New PSB directive mandates ‘zero distance’ between police and people in TAR
February 14, 2020

The Central Public Security Bureau (PSB) issued a new directive mandating the Police Headquarters in TAR to launch a new propaganda campaign entitled ‘One million policemen into ten million homes’ and asking it to maintain ‘zero distance’ between the police and the people. Launched on January 14, 2020, the new campaign is scheduled to end by December 2020. The Tibet Entry-Exit Border Inspection Station organized a meeting in this connection and discussed the overall deployment activities to be carried out in TAR.

It was decided that grassroot civilian police units would enter into all aspects of a community, into pastoral areas, monasteries, nunneries, campuses, market, construction sites, homes, border areas, and ‘mingle’ closely with the common people. The grassroot civilian police units were asked to grasp the root causes of a ‘problem/risk’ and conduct preventive measures accordingly.

Damshung County of Chengguan District, Lhasa started the campaign on February 14, under the leadership of the Tashi, Director of the Damshung Public Security Bureau and Secretary of the local Political and Legal Committee. At a deployment meeting he told local Township police units that to carry out the campaign they should enter into village groups (including virtual ones like WeChat), monasteries, nunneries, campuses and entrepreneurial sites. He added that the Township police units should keep as close contact as possible with the people, ensure their safety and maintain stability in the region. After the deployment meeting, policemen of Damshung County packed rice, dumplings and other necessities and went to their respective jurisdictions to conduct the campaign. Deputy Director Damshung County’s Public Security Bureau and Police in-Charge of the Gongtang Township visited a family in Chongga village as one of the family members was ill and gave edible oil, rice, flour, vegetables, etc. The Public Security Bureau of Damshung County has so far spent over 33,000 Yuans, including as the cost of posters, to propagate the campaign in the Township.
A seven-point circular was issued by the TAR Internet Information Office asking internet users to stop ‘rumour mongering’ and regulate their internet behaviour concerning the Covid-19 epidemic. The circular presaged implementation of first-level health emergency, to protect national security, unity and social stability. The seven-points are:

1. Internet users are advised to refrain from disseminating and posting information that ‘undermines socialist system, endangers national security, incites ethnic hatred, discrimination, subverts state power’;
2. Internet users are “forbidden from spreading statements that attack religious affairs, policies, and promote extremism and separatist ideas, to provoke dissatisfaction against the party and use the network to spread information about cults and feudal superstitions”;;
3. It is “strictly forbidden to use internet to enflame resistance against staff dealing with preventive and compulsory quarantine treatment to those tested with Corona Virus epidemics”;
4. Websites, public internet accounts, mobile networks and all other forms of social media platforms in the region are strictly asked to abide national laws and regulations concerning information sources and contents. All cities, counties and departments are asked to implement territorial and industrial supervision obligations and that anyone who releases “illegal content” are to be punished severely;
5. All citizens should improve their ability to identify and consume “correct information” from the internet, all information shall be subject to official evaluation and comments, “unidentified images”, videos, audios, images are promptly to deleted, not to be reposted or commented on social media or internet networks;
6. Internet group creators and managers are directed to fulfil their group management responsibilities, regulate internet behaviour, and check on information disseminated by members. If false information is released or disseminated in the group, causing “adverse social impact”, the online Information Network Office and Public Security Departments will strictly deal with it according to law and regulations, and hold the publishers, forwarders, group owners and other relevant personnel legally responsible; and
7. The respect and privacy of individuals are to be considered and refrain from engaging in illegal online activities that infringe on the reputation and privacy of others.

The circular started in conclusion that the internet is not superior to law and those who commit illegal and criminal activities will be severely punished in the crackdown by Information and Public Security Departments.

On January 29, a netizen in Tibet named “Zhou” posted a statement saying that “Ngari [Chinese: Ali] has one case [of the virus]” and that “No one in this pure land is safe.” Zhou was punished with eight days of detention.

A report in Tibetan by the China Tibetan Netcom website disclosed that two WeChat users in Chentsa (Chinese: Jianzha) county in Malho, Qinghai province were investigated and found guilty of spreading a rumour about someone in the area having been infected with coronavirus. One of them was punished with five days in detention and the other was fined RMB 500. Radio Free Asia said a person named Tse in Tengchen (Dingqing) County was among seven detained on February 05, in Chamdo (Changdu) for posting a message on WeChat asking people to recite a particular prayer 10 times and forward the request to 10 other people to guard against infection.

**TAR Leader Inspects Tsurphu Monastery**
China Tibet News Network

Ding Yexian, Executive Deputy Secretary of the TAR Party Committee and Secretary of TAR PPCC went to Tsurphu Monastery to inspect implementation of religious regulations and preventive measures against the Corona Virus epidemic. Upon arrival, he greeted the Monastic heads and Temple Management cadres and urged them to work together to ensure Tibet’s long-term stability and development. He was accompanied by Danke, Minister of TAR United Front Work Department, Chairman of TAR PPCC, Woeser Deputy Director of TAR People’s Congress and Sangay Jampa, Vice Chairman of TAR PPCC.
An interaction session between the inspecting team and the monks representing Tsurphu Monastery was held where they exchanged inputs and suggestions. Ding Yexian mentioned the “Tsurphu Monastery’s patriotism, love for religion and protection of people and the country.” He added that “monks of the monastery support the Party’s Leadership, abide by national laws, regulations, ethnic and religious polices, and determinedly oppose divisions and sabotage activities.”

Ding Yexian commended the monastery for maintaining “the motherland’s unity, and for making positive contributions towards social stability and harmony in the religious field. He shared that at present, TAR is taking every effort to eradicate poverty in the region, to build a comprehensive well-off society and maintain social stability”. He asked the monks to strengthen the Party’s leadership in the religious field and to implement Xi Jinping’s expositions on border management, stability and on religious works. He said it is necessary to implement TAR government guidelines on monastic management, and help monks, nuns to solve practical problems and unite them tightly towards the party and the government.

**Shigatse Municipal Party Committee Meeting**
February 05, 2020

The Shigatse Municipal Party Committee met on February 5, to enhance measures for a ‘harmonious and happy’ Shigatse. Zhang Yanqing, Vice-Chairman of TAR People’s Government and Party Secretary of Shigatse Municipal Committee presided. At the meeting, he pointed out that measures against secessionist activities should be deepened, and the religious affairs in the city should be managed in accordance with the law. He added that there is need to consolidate grass-root Party-building mechanisms including the campaign themed ‘follow the Party, trouble-free, rich and stable,’ and train young ‘forces’ in villages, consolidate village-level organisations and additionally educate peasants, herdsmen and common people about the ‘Four Consciousness’.

**TAR Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in Jokhang**
February 07, 2020
Staff from TAR Centre for Disease Control and Prevention visited Jokhang Temple in Lhasa on February 6 to create preventive awareness among monks about the Corona virus. Pamphlets about the virus were distributed and the monks were taught “how to do self-protection, wash hands, and wear face masks” said Phurbu Dolma, Director of the Centre. She said the Jokhang Temple is closed for the public and tourists, and the monks “devoted themselves to fight the epidemic like cleaning the temple, learning about the virus, disinfecting of temple spaces etc.” She said the Centre will carry out similar prevention measures and propaganda in other monasteries of Lhasa including Drepung and Sera Monastery.

TAR Health Commission sends Tibetan medicines to Hubei Province
February 06, 2020

According to reports, the TAR Health Commission sent 10,000 capsules of Tibetan medicines and 10 cases of Tibetan incense produced by Tibet Medical Hospital to Hubei Province’s Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine Hospital. The Tibetan Medicine manufactures have speeded up production and supply of Tibetan medicines which could prevent new types of Corona Virus epidemic.

Communist Youth League organizes volunteers to fight Corona Virus
February 05, 2020

Under the leadership of Communist Youth League and the Tibet Youth Volunteers’ Association, about 260 young Youth League members volunteered to create awareness about preventive measures, psychological counselling, spraying disinfectants, and temperature detection in densely populated areas such as communities, commercial areas, railway stations, airports and to set up temporary tents in designated hospitals, duty rooms, temperature detection stations, and other voluntary services such as setting up information registry, and collecting statistics of people entering Tibet. He Hua, Head of the Tibet Youth Volunteer Association said, “our participation in epidemic prevention and control is an expression of the courage of young people to face challenges.”
Recruitment and training of new Police Officers
January 15, 2020

A 90-day intensive training course was conducted for 74 new police officers to be posted under the Public Security Bureaus of Nyingtri (Ch: Linzi), Nagchu (Ch: Nagqu) and Ngari (Ch: Ali). The training was conducted in Nyingtri. Xu Zhi, Director of the Political Department said out of the 74 recruitments, 70 are to join Nyingtri Public Security Bureau. The training curriculum included theoretical knowledge on police forces, party, laws and regulations.

TAR PSB Head meets retired officials and hold seminar
January 23, 2020

A seminar was organized for retired officials of Lhasa Public Security Bureau in Chengdu. Head of TAR Public Security Bureau and Deputy Vice-Chairman of TAR People’s Government, Zhang Hongbo spoke at the seminar. He pointed out that “retired cadres are the witness, contributors to social and economic development undertaken by Public Security Bureau in Tibet and that they are valuable, powerful think tanks and are supportive of the Public Security work.” He said the TAR Public Security organs have always adhered to Xi Jinping’s Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era. He added “ Under the strong leadership of the Ministry of Public Security, TAR Party Committee and TAR People’s Government, the main theme of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China is to maintain social stability and overcome poverty under the guise of ‘old heart, new mission.” Loyalty, strengthening of the security system, and safeguarding of the Party are essential for continuous harmony and stability in the region, he said. Retired cadres have stated that they will conscientiously study and implement the spirit of a series of meetings convened by the Party Committees of the Central and Regional governments, and that they firmly support major decision-making arrangements of TAR Party Committee, TAR People’s Government, and continue to care, about stability and public security of the region. Huang Dongsheng, Director of the Political Department of TAR Public Security Bureau chaired the seminar.

Lhoka pushes to meet the deadline of 2021 to build a well-off society
February 14, 2020

Lhoka (in Chinese: Shannan), at the outbreak of the Covid-19, held a meeting in the week beginning February 14, to discuss ways to meet the deadlines of 2021 - and creation of Lhoka city, as a city of national unity and model of progress. The meeting focused on ways to re-arrange and redeploy the work to accelerate the pace of development and ensure building a well-off society in sync with the whole country as per schedule. They were instructed to enhance the sense of urgency and responsibility for creation of the national unity and progress demonstration zone. It highlighted that Lhoka had successfully laid a solid foundation for carrying this project forward and already achieved a stable and prosperous border area. It said in future it is necessary to unify people's thinking further, raise awareness, and make economic and social development as the starting point of national unity and progress along with mobilizing the cadres.

As per the 'Regulations on the Establishment of the Model District for the promotion of Ethnic Unity and Progress in TAR,' the meeting conveyed that Lhoka also will work on the establishment of 'nine advances' of the counties, district, and city and ensure collaboration among these administrations. All the departments of the City were told to resolutely implement the required deployment and carry out extensive activities to strengthen the unity and awareness of all the ethnic groups.

The Propaganda Department of Lhoka Municipal Party also held a tea party for the retired cadres to promote their ideology and contribution. The meeting urged all units of the City to promote the historical achievements of the veteran cadres in keeping the party's ideological and cultural system. Since 2019, a vast of the number of cadres have a firm belief that Lhoka has achieved results in grafting the ideological and cultural work under Xi Jinping's correct guidance of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era and his important expositions on border management, and stability.

Sonam Yangba commits suicide in re-education camp in Jomda, TAR

February 13, 2020
A nun, Sonam Yangba from Jomda, Chamdo in TAR, one among more than 13,000 evicted in 2019 from the Yarchen Gar Buddhist Institute in Ganzi, Sichuan, committed suicide ostensibly due to extreme hardship in the internment camp. She was given a ‘short release’ last June due to poor health but was called back later that month before she had fully recovered. The name and location of the re-education camp are not known.

(Comment: Reports filtering out of Yarchen Gar continue to mention arbitrary arrests from Yarchen Gar/Larung Gar with multiple raids in the nights by PSB officers. According to Radio Free Asia at least 4,820 Tibetan and Han Chinese monks and nuns were removed from Larung Gar in 2017 and 2018.)

CORONAVIRUS CASES AND CONTAINMENT MEASURES IN TAR
February 14, 2020

By February 12, there was one confirmed case of the coronavirus in the Tibet Autonomous Region. It was later announced as cured. Details of other cases in Tibetan areas are; Qinghai 18 confirmed cases, with 11 reported to have been cured; Sichuan: 37 cases in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) prefecture, with three reportedly cured. Of the 37, 32 were in Tawu (Daofu), two in Sertha (Seda), two in Dartsedo (Kangding) and one in Dabpa (Daocheng). There was also one case in Ngaba (Aba); Gansu: Seven cases in Kanlu (Gannan) with one reportedly cured; and, Yunnan: Dechen Prefecture said it has zero cases.

As part of containment measures and to prevent the spread of the illness, Chinese authorities have announced the cancellation of public religious festivals and prayer ceremonies related to “Losar,” the Tibetan New Year. Across Tibet, most religious sites have been asked to cancel group gatherings. In Qinghai province, authorities announced the cancellation of all group religious activities and also asked the religious community not to “believe in rumours, do not spread rumours.”

Ding Yexian, Executive Deputy TAR Party Secretary, visited the monasteries of Drepung, Sera, Ramoche and Jokhang in Lhasa last week to review the situation. He told monastic authorities that the TAR was at a critical stage in the prevention of the epidemic and also at a critical stage in
stability maintenance. According to state media, Ding Yexian said at a meeting about combatting the virus that: “We must lay a solid foundation to leverage the role of grassroots party cadres and organizations as battle fortresses and vanguards to fight against social stability maintenance and coronavirus with the Party flag raised high in the frontlines of the struggle. We should work on prevention and control work of coronavirus and social stability maintenance as a whole, and jointly prevent and control the ongoing coronavirus and stability risk to build a strong iron wall of social stability maintenance and fight against the coronavirus epidemic in Tibet.”

TAR officials have also asked people not to come to the Region until the epidemic was under control, with one expert reasoning that patients infected by the novel coronavirus will suffer from much more severe symptoms in Tibet on account of the low level of oxygen in the air. The TAR Internet Information Office issued a seven-point circular regulating online posting. Point 1 forbids people from posting information “that endangers national security, undermines national unity, subverts state power, or overturns the socialist system, or incites ethnic hatred, ethnic discrimination, and undermines national unity by means of rumours and incitement to libel”. Point 2 said, “It is strictly forbidden to spread statements that attack the party’s religious policies on the information network, promote religious extremism and separatist ideas, incite the masses to dissatisfaction with the party and the government, organize mass incidents in series, and use the network to spread information about cults and feudal superstitions.” Officials told Tibet Commercial Daily, a state media outlet, that: “At this time, malicious fabrication and spread of rumours will be severely punished.”

PUBLIC SECURITY, PAP, PLA ASSIST IN EFFORTS TO COMBAT EPIDEMIC

A report in Tibet Daily on February 13 said Chinese Communist Party (CCP) organizations and members at different levels displayed “courage in moving forward” that equated the “size of the problems and dangers” they had to confront in their effort to help the people. Chinese authorities have reportedly used their existing “grid management” network of thousands of CCP cadres in Tibet to enforce control and quarantine measures, taking every opportunity to ensure praise for the Communist Party. In Shigatse (Rikaze) in the TAR, a “commando” team of 865 party cadres pledged their loyalty to the fight “for the Party and the people” under the Red Flag. Tibet
Daily stated that the Party cadres were, "Fighting for Communism for life, ready to sacrifice everything for the Party and the people." Tibet Daily (January 24) said despite the major problem of coronavirus, officials went ahead with a new campaign described as a “million police entering 10 million homes,” which includes “visiting the people, resolving people’s concerns, resolving conflicts, preventing risks, investigating problems and controlling chaos.” An example of the integration authorities seek between civilians and the security apparatus and military, the new campaign involves organizing “all grassroots units of the … police into the community, into the pastoral areas, into the scenic areas, into the temples” ensuring that they are in “close contact” “with the masses.”

(Comment: The new “million police entering 10 million homes” campaign implies that one policeman will be present in each family home since, on average in TAR, 10 family members reside in one house.)

The Tibet Military Region recently held its first award ceremony for “model border stabilization.” A ceremony on maintaining an “iron faith” in the government’s mission to secure the borders was broadcast on January 25 to tens of thousands of troops across the TAR, with soldiers singing a “battle song” indicating “the heroic spirit of the military troops in the snow-land.”

(Comment: The arrival of coronavirus in Tibet also comes weeks before the anniversary of the March 10 Uprising in 1959, as well as the mass protests in Tibet on the same date in 2008.)

DEVELOPMENTS IN TIBETAN ETHNIC AREAS OUTSIDE TAR
Wang Shuming appointed Deputy Governor of People’s Government of Ngaba, Sichuan
February 8, 2019

The People’s Government of Ngaba (in Chinese: Aba) and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, issued a notification on February 8, appointing Wang Shuming (Dai Nationality) as the new Deputy Governor. He also takes over as the Dean of the Institute of Socialism, Ngaba.

(Comment: He was previously the Director of the Aba Prefecture Earthquake Disaster Reduction Bureau from 2016. He is a graduate of the Party School University.)

Ouyang Mei, (Dai Nationality and Standing Committee member of the 12th Sichuan Provincial PPCC), who was Deputy Governor of the Ngaba People's Government has been transferred to Nanchong City as the Deputy Mayor. She was appointed Deputy Governor of the Ngaba People's Government in 2017. She was transferred from the post of Deputy Governor and Dean of State Institute of Socialism on February 10.

The Ngaba People’s government also decided to remove Mo Chunhua from the position of Deputy Director of the State Economic and Information Technology Bureau and Zhao Min from the Deputy Director of the State Civil Affairs Bureau. Their new positions and replacements are yet to be announced.

New Tibetan hospital built by Ngaba County
February 10, 2020

Ngaba (in Chinese: Aba) built a new hospital to provide a centralised medical isolation observation facility and to control the coronavirus epidemic. The isolated observation area admits people who have had close or actual contact with the confirmed or suspected cases of the coronavirus and failed to get home service or hospital check-up. It can accommodate around 100 people and is fully operational. Starting from February 7, eight people are being observed under complete isolation.
The newly built Tibetan Medical Centralized Isolation and Observation Zone is located in the Nan'an New District, in an independent courtyard away from the residential areas. The medical staff and logistics support staff in this centralized medical isolation observation area are called from the county people's hospital and county Tibet hospital, and are responsible for medical observation in the area for 24-hours care with on-time body temperature monitoring, and disinfection facilities as it is spreading fast in Sichuan.

(Comment: There are 405 confirmed cases so far involving 124 counties).

China starts reward and punishment mechanism relating to the Corona Virus in Tibet, Tawu County, Sichuan
February 11, 2020

Circular no 6. of the Propaganda Department of Tawu (in Chinese: Daofu) County Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture provides for strict implementation of the Reward and Punishment Mechanism under the New Corona Virus Joint Prevention and Control Report. It will collect every clue from society that will help prevent and control the epidemic situation and fully mobilise the county’s force in this joint effort.

Tawu county issued the regulations in compliance with Central and Provincial instructions initiated under “The People’s Republic of China’s Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Law". People who go out from the segregated and isolation areas will be fined 50,000 RMB, and those who report such cases will be rewarded 30,000 RMB. Those who observe home medical observation will be rewarded 10,000 RMB. Anyone who reports on an event taking place in any part of the county such as weddings, housewarming, banquets will be rewarded 5,000 RMB. The notice also stated that those who conceal, postpone, misrepresent, or instigate others to conceal, postpone, misreport on corona virus-related situations that led to the expansion or worsening of the epidemic shall be labelled as criminals under Article 291 of the criminal law. Those who fabricate or spread rumours related to the epidemic that could disrupt social order shall be called under the provisions of Article 25 of the Law on Penalties for Public Security Management. And
those who make profits or raise the price of the commodities and do not maintain the relevant market operator shall be booked under Article 14 of the 'Market and Pricing law.'

Kardze and Ngaba comes under greater restrictions as the most affected Tibetan Areas outside TAR in Sichuan

February 13, 2020

On February 13, a total of 43 confirmed cases of new coronavirus cases were reported in Ganzi Prefecture (38 in Tawu (Daofu), 2 in Dhartsedo (Kangding), 2 in Seda, and 1 in Dhanpa Dzong (Daocheng). Ganzi Prefecture held the first press release on the spread of the new epidemic. Cheng Jing, Deputy Governor of the People's Government of Ganzi Prefecture, said that since February, "the number of reported cases of new coronavirus in Tawu County has continued to increase, causing widespread concern from all walks of life. Tawu County will be the top priority of the next epidemic prevention and control work in Ganzi Prefecture". The official report claims that the infected case in Tawu is mostly confined to three families and their relatives. There are 275 observations in centralized medical isolation and 1,612 observations in-home medical observation. The official said that it is due to a family gathering and because one of the family had a funeral gathering. Both Kardze and Ngaba (in Chinese: Aba) are now under strict rules. In Ngaba, each case of verified reporting will be rewarded with a payment of 300 RMB.

The county has imposed restrictions on the movement of people and have placed checkpoints at every village entrance, controlling the entry and exit of village. No personnel or vehicles can leave without permission. The rules specify:

i) Scenic spots, libraries, cultural halls, expo halls, cinemas, entertainment venues, tea houses, Internet cafes, and other public places are closed. All kinds of tourism marketing activities are suspended.

ii) The opening of religious venues is suspended, and all Buddhist activities are suspended. Strict orders have been given to the monastery, religious heads, and masses to not gather inside or outside religious venues for any reason. And
iii) Banquet gatherings of 2 or more families are prohibited. All catering services units for any such gatherings or for groups are ordered to shut down; instead, they were told to strengthen their role in monitoring and to manage the situation on their own.

**Major donations from Tibet towards Wuhan, Hubei**

February 15, 2020

Local authorities have told all units to make monetary and other contributions to Wuhan, which is the epicentre of Covid-19. Individuals, monasteries, business groups, and individual districts are making significant contributions. The Party is projecting this as a sign of the closeness of Tibetans and Chinese and ethnic unity. Apart from donations, it is reported that everyone expressed their determination to follow the deployment requirements of the Party Central Committee and Provincial Party Committee resolutely to overcome the difficulties and cooperate fully in fighting the epidemic.

Cordyceps Sinesis worth 3 million RMB from Yushul, and a total of 4 million Yuan received from the Qinghai Cordyceps Association has been shipped to Xilling on February 13, which it was said would be shipped to Hubei and used for boosting the immunity of frontline cadres in Tibet. There were also large exports of pork, yak meat (50 tons from Lhasa alone), mineral water, chicken, Tibetan medicine, etc.

The following table shows the donations as highlighted by various news report from Tibet:

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<tr>
<th>Unit (RMB)</th>
<th>Amount (RMB)</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Amount (RMB)</th>
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<td>Songpan (Songchu) County</td>
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<td>Songtsen Monastery</td>
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<td>Markham Buddhist Asso.</td>
<td>283,810</td>
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<td>Kumbum Monastery</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>Kundeling Temple</td>
<td>170,000</td>
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<td>Sera Monastery</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
<td>Chamdo Jampa ling</td>
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<td>Amount</td>
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<td>Lithang Red Cross</td>
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<td>Ganzi Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>The 11th Chinese Panchen Lama and Tibet Fund</td>
<td>1 million worth medical supplies</td>
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<td>1,98,400</td>
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<td>Hubei Chamber of Commerce Tibet Branch</td>
<td>527,000</td>
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**Wildfire in Ngaba grasslands, Chungchu Dzong, Sichuan**

February 14, 2020

A wildfire swept through the mountain and grassland of Ngaba (in Chinese: Aba) on February 12 and 13 according to information circulated by local people on social media. The local authority and fire department announced they had successfully extinguished the fire and brought the situation under control. Local people later posted photos of the wildfires across the valley and grasslands and claimed that the authorities failed to control the fire. The wildfire reportedly spread fast and wide and burnt thousands Mu of land. There are no known causalities so far. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. The local authorities dispatched five firefighter trucks and 60 advanced firefighter cannons along with 180 police. More than 4000 local people were mobilised for extinguishing the fire. The fire started from the main road and spread to the upper regions of the grasslands.
EXILE TIBETAN NEWS

Secretary of State urges US states to resist China’s pressure on Taiwan, Tibet
February 09, 2020

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on February 8 urged the country’s State Governors to resist Chinese pressure to shun Taiwan as he warned that Beijing was increasingly taking its diplomatic battle to the local level. He also urged them to ignore Beijing’s pressure on Tibet. In an address to state Governors gathered in Washington on February 8, he said “Don’t make separate individual deals and agreements with China that undermine our national policy”. He pointed to a threat sent last year to Mississippi’s Governor that China would cancel investment over his visit to Taiwan. He also cited a letter by a Chinese diplomat calling on State Governments not to congratulate Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen on her re-election last month and a case in which a high school in Chicago withdrew an invitation to a Taiwanese representative to take part in a climate discussion. “It’s one thing to pressure the Secretary of State of the United States of America. It seems quite something else to go after a high school principal,” Pompeo said. The report said Pompeo also warned of Chinese pressure on local leaders not to meet Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

Two claimants to Karmapa title to jointly search for reincarnation of Shamar Rinpoche
February 20, 2020

The two main claimants to the title of the foremost religious head of the Karma Kagyu lineage, Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje and Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorjee, will join hands to recognise the reincarnation of a ranking lama Shamar Rinpoche to bring unity and cement the future of the lineage. “It is extremely important that Shamar Rinpoche’s reincarnation be recognized without any mistake or confusion, without any “our side” or “their side.” Having a unanimous recognition is absolutely crucial for Buddhism in general and our lineage in particular and, with this in mind, Gyalwa Thaye Dorje and I intend to cooperate in the search and recognition,” Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorjee said at the 37th Kagyu Monlam in Bodh Gaya through live video feed. He added that the issue warrants a “wider perspective” as well as “long term view” for the betterment of the
particular school of Tibetan Buddhism. He added “I see the reincarnation of Shamar Rinpoche as a crucial point for bringing unity to the Kamtsang and am putting effort into it. If the reincarnation of Shamar Rinpoche is disputed, in the future, all the Kamtsang high lamas will be disputed and the Kamtsang will be completely split. The attachment and hatred will be the same as in a feud that lasts for generations. If we fall under its power, all the majesty and power of over nine hundred years of history will be destroyed.”

(Comment: Some analysts view it as a move by the two lamas to mend division and promote unity within the lineage that, over the last few decades, saw internal rift and discord between main rival camps. In late 2018, the two met in France and later released a joint statement where they said they talked about ways “to heal the divisions that have unfortunately developed within our precious Karma Kagyu lineage in recent years. We view it as our duty and responsibility to do whatever we can to bring the lineage together.”)

Nyingma Buddhists to be headed by Nyingma Monlam Committee head
February 05, 2020

With Kyabje Kathok Getse Rinpoche having passed way before completing his three-year term, Kyabje Dzogchen Rinpoche declining to accept the role in the beginning of last year and Kyabje Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche also very recently not accepting the role, the Nyingma Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism will now be headed by the Nyingma Monlam Organizing Committee which organizes the Tradition’s yearly annual prayer festival.

Kyabje Kathok Getse Rinpoche was the first to hold that position under the new arrangement. After his untimely demise, Kyabje Dzogchen Rinpoche declined to accept that role after it was decided during the January - February 2019 Nyingma prayer festival event. During this year’s prayer festival, the 31st Kyabje Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche was urged to accept the role in keeping with the 2018 arrangement. However, he too declined saying that the continued appointment of a ‘head of the Tradition’ carries the danger that it may bring more harm than benefit to the Nyingma lineage. He suggested there was no need to appoint a Head of Tradition. He noted that the Nyingma Monlam involved all Nyingmapa organisations and the head of the Nyingma Monlam Committee was already engaged in ‘virtuous’ activities for the ‘benefit of beings and the teachings of the
Buddha’. He therefore felt it appropriate for the head of that committee to assume the role of the Nyingmapa head and the committee decided to accept his suggestion.

(Comment: The Nyingma tradition did not have an overall head until Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche was urged to assume that role after Tibetans fled the Chinese occupation of their homeland in 1959. It has since been headed by a number of distinguished lineage holders in the Nyingma tradition until Kyabje Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche. In 2018, at the twenty-ninth Nyingma Monlam Bodh Gaya, it was decided that the representational headship of the Nyingma tradition should be held by the six major Nyingma Monasteries in this order: Kathok, Dzogchen, Shechen, Mindroling, Dorje Drak, and Palyul. A senior Lama from each monastery was to hold that position for a term of three years.)