myanmar were invited to light a lamp of wisdom to give an auspicious opening to the gathering.

President of the International Buddhist Council (IBC), Bodhgaya, Geshé Ngawang Tenzin Gyatso gave a welcome address.

“On behalf of the IBC I welcome you to this land of enlightenment. First of all, let me express deep gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for blessing us by his presence and for presiding over this gathering. I also welcome the Sangharajas from different countries. The International Sangha Forum, as well as this meeting today, fulfilling the vision of His Holiness, have been coordinated by the South-east Asia representative of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

“Our primary focus has been to establish an ongoing dialogue and collaboration among the various Buddhist

communities belonging to the Pali and Sanskrit traditions. This is a day for joy and happiness as we witness members of these traditions praying together for the welfare of all humanity.

“Once again, I thank His Holiness for imparting the true teaching of the Buddha and for rejuvenating the whole world by revealing the ancient wisdom of India rooted in compassion and wisdom. May the teaching of the Buddha remain long in our hearts and may all our teachers live long and in good health.”

There followed prayers for universal peace chanted by Sangha members from India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Cambodia, all of whom prayed in Pali. Monks from Taiwan recited the ‘Heart Sutra’ in Chinese. Monks from Korea, Japan and Vietnam chanted the ‘Heart Sutra’ in their respective languages as they beat a wooden fish to keep their rhythm. Lastly, Tibetan monks recited the ‘Prayer of the Three Continuums’ and the following verse:

May there be happiness in the world,
may harvests be abundant,
Increasing the production of grains; may
spirituality flourish;
May we achieve all happiness and
benefit
And fulfill all our heartfelt desires.

Before chanting the ‘Heart Sutra’ in Tibetan, they recited this ‘Praise to Prajnaparamita’ by Rahula:

Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom,
Mother of all Buddhas of the three times,

Which is beyond words, inconceivable,
inexpressible,
Unproduced and unobstructed, in the
nature of space,
The objective domain of self-aware
wisdom.

They ended with this concluding verse:

With the coming of the Buddha in the
world
The teaching shines forth brightly like
the sun
The custodians of the teaching are
harmonious like siblings
Through them may the teaching flourish
for long.

Bhikkhu Pragyadeep, General Secretary
of the International Buddhist Council,
Bodhgaya offered words of thanks:

“His Holiness the Dalai Lama and
guests—monks, nuns and lay-people
from 33 different countries—today we
have assembled beneath the Bodhi Tree,
the sole witness of the enlightenment
of Siddhartha Gautama. This is the first
time that representatives of so many
lands have gathered together here in the
shade of the Bodhi Tree. We hope there
will be many more such assemblies in
the future.

“It is His Holiness who has explained
Buddhism in such a way that it has
attracted great interest. Due to your
efforts many people in different parts of
the world are paying attention to what
the Buddha taught. Your presence brings
Buddhism alive for people. Therefore,
we pray you will live long.

“Many scholars among representatives
from 33 countries have presented papers
to the conference, full of knowledge and
intelligence about consciousness and so
forth. We thank you for the inspiration
you have given us.”

Ven Mahayano Aun expressed the hope
that with a shared commitment to the
Dharma and a collective aspiration for
world peace the prayers said today would
spread love, wisdom and compassion
around the world leading all sentient
beings to live in peace and harmony.

“May all our efforts contribute to the
flourishing of the Buddha’s teaching,”
he added, “and may all beings find
peace and happiness. This concludes our
prayers for the world beneath the sacred
Bodhi Tree.”

His Holiness made an impromptu
request to address the assembly:

“All of us, including you my Dharma
friends gathered here, know that the
unique aspect of the teaching of the
Buddha is that it deals with dependent
arising—pratityasamutpada. When
you combine this with the aspiration
to attain nirvana, or liberation, you
tread the paths of Arhats and Solitary
Realizers. But when you combine it with
the awakening mind of bodhichitta your
path leads to Buddhahood.

“In the Nalanda tradition masters such
as Nagarjuna have shown that we should
examine the teaching of the Buddha in
the light of reason, not relying solely on
faith. I was born in the remote north-east
of Tibet, but I came to Lhasa to study
the Dharma with my tutors. By using
my own intelligence through study and
reason I discovered how profound were
the Buddha’s instructions. In my daily
practice I focus on bodhichitta and an
understanding of emptiness. So, I can
tell you that the Buddha’s teaching is
not only vast and profound, it is also
practical and effective in terms of inner
development.

“As is indicated by the ‘Heart Sutra’
mantra, we aspire to reach Buddhahood
by following the five paths. We are not
confined to merely saying prayers, we
must follow the direction shown by
Nagarjuna and others and examine the
teaching in terms of reason and logic. I
have acquired good experience of both
bodhichitta and emptiness such that
I can say I have reached the path of
accumulation and hope to reach the path
of preparation.

“From my own experience I have learned
how practical the Buddha’s teachings
are. If you integrate them with your mind,
you’ll see their effect, which ultimately
results in the attainment of Buddhahood.

In other words, the Buddha’s teachings
are vast and profound.

“I myself am a follower of the Buddha.
I have studied his teachings, but I have
also meditated on them. Through study
and practice I have gained experience
of how vast and profound they are. As a
person with such experience, being here
at this sacred place where the Buddha
attained enlightenment, I feel most
fortunate.

“None of us wants to suffer; we all want
to be happy, but those who cultivate the
causes of happiness through actually
practising the path are few. Remember,
the Buddha told us that the Enlightened
Ones don’t wash unwholesome deeds
away with water, and they don’t remove
the sufferings of beings with their
hands, nor do they transplant their own
realization into others. It is by teaching
the truth of suchness, revealing reality
as they have experienced it, and the
means to pacify restless minds, that they
liberate beings. What’s more he stated,
‘You are your own master.’

“I can see how we rid ourselves of
negative emotions, the causes of
suffering by applying the teachings
within ourselves. I can feel the impact
the Dharma has had on my mind. If you
too practise, if you study and practise,
you’ll see how doing so brings about
peace of mind. When you understand
how mental afflictions can be subdued,
you’ll see how we can reach the final
goal of enlightenment by following the
path.

“This is what I wish to share with you—
that we should integrate the teaching
of the Buddha within ourselves. Thank
you.”



The Battle for the Soul of the Dalai Lama

-by Lobsang Sangay for Foreign Affairs

To Control Tibet, Communist China Ventures Into the Spiritual Realm

In 1954, China's paramount leader Mao Zedong met Tenzin Gyatso, the then 19-year-old who was the 14th Dalai Lama, the spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet. "Religion," Mao acerbically observed to the young Dalai Lama, "is poison." Five years later, Chinese forces would roll into Tibet and take over the country, driving the Dalai Lama and many other Tibetans into exile. The communists, who espoused atheism and derided religions, sought to yoke Tibet to China by squashing its local culture and historical institutions; destroying Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, nunneries, and cultural artifacts; and suppressing the practice of the Tibetan Buddhist faith.

In more recent times, however, Beijing has taken an inordinate interest in the ins and outs of Tibetan Buddhism. The *Global Times*, a Chinese state mouthpiece, has published in the last two years a series of articles asserting the Chinese state's control not just over territory but over souls. The articles claim that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has the final say over the traditions that guide the Tibetan belief in reincarnation—particularly over the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama.

As the Dalai Lama gets older, China has become increasingly invested in the question of his succession. When a high lama—an important priest—dies, his post is typically filled by someone identified as his reincarnation. This tradition is deeply entrenched in the spiritual and cultural fabric of Tibetan Buddhism. Communist China, which under Mao was so vigorously and uncompromisingly atheist in its orientation, now seeks to control the process that will identify the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. This audacious move points to China's drive to consolidate its hold over Tibet, a strategy that not only seeks to fatally

undermine the institution of the Dalai Lama but also encroaches on the Tibetan people, their rich culture, and their civilization.

In addition to a significant recent uptick in Chinese propaganda on this topic, Beijing has convened a committee composed of government-selected Tibetan monks and key Communist Party officials to preside over the process that will select the next Dalai Lama. Authorities have set up museum exhibitions about the reincarnation of Dalai Lamas in both Beijing and Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, highlighting the Chinese government's claims to legitimacy in supervising the selection. Such an orchestration will blatantly violate Tibetan tradition and is a move of monumental concern to the Tibetan people.

The norms of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of reincarnation and the Dalai Lama's stance on his own reincarnation must steer the process of determining any future succession. In accordance with that tradition, instructions the Dalai Lama leaves before his death should be the basis of any search to identify his successor. Beijing, however, wants to usurp both spiritual and temporal authority in Tibet. The Chinese government's transgressions are legion, including legislative interference, historical revisionism, and the outright denial of the Dalai Lama's fundamental right to guide the choice of his successor. Along with the government's broader efforts to suppress Tibetan culture, China's actions constitute a grave violation of the basic human rights of the Tibetan people.

THE OLD ORIGINS OF NEW BEGINNINGS

The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet is an esteemed spiritual leader who continues to amass a large following worldwide. His teachings, which emphasize peace and compassion, resonate across

cultures and religions and have elevated him to remarkable heights over the past few decades. In recognition of his contributions toward global peace and nonviolence, he has received an array of international recognitions, including the Nobel Peace Prize and the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal.

The respect the Dalai Lama receives around the world stands in stark contrast to the opprobrium heaped on him by the Chinese government. Chinese officials have persistently vilified him, calling him a "splittist" and "a wolf in monk's clothing," while deriding his followers as "the Dalai Clique." Beijing sees the Dalai Lama as a threat, even though he has lived in exile in India since 1959. That threat is, of course, significantly overblown. The Dalai Lama has not advocated Tibetan independence since the 1970s but, rather, demands genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution. Since 2011, he has devolved all of his political and administrative responsibilities to a democratically elected Tibetan leadership. Yet the Chinese government continues to accuse him of inciting political unrest against the state.

The Dalai Lama turned a venerable 88 this July. At some point in the years ahead, the question of succession will arise. China wants to determine who the next Dalai Lama will be, and Chinese officials have taken a huge interest in the sacred Tibetan tradition of reincarnation, known as tulku. It dictates that a young lama of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition inherits the religious, economic, and political responsibilities of the predecessor following that person's death. The process that leads to the identification of the reincarnated lama is guided by the instructions left by the previous incarnation and is carried out by highly trained Buddhist scholars, often chosen by the previous lama. In the case of the Dalai Lamas, this process is often supervised by the regent appointed

by the Dalai Lama or by the government in Tibet. In the last eight centuries, many reincarnated lamas have been found throughout the Tibetan plateau but also elsewhere in the far-flung world of Tibetan Buddhism: in the Himalayan regions of Bhutan, India, and Nepal, and even in areas such as Mongolia and parts of Russia where there are many Tibetan Buddhist practitioners, particularly in the Russian republics of Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Tuva.

LAMAS AND BUREAUCRATS

In 2007, the Chinese government asserted its jurisdiction over spiritual matters and proclaimed that the tulku system could operate only with state approval. Traditional precedents were not enough to govern the selection of reincarnated lamas; it now was subject to Chinese laws. Authorities promulgated a national-level decree through the State Administration and Religious Affairs department. This legislation formalized an earlier set of reincarnation rules announced by the Chinese-controlled Tibet Autonomous Region in 1995.

China may officially be an atheist state, but through such legislation it continues to interject itself into the religious lives of its citizens. Its track record of meddling in the selection of Tibetan reincarnated lamas has proved largely unsuccessful, often leading to widespread anxiety and confusion among Tibetans. A distressing example is the case of the 11th Panchen Lama, the second-most well-known lama in Tibetan Buddhism, who was endorsed by the Dalai Lama in 1995 at the age of five as the reincarnation of the tenth Panchen Lama. That same year, the Chinese government forcibly disappeared him from his hometown in Tibet. Authorities then elevated their own choice of a boy as the 11th Panchen Lama. The disappeared boy remains missing after 29 years, as do his parents and the main members of the search committee that identified him.

China's interference in the reincarnation system has also fostered bad practices. Under Chinese law, all reincarnated lamas must register with the government,

leading to the transformation of a sacred religious practice into a bureaucratic process open to sordid abuse. Jampel Gyatso, a prominent Tibetan scholar and senior member of the CCP, alleged in 2016 that bribery and corruption were rampant among Chinese officials involved in the process of recognizing reincarnated lamas. From 2007 to 2017, under the guise of religion and tradition, the number of registered lamas quadrupled from around 300 to over 1,300, an increase that has much more to do with corrupt political interests than spiritual needs. This political interference has cast a shadow of uncertainty and suspicion over a time-honored Tibetan tradition.

Along with its bureaucratization of a Tibetan cultural and spiritual practice, China relies heavily on historical distortion to assert its legitimacy in wading into Tibetan religious matters. A *Global Times* article in 2021 falsely claimed that all previous Dalai Lamas were born in China. Even under the presumption that Tibet has always been part of China, not all Dalai Lamas were born in what is recognized as Tibet. The fourth Dalai Lama, Yonten Gyatso, was an ethnic Mongolian born in Mongolia, while the sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso, was an ethnic Monpa from present-day Arunachal Pradesh in India. Furthermore, the Chinese government incorrectly asserts that Qing Emperor Shunzhi granted the title of "the Dalai Lama" in 1653 to Tibetan spiritual leaders. In truth, the title "Dalai" is a Mongolian word meaning "Ocean" and was bestowed in 1578 by Mongol leader Altan Khan. "The Dalai Lama" translates to "Ocean of Wisdom" and bears no connection to the Chinese language or Chinese dynastic history.

THE MISSING DECREE

History, or at least a particular understanding of it, underlies the Chinese intervention in the question of reincarnation. The Chinese government bases its right to appoint and recognize reincarnated lamas, particularly the Dalai Lamas, on a decree on governing Tibet that supposedly dates to the Qing

dynasty during the late eighteenth century.

And yet scholars have been unable to track down either an original version or a copy of this decree. It is conspicuously absent in numerous Qing-era archives, and no Chinese or Tibetan-language version has been found. Chinese authorities point to a document in Tibetan that they claim contains the notes compiled by an official of the amban, the Qing ambassador, in Tibet. The absence of an actual decree, if it existed at all, that supposedly set out laws on how to govern the whole of Tibet is not just curious: it is suspicious. This absence is even more startling given the reputation of the Chinese imperial archivists, especially those of the Qing dynasty, for meticulous and substantial record keeping. Nevertheless, the modern Chinese government claims its right to appoint the next Dalai Lama on the basis of an ordinance that is not extant.

It is also ironic that the CCP seeks to invoke the Qing past as justification for its control over Tibetan life. A century ago, communists and republican nationalists alike denounced the Qing—whose rulers hailed from Manchuria—as "foreign," "divisive," and "oppressive." The CCP was founded to "topple the three mountains" of "imperialism" (Western interference in China), "feudalism" (Qing rule), and "bureaucrat-capitalism" (the nationalist rule of China). Not a single law or ordinance from the Qing era remains valid in public law in China today. Yet, somehow, Beijing thinks it can cite an eighteenth-century Qing ordinance when it comes to the question of the reincarnation of Tibetan lamas.

That cynicism is all the more galling when one considers why and, crucially, when Beijing began to take an interest in the reincarnation of lamas. Between 1959 and 1990, Chinese authorities simply didn't allow Tibetans to choose new lamas in most Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation lineages. It was only in 1990, after the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, that

the Chinese government sought to revive religious institutions, such as the tulku tradition, within Tibet in a bid to counterbalance the growing popularity of the Dalai Lama. The introduction in 1995 of rules about reincarnations was calculated to allow the government to intervene in the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama. And China's more recent attempts to invoke the inheritance of Qing-era institutions and insist on historical continuity—when it does not obtain in any other area of Chinese law—seem designed for one reason: to control the appointment of the next Dalai Lama.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE NEXT LIFE

In Tibetan tradition, discussions about the next life of a spiritual teacher are discouraged while the individual is still alive. It is considered insensitive and disrespectful, almost as if the community is eagerly anticipating the lama's death. The Chinese government has displayed a keen and intrusive interest in the future incarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama, while the Dalai Lama himself approaches these speculations lightly. For example, when asked in 2019 about his next life, the Dalai Lama humorously responded: "What is the hurry for my reincarnation? I may be 84, but my health is good."

To be sure, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community are not oblivious to the profound impact his death and his reincarnation will have on the future of Tibet and the broader Buddhist world. The absurdity of an atheist communist state, which continuously vilifies the Dalai Lama and bans the display of his portrait, attempting to dictate his reincarnation is not lost on observers. Between 2009 and 2022, 157 people committed self-immolations in Tibet calling for the return of the Dalai Lama and freedom for Tibetans. The incongruity is further heightened by the fact that the CCP, after invading Tibet in the 1950s, was responsible for destroying nearly all of Tibet's approximately 6,000 Tibetan monasteries and nunneries and disrobing almost all its monks and nuns.

Several thousand tons of ancient Tibetan cultural artifacts, upward of three-quarters of the total kept in Tibetan sites, were destroyed, looted, or recycled for their components. That this same party is now claiming it has the right to choose Buddhist leaders, including the next Dalai Lama, is at best disingenuous.

In 2011, the Dalai Lama issued his most explicit statement regarding his reincarnation, unequivocally rejecting China's interference. He stated that he will leave clear, written instructions that will be implemented by the Gaden Phodrang Trust (the Dalai Lama's private office), in consultation with high-ranking lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist lineages and others who follow Tibetan Buddhism. He further clarified that only the individual set to be reincarnated has authority over determining where and how his rebirth will happen and how that reincarnation can be recognized. He stated explicitly that if he dies in exile, then his reincarnation will be born outside of China. This was a clear denouncement of the Chinese government's attempts to interfere in the reincarnation system, a sentiment that was reinforced at a 2019 conference of the spiritual leaders of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon (the Tibetan religious tradition that predated Buddhism), all living in exile. In the statement from 2011, the Dalai Lama specified that he would clarify his instructions for succession around the time he reaches the age of 90 (in 2025).

The Chinese government, however, will likely reject any decision regarding succession taken by the Tibetan Buddhists and the Dalai Lama's office. It falls on the governments of countries that support the free expression of religion as a fundamental human right to lend their support and insist that the selection process for the next Dalai Lama take place without Chinese political interference.

COMPLICITY IN SILENCE

For centuries, Tibetans have maintained a mystical and sophisticated tradition for managing the succession of the

Dalai Lama. This established procedure has ensured largely smooth and uncomplicated transitions of power, with only a few exceptions. It is unacceptable for China to attempt to usurp the Dalai Lama's fundamental right to determine how his successor will be selected, a tradition adhered to for five centuries.

China holds no moral or legal authority to intervene in the succession, and that it is doing so is an alarming situation that calls for a global response to protect religious freedom and ensure stability. The United States has already made a significant move in this direction by enacting the Tibetan Policy and Support Act in 2020, which states that "protecting the internationally recognized right to the freedom of religion and belief, including ensuring that the identification and installation of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders, including a future 15th Dalai Lama, is a matter determined solely within the Tibetan Buddhist faith community, based on instructions of the 14th Dalai Lama, without interference by the Government of the People's Republic of China." Any Chinese officials interfering in this process will face sanctions.

Although the U.S. stance is helpful, this policy will not succeed without concrete support from other key countries and blocs. These include Europe and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), countries such as India and Mongolia with large communities that adhere to Tibetan Buddhism, and countries such as Canada, Japan, and South Korea that have a special relationship with the Dalai Lama.

The European Parliament should agree to similar legislation to that passed in the United States clearly stating the EU (where Buddhism is the third- or fourth-largest religion in many European countries) recognizes the sole right of the Dalai Lama to decide on his reincarnation. India, too, holds special responsibilities to take a public stand. The Dalai Lama has been living there as a guest for more than six decades and calls himself a son of India because Buddhism originated in the country

China is Slowly Erasing Tibet's Name

-by Micah McCartney for Newsweek

over 2,000 years ago. Mongolia, with a majority Buddhist population, most of whom are followers of the Dalai Lama, should also clearly state that it is up to the Dalai Lama to decide on his reincarnation.

Japan, a frequent host of the Dalai Lama and home to many of his followers, should make similar statements. The Dalai Lama is an honorary citizen of Canada, and thus that government has the responsibility to protect his religious freedom. It is also important for Buddhist countries such as South Korea and several members of ASEAN to protect the tradition and customs of Buddhism. If the Chinese government selects the 15th Dalai Lama without protest, it sets the precedent for the CCP to assert its candidates as the heads of sanghas, or monasteries, in other Buddhist countries as well.

As the saying goes, "Silence is complicity." This is true in the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Failure to defend justice and religious freedom will not only embolden an expansionist regime but also risk instability in Asia and Buddhist countries, with ramifications for both the global south and global north. Instead, governments around the world should take a stand on this matter of principle. Tibetan Buddhists have the right choose their own spiritual leader, and upholding that right is essential to protecting the human rights of all people.

**Lobsang Sangay is Lecturer at Harvard Law School. He was Sikyong, or President, of the Central Tibetan Administration from 2011 to 2021.*



The Chinese government is gradually dropping the name "Tibet" in official English-language references in favor of the region's Mandarin Chinese name—"Xizang"—with experts saying the move is in line with Beijing policies aimed at erasing Tibetan culture.

The propaganda department of China's State Council, its central government, last week released a white paper on "Governance of Xizang in the New Era." Though the term "Tibetan" is used to refer to the region's people and geographical features like the Tibetan Plateau, Xizang is used exclusively when referring to the southwestern region's official name.

The document comes on the heels of a Chinese forum in October in the Tibetan city of Nyingchi, where Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi rebuffed Western human rights concerns and invited international visitors to another government-organized showcase of ethnic culture in the heavily policed region. "Xizang" was reportedly displayed in lieu of "Tibet" for the English translation of his opening speech.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry had not responded to Newsweek's request for comment before publication.

"The Chinese government was desperate enough to propagate Xizang to create a Tibet of Chinese characteristics which is unknown to the world," Tenzin Lekshay, a spokesperson for the Central Tibetan Administration, the Tibetan government-in-exile, said of Beijing's report.

"This time, the Chinese government is rigorous in changing the name in all the official records and communications, which is strictly designed to fulfill their political ambition of legitimizing their claim over Tibet by dividing and annihilating Tibet," he told Newsweek.

Lekshay said the Sino-Tibet conflict

was long-running and that changing the name would complicate rather than improve the situation.

Beijing says its policies have improved the lives of those living in the sparsely populated region.

The recent white paper lauded the Chinese Communist Party's policies and said state-directed development had achieved "victory in the battle against extreme poverty that had plagued Xizang for thousands of years."

On the cultural front, the paper said it had helped people of all ethnic backgrounds in the region to "develop a sound understanding of our nation and our country, and of history, culture and religion."

Many in the Tibetan diaspora, however, say Beijing is bent on sinicizing the former Buddhist monarchy, which was annexed by China in 1951.

In February, members of an independent fact-finding mission mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Office found the vast majority of children in Tibet, or about 1 million, were placed in boarding schools, as opposed to the Chinese national average of 20 percent.

The curriculum was almost exclusively taught in Mandarin, with a learning environment based on the culture and experiences of China's Han ethnic majority.

"As a result, Tibetan children are losing their facility with their native language and the ability to communicate easily with their parents and grandparents in the Tibetan language, which contributes to their assimilation and erosion of their identity" the fact-finders said.

"China's leaders are acutely aware their occupation of Tibet, including a coercive system of residential boarding schools now housing one million Tibetan

children, is viewed as a serious problem by the international community and so they are literally trying to erase Tibet from global consciousness by replacing the name Tibet with the Chinese word ‘Xizang.’” Lhadon Tethong, director of the Tibet Action Institute, a rights advocacy group, told Newsweek.

“Language matters, and it’s critical the international community does not comply with China’s effort to hide its crimes in Tibet through this cynical and manipulative ploy,” she said.

“Beijing’s strategy in Tibet is that of a gradual cultural genocide,” German scholar Adrian Zenz, who has written extensively about forced labor and forced assimilation in China’s western Xinjiang region, told Newsweek.

The strategy spans both linguistic assimilation and “targeted separation of children from parents through the expanding boarding school system,” Zenz said.

In August, the U.S. State Department announced visa restrictions on officials allegedly involved in forcibly assimilating Tibetan children in

government boarding schools.

“We urge [People’s Republic of China] authorities to end the coercion of Tibetan children into government-run boarding schools and to cease repressive assimilation policies, both in Tibet and throughout other parts of the PRC. We will continue to work with our allies and partners to highlight these actions and promote accountability,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said of the sanctions.

Blinken also raised the issue of human rights in Tibet, as well as in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, when he met with Foreign Minister Wang during the latter’s visit to Washington in late October to pave the way for this week’s meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Joe Biden.

“Renaming a country is so obviously a move from the colonial playbook that I think most international governments and institutions would recognize it as such and be unlikely to easily go along with China,” Tethong said of Beijing’s new naming convention.

However, she said Chinese authorities

clearly saw it as a priority and would thus exert pressure to reinforce it where they can.

China has been accused of threatening and harassing dissidents or the families of dissidents who have fled Tibet—or Xinjiang, Hong Kong and elsewhere—and speak out against Chinese government activities back home.

“The PRC utilizes a wide variety of tactics, including online harassment, exit bans on or imprisonment of family members of targeted individuals, the misuse of international law enforcement systems such as Interpol, and pressure on other governments to forcibly return targeted individuals to the PRC,” Uzra Zeya, the under secretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights—and America’s special coordinator for Tibetan issues—said in September at a congressional hearing on transnational repression.

**Micah McCartney is a reporter for Newsweek based in Taipei, Taiwan. He covers U.S.-China relations, East Asian and Southeast Asian security issues, and cross-strait ties between China and Taiwan.*

“The level of (China’s) repression (in Tibet) has remained same. But the form and the nature of repression has changed and shifted. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-67), it was much more about the physical destruction of Tibet. During that time, some 6,000 Tibetan monasteries and nunneries were destroyed, and we estimate that some 1.2 million Tibetans died from different forms of torture. Now, it is more psychological, indoctrination, sinicisation and the extermination and eradication of Tibetan identity and culture. The repression has become more sophisticated, with much more emphasis on propaganda. Currently, more than a million Tibetan children from the age of six to 18 are being forcibly enrolled into colonial-style residential schools all over Tibet in an attempt at sinicising them from a very impressionable age.”

- Kalon Norzin Dolma (DIIR) during the interview with Jan van der Made, Radio France Internationale

Despots Fear Ridicule: China's Great Game Over Dalai Lama's Succession Can Be Stopped: OPED

-by Tsering Passang for *EurAsian Times*

For the people of Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the manifestation of Chenrezig, or Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Successive Dalai Lamas have held spiritual and temporal power over the Tibetan Buddhist Kingdom for 400 years.

Buddhists from the Himalayan belt and beyond revere the Dalai Lama as their spiritual leader and share solid karmic bonds. To others, the Dalai Lama is an inspiration and is regarded as a leading moral authority worldwide.

In recognition of his non-violent campaign to end China's rule in Tibet, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the most prestigious Nobel Peace Prize to the 14th Dalai Lama on December 10, 1989, in Oslo, Norway.

This recognition presented an excellent opportunity for Tibetans to reignite the China-Tibet conflict as an unresolved political issue that required global attention and continued support.

For the next two decades or so, the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people traveled extensively throughout the world — reaching out to political leaders, heads of many States, parliamentarians, policymakers, religious chiefs, media organizations, universities, scholars, writers, celebrities, activists and many more to garner political and practical support for Tibet and the Tibetan people.

At the same time, the Nobel Peace laureate reached out to leaders in Beijing for a mutually acceptable outcome to bring about lasting peace and security for the Tibetan and the Chinese people through a negotiated settlement.

China's brutal dictator Mao Tsetung ordered his PLA troops to invade Tibet in 1950. Over a million Tibetans died

as a direct result of China's illegal occupation. Beijing took complete control of the peaceful Buddhist nation after the 24-year-old Dalai Lama fled to India in March 1959, where he was given political asylum.

“Government-in-Exile” And Tibetan Democracy

After establishing Tibet's “Government-in-Exile” (or Central Tibetan Administration), the young Dalai Lama continued to promote the democratic reforms for his people, which he had sought to implement in Tibet before being forced to flee in 1959.

Today, based in Dharamsala, northern India, the Central Tibetan Administration continues to carry out its mission of securing political freedom for Tibetans in Tibet while taking care of its refugee community.

During an early public gathering in February 1960 in Bodh Gaya, where the Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment, the Dalai Lama advised the exiled Tibetans to set up an elected body.

The Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD) took its first oath on September 2, 1960. Since then, this historical date has been observed by the Tibetan diaspora as Mang-tso Dus-chen — Tibetan Democracy Day.

The final stage of this democratization process was achieved when the Dalai Lama voluntarily relinquished his remaining political authority to the elected Tibetan leadership in 2011 after a young Tibetan legal scholar from Harvard University, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, had secured a landslide victory in the general election. Dr Sangay held the highest Office of Sikyong (formerly Kalon Tripa) for two consecutive terms until 2021.

Full retirement from the Tibetan political leadership meant the Dalai Lama reduced his international travels and political engagements with world leaders. At 88, the Dalai Lama remains very healthy and joyful as always, and above all, His Holiness continues to deal with a busy daily schedule of public and private engagements.

Over this summer (2023), the Dalai Lama visited Ladakh, near the India-Tibet border, where he stayed for a month and gave Buddhist teachings to tens of thousands of his followers.

Public support for the Dalai Lama in this and other parts of the Himalayan belt, including Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, is rock solid. One of his predecessors, the 6th Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso (1693 – 1706), was born in Monyul, Tawang.

The current Dalai Lama has visited this historic Buddhist region of Monpas many times. Tawang was the first Indian town where the Dalai Lama was welcomed by the Indian authorities after he escaped from Tibet in March 1959.

The region, also claimed by the People's Republic of China, has once again become a border hot spot with tension between Beijing and New Delhi after Chinese troops recently crossed into Indian territory.

The Dalai Lama's Succession And The Tibet Question

As his age advances, governments, parliaments, think tanks and media houses have been taking a deep interest in the succession of the current 14th Dalai Lama. The Tibetan Buddhist leader has previously stated that when he reaches around 90, some news about his successor will be revealed.

The Dalai Lama has also repeatedly

stated that he envisions living around 113 years. Scholars and researchers from Australia, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, India, Japan, Mongolia, Poland, Sweden, Taiwan, the UK, and the US have been studying the possible implications of the post-Dalai Lama era.

In May 2023, “The Dalai Lama’s Succession: Strategic Realities of the Tibet Question,” a joint publication of the Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs (SCSA-IPA) of the Institute for Security & Development Policy (Sweden) and the Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA, India), is probably the first in-depth research paper made publicly available.

This major issue for the Tibetan Buddhist world has geo-political implications. Many noted experts and researchers from across the world have contributed to this Special Paper, edited by distinguished scholars — Jagannath P. Panda, Head of the Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs; and Eerishka Pankaj, Director, Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA).

The scholarly work, which reveals some penetrating insights into the post-Dalai Lama era, requires close attention and preparation by all major stakeholders.

Unsurprisingly, Beijing has closely monitored this development for some considerable time. It passed Order No.5 – ‘Management measures for the reincarnation of living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism’ – at the State Administration of Religious Affairs administrative affairs conference on July 13, 2007.

The Order shows a clear intent on the part of Communist China to interfere in the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation, a tradition Tibetan Buddhists have continued for centuries and which has no relevance to the People’s Republic of China, which came into existence only in 1949.

In his article titled, “The Battle for the Soul of the Dalai Lama – To Control

Tibet, Communist China Ventures Into the Spiritual Realm,” published in the Foreign Affairs Magazine earlier this month, Dr Lobsang Sangay, Lecturer at Harvard Law School and former President of the Central Tibetan Administration, writes: “The norms of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of reincarnation and the Dalai Lama’s stance on his reincarnation must steer the process of determining any future succession.

“Following that tradition, instructions the Dalai Lama leaves before his death should be the basis of any search to identify his successor. Beijing, however, wants to usurp both spiritual and temporal authority in Tibet.

“The Chinese government’s transgressions are legion, including legislative interference, historical revisionism, and the outright denial of the Dalai Lama’s fundamental right to guide the choice of his successor. Along with the government’s broader efforts to suppress Tibetan culture, China’s actions constitute a grave violation of the basic human rights of the Tibetan people.”

Speaking at recent Tibetan gatherings, the Dalai Lama stated that his hope of bestowing Buddhist teachings to fellow Tibetans in Tibet in front of the Potala Palace, which has been the official residence of the Dalai Lama for centuries, is expected to materialize “soon.”

The Tibetan spiritual leader and Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the incumbent President of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), have also stated recently that individuals affiliated with the Chinese Communist leadership in Beijing have been in contact with the Dalai Lama through backdoor channels.

Given the rapid geo-political developments, especially since the pandemic, this backdoor communication channel between Beijing and Dharamsala is unsurprising. Beijing has been scheming its next great move for some time.

We ought to remember the last “official talks,” held between the envoys of the Dalai Lama and China’s representatives, from 2002 to 2010, ended only after Beijing flatly rejected the Tibetan leader’s proposal in his ‘Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People’ after nine rounds of formal, but fruitless, dialogue.

In June 2012, Reuters quoted the joint resignation letter by former envoys of the Dalai Lama – Special Envoy Lodi Gyari and Envoy Kelsang Gyaltzen – in which the duo said, “Given the deteriorating situation inside Tibet since 2008 leading to the increasing cases of self-immolations by Tibetans, we are compelled to submit our resignations.

“Furthermore, the United Front did not respond positively to the ‘Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan people’ presented in 2008 and its Note in 2010. One of the key Chinese interlocutors in the dialogue process even advocated abrogation of the minority status as stipulated in the Chinese constitution, thereby seeming to remove the basis of autonomy. At this particular time, it is difficult to have a substantive dialogue”.

During a recent interview with Tsering Kyi on Voice of America (VOA), Tenzin Norgay, Research Analyst at the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), Washington DC, echoed this mooted change in the Chinese constitution, which could impact the Dalai Lama’s “Middle-Way” proposal.

Norgay said: “If the PRC removes the Regional Autonomy rights, as currently stipulated in the Chinese constitution for China’s minorities, which also includes the Tibetans, then this leaves no basis for the Central Tibetan Administration to pursue the Dalai Lama’s Middle-Way policy.”

Speaking about a precedent for changing China’s constitution, the Tibetan analyst added: “Beijing amended its constitution in recent years to accommodate Xi Jinping’s desire to stay in power beyond the previous two five-year fixed terms.”

After Xi Jinping came to power in 2013, Beijing invested billions of dollars to drive his expansionist ambition through China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). Intended to be a "win-win" strategy for participating countries, Xi's regime is already proving a growing enemy to "debt-trapped" poorer nations while posing a real security threat at regional and global levels.

The "de-risking" strategy — considered by many nations, which would include the reduction of investments and moving multinational companies out of China, has a solid connection to Beijing's cover-ups during the COVID-19 pandemic, global goods supply chains, and geopolitical and other security issues.

Key stakeholders, including the Tibetan

leadership in India, need to learn lessons when dealing with the Chinese regime that has exerted power since 1950. Communist rulers pursue various means to secure their "interests."

One firm, and probably the only card the Tibetans-in-Exile have still retained on their side for Tibet's future, is the present 14th Dalai Lama, who currently lives in a free and democratic country.

Gifted his succession to the court of the Chinese Communist regime would not only be fatal to the centuries-old Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Still, it would serve China's aim to gobble up Tibet and exterminate Tibetans's unique identity while alienating friends and allies of Tibet in India and beyond.

China's cynical move to interfere in the Dalai Lama's succession needed to be ridiculed. It was George Orwell, in his essay *Shooting an Elephant*, who stated that the one thing despotic rulers fear is ridicule.

China's CCP is avowedly hostile to religion. "Religion is poison" was Mao's private remark to the Dalai Lama during his visit to China in 1954. There is no place for the Communist Party of China to interfere in the religious beliefs and practices of other people.

**Tsering Passang is the Founder and Chair of the Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities.*

His Holiness Dalai Lama's Message for the New Year - 2024

On the occasion of the New Year, I would like to thank everyone who has sent me good wishes, and I offer my greetings to you all, brothers and sisters across the world.

Despite the many challenges that we are facing today, I feel optimistic that with a growing appreciation of how interconnected we all are in the oneness of humanity, we can all work to lead more meaningful lives and create a better world.

As human beings we share a common wish to be happy and free from pain. We are social animals who depend on others to survive. Therefore, as I often say, we should work for the benefit of others. If we cannot help them, we should at least make sure we do no harm. I have found that helping others is the best way of ensuring happiness and calm for ourselves.

I also firmly believe that we can find peace in the world only when we find peace within. Every human being has the potential to cultivate inner peace, and by so doing to contribute to the peace of our global community.

We must try to cultivate compassion and inner peace, regardless of our nationality or religion, we can contribute to the well-being and happiness of all mankind. If the last century was the century of violence, it is our responsibility to make this century the century of dialogue.

Once again, I extend warm greetings to you all. I hope that you all enjoy an auspicious beginning to the new year, 2024.

With prayers and good wishes,

Obituary: CTA Mourns Demise of Former Chief Justice Commissioner Phunrab Lobsang Dhargyal



Central Tibetan Administration holds prayer service to mourn the demise of Phunrab Lobsang Dhargyal, the first Chief Justice Commissioner of the then Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) held a memorial service in the afternoon of 24 November 2023 to mourn the demise of Phunrab Lobsang Dhargyal, the first Chief Justice Commissioner of the then Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Officiating Sikyong Tharlam Dolma Changra (Education Kalon), Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, Justice Commissioner Tenzin Lungtok, Security Kalon Dolma Gyari, Heads of the three Autonomous bodies, Secretaries, senior officials and the civil servants of the Central Tibetan

Administration attended the memorial service.

Following a brief biography of the deceased narrated by Cabinet Secretary Tsegyal Chukya Dranyi, the Officiating Sikyong Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra expressed her condolences to the family. She remembered the late Phunrab Lobsang Dhargyal's contribution to the Tibetan community and the impact he had made during the course of over 30 years of his service to the cause of Tibet.

Phunrab Lobsang Dhargyal was also a member of the First Fact-Finding Delegation to Tibet in 1979.

The former veteran CTA official passed away on Thursday, 23 November 2023, in Dharamshala at the age of 86.

Brief bio: Phunrab Lobsang Dhargyal was born in Lhasa in 1937. He worked Drakyap Rinpoche, the 14th reincarnation of Ka-dam Geshe Potowa Rinchen, and escaped with him to India in 1959. He studied English in Kalimpong while teaching Tibetan to other students. He accompanied Drakyab Rinpoche to the Lugsum Samdupling camp in Bylakuppe in 1963, where he led education programs for adults in the centre for the next six years. During that time, he became a board member of the Federation of Tibetan Cooperatives India Ltd and later served as its secretary.

In 1969, Dhargyal was elected to the 4th Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD) – the former name for the Tibetan Parliament in exile, in the first three terms as the representative of U-Tsang Province. By the 6th CTPD, he was elected as the Vice-Chairman. In 1979, he served as a member of the first fact-finding delegation to Tibet. In the following decades, he served in various positions in the Tibetan administration in exile, including Secretary, Cabinet Minister, and Chief Justice Commissioner. After serving for 10 years as the Chief Justice Commissioner, he retired in 2002.



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QUOTES

“As human beings, we all need love and affection, so it’s important that we help one another. Secular ethics is an ethical code that reflects human values free from the trappings of religion, which I speak of admiringly wherever I go. What is crucial to understand is that whether or not we believe in religion, we all need a warm heart.” - His Holiness the Dalai Lama during teaching at Sed-Gyued Monastery, Salugara

“We may have different cultures, different ways of organising our lives, or different ideologies, but in the context of the oneness of humanity, as human beings we are all the same.” - His Holiness the Dalai Lama during teaching at Sed-Gyued Monastery, Salugara

“The white paper talks only about the “Tibet Autonomous Region” “(TAR)” and nothing about the situation in the Tibetan areas incorporated into the Chinese provinces. However, the policy of exterminating the Tibetan race is being enforced all across Tibet. The ploy applied in the name of inter-ethnic exchanges, communication and integration, is firmly to Sinicise Tibetans extensively in every section of the community, including rural and pastoral communities, schools and monasteries.” - Sikyong Penpa Tsering during the 34th Anniversary of Conferment of Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama

“The content of the latest white paper on Tibet is seen to be filled mainly with nothing but brazen lies about the achievements of the government of China since its takeover of the country. It is obvious that the survival or extinction of the Tibetan people rests on the lifeblood of their culture and religion. But on these matters, there has not been any meaningful achievement.” - Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel during the 34th Anniversary of Conferment of Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama
