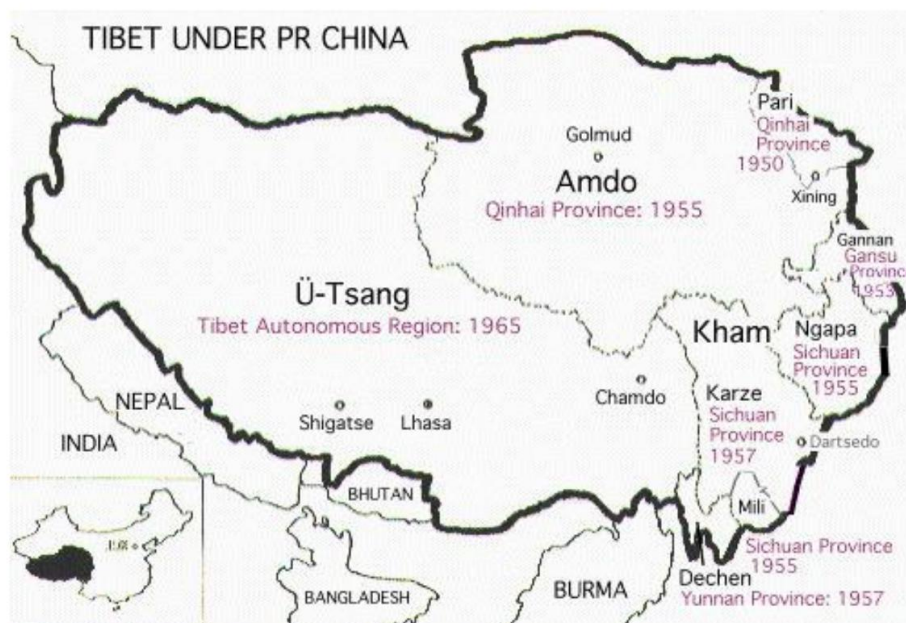
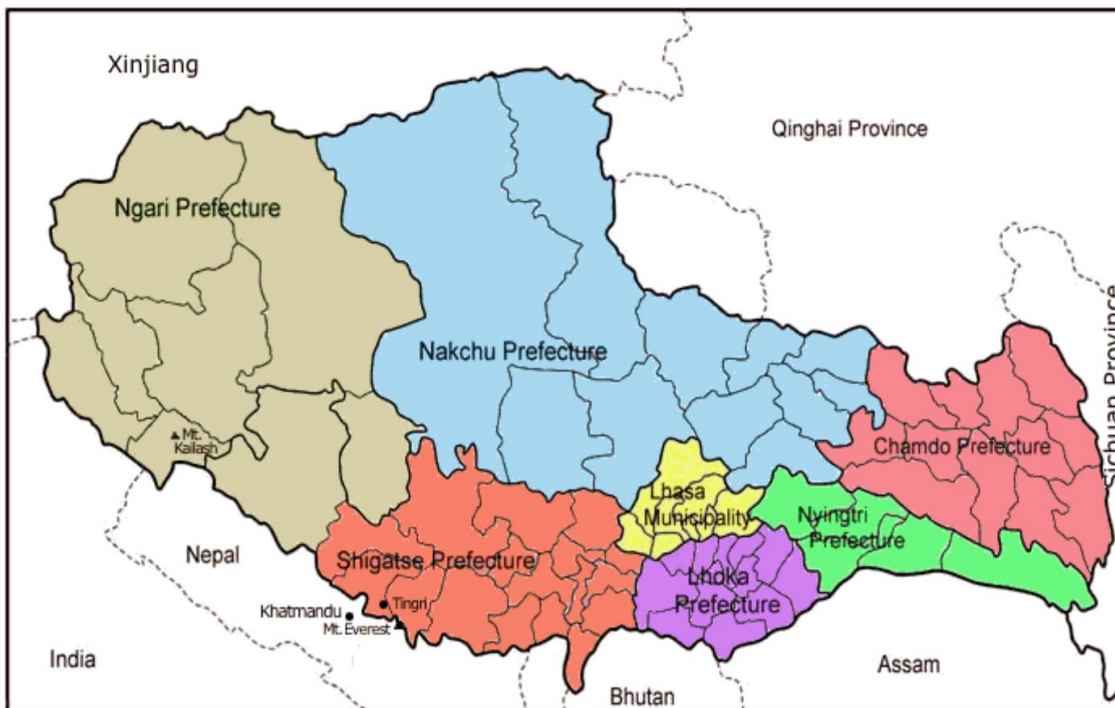




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TIBET INSIGHT, 1-15 MAY 2019



TAR NEWS

US envoy visits Tibet first time in Four Years

May 20, 2019

US Ambassador to China, Terry Branstad to China is making his first trip to Tibet from May 19-25, 2019. The visit by Ambassador Terry Branstad comes two months after the US State Department said Beijing had "systematically" impeded access to Tibetan areas for US diplomats, journalists and tourists. Branstad was scheduled to visit Qinghai province and Tibet Autonomous Region. Branstad's predecessor, Max Baucus, visited Tibet in May 2015.

China Digital Wall around Tibet

May 16, 2019

Reports suggest that the Chinese government has secured its grip around Tibet by creating a nearly impassable border with drones, facial recognition, an interconnected rapid monitoring system for soldiers on the border and radar. These claim the 97% drop in refugee numbers escaping Tibet is due to new technology which has allowed China to build a nearly impassable digital and securitized border wall along its southern and western borders.

‘First village of the border’ located just 5km away at the India-‘China’ border

May 15, 2019

China Tibet Network reported (May 15) that Jishao village in Gamba County of Shigatse, which is 30 kms in area and located just about 5kms away from the Indian border, had no electricity, water or roads, four years ago. Known as the ‘first village of the border’ it presently has 142 households with a total population of 542, including 7 Han Households. The report added that Tibetan families learn Chinese while the Chinese households learn Tibetan. They also conduct exchanges to promote ‘national unity.’ The village now has rows of two-story buildings, postal services, water, electricity and, since last year, 100 motorcycles. It added that the villagers had formed a motorcycle patrol and had volunteered to carry out border patrols They send 10 motorcycle patrol units daily and all shepherds are ‘patrol officers.’

“Jishao village has also “established a Sheep Breeding Cooperative and every villager participates, manages and distributes dividends.” The Cooperative has 130 herdsman, and 8000 sheep. Each sheep cost around 1,000 Yuan and breeding sheep cost 800 yuan. In addition to selling and breeding sheep, the cooperative sells wool and other products. The village receives SinoChem Scholarships of 3500 Yuan and 4000 Yuan for university students apart from medical expenses of the villagers being fully covered.

CPPCC Chairman Wang Yang meets Chinese Panchen Lama

May 6, 2019

Wang Yang, PBSC member and Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), met the Chinese appointed Panchen Lama, Erdi Gyaltzen Norbu on May 05. Xinhua reported that Wang Yang acknowledged the progress made by the Panchen Lama in promoting Buddhism and cultural literacy. He said, "the Panchen Lama as a leader of Tibetan Buddhism shoulders a great responsibility of leading Tibetan Buddhism in the right direction, and safeguarding the unification of the motherland and the ethnic solidarity".

Wang Yang also said he hopes to see Panchen Lama taking a firm political stand and leading the religious figures and believers in fighting against all separatist elements. Gyaltzen Norbu was told to lead in interpreting Buddhist doctrines to adapt them to Chinese socialism and improve his religious practice and study to earn support from believers.

Panchen Lama responded by saying that he will always remember the instruction given by the Party and devote himself to religious studies and practices to serve his believers. He said he would contribute to safeguarding the unification of the motherland, ethnic solidarity, social stability, and religious harmony.

On May 7, Wang Yang visited the exhibition marking the 60th anniversary of the campaign of the ‘democratic reform’ in Tibet where he said that ‘Tibetan people would not have been emancipated and the people of all the ethnic groups in Tibet would not have lived a happy life without reform. So it is of utmost importance to uphold the CPC leadership, the socialist system and the system of regional ethnic autonomy’.

China's Panchen presents report card to top leadership

May 08, 2019

The Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama Gyaltzen Norbu on May 5 presented his progress report to China's top political advisor Wang Yang, according to the official Xinhua news agency May 6.

The report said Gyaltzen Norbu, appointed by China in 1995 in place of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, proclaimed earlier by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the late 10th Panchen Lama, presented a ceremonial scarf and "reported his studies and life in recent years" to Wang Yang, Chairman of the CPPCC. It said Wang Yang "fully recognized the progress made by the Panchen Lama in terms of Buddhist attainments, cultural literacy, and religious influences."

(Comment: Gyaltzen Norbu is being groomed to play the tough task of winning the loyalty and patriotism of Tibetans including to the Chinese Communist Party of China.)

Villagers forced to work in farms owned by Military in Nyingtri

May 6, 2019

A report from a news outlet of exiled Tibetans claims that villages located opposite the Kyichu river of Lhasa have been forced to work on the nearby Nyingtri army camp. It is mandatory for each family to send at least one family member for labour. The workers are paid 80 yuan per day as against the average rate of Yuan 200-250 around Lhasa. Almost 70 families reside in the village. The army camp also claims of ownership of the area and the residents have been warned that failure to send labour would result in confiscation of their land and houses. The locals have petitioned the local government for redressal of the problem, but have received no response so far. A similar problem is faced by the area surrounding the Gonggar airport in Lhasa. According to the report, the residents were relocated from Medro Gangkar, Chulsum and Phenpo in 2006 on the pretext of being relocated at Lhasa but were settled in Drepdrung town.

County in Tibet uses WeChat to fight 'gang crimes'

May 07, 2019

The official Tibet daily (May 7) revealed that Gonjo county in Chamdo has been effectively using WeChat groups to motivate residents to help crack down on gang crimes. Since the beginning of the year, Gonjo authorities have gathered more than 2,000 messages through WeChat groups of local villages and neighbourhood committees. This is keeping with a nationwide trend to use social media to fight crimes. Other Chinese cities and regions, including Hefei in Anhui Province and Yinzhou district of Ningbo have used WeChat groups to crack down on gang crimes.

The WeChat groups were established as part of the county authorities 'efforts to urge residents to stay away from gangs and illegal organizations.' Zhu Wei-qun, former head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), told Global Times that 'some gangs in the Tibetan region have colluded with the "Dalai clique", serving as a base to help the clique spread separatism and create separatist incidents'. He added "The Dalai clique is very good at using modern communications channels, including WeChat, to spread separatism." Resident representatives have been selected and are required to send at least one message a day. The Tibet Daily report did not mention how many people have been rewarded so far or how much the rewards are.

Former TAR Party Member under investigation

May 19, 2019

The TAR Commission for Discipline Inspection disclosed that the former head of TAR Transportation Department and member of the TAR Party Committee, Sonam Khunphen is under investigation for 'serious violation of law.'

(Comment: Sonam Khunphen is a native Tibetan, born in Nagatse County of Lhoka (Ch: Shannan) in October 1958. He joined the CCP in August 1972. He has worked in various capacities under the TAR Party Committee and his last position before retirement in December 2018 was Director of TAR Transportation Department.)

TAR PPCC inspects Nyingtri's religious affairs management and national unity progress

May 10, 2019

Lobsang Jigme, Vice Chairman of the Party Committee of the TAR PPCC and Chairman of the TAR Federation of Trade Union, led a group of 10 party members and researchers from the TAR Political Coordination Research Group to inspect (7-9th May) Nyingchi's progress in religious management and ethnic unity. The team inspected Nekho monastery, Jiri monastery, Bayi town, Dazhe monastery, Baquide monastery and the monastery in Milin. They conducted a field survey to gauge progress.

On May 8, the Vice Chairman of the Party Committee of the TAR PPCC Lobsang Jigme and his team held a symposium on the same theme. The meeting was attended by Dawa, the Deputy General Secretary of District PPCC; Huang Jianguo, Director of the Ethnic and Religious Committee of the district PPCC; Jinpa and Song Xinglai, Deputy Directors of district PPCC; and Ding Yonghui, Deputy Mayor who accompanied Lobsang Jigme. The meeting stressed that all relevant departments at all levels should understand the importance of doing well in national unity and promoting in-depth and sustained activities for ensuring progress in national unity. They were told to manage religious affairs in accordance with the law, ensure the harmony of monasteries religious affairs, grasp the correct direction of religious work, strengthen the publicity and education of the rule of law, and vigorously promote the core values of socialism. All relevant departments including the Department of Municipal Party Committee, the Propaganda Department, the United Front Work Department, the Political and Legal Committee, the Citizens Bureau, the Public Security Bureau, and the Buddhist Association Office attended the symposium.

Nyingchi PSB calls for special fight against 'evils'

On May 7, the Nyingchi Public Security Bureau called for a special fight against 'evils' at all levels of public security organs in the city. They asked all public security-related bodies to have clear goals and strike in precision. They discussed the need to strengthen propaganda guidance, how to make full use of traditional media and emerging social media, and ways to make top-down participation of different levels of social sectors and general masses.

Nyingchi is said to have created a strong atmosphere in this pursuit as from January to April 2019, the Linzhi public security bureau and its branches carried out 349 centralized publicity, LED screens and banners and distributed around 9,690 publicity materials. In the process,

they inspected various industries and social sectors, which they say breed ‘evils’. So far, in 2019, they have identified 3,845 illegal websites, one illegal column, 953 illegal keywords, and other cases of gambling and prostitution. The latter ones are identified as ‘non-classical’ cases.

Two new police officers deployed at Yumai border village, Lhoka

May 15 2019

Chen Ming and Tang Hao, two new police officers of Lhunzi Brigade of the Lhoka Border Management Detachment Centre have recently been deployed to Yumai Township. They are under ‘Tibet entry’ of the ‘Exit Border Inspection Headquarter’. Yumai has only a few nomadic families living there. This is the first time that the formal border police is patrolling, clearing rocks and bushes and putting up the flag to mark the border.

Chen Ming earlier served in the Inner Mongolia Public Security Bureau Corps. When the troops were restructured, he applied to come to Tibet. According to the report, they officers developed an interest after seeing the stories of Yumai and the two sisters on TV and phone. They imagined Yumai to be a beautiful place, however, reality hit them when they realised the altitude was around 4,800 metres and it was a long distance from the country.

(Comment: Yumai township in Lhoka (Shannan) became a border defence village after the two sisters Dolkar and Yangzom wrote a letter to Xi Jinping in 2017.)

DEVELOPMENTS IN TIBETAN ETHNIC AREAS OUTSIDE TAR

Dhartsedo unveils the largest lithium phosphate mine in Asia

May 10 2019

At a press conference on May 10, the Dhartsedo (Kangding) People's Government Information Office announced the city's biggest new project owned by Ganzi's Lithium Ore Co. Ltd. with a total investment of 16 billion Yuan. Once production starts the annual output value is expected to be 800 million yuan. It was stated that the contract for the lithium-mining project was signed after proper environmental impact assessment and water and soil

conservation clearances from provincial experts. The project also required high social risk assessment as it covers more than 18 villages in the town and more than ten thousand people. Project investor Ganzizhou Rongda Lithium paid only 6.61 million yuan for land acquisition and invested 3.5 million yuan in setting up a net fence of 8,000 meters to enclose the mining area. This is reportedly the world's second largest and Asia's largest solid lithium-phosphorous mine and has the potential to make China a leader in this field. In recent years, the state has encouraged initiatives in the new energy industry and development of methyl and card lithium. This is a major project of Dhartsedo province, Ganzi Prefecture.

Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture started National Unity and Progress Promotion Month

May 10, 2019

The Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Gansu Province on May 9, launched the 16th National Unity and Progress Promotion Month at the Shambala Cultural Square. It was attended by Ma Hucheng, Deputy Director of the United Front Work Department of the Provincial Party Committee and Director of the Provincial People's Committee; Zhao Lingyun, Deputy Secretary of Gannan State Committee and Governor; He Moubao, Deputy Secretary of Gannan State Committee; Wang Fang, Deputy Governor of Gannan Prefecture; Yang Changde, Deputy Director of Gannan Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee; Liu Yongge, Deputy Governor and Secretary of the Municipal Party Committee; and Zhao Majie, Vice Chairman of the State Political Consultative Conference. Ma Hucheng emphasized the need to strictly follow and practice 'four consciousness', 'four self-confidence', and 'two maintenances'. He stressed the need to study the theoretical policy on ethnic and religious work, focus on rectification of religious issues and improve the levels of legalization of religious work.

The Gannan State Party Committee and the State Government have in recent years embarked on a new path that conforms to the spirit of the central government, has rich characteristics of the times, and reflects the characteristics of Tibetan areas in the work of creating national unity and progress.

A publicity exhibition board was set up, publicity banners and nearly 10,000 promotional materials were distributed to create a strong atmosphere of unity and progress and the

national song and dance performances all propagated the "National Solidarity and Awareness Month" and highlighted the theme of "common unity and struggle, common prosperity and development", taking awareness of the Chinese Community as the fundamental direction, maintaining social harmony and stability and promoting healthy economic development as a common responsibility. It also welcomed the 70th founding anniversary of the PRC. More than 3,000 people from various ministries and commissions of the Gannan State Committee, various state departments, provincial units in Gannan, cooperative municipal governments, various departments and units, representatives from Gansu National Teacher's College, and other elementary and middle school students in the city attended the launching ceremony.

Forty monks from Senior Buddhist College to participate in Geshe Thorampa convocation

May 15, 2019

The fourth session of the Senior Academic Ranks Evaluation Committee and the Fifth Session of the Qualifications Evaluation Committee of the Senior Buddhist College of the Chinese Department of Tibetan Languages officially began on May 13. The meeting said there is need of new requirements for the evaluation of advanced academic title in the new era and a specific working committee will be established to assess and approve the qualification of the contenders. They also said that implementation of the three-level academic title system is a major decision made by the state based on the reality of Tibetan Buddhism, to establish a normal order of Tibetan Buddhism, and to guide the adaptation of religion to a socialist society. Tibetan Buddhism is said to have entered into a new era by constantly advancing with time and ensuring standards and order. Guo Zangcang from China's Tibetan Department of Higher Buddhist College said, "I hope that members will seize the rare historical opportunity and study Xi Jinping's new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics and guide the Tibetan Buddhism". There will be 40 students from three sects (Gelug, Nyingma and Sakya) applying for the title of Thomrampa title from Senior Buddhist College. More applications from other monasteries are expected, but going by the past year's record, the title from Beijing has evoked little response from Tibetan monks.

EXILE TIBETAN NEWS

Russia's Putin says Dalai Lama not barred, but not sure about welcoming him

May 19, 2019

Russian President Vladimir Putin was quoted by TASS as saying (May 16) that “Dalai Lama is not barred from entering Russia. But there are not very many Buddhists in Russia.” Putin made the remark in the context of stressing that his country did not discriminate against people of different religions, whether Christian, or Judaists, or Moslems. He said “Let us dwell on this topic. There are countries with a large Buddhist population, and their relations with Dalai Lama cannot be described as good. Nevertheless, we will think about it.” The Russian Foreign Ministry had earlier said a visit by Dalai Lama was impossible due to the “political motives” in his activities.

His Holiness reiterates confidence to live past 110 years

May 17, 2019

His Holiness the Dalai Lama reiterated his confidence in living till around the age of 110. He also thanked all his followers and well-wishers across the world for praying for him during his illness recently. The offering on May 17 at Tsuglakhang, the Dalai Lama temple, organized by Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) was attended by heads of all major Tibetan religious sects, exile leadership and devotees amounting to an estimated 7500 members.

The Dalai Lama said at the function that ‘it is the determination of the Tibetan people inside Tibet mostly, and some contribution he was able to make in the last 60 years for the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism and culture, that we have retained our identity in this world.’ “So the longer I live, the more I could help,” he added. He then shared with the gathering that he recently dreamt of crossing a river by swimming with Palden Lhamo (one of the two principal protector deities of Tibet) on his back telling him ‘there is no doubt that you will live to be 110.’

Ranking Tibetan monk denies molestation charge

May 04, 2019

Senior Buddhist Tibetan lama Dagri Rinpoche, in the wake of multiple molestation allegations issued a statement (May 11) denying the charges. On May 3, an Indian woman alleged that the 65-year-old Tibetan religious leader groped her during a flight from Delhi Airport to Gagal Airport. A First Information Report (FIR) has been filed at the Gagal Police station. On May 7, a Spanish woman Jakaira Perez Valdivia posted a video where she said that in 2008, Dagri Rinpoche molested her on the pretext of giving her blessings when she was a nun studying Buddhism in Dharamshala and had visited Dagri Rinpoche's apartment near Namgyal monastery.

(Comment: Dagri Rinpoche belongs to Sera Jey's Tsawa khangtsen based in Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement in South India, one of the largest monasteries in Tibetan Buddhism. He is the 5th reincarnation of Dagri Kyenchen Gyatso Thaye. He is also a Geshe Lharampa, the highest order of the Gelukpa's scholastic hierarchy.)

Members Of Congress Urge Trump Administration To Implement Key Tibet Legislation

May 13, 2019

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) welcomed a letter signed by 32 members of Congress addressed to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and released on May 13. The letter urges the Trump Administration to promptly implement key legislation passed by Congress to guide US policy on Tibet and expresses the Congress members' "deep concern about the well-being of the Tibetan people under Chinese rule," adding that "the repression in Tibet continues unabated." The letter says "It is therefore now more urgent than ever that the State Department fully implement current law on Tibet." "Strong support for human rights must always underlie America's relationship with the government of China." It said "Members of Congress and the Administration must affirm the peaceful desires of the Tibetan people for greater autonomy and freedom within China. We should demand open access to Tibet by journalists and diplomats, and we should raise the cases of prisoners of conscience with Chinese officials. Congress passed the Tibet Policy Act of 2002 and the 2018 Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act to advance religious and political freedom in Tibet, and the

Administration must act to fully implement these laws. US leadership on these issues is critical, and we must demonstrate that universally-recognized human rights, especially religious freedom, matter everywhere—especially in Tibet.”

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