



CCAS

Centre for China Analysis & Strategy
中国分析及策略中心

23 August 2021

'CPPCC CHAIRMAN WANG YANG'S VISIT TO TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION IS IMPORTANT'

by JAYADEVA RANADE

The 3-day (August 18-21, 2021) visit to Lhasa by Wang Yang, Politburo Standing Committee member and Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), at the head of a 22-member delegation is important. The visit follows that by Chinese President Xi Jinping in late July and, together, the two are intended to give a substantive push to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership's plan to effect a cultural and socio-economic transformation of Tibet.

2. Indications of the proposed changes were given at the National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2021, which approved the '14th Five Year Plan and Long Range Plan-2030'. Tibet has received elevated attention from the CCP leadership since Xi Jinping took office and especially over the past year. Central Party organisations and the TAR leaders have been urging cadres to intensify the campaigns designed to bring about the changes.

3. CPPCC Chairman Wang Yang arrived in Lhasa at the newly opened Terminal 3 of Lhasa Gonggar Airport just after noon on August 18, 2021. The delegation, which had come to take part in the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the so-called "peaceful liberation of Tibet" on August 19, was welcomed at the airport by TAR Party Secretary Wu Yingjie, Chairman of TAR People's Congress Lobsang Gyaltsen, Chairman of TAR People's Government Che Dalha and nearly 500 representatives of "ethnic groups in Tibet". The People's Daily marked the celebrations with a 20-page special pull-out.

4. Included in the delegation from Beijing were: You Quan, Politburo member and Head of the United Front Work Department (UFWD); Pema Trinley, presently Vice Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee and former Chairman of the TAR People's Government; Zhang Qingli, Vice Chairman of the CPPCC Standing Committee and former hard-line TAR Party Secretary from 2006-2011; Sithar, former Executive Deputy Minister and Head of the UFWD Seventh Bureau who played a key role during the 2002-2010 talks with envoys of the Dalai Lama; and Admiral Miao Hua, Political Commissar of the Central Military Commission (CMC).

5. On arrival at the airport on August 18, Wang Yang was received by TAR Party Secretary Wu Yingjie and senior TAR officials. Soon after its arrival, the delegation attended the opening ceremony of an exhibition at the Tibet Museum on the theme "The Party's greatness shines on the borderland and the Tibetan Plateau -- the 70th Anniversary of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet!" The same evening the delegation had a meeting with leading cadres of Tibet

including Pema Trinlay, Phakpa La Gelek Namgyal, Legcho, Pasang, Lobsang Gyaltsen, Che Dalha, Wu Yingjie and the family of Ngapon Ngawang Jigme.

6. The official celebration of the 70th Anniversary commenced at 10 am at the Potala Palace Square and was attended by more than 20,000 party cadres and masses. 24 officers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) including 7 lady officers and 10 representatives from the People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) were also present.

7. Wang Yang addressed the gathering and the Head of the UFWD, You Quan read out the congratulatory messages from the CCP Central Committee, NPC, the State Council, CPPCC and the CMC. TAR Party Secretary Wu Yingjie, Commander of the Tibet Military Region Lt. General Wang Kai, a representative of the people who currently works as Director of the Zangre Community Neighbourhood in Lhasa, Tenzin, and a representative of the Tibet Aid Cadres and Deputy Secretary of Shuanghu County Party Committee, Liang Nanyu, also delivered speeches. Commemorative messages and plaques were presented by Wang Yang to select persons and a representative each of the TAR, the Tibet Military Region, Headquarters of the PAPF, the Political and Legal Affairs Commission (PLAC) of TAR and the Tibet Branch of the Buddhist Association of China.

8. Phakpa La Gelek Namgyal, Vice Chairman of the CPPCC and Chairman of the TAR PPCC, and other TAR leaders like Lobsang Gyaltsen, Chairman of TAR People's Congress; Yan Jinhai, Party Secretary of Lhasa Municipal Party Committee, Zhang Xuejie, Tenkho, Jiang Jie, He Wenhao, Pema Wangdui, Liu Jiang, Wang Weidong, Chen Yongqi, Wang Haizhou and old Party Cadres like Legcho and Pasang attended the celebration. Gyaltsen Norbu, the Chinese-appointed 11th Panchen Lama was also present. As he was not photographed or mentioned in the list of delegates arriving from Beijing, it is likely that he arrived in Lhasa separately. The Celebration was presided over by the Chairman of the TAR People's Government, Che Dalha.

9. Wang Yang's over 2500-word speech mentioned Xi Jinping at least seven times. Addressing the 70th anniversary celebrations of the so-called "peaceful liberation of Tibet" on August 19, Wang Yang asserted that "The peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951 was a major victory in the cause of liberation of the Chinese people and China's reunification" and said "It marked a historic transition with epoch-making significance for Tibet". Asserting that serfdom had been abolished, he said Tibet presently has over 35,000 deputies of people's congresses and over 8,000 CPPCC members at various levels, 90 percent of whom are ethnic minorities. He claimed that "separatist and sabotage activities" committed by "the Dalai group and hostile external forces have been crushed". Wang Yang said that more than 1,700 temples in Tibet have full access to water, electricity, the Internet, fire-fighting and other facilities. All the 46,000 monks and nuns in TAR are covered by the government's social security scheme. He also expressed support for "a national demonstration zone for ecological civilization construction."

10. Wang Yang urged that officials and the general public of all ethnic groups should be mobilized to forge an "ironclad defence" against separatist activities. He also called for efforts to ensure "that religions in China are Chinese in orientation and guide Tibetan Buddhism in adapting itself to socialist society. And we should rally religious figures and believers around us in a joint effort to safeguard national security and social harmony. Tibet's development over the past seven decades demonstrates that unity and stability is a blessing, whereas

separatist activities and chaos can only lead to disaster. No one outside China has the right to point fingers at us when it comes to Tibetan affairs. Any attempt or maneuver designed to separate Tibet from China is doomed to fail”.

11. Referring to the project for assimilating Tibetan culture with that of the Han, he said “It is necessary to promote the cause of national unity and progress based on forging the consciousness of the Chinese nation as a community as the main line.” Wang Yang explained that this entails “Efforts to raise public awareness of ethnic unity and progress should go hand in hand with efforts to raise awareness of core socialist values, of patriotism, of struggle against separatist activities, of contrast between old and new Tibet, and of the Marxist views of country, history, ethnicity, culture and religion. Such efforts will enable people of all ethnic groups to strengthen their faith in our great motherland, the Chinese nation, the Chinese culture, the CPC and socialism with Chinese characteristics, thus solidifying the cultural foundation for ethnic unity. A shared cultural identity underpins ethnic unity.”

12. Continuing with this theme, he said “All-round efforts should continue to be made to teach standard spoken and written Chinese language. We should foster and share Chinese cultural symbols and images of the Chinese nation among all ethnic groups, and thus create a source of inspiration for the entire Chinese nation.”

13. On August 20, the delegation split into two groups and left Lhasa for inspections to Nagchu, Shigatse and Lhoka. Wang Yang, Zhang Qingli, Miao Hua and some members from the delegation from Beijing went to Nagchu (Ch: Nagqu) and visited the Animal Husbandry Industry Demonstration Base (Green House), Kaima Village in Sernyed Chu District, and the Hangjie Middle Military School, which was established in 2017 as the single largest project of the 13th Five Year plan aided by Zhejiang Province and has more than 2000 students. The delegation visited the Nagchu City People’s Hospital and inaugurated the Nagchu-Yangbachen Section of the Beijing-Tibet National Expressway. TAR Party Secretary Wu Yingjie, accompanied this delegation for their visits.

14. You Quan, Pema Trinlay and some of the other delegates who had come from Beijing left for visits to Lhoka (Ch: Shannan) and Shigatse (Ch: Xigaze). Lobsang Gyaltsen, Chairman of TAR People’s Congress accompanied this group. At Lhoka the delegation visited Nyedong District’s Ethnic Hand-knitting Professional Cooperative Society, the Lhoka City People’s Hospital, the Lhoka No.2 Vocational and Technical School, and held a meeting with Lhoka Municipal Party Committee officials and local people. The delegation also visited the ‘Exhibition Hall of the First Democratic Reform Village’. In Shigatse, the delegation visited the Jianglou Khangsar Community in Samdrubtse District, and inspected the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Shanghai Experimental School and the Shigatse People’s Hospital. Interestingly, there was no mention of Gyaltsen Norbu, the Chinese-appointed 11th Panchen Lama, being present at the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, which is his traditional religious seat, though he had attended the 70th Anniversary celebration in Lhasa on August 19.

15. CPPCC Chairman Wang Yang’s speech clearly outlined the thrust of the CCP’s policy for Tibet in the coming years. The focus was on unity among Han and Tibetan ethnic groups, the oneness of their culture, harmony and stability in Tibet and the defence and security of the borders. Interesting were the repeated references to separatist and sabotage activities and

the Dalai Lama and ‘his clique’, though in the same speech Wang Yang also asserted that separatism had been crushed. Important in this context was the indication of continuing resistance to the CCP’s efforts, highlighted by the call to “rally religious figures and believers around us in a joint effort to safeguard national security and social harmony”.

(The author is a former Additional Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India and presently President of the Centre for China Analysis and Strategy.)

