

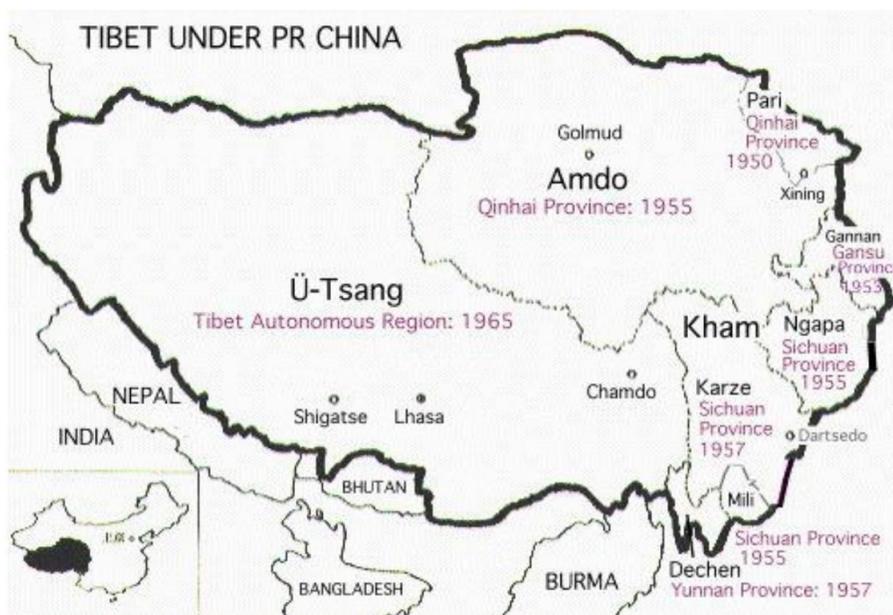
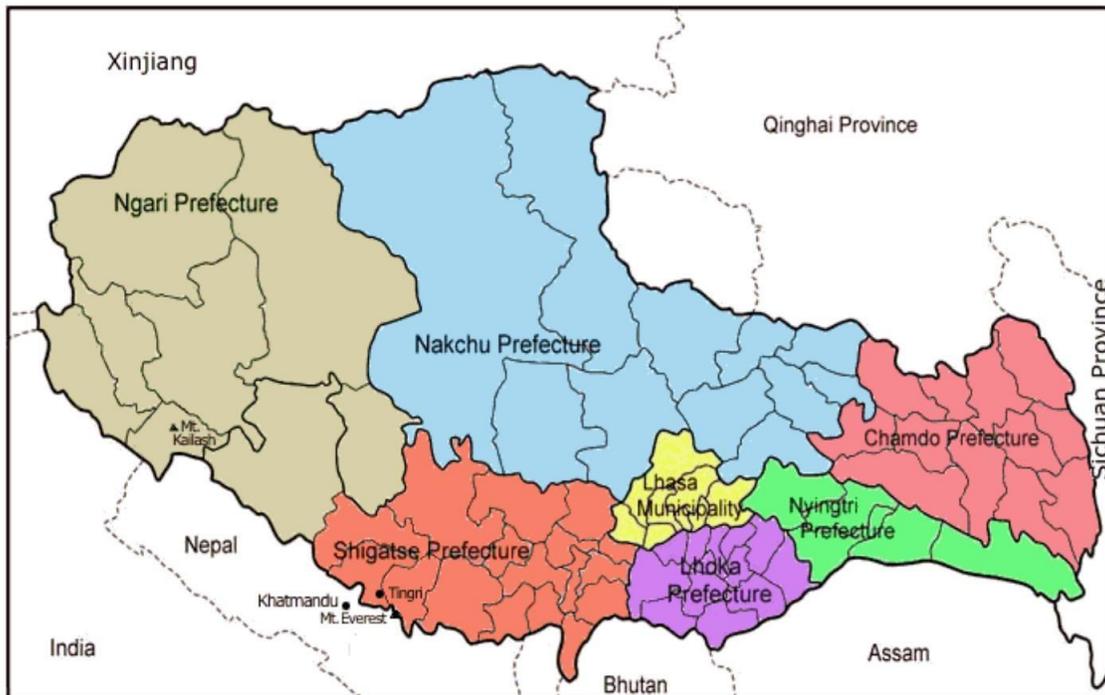


**CCAS**

**Centre for China Analysis & Strategy**

**中国分析及策略中心**

**TIBET INSIGHT, 15-31 JANUARY 2020**



## TAR NEWS

### **China jails 12 Tibetans of ‘criminal gang’ for religious activities**

January 14, 2020

In an apparent strengthening of the crackdown on religion, China has jailed 12 villagers of Sog (Chinese: Suo) County of Nagchu Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region, for up to nearly two years for allegedly running “a criminal gang.” The Tibet Daily (January 14) reported only that they had been accused of fraud and “using religious influence to interfere in the affairs of local government”. The report further stated that the 12 had “exploited and harassed” local people and preached “superstitious ideas, attempting to spread the evil influence of religion in the villages”. The arrested villagers will serve one to two-year prison terms without permission to appeal to a higher court.

### **China says US bill on Tibet Interference in ‘Internal Affairs’**

January 31, 2020

The Chinese Foreign Ministry and ‘experts’ criticised the Tibet Policy and Support Act passed unanimously by the US House of Representatives on January 28 with a landslide majority of 392-22. China’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang said at a press conference that the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2019 “blatantly interferes in China’s internal affairs and sends a wrong signal to the ‘Tibet independence’ forces,” and that there could be retaliatory measures such as imposing visa restrictions on the sponsors of the bill, including Representative James McGovern and Senator Marco Rubio. The Global Times quoted Zhu Weiqun, former Head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, as saying the Act was “laden with extremely wicked intentions aimed at supporting the Dalai clique and Tibet secessionists” while challenging “China’s legitimate sovereignty and territorial integrity”.

The Bill provides for sanctions against Chinese officials who interfere in the ‘reincarnation’ process of the next Dalai Lama including visa sanctions, freezing of US assets of those sanctioned and suspension of business transactions between the Chinese officials and US citizens

and companies. Diao Daming, Associate Professor at China's Renmin University told Global Times, that although this "long-arm jurisdiction" looks harsh, it actually has a limited impact on Chinese officials in view of the nationwide anti-corruption campaign and strict Party governance.

*(Comment: In 2013, Spain's National Court had issued an arrest warrant against five former Chinese leaders, including former Chinese President Jiang Zemin, former Prime Minister Li Peng and Chinese President Hu Jintao on charges of 'genocide' in Tibet. The case against them was brought by human rights groups under Spain's 'recognition of universal jurisdiction' - the principle that crimes against humanity can be prosecuted across borders. However, Spain's National Court introduced changes in Spanish Law (reportedly under pressure from China) in 2014, which authorised Spanish judges to only investigate crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity if those indicted were Spanish citizens or foreigners who had their habitual residence in Spain at the time when the crimes were committed).*

### **Construction of Ratamate-Kyirong Power Transmission Line has begun**

January 23, 2020

The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and State Grid of China are jointly conducting a load flow test in the third week of February prior to building the first cross-border transmission line. Komalnath Atreya, chief of the Ratamate-Rasuwadhi-Kerung 400 kV Transmission Line Project, said "The technical team will first evaluate the flow all over Nepal and will look into the amount of energy that can be flowed in the transmission line". The design of the substation will be prepared and necessary equipment imported thereafter. The project transmission line will have the capacity to transmit 5,000 MW of electricity. China plans to procure electricity generated in Nepal after construction of the transmission line. Officials said Nepal can also use this key infrastructure to sell electricity to 'power hungry' Bangladesh. The pre-feasibility study of the transmission line that will stretch 70 kms between Ratamate in Nepal to Kyirong (Tibet) has been completed. According to it, a total of 214 pylons will have to be erected. The transmission line is expected to be completed in six years. The substations will be built at Ratamate on the Nepali side and Kyirong in Tibet.

## **Regulations for Monks and Nuns to promote unity**

January 25, 2020

A set of new ‘Regulations’ passed by the 11<sup>th</sup> TAR People’s Congress during its third session decided that a ‘National Unity Affairs Office’ will be set up in TAR to monitor the progress of unity in the region. The regulations require all levels of government, companies, community organisations, villages, schools, military groups and religious activity centres to be responsible for work on ethnic unity. They were asked to support efforts to develop local trade, tourism and handicraft industries and build local brands. Companies, it said, are to be encouraged “to integrate ethnic unity into the companies’ management and culture, recruiting employees from all ethnic groups.” September has been designated as the month for activities to promote ethnic unity in the region.

One of the targets of the regulations is monasteries, monks and nuns. It asserted that ‘they must study and implement the Regulations and firmly adhere to initiatives that promote national unity.’ Monks and nuns were told to treat ‘national unity’ as their personal objective and work towards it. Luo Ci, Deputy Director and Secretary of the Lhasa Ramoche Temple Management Committee said, “The new Regulations are part of the CCP’s ethnic policy and will publicize its content to Ramoche monks in a timely manner, change working mechanism of the Temple and make positive contributions for a harmonious atmosphere.”

Tsetan, a Monastic Management Official of Jokhang Temple said “I will propagate Article 19 of the Regulation which mandates monks to love national unity as much as their own eyes, and as much as their own lives.” He added “ethnic solidarity is the prerequisite for social harmony and the lifeline of the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet” and that he “will actively guide monks to make their own contributions to maintain harmony and stability in the religious field.” Rinchen Sangmo, a nun and Deputy Director of the Ani Tsankhung Nunnery in Lhasa said “Monastic institutions are an important part of the Tibetan society, and the Regulations are a great tool to protect unity amongst the Tibetans in particular and of all other ethnic groups in general.” She assured that the contents of the Regulations will be propagated in her nunnery. Eightythree nuns have reportedly supported the regulations.

*(Comment: The full text of the Regulations is yet to be released, but they will take effect from May 1.)*

## **Nepal, China to hand over nationals illegally crossing mutual border**

January 23, 2020

Nepal and China have agreed to repatriate each other's citizens illegally crossing the international border to the authorities in their respective countries within seven days of their being detained. The agreement is part of the Boundary Management System reached between the two countries during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Nepal in October last year. Article 26 (2) of the agreement states "The boundary representatives or competent authorities of both sides shall investigate cases of persons found while crossing the border illegally, ascertain their identities, cross-border facts and reasons as soon as possible and hand them over to the side where they stayed before crossing the border, within 7 days from the day they are detained."

Apprehensions have been expressed that the provision could immediately target 'refugees' from Tibet who sneak across the border to Nepal to make a safe passage to India and elsewhere with the help of the UN refugee agency in Nepal. The agreement comes in the wake of Nepal's immigration authorities handing over earlier this month 122 Chinese nationals arrested in Kathmandu for 'suspicious activities'. Senior police officials said the arrests were made at the request of the Chinese side and that Nepali security agencies did not have any independent credible evidence. The agreement proposes to establish a Nepal-China Joint Commission led by a senior official of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The Commission will comprise experts and technical personnel who will meet each year alternatively in the respective countries.

## **Special Supervisory Committee established in Nyingchi**

January 25, 2019

The Nyingtri (in Chinese: Linzhi) Municipal Supervisory Committee appointed a 13-member

Special Committee of Inspectors. This marks the formal establishment of the inspector system as part of the city's supervisory authority. The special committee consists of representatives from the Party and government including the regional Party Congress, CPPCC, judiciary, cultural and social department, state-owned enterprise, frontier and grassroots cadres etc. The Special Committee of Inspectors will deepen reform of the national supervisory committee, promote acceptance of democratic supervision, deepen the supervision of social reality and public opinion in accordance with the law. Their focus will be on supervision of the Nyingtri Municipal Discipline Inspection and Supervision Department and to recommend ways to improve and strengthen the supervision system. They will be a bridge between the people and government and guide the public.

### **Authorities Arrest Over 30 Tibetans In Government Clampdown**

January 07, 2020

30 Tibetans from Dza Wonpo village of Sershul county in Tibet's Karze (Ch: Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture) were detained late last year on suspicion of spreading news of the protests outside of Tibet, having social media contact with the outside world beyond Tibet, keeping pictures of the Dalai Lama, and other offences. On November 7, 2019 four monks from Dza Wonpo monastery were detained after they scattered leaflets with pro-independence messages in the village. On November 21, two more Tibetans called Lhagyal and Yonten made a similar protest with leaflets and were also arrested. Some monks in the village were forced to undergo 15 days of "political re-education" as part of the consequent security crackdown. The majority of those arrested in late November and early December 2019 have since been released after spending a month and a half in detention. The deployment and arrests followed a series of pro-independence protests that were held in Dza Wonpo on November 7, 18 and 21, 2019. After the protests, military paraded through the streets carrying weapons with live ammunition. Some of the villagers were summoned to the police station for interviews while others had their mobile phones checked or ordered to sign papers. Movement of Tibetans in the village has been restricted.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN TIBETAN ETHNIC AREAS OUTSIDE TAR**

### **China imposes new rules in controlling birth rate in Tibet**

January 22, 2020

China imposed new restrictions in Tibetan areas in Lithang and Nyakchu Serta in Sichuan for circulation through village and county leaders. According to the information, the villagers who have three or more children were forced to appear at the district headquarters for sterilisation, and those who failed to comply were fined 16,000 Yuan. Because of fears of developing diseases like cancer etc following long-term insertion of Copper-T, some women appealed to exempt them from insertion of Copper-T on the promise they would not give birth to more than three children, but their please were not heard. The regulations are to be implemented in other parts of Tibet as well. The initiative seems to directly target the areas with large Tibetan populations like Lithang and Serta where the Tibetan identity, culture and language are kept intact.

### **Qinghai Cultural Exhibition in Colombo, Sri Lanka**

January 16 2020

A cultural exhibition of Tibetan Thangkas, natural scenic pictures, and portrayal of the social and economic development of Qinghai with the theme “Perception of China and Beauty of Qinghai”, was held at Colombo, Sri Lanka on January 14, 2020. The exhibition was hosted by the Information Office of the Qinghai Provincial Government along with the Xieli Huanyu Economic and Cultural Exchange Center, Beijing. The exhibition was headed by Dong Jieren, Deputy Head of the Publicity and Propaganda Department of Qinghai Provincial Party Committee. Speaking on the occasion, Dong Jieren said such exchange ‘is the fruit of the Belt and Road cooperation between two countries’.

### **Boom in Cordycep export value in 2019, Qinghai**

January 19, 2020

According to latest statistics from Xilling (in Chinese: Xinning) Customs, the export value of

cordyceps has increased by almost 90%, to reach RMB 52 millions. 459 kilograms of cordyceps were exported outside Qinghai. Caterpillar (Cordyceps) has been a major source income for Tibetans and many of them are involved in this trade for the last 10-15 years. 80% of Qinghai's production comes from the Tibetan areas of Sanjiangyuan and Yushul Prefecture. Qinghai accounts for 60% of the China's total production of Cordyceps caterpillar.

## **Larung Gar Abbot announces the closure of their Buddhist centers around the world**

January 2, 2020

Khenpo Sodargye, a well-known disciple of late Khenchen Jigme Phuntsok, announced the closure of all centres of the Bodhi Institute of Compassion and Wisdom around the world. Khenpo Sodargye is one of the main Khenpos of Larung Gar, Serta, Sichuan, and a prolific translator of Buddhist text into Chinese. On December 30, he issued an announcement in Mandarin, stating that some people have engaged in "illegal activities" in the name of the institute. Earlier, in November 2019, Khenpo Sodargye along with Khenpo Tsultrim Lodoe were interrogated by the authorities. Larung Gar has been under the tight control of the authorities in the last few years with almost 4,820 monks and nuns evicted from the institute. Khenpo Tsultrim Lodro requested his followers to abide by the law of the nation. Khenpo Sodargye's official English website has been inactive since November, 2019. Khenpo Sodargye's declared "I disband the Bodhi Institute of Compassion and Wisdom and all its offices. As a result, regional dharma centres, committees and institutions related to and established in the name of Bodhi Institute will be disbanded. I would like to reiterate that all activities undertaken by these institutions will be suspended, and websites related to them will also be disbanded. Henceforth, if you come across any kind of announcement made in the name of Bodhi Institute, they are fake. Any type of donation sought in the name of Bodhi Institute has nothing to do with me, and one shouldn't fall prey to it. If in case such act happens, I will take legal action to identify the culprit. I will continue to love the nation as well as the religion and be in the service of faithful public. I hope the faithful public will remain honest and be law abiding.

## EXILE TIBETAN NEWS

### **Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche declines offer to head Nyingma tradition**

February 03, 2020

Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche, a noted Nyingma master, declined to head the Nyingmapa Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism at a meeting of the Nyingma Monlam Organization Committee in Bodh Gaya. The position has traditionally been held by distinguished lamas of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism, who have been approved by its inner circle. In 2018, at the 29th Nyingma Monlam, it was decided that the head of the Nyingma tradition should be jointly held among the six-major Nyingma monasteries in this order: Kathok, Dzogchen, Shechen, Mindroling, Dorje Drak, and Palyul; with a senior lama from each monastery holding the position for three years. As per this decision, a request was made to Kyabje Kathok Getse Rinpoche to assume the role of head of the Nyingma Tradition, which he accepted but passed away before completion of his tenure. The title then passed to Kyabje Dzogchen Rinpoche who declined to assume the role. Two years later, Kyabje Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche was repeatedly requested at the 31st Nyingma Monlam, to accept the position, but he replied that “with the insistence of a continued appointment of a ‘head of the tradition’, there is a danger that it may bring more harm than benefit to the Nyingma lineage”. Rabjam Rinpoche said there is no need to appoint a Head of Tradition and suggested that since the Nyingma Monlam involves all Nyingmapa organizations, and as the appointed head of the Committee is already engaged in activities concerning the benefit of sentient beings and teachings of the Buddha, it would be advantageous if they would assume the duties previously undertaken by the lineage head.” The committee decided to implement the suggestions of Rabjam Rinpoche that it “will also take the responsibility to continually select and request high lamas and responsible individuals from the various Nyingma institutions to lead the Monlam Committee and act in accordance with the above.”

### **Tibet Policy and Support Act (TPSP) draw strong reaction from China**

On January 28, the US House of Representatives voted to approve the ‘Tibet Policy and Support’ bill with a vote of 392 against 22. The bill was introduced by Sens. Marco Rubio, Ben Cardin

and James McGovern in the House and co-sponsored by Rep. Chris Smith. The TPSA is a major update to 2002 U.S Tibet Policy. The updated Act (H.R. 4331) includes matters related to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's succession, U.S. consulate in Lhasa as part of reciprocity, and water security and environment issues. It formalised a budget of US\$ 26.6 million as funding for humanitarian projects for Tibetans living in Tibet and in exile from 2021-2025. The Tibetan government in exile expressed its appreciation to the U.S. for its continued support for Tibet and passing the TPSA. Sikyong Lobsang Sangay said "This sends a very strong message to the Chinese government that the support for Tibet in America is as strong as it used to be in 2002 when the first Tibet Policy Act was passed." The Act predictably drew a strong reaction from China with China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying saying the "Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2019" seriously violated international law and basic norms governing international relations, grossly interfered in China's internal affairs and sent a severely wrong signal to the separatist forces of "Tibetan Independence." He said the Tibet-related issue is a major principle concerning China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The China Daily wrote "the spiritual successor of the Dalai Lama must be endorsed by the central authority is stipulated by law, and the regulation dates back to the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It is a practice that predicates a harmonious relationship between the autonomous region and the central authority. There is no way the US can change that legal requirement". The State Department has not submitted the due report of Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA) to the Congress prompting the China Daily to observe that delay in submitting the report suggests that the U.S. Administration is more cognizant to the reality of Tibet as an autonomous region of China than most of members of the Congress.

### **Confirmed cases of Coronavirus reported from all three provinces, over 140 people infected**

January 31, 2020

After a suspected Chinese man tested positive for the novel Coronavirus pneumonia (nCoV-2019) in Lhasa on 30<sup>th</sup> January, all provinces of Tibet now have confirmed cases of Coronavirus. The state-owned Xinhua on January 29 stated that TAR is the last provincial-level region in the Chinese mainland to launch the top-level response to contain the novel coronavirus epidemic. All

tourist attractions have been shut down including the Potala palace and Norbulinga. An amateur video shot most likely using a cell phone showed the streets of Lhasa city deserted and empty.

Despite China announcing “top-level” emergency level in TAR, Beijing-based Tibetan writer Woeser wrote on her Facebook that despite China announcing “top-level” emergency in TAR, buying a face mask is a difficult task in Lhasa. She said that she is “scared” and “worried” as to how Tibetans will cope without proper containment measures in place if the outbreak spreads on a larger scale.

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