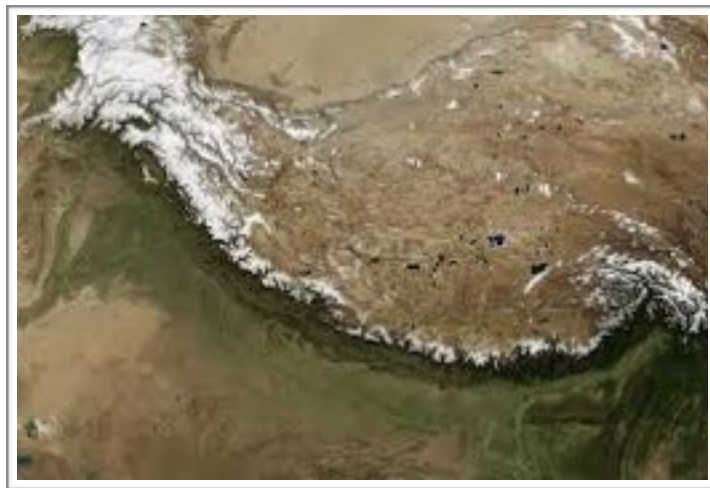


Tibet Digest

May 2016



FOUNDATION FOR NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES

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China's Minority Policies

New city inaugurated in Tibet

china.org.cn

Xinhua

May 28, 2016

Shannan in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region was officially reclassified as a city on Friday.



Photo taken on May 21 shows Shannan City in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. [Photo: Xinhua]

China's State Council, or the cabinet, approved Shannan's application to be upgraded from a prefecture to a prefecture-level city in January.

Shannan will now get its own city committee of the Communist Party of China, government, people's congress standing committee, and political advisory body.

Located in southeastern Tibet with an average altitude of 3,700 meters, Shannan is the fifth prefecture-level city in Tibet after regional capital Lhasa, Qamdo, Xigaze and Nyingchi.

With a population of 360,000, Shannan had a GDP of 11.36 billion yuan (1.73 billion U.S. dollars) in 2015.

Phurbu Dondrup, mayor of Shannan City, said that conversion from a prefecture to a city means a simplified administrative approval procedure, which will be helpful for the economic development of the area due to higher efficiency.

Rights abuse allegations in Tibet groundless: Chinese media

easternmirrornagaland.com

pti

May 26, 2015

Accusing the US of being an "active provoker" of Tibetan independence, China's state media today said the West was making "groundless" allegations about human rights violations to sabotage the integrity of China.

"The western countries are always hyping human rights conditions in Tibet. Their accusations are groundless," said an article in the state-run Global Times.

"The Western countries are colluding with some Tibetan radicals to instigate Tibet independence. In recent years, China has been developing rapidly. Concerned about China's rise, the Western countries are colluding with the 14th Dalai Lama, who went into exile in India in 1959, and other radicals to instigate Tibet independence," it said.

"However, the Tibetan separatists are merely chess pieces used by the West to counter China," it claimed.

China this month commemorated the 65th year of its takeover of Tibet and Chinese media has been taking an increasingly tough stance against the US of late. Yesterday, the Chinese media slammed the US for lifting the decades-old arms embargo against Vietnam.

Today, the paper said: "The US is also an active provoker of Tibet independence. Given its huge ideological disparity from China, the White House has been attempting to sabotage the integrity of China for a long time."

"In fact, the so-called Tibet independence movement is an outcome of the imperialist aggression against China. Specifically, the UK attempted to construct a buffer zone to protect its geopolitical interests in India, which was colonised by the UK at that time. To this end, the UK invaded Tibet in the 1860s and at the beginning of the 20th century," it said.

"India, after its independence, attempted to inherit the UK's strategic legacies in the region, and thus followed the UK to intervene in the interior affairs of Tibet," it said.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet to Dharmasala in India.

China officially established the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965. "Since then Tibet has achieved enormous development," the article said.

Tibet's GDP surged from USD 15 million in the 1950s to over USD 17 billion in 2015 and the article claimed that Tibet has seen "dramatic changes" in economy, politics, social welfare and culture.

China Pouring Billions Into Majority Tibetan Ganzi Prefecture

NBCNEWS.COM

MAY 25, 2016

KANGDING, China — One of the world's most remote regions is in the midst of a multi-billion dollar overhaul.

After decades of subduing unrest, China is betting that cold, hard cash will pacify restive Tibetans within its borders.

Beijing aims to spend nearly \$30 billion — or roughly \$25,000 per person — over a five-year period in the majority Tibetan prefecture of Ganzi in western Sichuan province, according to Governor Yeshe Dawa.

Its capital city of Kangding now features a new airport offering easy access. In a couple of years, an expressway will cut the road trip to provincial capital of Chengdu to three hours from as many as 20. A billion-dollar railway project is also in the works.

"In 20 or 30 years, we will achieve Northern Europe's living standards," said the feisty Yeshe, who is an ethnic Tibetan.

During a recent government-organised media tour of Ganzi, Yeshe and other officials revealed the scale of China's Tibet investment plan: An annual subsidy equaling 10 times the prefecture's internal revenues.

The rare visit to the area was an attempt by Beijing to showcase its efforts to fast-track Tibetans' integration with China's modernising economy. Officials cited improvements to health services, education and employment opportunities.

Part of the ancient Tibetan region of Kham, Ganzi is roughly the size of the state of New York but has a population of only 1.16 million, mostly Tibetans. Boasting snow-capped mountain peaks, alpine forests, breathtaking gorges and river valleys, its 500 Lamaist monasteries also inspire a unique cultural and religious legacy.

However, China's investment has triggered a tourism boom that is prompting fears that Tibetans' traditions and way of life are threatened.

The trip offered a glimpse of how the new Tibet strategy mapped out by President Xi Jinping in August is playing out at the local level. It mandated that Tibetans will march "in step" with the rest of China towards the 2020 goals of a \$20 trillion economy — an overall GDP rivalling that of the U.S. Beijing, the prefecture chief said, is so supportive of Ganzi's takeoff that it is funding road construction at a cost of \$45 million per mile. Many areas soar from 6,000 to 13,000 feet above sea level.

These improvements have made a huge difference for Alaskan teacher-turned-café owner Jonathan Westbrook, who introduced the first Western-style café to Kangding when he traveled there four years ago. At the time, poor roads were practically crippling for the young business.

"The transportation access to the region is phenomenal compared to 10 years ago," Westbrook told NBC News, noting that his pioneering Himalayan Coffee bar, which blends Tibetan motif with the log cabin feel from his Alaska hometown, is now popular among locals and tourists alike.

Some 3 million Tibetans live in province of Tibet while another 3.5 million call other parts of China home, mainly in the west.

For most Tibetans in exile and their international supporters, China has unlawfully occupied much of the Himalayan region since 1951 when the People's Liberation Army overran what is now the autonomous region of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama, Tibet's Nobel Prize winning spiritual leader, has led the government in exile from neighbouring India since fleeing during the 1959 uprising.

While strikingly beautiful and a tourist draw, Ganzi is also "one of the most restive Tibetan areas," according to Kate Saunders, communications director of the International Campaign for Tibet, citing Tibetans' self-immolations and other protests against Chinese rule. ICT is the largest Tibet advocacy group and chaired by American actor Richard Gere.

A majority of 145 reported self-immolation protests have taken place in western Sichuan's Tibetan areas including Ganzi since 2009, according to Pema Yoko, leader of the Students for a Free Tibet, another advocacy group.

Asked about these self-immolations, the Ganzi government issued a statement to NBC News that "the reasons were not what Western media have reported, some people had lost hope, some incurred gambling debts, and very few were incited by outside forces for political purpose," referring to supporters of the exiled Dalai Lama whom China has accused of splitting the country.

It said the "inhuman" incidents have become very rare due to "improvements in people's lives and rule of law."

"Self-immolation is definitely on the decline," according to Robert Barnett, a leading authority on Tibet at New York's Columbia University. "It seems that the use of collective punishment in some key areas —penalising families, friends, communities and monasteries for a single incident — contributed to the decline."

Exact reasons won't be known as "no independent research is allowed there," he said, adding that the Tibetan government in exile in India has also called on people not to self-immolate.

In Ganzi, the Beijing-organised visit showed off a new \$30-million hospital which offers medical services nearly for free due to insurance schemes, a \$30 million technical college and a middle school for 4,700 mostly Tibetan students on government scholarships, a winery that mostly employs Tibetans, and a tourism program that recruits former nomadic herdsmen.

The local government said it has spent nearly \$200 million helping hundreds of monasteries and religious sites in the past five years, covered some 80,000 Tibetan monks and nuns with health and social insurance, and spent \$400 million to almost double high school enrolment.

Local Tibetans NBC News met during the government-organised tour said they are taking up the offer of economic help.

"I want to be an art teacher," said 17-year-old Zeren Yongjin while doing a traditional Tibetan Thangka painting at the technical school. One painting can take three to four months, she said.

Meanwhile, 19-year-old high student Dingzhen Yijie comes from a long line of herdsmen, but he sees his future in law enforcement.

"The concept of law is weak among us so I want to be a policeman," he said. A police officer commands a monthly salary of \$650, which would place him firmly in the country's growing middle class.

Tourism is an industry that Beijing and at least some Tibetans are really staking their future on.

Sensing a boom in this area, Zuo Ma, a 49-year-old mother of three told NBC News she invested \$150,000 in savings to convert a two-room family inn into a 14-room, 30-bed hotel in the picturesque Jiaju Village in Danba County. "Making \$50,000 a year is no problem," she said.

Meanwhile, Luo Zha, a former nomadic herdsman, has decided to settle his family and 30 yaks — the long-haired oxen unique to the Himalayas — in a village. From now on he's betting that he can boost his income three-fold by hosting curious tourists his colorful Tibetan-style house.

While some may see these changes as opportunities, a spokesman for rights group International Tibet Network warned that Beijing's attempts to settle traditionally nomadic Tibetans could destroy an ancient culture.

International Tibet Network's spokesman Tenzin Jigdal with family roots in Daofu County, condemns what he says

are plans to "rehouse" 2 million Tibetan nomads within China.

The moves were "profoundly altering to Tibet's social and environmental fabric, imperilling their livelihoods and their culture, and threatening the survival of the rangelands," the organisation's international coordinator said.

"Historically, many other centralised governments have tried to win over oppressed populations with money, and have failed," said Matteo Mecacci, president of the International Campaign for Tibet and a former Italian parliamentarian.

He also called on Beijing to accept that "the expression by Tibetans of their identity and way of life is not anti-China."

Chinese officials argue that Tibetans must abandon at least some expressions of their culture in order to benefit from modern Chinese society.

"If we don't help the Tibetan herdsmen to settle down, how can we provide them with health, education and other social services?" said Li Yongxin, a press officer for rural Danba County.

He also stressed that resettlement efforts were strictly voluntary.

Lhasa passes a law to protect ancient villages

Xinhua

May 25, 2016

Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, has passed a law to protect its ancient villages, authorities said Wednesday.

The law, effective June 1, stipulates principles on ancient village protection and restoration, funds, responsibilities and building a long-term protection mechanism. It also demands a "supervisor mechanism" and encourages volunteer groups to help with protection efforts, according to the regional government.

Lhasa has 1,123 villages, which boast unique landscapes, cultures and traditions. As the local economy speeds up, many ancient villages have yet to be restored, and the law was enacted to address this, the government said.

"The law will enhance protection efforts for precious cultural resources in Lhasa," said Zhang Hui, vice director of the standing committee of the Lhasa municipal people's congress.

Tibetans Protest Unsafe Conditions in Their Town in Draggo

rfa.org

May 25, 2016



Map showing location of Draggo county in Sichuan province.

Facing increasingly hazardous conditions caused by decaying infrastructure, the residents of an impoverished Tibetan town in southwestern China's Sichuan province are pleading with local authorities to repair crumbling roads and a badly maintained power station, according to a local source.

Kharnya township in Draggo (in Chinese, Luhuo) county in the Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture has suffered for years from dangerous roads and an unreliable and unsafe power supply, prompting residents to petition township officials for help, a local resident told RFA's Tibetan Service.

"A similar petition was presented to authorities last year but was ignored," RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The main issue now is the lack of proper roads in Kharnya on which local residents can travel and conduct economic activities in the town," the source said.

"Traffic on the town's main road is often halted by erosion and the frequent landslides caused by poor construction work," he said.

Fatal accidents

And though an electric power station was built in the area about 10 years ago, "the station is not well maintained, and the local residents get hardly any benefit from it."

Instead, power lines left lying in the open have caused occasional and sometimes fatal accidents, he said.

"For example, Chime Wangchuk of the township's Jedak village was killed when he picked up a live wire lying on the ground, and Konchok Gyaltzen from the same village was disabled when he touched a stray cable."

Deforestation initiated by local authorities has also damaged the local environment, RFA's source said, adding that the "random cutting and transportation" of timber in and around Kharnya has also resulted in injuries.

"The authorities have not provided any kind of compensation for these victims of government neglect in the area," he said.

School abandoned

Lying about 80 miles from the Draggo county seat, Kharnya is home to about 400 families, but owing to poor road conditions in the area, no teacher can be persuaded to remain in the township to teach, the source said.

"Thus, there are now no students in the school," he said.

Chinese security forces swarmed Draggo in large numbers two years ago in an apparent attempt to prevent county residents from observing the anniversary of a violent crackdown on Tibetan protesters in January 2012.

Two Tibetans were killed, and at least 30 injured, in the incident in which armed police fired at random into a crowd, sources said in earlier reports.

Shopkeepers in the county have since been ordered by authorities to hand over all stocks of photos of exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, with "severe punishment" threatened for those who fail to comply.

China's Centuries-long Secret War on MuslimsOZY.COM

LAURA SECORUN PALET

MAY 24 2016

Armed conflicts are like living organisms. Some grow and die in the blink of an eye, others ebb and flow like the tides of a river and others survive half buried, but alive, for centuries. In Xinjiang, its been over 300 years ... and counting.

This vast region in China's far northwest is home to an ethnic Uyghur population of Turkic origin that has been waging violent independence campaigns of varying intensity since the commencement of Chinese rule in the 18th century.

And they're still going at it. This arid land of endless deserts and imposing mountains is home to a largely Muslim insurgency, which claims that most new opportunities from the region's rapid economic development have gone to the ethnic Han immigrants. Violence is escalating: A 2013 attack in Tiananmen Square killed five people and, last June, 18

people were killed after ethnic Uyghurs attacked police with knives and bombs at a traffic checkpoint.

The Uyghur have their own culture, language and religion (Islam), yet lately they have been subjected to humiliating measures, including bans on beards and veils — something observers say is only fuelling the insurgency. “For peace to prevail, we need to stop treating Uyghur as second-class citizens and routinely denying their human rights,” says Greg Fay, project manager at the Uyghur Human Rights Project. There is no free press in the region, but activists like Fay say it’s a bloody, never-ending cycle: The growing death count increases political repression, and the more Beijing clamps down, the more attacks are carried out. Meanwhile, HRW accuses the central government of limiting the Uyghurs’ rights of mobility, speech (the use of their language is restricted) and assembly.

Yet some believe the central government has no choice but to be implacable. “China must counter Xinjiang’s insurgency because threats from the periphery are multiple and linked: If one area of China secedes, the country could disintegrate,” argues Martin I. Wayne, author of *China’s War on Terrorism: Counter-Insurgency, Politics and Internal Security*. Indeed, like Tibet or Taiwan, this chunk of territory (twice the size of Texas) is a vital organ to the whole — one rich in oil, gas and mineral resources. (The government of China did not reply to our request for comment.)

Reconciliation seems way out of the picture. Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti ran a website in Chinese to try to build bridges between Uyghur and Han communities, but last year the government sentenced him to life imprisonment for “separatism.” Instead, President Xi Jinping hopes to win Uyghur hearts by providing development to the region. But that’s not going so well either. Locals resent that the oil-extraction industry and other large-scale development projects employ mostly Han immigrants — 50 of whom died in a recent attack on a coal mine. So Xinjiang is starting to look less like Tibet and more like China’s Chechnya.

Panchen Lama visits Jokhang Temple

Xinhua

May 19, 2016

LHASA, May 19 (Xinhua) -- The 11th Panchen Lama visited Jokhang Temple on Thursday, leading a prayer service and blessing lamas in the most revered monastery in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region.

The 11th Panchen Lama, Bainqen Erdini Qoigyijabu, arrived at the Jokhang Temple around 5:40 a.m. He was greeted by lamas lined up at the temple gates who were holding Tibetan incense.

The 26-year-old visited the temple's major halls, paid homage and presented hada -- a long scarf-like piece of white silk used by Tibetans in blessings -- to Buddha statues. They included Jokhang's treasure: a statue of Buddha Sakyamuni brought to the temple by Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty in the seventh century.

It was before this statue in November 1995 that the current Panchen Lama, whose secular name is Gyaencaen Norbu, was chosen as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Erdeni through the traditional method of drawing lots from a golden urn.

Following worship, the Panchen Lama led sutra chanting at the temple, praying for harvests, prosperity and stability, before he performed a head-touching ritual to bless the lamas.

The service at Jokhang Temple marked the start of the Panchen Lama's annual visit to Lhasa. Arriving on Tuesday in the city known as the "holy city" of Tibetan Buddhism, he will hold more religious activities during the visit.

The Panchen Lama serves as vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and as a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

Over 100,000 Tibetan antiques digitally documented

Xinhua

May 17, 2016

Southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region has finished making digital records of over 100,000 antiques, local authorities said Monday.

As part of the country's first census of antiques, Tibet started digitally cataloging in 2013.

A total of 105,494 items at 825 sites have had their information and state of preservation recorded online, according to the regional cultural heritage bureau.

Most items already had their basic information documented, and during the census more detailed and complete information was collected and uploaded.

Tibet boasts abundant historical resources, with 1,295 registered institutions, about 90 percent of which are temples, holding items.

Digital documentation of all such antiques is scheduled to be completed within three years.

China Pressures Europe to Stay Silent on Human Rights

The Diplomat

May 15, 2016

China's attempts to export its censorship and authoritarianism raise serious questions for all European countries.

China's belligerent diplomacy in Europe has been in the spotlight this week after a German lawmaker who chairs the Bundestag's Human Rights Committee was refused access to China after he criticised rights violations in Tibet. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said he was "not welcome" because of his support for "Tibetan independence."

German Christian Democrat politician Michael Brand, who had intended to travel with the Parliamentary Committee to Tibet in late May, was robust in his response to the visa ban when he said: "We can't just accept it when authoritarian regimes like China, Russia or Turkey carry out censorship and oppression, certainly not if they want to export these methods — and to Germany too. When it comes to human rights, pussyfooting around doesn't pay off. Human rights are not an internal affair of the state of China."

China's attempts to export its methods of censorship and authoritarianism raise serious questions for all European countries about whether their approach has contributed to Beijing's aggressive diplomacy.

When governments adopt a softer approach on human rights and Tibet, their country's potential for negotiation on important strategic issues becomes more constricted. Going to great lengths to accommodate the Chinese leadership's sensitivities at a time when Chinese President Xi Jinping is presiding over the most eviscerating crackdown on civil society in a generation weakens a country's leverage instead of strengthening it.

Demands from China to Western democracies, which have included telling prime ministers not to meet the Dalai Lama, or to withdraw criticism, as with this example, are aimed at reducing their negotiating strength, and asserting Beijing's own agenda for greater gains.

Some countries in Europe, such as the United Kingdom, have acceded to such demands and kowtowed to such a significant degree that they have faced a major public backlash for doing so. In the UK, even those involved in doing business with China expressed concern about the

British government's overly accommodating approach to Xi's state visit last year. James McGregor, a business consultant with operations in China, said: "If you act like a panting puppy, the object of your attention is going to think they have got you on a leash."

Sometimes the accommodating approach arises from short-term considerations of political expediency, rather than from an informed position. There is no credible evidence of significant economic loss when governments do risk Chinese wrath and take a position on, for instance, whom they can and cannot meet, whether it is the Dalai Lama or anyone else. For instance, when Norway did not apologise for the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, there was no evidence of any serious economic consequences — indeed, bilateral trade significantly increased, according to an analysis in *The Diplomat*.

Experienced China hands understand that the Beijing leadership will seek to frame the debate in its own terms, amplifying issues that are less important in order to compel concessions elsewhere. In the case of the row with the Bundestag Committee Chair, the official statement from the Foreign Ministry deliberately blamed his support for "Tibet independence" — although the issue of the status of Tibet has never entered the equation. Virtually all Western governments acknowledge that Tibet is a part of the PRC, and the Dalai Lama's position is that he is seeking a genuine autonomy for Tibet under the auspices of the PRC.

And yet even so, Chinese diplomats have had some success in pushing governments to adopt specific language on the "Tibet independence" question, perhaps with a view to closing down future possible support for the Tibetan people. The UK, France and Denmark have all caved in this respect, giving the unnecessary addition to their official position that they "do not support Tibetan independence."

It is nothing new that China attempts to use economic and commercial interests to enforce submission to its agenda, but it is new that in recent years too many European democracies seem willing to cooperate with this process, sometimes even engaging in pre-emptive capitulation and self-censorship before any demands are even made.

Kardze Mine Work Halted Pending 'Resolution' of Community Concerns

rfa.org

May 11, 2016

In a rare move, authorities in southwestern China's Sichuan province have ordered a temporary halt to a Chinese mining company's operations in a Tibetan-populated area after first telling protesters they had no right to ask that the work be stopped.

The order issued on May 6 by authorities in the Kardze (in Chinese, Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and in Kangding city cites environmental problems resulting from the mining and "solemnly commits" to block further operations until community concerns can be resolved.

A copy of the order, which was written in Chinese, was obtained by Radio Free Asia's Tibetan Service.

Authorities had earlier appealed to Tibetan protesters to end their blockade of a highway aimed at ending work at the lithium mine, which was linked to water pollution and fish deaths in the region, sources told RFA in earlier reports.

More than 100 Tibetans from five nomadic villages in Dartsedo (Kangding) county staged the protest, fearing further environmental damage after the mining company announced last week that it would resume operations after an almost three-year halt.

"The authorities convened a meeting where they tried to convince the community that the land is owned by the government and that the mining operations are a government decision," one source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The local community was told they had no right to block the work, he said.

Chinese security forces armed with rifles surrounded the protesters at one point but did not attack, sources said.

Tibet has become an important source of minerals needed for China's economic growth, and Chinese mining operations in Tibetan areas have often led to widespread environmental damage, including the pollution of water sources for livestock and humans, experts say.

China's Youth League Sends 4,500 Volunteers to Tibet in 13 Yrs

womenofchina.cn

May 9, 2016

Over 4,500 Chinese university students have offered their services to volunteer in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region over the past 13 years, and 1,500 stayed permanently, according to statistics released by the China Communist Youth League Tibet Committee on international Youth Day (May 4).

In 2003, China launched the scheme called the College Students' Volunteer Service Western Program, transporting college graduates or postgraduates to parts of the country's less-developed



Volunteers for the Western Program take pictures together. [China Youth Daily]

western regions. Under the program, participants provide one to three years' volunteer services in education, health, agriculture and poverty alleviation, or other areas.

"The program not only toughens the youth but improves the talent framework of Tibet," said Qin Lin, vice-minister of the Volunteer Work Department under the committee.

"It helps promote national unity and infuses new blood into the region," he added.

According to Qin, Tibet has formulated preferential policies to help college volunteers better get adjusted to work and life there. It also trained them beforehand in acclimatisation and local history, and informed them of the general conditions of the region.

Detention and Self-immolation

Tibetan Former Prisoner Vanishes Into Custody Again

rfa.org

May 31, 2016

A Tibetan man freed from prison three years ago after serving a 21-year sentence has disappeared again into Chinese police custody, a Tibetan source in exile says.

Lodroe Gyatso, 55, was detained in Tibet's regional capital Lhasa around midnight on May 14, 2016 and has not been heard from since, Ngawang Tharpa, a Tibetan living in India, told RFA's Tibetan Service, citing contacts in the region.

"We have no information on his present condition, and it is very difficult to contact anyone to get more information," Tharpa said.

News of Gyatso's detention was delayed in reaching outside contacts due to restrictions on communications imposed by Chinese authorities in Tibetan areas.

Gyatso, a native of Sog (in Chinese, Suo) county in the Nagchu (Naqu) prefecture of China's Tibet Autonomous Region, was first handed a 15-year prison term in 1991 for killing a man in a fight, but later had his sentence extended for engaging in political activism while incarcerated, sources told RFA in earlier reports.

On March 4, 1995, he called on other prisoners to protest and shouted, "Tibet is independent, China should leave Tibet!" one source said, adding that Gyatso had also distributed protest literature in prison.

Though authorities wanted to execute him for his activism, his case was raised by Amnesty International and the U.N., and he was sentenced instead to a further six-year term, sources said.

Gyatso had been "severely tortured" during the initial phase of his earlier detention, Tharpa said.

"His cell was so small that he couldn't even raise his head, and at one point he was hung from a ceiling all night with nails driven through his thumbs," he said.

The reasons for Gyatso's most recent detention and the place where he is being held are still unknown, Tharpa said, adding, "His relatives and family members have had no word on his condition."

Over a Hundred Tibetans Launch New Protest Against Gold Mine in Gansu

rfa.org

May 31, 2016



Tibetan protesters hold a banner calling for a halt to Chinese mining operations on a sacred mountain in Gansu's Sangchu county, May 31, 2016.

More than a hundred Tibetan villagers turned out on Tuesday in northwestern China's Gansu province to protest the mining of gold near a sacred mountain, drawing large numbers of police and other security forces to the area, local sources said.

The May 31 protest in Amchok township in Sangchu (in Chinese, Xiahe) county follows 15 years of frustrated appeals to officials to halt the work, a Tibetan living in the area told RFA's Tibetan Service.

"But the mining only continued," RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The mining company had previously prevented a united Tibetan resistance to its operations "by spreading money and other benefits to many in the area," the source said.

"But now, the local Tibetans have been driven to desperation and have launched this protest."

The threatened mountain, Gong Ngon Lari, has been regarded for generations as a sacred site by the township's cluster of eight villages, the source said.

"Villagers are now protesting at the mine with a large banner calling for all activities there to stop and for local officials to look into their appeal and take the issue up with higher authorities if necessary," he said.

Protesters surrounded

Armed paramilitary police and other security forces arrived shortly after the protest began, and quickly surrounded the protesters, the source said.

No word was immediately available regarding clashes or detentions in the area.

Two years ago, more than a hundred Tibetan residents of another Sangchu county township protested the seizure of

farmland for the construction of roads tied to state-linked gold mining and industrial operations, sources said in earlier reports.

The April 2, 2014 protest by banner-carrying residents of Hortsang township came two weeks after other local demonstrations against government seizure of Tibetan land, and quickly drew police to the protest site.

Tibet has become an important source of minerals needed for China's economic growth, and Chinese mining operations in Tibetan areas have often led to widespread environmental damage, including the pollution of water sources for livestock and humans and the disruption of sacred sites, experts say.

Tibetans in Ngaba Warned Over Anti-Mine Protests

rfa.org

May 27, 2016



Police vehicles guard a road leading to a planned mining site in Chuchen county, Sichuan, May 20, 2016.

Authorities in southwestern China's Sichuan province are ordering residents of a Tibetan-populated county not to resume their blockade of road construction in the area, issuing their warning two months after police violently cracked down on an earlier protest, according to a local source.

Tibetans living in Akhore town in the Ngaba (in Chinese, Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture's Chuchen (Jinchuan) county are objecting to the work because the finished road may be used to support Chinese mining operations on nearby sacred mountains, a Tibetan living in the area told RFA's Tibetan Service.

"Officials said that the road is intended for a dam project in the area, but workers have explained to the local people that mining is the project's ultimate object," RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

On May 20, a group of police officers arrived in Akhore and warned residents over loudspeakers of "serious consequences" if they attempted to block government road work in the area, the source said.

"They also imposed restrictions on the activities of local Tibetans," he said.

Beaten, detained

Two months before, police had clashed with community members protesting authorities' failure to respond to their concerns over the work, the source said.

Police "randomly beat up Tibetan protesters, including an old man in his 60s," during the March 28 protest, the source said.

"They also took away seven Tibetans who were detained for seven to 20 days and then released. Several among them suffered serious injuries."

Local residents had earlier halted work on the project for almost five years, RFA's source said.

"However, on March 28 of this year, workers arrived in the area again," he said.

Tibet has become an important source of minerals needed for China's economic growth, and Chinese mining operations in Tibetan areas have often led to widespread environmental damage, including the pollution of water sources for livestock and humans and the disruption of sacred sites, experts say.

Chinese Police Hold Herders Who Staged a Sit-in at Construction Site

rfa.org

May 24, 2016

Chinese authorities in the northern region of Inner Mongolia have detained 12 ethnic Mongolian herders amid a protest over the building of a highway across grasslands in the Shiliin-gol League in the west of the region.

The 12 herders from Shuluun Hoh banner to the south of the regional capital Shiliinhot were detained on May 21, as local residents blockaded a highway construction site on their grazing lands, which they graze under a 20-year government lease.

"We were sitting down in front of their vehicles so they couldn't move," a local herder told RFA in a recent interview.

"The grasslands are collectively leased by the herders. This is our land," he said. "They want to build a highway, and we tried to stop them."

"So the banner government sent in the riot police and armed police, who detained people," the herder said, adding that one of his relatives is being held on a seven-day administrative sentence, which police can hand down without a trial.

He said authorities had told local people the road would be built regardless.

"That's when they started detaining people, as we were sitting there," the herder said.

He said 14 people were detained at the scene, while two were released later.

"They told us we'd get compensation, but we don't know who they compensated," the herder said. "We haven't [seen any money]."

A second herder at the scene said herders had gathered at the banner government offices to demand the release of the detainees, which officials had refused to arrange.

"We have been here demanding their release ever since ... they just met with us," the second herder said. "But we haven't had any reply."

He said the government seemed to be focusing only on suppressing further protest.

"They just use their power to suppress people, and to make sure they don't kick up a fuss," he said. "We don't agree with [this highway], but they just force it on us anyway."

"They won't even let us have what's ours."

Local sources said the herders are grazing the land under a 20-year responsibility contract that has yet to expire.

Others held

Elsewhere in the region, police in the Darhan Muminggan United Banner detained dozens of protesting herders after they showed up outside the banner-level government offices on Tuesday in protest at nonpayment of government subsidies.

"More than 50 people went this morning," one protester told RFA. "Herders from Darhan Muminggan near Baotou went to demand their subsidies outside the banner government."

"They said they have given us various subsidies because of the ban on grazing, but they haven't paid them; they are just playing for time," the herder said.

"We still haven't had any result from the banner government, who have done nothing," another herder told RFA. "The herders have been petitioning and

protesting, but the government just sends in the police to detain people."

"They have let it drag on for so long without resolving it."

One woman who was among those detained said that she was briefly held and later released.

She added: "The police are monitoring [the smartphone app] WeChat so you can't post anything in there."

"I can't even open it, and they confiscated my smartphone," she said. "I only got that back today."

Repeated calls to the Darhan Muminggan banner government offices rang unanswered during office hours on Tuesday.

China: Repression Expands Under 'Stability Maintenance' in Tibetan Areas

Human Rights Watch

May 22, 2016

Dataset of Nearly 500 Cases Shows Diminishing Tolerance of Peaceful Dissent

(New York) – The Chinese government's campaign to suppress peaceful dissent in Tibetan areas has continued to produce a high rate of detentions, prosecutions, and convictions since the outbreak of widespread unrest eight years ago, Human Rights Watch said in a new report released today. The authorities have detained people for types of expression and assembly that are protected under Chinese and international law and had been previously tolerated. Many of these cases took place in rural areas or involved segments of society not previously targeted.

"Tibetan areas are the forefront of the Chinese government's country-wide crackdown on peaceful dissent," said Sophie Richardson, China director. "The authorities are treating all Tibetans as potential dissidents and are trying to extend surveillance to the entire Tibetan community."

The 86-page report, "Relentless: Detention and Prosecution of Tibetans under China's 'Stability Maintenance' Campaign," shows how changing patterns of unrest and politicised detentions, prosecutions, and convictions from 2013-2015 correlate with the latest phase of the government's "stability maintenance" campaign – a policy that has resulted in unprecedented surveillance and control in Tibetan villages and towns.

The Tibet Autonomous Region remains nearly entirely closed to journalists, researchers, and individual tourists, and almost no official data is available. Human Rights Watch's findings are based on a dataset of 479 cases drawn from reports by foreign media, the Chinese government, and exile sources. Human Rights Watch analysed this data to identify changing patterns of detention and sentencing.

Previously unpublished documents reveal the devastating cost paid by a local community for a single protest, Human Rights Watch said. In April 2013, the trial and conviction of three lamas from Chamdo in the Tibet Autonomous Region for a minor charge of "harbouring a criminal" led to police employing waves of collective punishment, intimidation, and repression throughout the wider community for over a year as they sought to find other suspects. The authorities detained, beat, and threatened scores of local Tibetans, and subjected others to political indoctrination and travel restrictions in an apparent attempt to obtain information about key suspects and deter further dissent.

Treatment in detention remains a serious concern, Human Rights Watch said. Fourteen of the detainees from Human Rights Watch's dataset were reported to have died while in custody or shortly after release.

After 2012, thousands of officials who had been posted the previous year to villages across Tibet as part of the "stability maintenance" policy began to implement local-level measures to prevent dissent. In those communities, many social, cultural, and environmental activities that were previously considered harmless became a focus of state attention and punishment.

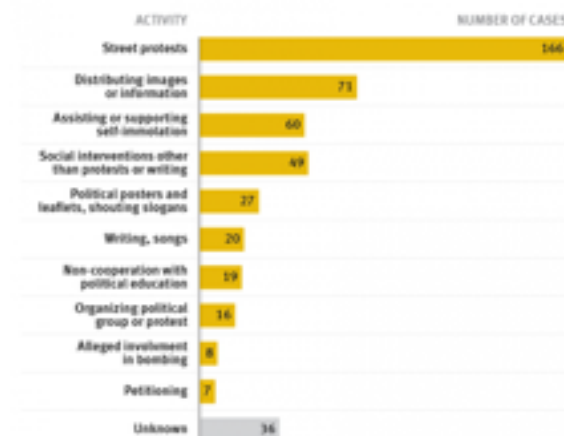
Many detainees and defendants from Human Rights Watch's dataset, ranging in age from 14 to 77, were people who had merely exercised their rights to expression and assembly without advocating separatism. Others had simply criticised decisions by local officials in their villages, opposed a mining development, advocated for greater language rights, or shown sympathy for self-immolators. Dozens of protests ended with security forces opening fire on protesters, although there are no reports of violence by protesters at those events.

Human Rights Watch found that almost all reported expressions of dissent that led to detentions occurred in villages, small towns, or rural townships, rather than in cities as in the past – the same places where government "stability maintenance" measures have been implemented. The report identifies nine specific localities, or "cluster sites," across the Tibetan plateau that, apparently in response to these measures, saw recurrent cycles of protest and suppression, increased politicised

detentions, and longer sentences for relatively minor offences compared to other areas.

Many of those detained and prosecuted during this period were local community leaders, environmental activists, and villagers involved in social and cultural activities. In the previous three decades, the authorities rarely accused such rural Tibetans of involvement in political unrest. Human Rights Watch identified seven protests, five of them with more than a hundred participants, in which villagers demanded the release of a detained community leader. The detention of local leaders and their communities' mass support for them appears to be a new phenomenon.

Of 479 cases of Tibetans detained from 2013 to 2015, most were detained for participating in peaceful dissent.



479 cases of Tibetan detainees, by activity.

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An analysis of detention cases in this period indicated that, once detained, people with social influence, such as community leaders, religious professionals, writers, or singers were more likely to be sent for trial than others. Those detained for an action that had been singled out as a political priority for containment during this time, such as support of self-immolations, also faced a greater likelihood of being sent for trial.

"If the goal of the 'stability maintenance' campaign was to wipe out dissent among Tibetans, it has failed to do so," Richardson said. "The basis of real stability is for China's government to respect rights, understand and respond to local grievances, and roll back abuses by security forces across the plateau."

Tibetan Prisoner's Family Fears For His Health

rfa.org

May 20, 2016

A Tibetan monk jailed for 13 years for his role in protests challenging Chinese rule is in uncertain health in a prison in Sichuan province, leading family members to fear he may not survive the remaining six years of his sentence, sources say.

Lobsang Choedar, a monk of Kirti monastery in the Ngaba (in Chinese, Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, was detained in 2009 after calling the previous year for the return of exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, a source in the region told RFA's Tibetan Service.

"He is now languishing in Mianyang prison in Sichuan, and his family members are very worried about his health, as he still has six years of his sentence left to serve," RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Choedar has received visits in prison three times this year, with family members speaking to him through a closed glass window, and relatives have formed changing impressions of his health, the source said.

"His family members are very worried, but at the same time they are very proud because he is serving his sentence for the sake of Tibet and the Tibetan people."

"His mother, who is 72, is concerned that she may not see her son again before she passes away, though," he said.

Hunger strike

At one point during his incarceration, Choedar had gone on a 12-day hunger strike in protest over the poor diet fed to the prison's more than 1,000 prisoners, the source said.

"Later, he was physically forced to eat and was moved to another location within the prison complex," he said.

"He is now reported to be in slightly better condition," the source said, adding that Choedar has told relatives that changes in his appearance may be due to long periods of exercise while in prison.

Choedar's Kirti monastery has been the scene of repeated self-immolations and other protests by monks, former monks, and nuns opposed to Chinese rule in Tibetan areas.

Authorities raided the institution in 2011, taking away hundreds of monks and sending them for "political re-education" while local Tibetans who sought to protect the monks were beaten and detained, sources said.

Sporadic demonstrations challenging Beijing's rule and calling for the return of exiled spiritual leader the Dalai

Lama have continued in Tibetan-populated areas of China since widespread protests swept the region in 2008.

A total of 145 Tibetans living in China have now set themselves ablaze in self-immolations since the wave of fiery protests began in 2009, with most protests featuring calls for Tibetan freedom and the Dalai Lama's return from India, where he has lived since escaping Tibet during a failed national uprising in 1959.

China Holds Activist Who Helped Lawyers' Son on 'Smuggling Charges'

rfa.org

May 19, 2016

A Chinese activist who helped the son of two detained human rights lawyers leave the country to attend college in the United States is being held under criminal detention, police have confirmed after holding him incommunicado for seven months.

Tang Zhishun and Xing Qingxian escorted Bao Zhuoxuan, 16, across the border from the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan into northern Myanmar posing as tourists after the boy was slapped with a travel ban in the wake of his parents' arrest.

Bao, who is also known by his nickname Bao Mengmeng, is the son of rights lawyers Wang Yu and Bao Longjun, who were detained on the night of July 9, 2015 at the start of a nationwide police operation targeting the legal profession.

But Bao and his minders were taken away from the Huadu Guesthouse in the border town of Mongla by local police on Oct. 6, and handed over to the Chinese authorities, sources told RFA at the time.

Seven months later, Xing's family received official notification of his criminal detention on suspicion of "organising the smuggling of persons across a national boundary."

While Xing and Tang had entered Myanmar legally, Bao's passport had been confiscated after his parents' detention.

Xing is currently being held in the Tianjin No. 2 Detention Center. It now looks likely that Tang is also being held in the city, which is coordinating the prosecutions of Wang, Bao Longjun and more than a dozen other rights attorneys on subversion and other charges.

226 days

"Two-hundred-and-twenty-six days after Tang Zhishun and Xing Qingxian were detained by Chinese police in Myanmar, I have finally received notification of Xing's

criminal detention," Xing's wife He Juan said via Twitter on Thursday.

"This notification arrived as a registered letter," He told RFA . He is living in the U.S. where she fled after her husband's detention.

"It was originally addressed to the [ruling] Chinese Communist Party village committee [in my hometown]," she said. "My mother has just gotten home, so they just handed it to her."

He Juan hit out at the length of her husband's detention, and at the lack of information given to the family in the interim. The detention notice was signed and sealed by Tianjin police on May 7.

"I think that we had to wait far too long," she said. "The rule is that the family should be notified within 24 hours, and we didn't get this for 226 days."

"In that time, I have experienced terror, fear and despair, but at least my husband is still alive," she said.

Xing's birthday falls on June 4, the politically sensitive anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, and He Juan called on supporters and fellow activists to send cards to the detention center to support him.

Meanwhile, Tang's lawyer Tan Chenshou told RFA that his client's family has yet to receive a similar notification.

"We haven't received anything here yet," Tan said. "But common sense says that they are probably being held in the same place."

Tough sentences

He said he expected both men to receive harsh jail terms for helping Bao Mengmeng.

"I think they'll give them tough sentences, because they use the word 'arranging,'" Tan said, adding that the smuggling charge is usually used against human traffickers, not against those arranging for a single person's departure.

"As his lawyer, I don't think that what they did amounts to 'organising the smuggling of persons across a national boundary,'" he said.

In an interview with RFA last October, Tang's wife Gao Shen, who also fled to the U.S. with the couple's daughter after his detention, said she feared the two men were at risk of torture.

"Secret detention is a terrifying thing," Gao said. "We are terribly afraid that the Chinese police may be torturing Tang Zhishun and Xing Qingxian, destroying them in order to get a forced confession."

China has detained, questioned or otherwise placed restrictions on at least 319 lawyers, law firm staff, human

right activists and family members since the July 9 crackdown began, a Hong Kong-based rights group reported on its website.

Some have been criminally detained or formally arrested on subversion, state security or public order charges, while others have been banned from leaving the country or placed under house arrest or other forms of surveillance, the Chinese Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group said.

Rights lawyer Ran Tong said the practice of holding people incommunicado for long periods was "wrong."

"These enforced disappearances are all just plain wrong," Ran said. "They are all illegal."

"Both Chinese law and international law is very clear about this, and this practice amounts to a criminal offence," he explained. "The families must be notified."

Detained Tibetan Monk Had Photo Taken With Banned National Flag

rfa.org

May 18, 2016

A young Tibetan monk taken into custody this week by authorities in southwestern China's Sichuan province had been photographed with a banned Tibetan national flag, leading to his investigation and eventual detention by police, sources in exile said.

Jampa Gelek, believed to be about 23 years old, was seized by police at about 8:30 p.m. on May 16 in Tawu (in Chinese, Daofu) county in the Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, one source told RFA's Tibetan Service in an earlier report.

A first-year student at the Tawu Institute of Buddhist Studies, Gelek was detained while walking in prayer around a Buddhist stupa near his monastery, the source said.

Though no explanation for his detention was immediately available, exile sources with contacts in Tawu now say that Gelek had been photographed with a Tibetan national flag and may have expressed a wish to immolate himself in protest against Beijing's rule in Tibetan areas.

"Gelek was detained after authorities obtained a photo he had taken in his room with a Tibetan flag hanging in the background," Sonam, a Tibetan living in Switzerland, told RFA.

"Another reason may have been that he had declared his intention to stage a self-immolation protest last year,

though family members later stopped him from doing so," Sonam said.

Slogan found on wall

Separately, a second Tibetan source with contacts in Tawu confirmed Sonam's account of Gelek's detention, adding that police on searching Gelek's room had found a Free Tibet slogan written in English on a wall.

"After Gelek was taken away at around 8:30 at night on May 16, another group of security officials raided his room again at around 11:00 p.m.," the source, a monk living in South India named Yama Tsering said.

"That very night, Gelek was moved to Dartsedo [Kangding] county and is now being held in a detention center," Tsering said.

Sporadic demonstrations challenging Beijing's rule and calling for the return of exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama have continued in Tibetan-populated areas of China since widespread protests swept the region in 2008.

A total of 145 Tibetans living in China have now set themselves ablaze in self-immolations since the wave of fiery protests began in 2009, with most protests featuring calls for Tibetan freedom and the Dalai Lama's return from India, where he has lived since escaping Tibet during a failed national uprising in 1959.

Six Months On, No Sign of Repatriated Chinese Political Refugees

rfa.org

May 18, 2016



Dong Guangping's wife Gu Shuhua (L) and Jiang Yefei's wife Chu Ling (R) hold up placards protesting their husbands' disappearances in Toronto, May 2016.

Six months after their forcible repatriation from Thailand, the whereabouts of two Chinese asylum seekers remain unknown, their families told RFA.

Sichuan-based rights activist Jiang Yefei and Henan activist Dong Guangping, who had fled persecution in their home country, were handed over by Thai police to Chinese authorities on Nov. 13, in a move that drew strong criticism from the United Nations.

Both men had United Nations refugee status and were awaiting resettlement in Canada.

They are being held in China under criminal detention for "organizing illegal border crossings and illegally crossing the border," amid fears they are at risk of torture.

Jiang's wife Chu Ling and Dong's wife Gu Shuhua and daughter Dong Xuerui arrived in Canada safely several days after the repatriation.

But Gu said it is hard to enjoy their personal freedom and safety in the absence of news from Dong.

"My daughter and I may be in Toronto in a country that is relatively free and where human rights are respected, but we are still sad and grieving because Dong Guangping has disappeared and [may have] been tortured," she said.

Gu said there is still no news from police of Dong's whereabouts, and his lawyers and relatives have been unable to find out where he is being held.

The family has received no official documents linked to his detention, she added.

One earlier online report suggested Dong was being held in the northern province of Hebei, but his lawyer had been unable to confirm it, Gu said.

"I am still very angry that he was forcibly repatriated to China by the Thai authorities," she told RFA.

She said Dong had been the target of political persecution in China for more than a decade, and has already spent time behind bars for his activism.

Similar situation for Jiang

Jiang's wife Chu Ling said her family is in a similar situation.

"My mood is so low and depressed right now, and I cry at the slightest thing," Chu said. "Recently I saw a report that [another dissident] was detained, held for more than two years in prolonged pretrial detention, before being sentenced [to 11 years in jail]."

"I am so worried that the same thing will happen to Jiang Yefei," she said.

Jiang's lawyer Ran Tong said he had been to detention centers in the Sichuan provincial capital of Chengdu to look for his client, but to no avail.

He said Jiang may be being held in the northern port city of Tianjin where police are coordinating a nationwide

crackdown on rights lawyers, activists and law firm staff that began on July 9, 2015 in Beijing.

"I am guessing that they are holding all of these people in Tianjin," Ran said. "There is no need for this; the legal process should be transparent."

"There's nothing to be afraid of; I don't know why the law enforcement authorities don't even have the confidence to make their detention public," he said.

Meanwhile, Dong's lawyer Chang Boyang said he had lodged a freedom of information request to police asking for his client's whereabouts, and details of which law enforcement agency is holding him, and why.

He said he also plans to apply for an administrative review of the case by China's cabinet, the State Council.

"I still haven't received any reply [from the freedom of information request]," Chang told RFA. "If I still don't get a reply in another day, then I'll probably apply for an administrative review."

Three other Chinese nationals were repatriated from Thailand at the same time as Jiang and Dong, but their identities remain unconfirmed.

Death of Man in Police Custody Sparks Anger, Raises Doubts in Beijing

rfa.org

May 11, 2016

Authorities on the outskirts of Beijing are investigating the death of a young man in police custody amid growing public suspicion that he was tortured or beaten to death.

Lei Yang, 29, was detained on Saturday by police during after a raid on a foot massage parlor in Changping county, just north of the Chinese capital.

However, his family says that he had left home too late that evening to have been a client there, in spite of police accusations that he was using the services of prostitutes.

And his former classmates at the prestigious Renmin University, where Yang graduated with a master's degree in environmental science in 2009, have launched an online petition calling for a thorough investigation of his death.

Police refused to allow Lei's family and friends to take photos of his body, which family members said showed bruises on his head and arms.

Lei's brother Lei Peng declined to comment on Wednesday, indicating that the family is likely under close police surveillance.

"It's not convenient for me to tell you anything right now, and there have been no new developments," he said, using phrasing that suggests he was in the company of police officers.

Chinese news website Caixin.com cited eyewitnesses as saying that Lei was seen "screaming for help" as he was pursued in a residential compound by several plainclothes officers.

The Changping police department said Lei had "resisted and attempted to run away" when they tried to arrest him on suspicion of using the services of prostitutes.

Police took coercive measures against him, but then Lei "suddenly felt ill," police said in a statement.

Cameras 'all broken'

When Lei's friend demanded to see surveillance footage, they were told that the cameras were "all broken," and that the surveillance footage was gone.

An officer who answered the phone at the Xiaokou police station in Changping declined to comment on Lei's death.

"You need to talk to the district police department propaganda bureau," the officer said.

An official who answered the phone at the Changping police department propaganda department also offered no comment.

"This case is still under investigation, and we have already posted a statement on our social media account," the official said. "As soon as our investigations are concluded, we will make another statement, so follow us [on social media]."

Calls to the Changping county state prosecutor's office went unanswered during office hours on Wednesday.

Beijing-based lawyer Ma Gangquan said the police claims are extremely dubious.

"Even if the equipment is broken, the digital files will still be there," Ma said. "They should ideally release the full video of the arrest proceedings to the public."

Meanwhile, the Changping county prosecutor's office has said it is investigating Lei's death.

According to Zheng Xu, deputy director of the Institute of Criminal Procedure at the China University of Politics and Law, certain procedures should always be triggered by deaths in police custody.

"The police should report them immediately to the prosecution service, so that they can investigate," Zheng said. "That investigation focuses on two things: the first is the cause of death, whether Lei Yang died of natural causes, of illness or whether he was beaten to death, whether the police tried to force a confession out of him

in the course of their investigations, and whether the people guarding him tortured him or committed any other criminal actions."

"The second thing is whether or not the police were acting legally in carrying out those investigations in the first place," Zheng added.

Lei's friends and family said he was en route to the airport to pick up visiting friends when he was detained.

A police source in Changping county told RFA it is "normal" for police to pin people to the ground and apply handcuffs if they resist arrest.

"He was a strapping young lad who played a lot of football, and he was in pretty good shape. If you are only one-to-one with him and he resists, or even tries to escape, then how are you supposed to subdue him?" the source said. "You have to shove him to the ground and put handcuffs on him. This is normal operating procedure."

"As for straddling him and sitting on him when he's down, you have to be careful, so as not to injure [the suspect]."

Questionable timeline

Meanwhile, former investigative journalist Li Jianjun said the timeline of events leading up to Lei's being pronounced dead at 10.55 p.m., according to the police version of the story, didn't seem credible.

"I don't think he could have been visiting prostitutes, because there wasn't enough time," Li said. "He left home at 9.00 p.m., after which he was supposed to have had time to visit a prostitute, get arrested, be interrogated, and ... be taken to hospital [by 10.05 p.m.]."

"How would he have the time to fit all of that in?"

He said Lei's demeanour didn't fit the profile of people caught in police raids on brothels and similar establishments.

"Usually, people who really are caught with prostitutes are pretty docile when they are detained by police, because they are afraid of losing face [if they are discovered], even really high-ranking officials," Li said.

Li said the abuse of power is a frequent phenomenon in China, but that many people don't even think that it could happen to them.

"A lot of people here in China don't care much about how the country is run, and are pretty indifferent to a lot of the suffering and hardship that takes place here," he said. "But then, one day, this sort of thing happens to them, too. He probably never thought this could happen to him. But it could happen to me, too."

China Officially Jails Two Rights Activists After Three Years of Unofficial Detention

rfa.org

May 9, 2016

A court in the central Chinese province of Hubei on Monday handed jail terms of four and three-and-a-half years to two members of the anti-graft New Citizens' Movement following a lengthy pretrial detention, lawyers for the men told RFA.

Yuan Fengchu, also known as Yuan Bing, and Yuan Xiaohua were found guilty of "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble" after their April 20 trial at the Chibi Municipal People's Court in Hubei.

Yuan Bing was jailed for four years, and Yuan Xiaohua for three-and-a-half years. The two men, who aren't related, had been on a rights advocacy tour of the country.

They were held in prolonged pretrial incarceration after their initial detention by police in the southern province of Guangdong in June 2013.

A third activist, Huang Wenxun, was detained around the same time as the two Yuans, and is believed to have been tried in secret and sentenced to four years' imprisonment for "incitement to subvert state power."

Defense lawyer Lu Jingmei said both men had vowed to appeal following the sentencing hearing.

"The hearing ended after the sentencing was read out," Lu said. "They didn't give them the chance to say anything, but when we visited them after the hearing they said they plan to appeal, because they reject the verdict."

Lu said they expected the result.

Political persecution

"This case was largely in line with our expectations, and we don't feel too badly about it, because our clients know that this is a case of political persecution," he said.

"In our defence, we focused on breaches of due process by [the police and prosecution]," he said. "It was enough that we told everybody the truth."

Yuan Bing's lawyer Chen Keyun said the prosecution singled out his client's involvement in press freedom protests outside the Southern group of newspapers after a local propaganda official rewrote the 2013 New Year's Day editorial to remove references to constitutional government.

But his attorney said Yuan doesn't believe he has committed any crime.

"He doesn't think that any of his actions amounted to a crime," Chen said. "He wants me to keep arguing his case."

But Guangzhou-based rights activist Jia Pin said he was very angry about the sentencing.

"They took part in a lot of activities, all of which were against injustice," Jia said. "They were merely exercising their rights as enshrined in the constitution, and yet they received such heavy sentences."

"This shows how little political self-confidence the government has," he added.

Jia said the men had also been subjected to mistreatment during their detention in Chibi's Jiayu County Detention Center in Chibi.

"They were subjected to deliberate torture," he said. "It really makes me very angry indeed."

As both men have already been held for nearly three years, Yuan Xiaohua looks set to be released at the end of the month, once time served is taken into consideration, while Yuan Bing is looking at another seven months behind bars.

Pattern of prosecution

The overseas-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) network, which compiles reports from rights groups inside China, said the Yuans' trial was "an extreme case in a familiar pattern of persecution."

It said the aim of their "advocacy tour" was to enlighten China about concepts like democracy and the rule of law, and to promote civic activism.

The indictment cited as evidence against them demonstrations during which they advocated for press freedom, government transparency over top leaders' personal wealth, and called on the government to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China signed in 1998, CHRD said.

"They spent 34 months in pre-trial detention, a flagrant denial of their right to a fair trial," the group said, calling for the men's immediate release.

Dozens of people linked in some way to the anti-graft New Citizens' Movement group have been detained since President Xi Jinping took power in late 2012, according to Amnesty International.

Anti-graft campaigner and movement founder Xu Zhiyong was handed a four-year jail term in January 2014 on public order charges after staging a street protest calling for greater transparency from the country's richest and most powerful people.

Uyghur Given 7-Year Prison Term For Viewing Muslim Film

rfa.org

May 9, 2016

Authorities in northwestern China's troubled Xinjiang region have handed a seven-year prison term to an ethnic Uyghur for watching a politically sensitive film on Muslim migration, sources in the region said.



A map of Xinjiang showing the location of Aksu prefecture.

Eli Yasin, a resident of Chaghraq township in Aksu (in Chinese, Akesu) prefecture's Onsu (Wensu) county, was sentenced in February after being held since May 2015, sources said, adding that authorities had suspected Yasin and family members who viewed the film with him of planning to go abroad "to wage jihad."

Family circumstances argued against their having had such a plan, though, Hesen Eysa, security chief for Yasin's Karasu village, told RFA's Uyghur Service.

"All of them were over 40 years of age," Eysa said. "They had a farm, and they were struggling to survive and provide for their children's education."

"They showed no signs of opposing the government. At least I never saw any signs of this," he said.

"As a security chief, I am having a hard time explaining these charges to the people in my village."

"None of this makes any sense. It is very unjust," he said.

Relatives also held

Detained with Yasin were two sisters and the sisters' husbands, all residents of nearby Toxula township and each with three to five children in their own families, sources told RFA.

No details were immediately available regarding additional sentences handed out, and police authorities in Onsu

county hung up the phone on learning that a reporter from RFA's Uyghur Service had called them for comment.

The Chinese government's policy of "stability at all costs" is the root cause of such family tragedies in Xinjiang, Memet Toxti, a Uyghur living in exile in Canada, told RFA.

"China wants Uyghurs everywhere to know that the state is always watching them," Toxti, a former deputy chairman of the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress, said.

"Punishing entire families is a method commonly used to silence Uyghurs before any acts of resistance can take place," he said.

Heavy-handed rule

Rights groups accuse Chinese authorities of heavy-handed rule in Xinjiang, including violent police raids on Uyghur households, restrictions on Islamic practices, and curbs on the culture and language of the Uyghur people.

China regularly vows to crack down on what it calls the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism in Xinjiang.

But experts outside China say Beijing has exaggerated the threat from Uyghur separatists, and that domestic policies are responsible for an upsurge in violence that has left hundreds dead since 2012.

Two Tibetan Protesters Are Freed From Jail in Sichuan

rfa.org

May 9, 2016

Authorities in southwestern China's Sichuan province have freed a young Tibetan monk jailed two years ago for staging a public protest challenging China's rule and a popular singer briefly held for performing a politically sensitive song, Tibetan sources in the region and in exile said.

"Lobsang Tenpa, a monk of Kirti monastery, had been given a two-year term for protesting in Ngaba town and was released on May 5 from a juvenile detention center in Sichuan near [the provincial capital] Chengdu," RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"His father and three brothers went to the facility to receive him, and the local Tibetans made arrangements to welcome him home after his two years in prison," the source said.

No public welcome could be made, though, owing to a strict security clampdown following another local protest on May 2, the source said.

Tenpa, then 19, was detained after protesting in April 2014 in the main town of Ngaba (in Chinese, Aba) county in the Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, sources said in earlier reports.

With his head wrapped in a hand-drawn Tibetan national flag, Tenpa had shouted slogans calling for Tibetan freedom and the return of exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama before being taken into custody and beaten, sources said.

Tenpa's Kirti monastery has been the scene of repeated self-immolations and other protests by monks, former monks, and nuns opposed to Chinese rule in Tibetan areas.

Authorities raided the institution in 2011, taking away hundreds of monks and sending them for "political re-education" while local Tibetans who sought to protect the monks were beaten and detained, sources said.

Banned national anthem

Sichuan authorities meanwhile also released a popular Tibetan singer detained for his performance of the Tibetan national anthem, sources told RFA, adding that the man had been severely beaten while in custody.

Pema Wangchen sang the banned Tibetan song on Feb. 13 but was not detained until after his performance—in which he also wished the Dalai Lama a long life—had circulated widely online, a Tibetan source living in India said.

"Recently, police stopped him in Kardze town" in the Kardze (in Chinese, Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, RFA's source Kardze Choegyal said, citing contacts in the region.

When police discovered he was not in possession of his driver's license, they took him to a police station where he confessed to having sung the politically sensitive song, Choegyal said.

After learning that Wangchen's brother, Palden Trinley, was a Kardze monk linked to political protests, "police began to beat him, injuring one of his fingers."

Trinley had been detained in 2009 and was released last year after serving a seven-year sentence, Choegyal said.

Pema Wangchen had briefly studied in India and later returned to Tibet, Choegyal said.

"He is a resident of Osur village in Kardze town. His father's name is Pega, and his mother's name is Khaga."

Sporadic demonstrations challenging Beijing's rule and calling for the Dalai Lama's return have continued in Tibetan-populated areas of China since widespread protests swept the region in 2008.

Tibetan writer Lomig is handed 7-year term on unknown charges

Tibet Post International

Yeshe Choensang

May 9, 2016

Dharamshala — A Tibetan writer has been sentenced to seven years and six months by a Chinese court in Tibet over a year after being detained on unknown charges.

Jo Lobsang Jamyang, 28, (pen name: Lomik) had been taken into custody last April in Ngaba (Ch: Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture) county in north-eastern Tibet, India-based monk Kanyak Tsering told the TPI Monday.

"According to our reliable sources, Jamyang was handed a 7-year and 6-month sentence sometime recently. The trial took place at the Wenchuan county court in Ngaba prefecture. .

'Details concerning the charges on which Jamyang was convicted and on his present condition were not immediately available,' the Tibetan source in exile said, citing local contacts.

The police immediately arrested him while he was Walking in the Street of Ngaba County, on Friday night, April 27, 2015 at 11PM. The report suggests that he was severely tortured whilst in Chinese police custody.

Jamyang "has been held in detention, without being brought to trial or informing his family of his whereabouts, for over a year," Ven Tsering said, added that "the charges on which he was tried by the court are not known."

Jamyang hails from Meruma in Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, and his family lives in in village no.3 of nomadic villages in Meruma town. His father's name is Jodor and mother's name is Jamkar.

He joined Kirti monastery at a young age, and was studying in the Prajnaramita class. He has also taken part time courses in non-religious studies at Larung Gar monastery in Serta and the Northwest Minorities University in Lanzhou.

He has participated in many speaking events, and wrote numerous poems and regular social commentary, including on freedom of expression for writers in Tibet. A collection of his poems has been published as "The swirling yellow mist".

Kirti monastery is one of more than 20 monasteries of the Gelugpa sect and one of the most important such places inside Tibetan lands.

Ngaba County in the region are under heavy surveillance by Chinese security forces, which control their movement,

restrict entry to the areas by outsiders, and deploy re-education teams in monasteries.

Authorities quickly suppress and arrest monks and ordinary people there who participate in any peaceful political protests.

A Tibetan Detained and Tortured for Singing National Anthem in China

newsgram.com

May 5, 2016

Pema Wangchen was recorded singing the anthem Feb. 13, the fifth day of the Tibetan New Year, in Ogzung Township, Ganze County, Sichuan.

A father of three of was reportedly detained and tortured by security officials for singing the Tibetan national anthem at a public gathering in China's western Sichuan province.

Video of the Tibetan man singing the banned anthem at a public gathering in what appeared to be a village in the Tibet Autonomous Region went viral on Wechat in April.

A Tibetan monk in India who knows the man told VOA's Tibetan Service that Pema Wangchen, a single parent, was recorded singing the anthem Feb. 13, the fifth day of the Tibetan New Year, in Ogzung Township, Ganze County, Sichuan.

After the video surfaced, the man was detained for 15 days before being released in early May.

Choe Gyaltzen, an exiled Tibetan who is also from Ganze County, says Wangchen, whose pinky finger is now paralyzed, was possibly suspended by his smallest finger during interrogation, during which he was repeatedly told that his "family members are all criminal."

Wangchen's brother, Palden Trelan, a monk from Ganze Monastery, was arrested in 2008 after he and two other monks marched through Ganze shouting "Long live the Dalai Lama," according to a Radio Free Asia report in 2015.

Trelan had served seven years in prison by the time he was released May 18, 2015.

Last Tiananmen Protest Prisoner Scheduled For Release This Year

rfa.org

May 3, 2016

China is planning to release the last, and longest-serving, prisoner jailed in connection with the 1989 pro-democracy

protests centered on Tiananmen Square, a US-based rights group reported.

Miao Deshun was handed a suspended death sentence at the age of 25 after he allegedly flung something at a burning tank belonging to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during clashes amid a bloody military crackdown on the weeks-long student-led democracy movement.

A worker from Hebei province, which borders Beijing, Miao was recently granted an 11-month reduction in sentence, and is set to be released from Beijing Yangqing prison on Oct. 15, the Dui Hua Foundation said in a statement on its website.

Miao and four colleagues were found guilty of the charges against him by the Beijing Intermediate People's Court on Aug. 7, 1989, and Miao's suspended death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and further reduced to 20 years in 1998.

Fellow 1989 activist Zhang Yansheng, who was himself released on parole in 2003 after being jailed for life in the wake of the protests, said Miao now has severe mental health problems.

New life on the outside

"He has some severe mental health issues, and I think it could take him a long time to get accustomed to life on the outside," said Zhang, who developed diabetes during his time in prison. "I have a pretty hard time myself right now, but it'll be even worse for him."

"I was lucky enough to find a job with the help of some kind people and good friends, which means that at least I can eat," he said. "I expect he won't have much understanding of today's China, but we will help each other out."

Although has also spent some time in solitary confinement, Miao's sentence has been reduced twice since 2012 for good behaviour, Dui Hua Foundation said.

"Miao has had no contact with the outside world for many years," the Dui Hua statement said. "People who served sentences with him in the 1990s remember him as a very thin man who refused to admit wrongdoing and participate in prison labor."

Miao, 51, suffers from hepatitis B and schizophrenia, and was transferred to a ward for sick, elderly, and disabled prisoners in 2003. His family hasn't visited him since Miao asked them to stop 10 years ago. He was one of 1,602 people sentenced to prison in connection with the 1989 protests across China, Dui Hua cited official records as saying.

However, many more were locked up using administrative sentences, which could have included up to three years in the now-abolished "re-education through labor" camps.

Dui Hua said it has worked "tirelessly" on Miao's case, putting his name on 17 prisoner lists submitted to the Chinese government since 2005.

"As of today, Miao Deshun is the only Tiananmen prisoner known to Dui Hua to still be in prison," the group said.

Hong Kong activist Richard Choi, of the Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China, said the length of Miao's sentence was a "tragedy."

A long way to go

"I think that once they have released everybody, the most important thing is a political reappraisal of the 1989 pro-democracy movement, and for them to pursue those who were responsible for the massacre, as well as working for a democratic China," Choi said.

"There is still a very long way to go."

Last month, Choi's group said its Hong Kong-based museum commemorating the 1989 student-led democracy movement will be forced to close by the end of this year, amid growing political pressure.

The death of ousted former premier Hu Yaobang of a heart attack in

1989 prompted a massive public outpouring of grief on Tiananmen Square, sparking several weeks of student-led pro-democracy protests and hunger strikes that ended amid a bloody military crackdown by the PLA, which advanced into Beijing on the night of June 3 that year.

The Communist Party currently bans public memorials marking the June 4 massacre, and has continued to ignore growing calls in China and from overseas for a reappraisal of the 1989 student protests, which it once styled a "counterrevolutionary rebellion."

The number of people killed when People's Liberation Army tanks and troops entered Beijing on the night of June 3-4, 1989, remains a mystery.

Beijing authorities once put the death toll at "nearly 300," but the central government has never issued an official toll or list of names, in spite of repeated calls by the Tiananmen Mothers victims' group.

Tibetan Monk Vanishes after Staging Protest in Western China

Voice of America

May 3, 2016

A young Tibetan monk appears to have been detained by police Monday for carrying a portrait of the Dalai Lama through the streets of Ngaba in western China's Sichuan province.

In a cellphone video that surfaced online, Losang Thubten is seen walking through a shopping area crowded with vehicles and pedestrians; in a second video, he is seen being marched quickly down the middle of the street by two police officers on either side.

A source outside of Tibet told VOA that Thubten is a member of nearby Kirti monastery, whose monks have long protested what they call repressive and humiliating regulations imposed on Tibetan monasteries by Chinese officials.

A monk from Kirti monastery carried out the first self-immolation protest inside Tibet in 2009, and since then Ngaba and the surrounding area has seen a wave of self-immolation protests by monks, nuns and laypeople.

Between 2009 and 2013, when the largest number of self-immolation protests took place, Beijing's response evolved from discrediting protesters as disturbed, fringe activists to accusing them of separatism — and often charging and imprisoning relatives and friends on grounds of collusion.

Another development that has terrified some Tibetans: recent self-immolations in which the person was taken away while still alive, but later declared dead by officials who state the cause of death without allowing access to the remains.

The crackdown on friends and families of those who self-immolate in protest of Chinese policies in the Tibetan Autonomous Region has resulted in fewer protests since 2013. But since 2014, the number of lone street protests, such as the one that took place Monday, has grown.

These lone protesters are typically detained and not heard from again.

Thubten's protest is the first major news to come out of the Ngaba region in 2016, as authorities shut down the internet at the outset of the Tibetan New Year in early February. However, internet services were restored in mid-April, shortly after two sensitive dates for the communist officials in Tibet: commemoration of the March 10, 1959, uprising against Chinese forces in Lhasa, and polling results from the exile Tibetan government elections.

According to sources, the family of Thubten is distraught over the man's fate, as authorities have not informed relatives of his condition or whereabouts.

Two Tibetan Monks Detained For Ten Days, Beaten Following Traffic Dispute

rfa.org

May 2, 2016

Two monks attached to a large Tibetan monastery in southwestern China's Sichuan province were detained and beaten by police last month after they attempted to mediate a traffic dispute between a Tibetan and a Han Chinese driver, sources said.



Palyul monks Lakyab and Tsering Gyurme are shown in an undated photo.

Lakyab and Tsering Gyurme, both monks at the Palyul monastery in Palyul (in Chinese, Baiyu) county in the Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, were released on April 29 after being held for ten days, a local source told RFA's Tibetan Service.

"While in custody, both monks were severely beaten," RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Lakyab and Gyurme had attempted to intervene in a dispute between two drivers, one a Tibetan and the other a Han Chinese, whose cars had collided, the source said.

"When police arrived on the scene, the monks became involved in an argument with them, and they were then detained and taken away," he said.

In similar incidents in Palyul in the past, "the authorities have usually tended to blame the Tibetans," he said.

"[In China], it is often said that all nationalities, including the ethnic minority groups, will be treated equally and fairly, but really there is no fairness to be had."

Protests against Chinese authority have been rare in Palyul, a scenic mountain region where thousands turned

out in July 2014 to welcome a young child identified as the reincarnate leader of the Palyul monastery.

Resistance to Chinese mining operations in the county has occasionally flared, though, and in October 2013 hundreds of Palyul monks marched to a police station to demand the release of a colleague detained for spreading word of a fatal police crackdown in a neighbouring region, sources said in earlier reports.

China arrests a Tibetan Buddhist monk for peaceful protest in Tibet

Tibet Post International

Yeshe Choesang

May 2, 2016



Lobsang Thupten, a Tibetan monk from Kirti Monastery in Ngaba County, Amdo Province of Tibet. Photo: TPI

Dharamshala — Chinese police in Ngaba County of north-eastern Tibet have detained a Tibetan monk after he staged a solo protest against the Chinese government repression and failed official policy in Tibet.

Lobsang Thupten, a Tibetan monk from Kirti Monastery staged a solo protest on Monday, around 3:00 p.m. on May 2, walking down the Ngaba County street whilst holding a portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama,' Ven Sonam, a Tibetan living in Switzerland told TPI on Monday.

"Chinese police immediately arrested him at the spot, but details cannot be confirmed," he said, citing local sources in the region.

Thupten is a native of village no. 1 of Meruma town, Ngaba County in Amdo Region of north-eastern Tibet Tibet (Ch: Aba County, Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in the north-west of Sichuan Province)," Ven Sonam added, saying "His current conditions remain unknown."

The video footage and photos also show the monk from Kirti Monastery, staging a solo protest on a street in Ngaba county on Monday afternoon.

Most parts of Tibet have suffered severe crackdowns and been under heightened restrictions and controls in the past six decades, that China calls it a "peaceful liberation". But Tibetans say the main causes of the Tibetan people's grievance, including China's political repression, cultural assimilation, economic marginalisation, social discrimination and environmental destruction in Tibet.

Important Meetings & Conferences

2560th Buddha Jayanti Conference issues 10-point Kathmandu Lumbini Declaration

reviewnepal.com

May 22, 2016

LUMBINI (Rupandehi), May 22: The 10-point Kathmandu Lumbini declaration was made public amid a program organized to mark the 2560th Buddha Jayanti in Lumbini on Saturday. Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Ananda Prasad Pokharel publicised the declaration at the program which was attended by hundreds of people and devotees of Lord Buddha from across the world. The two-day International Buddhist Conference held in Kathmandu on May 19-20 prepared the declaration with the inputs from the participants including Buddhists, scholars and monks and nuns from 28 countries of the world.

The declaration highlights the point the participants attending the conference confessed that Buddha was born in Nepal and he spent most of his life here and Nepal is the origin of Buddha philosophy. Speaking at a program, minister Pokharel said that the confession was a big achievement for Nepal and the Nepali people. The declaration also said that Buddhism is not only a vision of the Asia but of the world and the origin of world peace is Nepal, apart from launching a campaign to spread Buddha's teachings across the world. It also said that an agreement was struck to devise a Lumbini Development Master Plan and develop Lumbini, Tilaurakot, Devdaha and Ramgram, besides making Lumbini University a center

for excellence as well as developing Bodhgaya of India, where the Buddha got enlightenment, Sarnath of India where Buddha gave his teachings and Kushinagar of India where Buddha passed away. Likewise, the declaration also said that the global Buddhist forum will also be formed aiming to promote peace and brotherhood across the world. The forum will also work for human peace and rights of animals.

Chinese rights activist speaks about the future of Tibet and democracy

Tibet Post International

May 5, 2016

Dharamshala — A discussion with Dr Teng Biao a Chinese Human Rights Activist and Lawyer who is also the Co-Founder of the Open Constitution Initiative(Gongmeng) held on Thursday afternoon in Dharamshala, India, attended by activists, Tibetan officials, Media Persons and Tibetan students. It was jointly organised by the International Tibet Network and Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

The Chinese activist talked of his experience in the past few years where he had himself faced oppression from the government in China for working closely with the Tibetan issues specially after publication of a comprehensive report called the Gongmeng Report of the 2008 uprising, came to their notice; because of this their office was shut down and they were arrested and detained for a month.

Dr Biao was arrested twice once in March 2008 and once again in February 2011. He talked about his experience when he provided counsel in numerous other human rights cases, including those of Rural Rights Advocate Chen Guangcheng, rights defender Hu Jia, the religious freedom case of Falungong, and numerous death penalty cases. He is also the Founder and President of China Against the Death Penalty, Beijing. Till this date he is not allowed to go back to China which speaks volumes about the physical embodiment of the Iron Wall in China.

"Many people have thanked me in the past for my work but, I tell you not to thank me; As we Han Chinese its our duty to take up the responsibility to talk up against the oppression taking place in China. Just because I did not oppress or take anyone's freedom does not mean that I have no responsibility for it." he said at the very starting.

Speaking about censorship, religious freedom and freedom of expression he mentions that while television, news papers and radio are used by the Chinese establishment as mode of propaganda while they are controlled, that was not the case for Internet and hence

encouraged the internet media to be more proactive as it is far harder to control and it connects NGO's and activists all over China.

He also spoke about the dearth of Human Rights lawyers in China and mentioned that in his time only 20-30 Human Rights lawyers existed but, even though today after recovery of the legal profession around 700 out of 250,000 lawyers which is minuscule, work for Human Rights most lack the will to take up sensitive cases.

Dr Biao also spoke about the Tiananmen Square massacre and subsequent increase in acts of suppression by the Chinese Communist Party where dissidents were put in prison for peaceful protests while being labelled separatists.

Talking of the need for a democratic setup he mentioned that China's Communist Party has a long standing feud with legitimacy and their attempt to cover it with economic growth. Talking of the eminent crisis going on in China he said that the time is not far when China will go through Economic, Political, Social and Cultural Crisis. He Spoke of the collapse of Communism around the world and the erosion of its values and ideologies in China as we know it today. He gave examples from the Arab Spring and mentioned that even Muslim countries are taking up democracy while discarding their autocratic leaders and hoped that china will one day follow on the same path.

Speaking of the plight of the Tibetan people he stressed the need to give more voice and freedom to the people while making the area more accessible to mainstream media. He spoke about the movements being organised for gender equality, educational rights and anti-corruption drives. He also mentioned how the legal fraternity is controlled by the bar council, judicial Bureau and the government.

On being asked by a member of the audience as to what he thought of the midway approach he mentions that he is a follower of the principles of His Holiness and considers himself an universal citizen hence, he would respect the wishes of the Tibetan people and their choice to follow for autonomy or the midway path should be their own choice.

Speaking on the lacunae of the Chinese Government he mentioned Art 35 of the Chinese Constitution which reads - 'Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration.'

He spoke of the contradictory practices in the policy of the government and there being not holistic education but brainwashing and propaganda for its citizens which leads to majority of them having no access to the true

information but being spoon-fed party propaganda to suit the government's motives.

To a question by a reporter of Tibet Post International about the nature of UN General Assembly and UNHRC resolutions and outcome documents that are not binding but only recommendatory in nature and the future of Human Rights to be enforced not only in the case of the Tibetan people but Human rights violations all around the globe which seem to be on a rise and the future of Human Rights he said:

"Today as we see it China is not run as a democracy per se, what we see in the international or even internal spheres is the government's view point; it is not the same as what the Chinese people want. If we follow international occurrences, we will find it siding with Syria and North Korea not because of their ideology or ideals but for strategic advantages. Human Rights in China today is a mere lip service to its international commitments not a loop hole free enforced legal system. Further, we also need to remember that it is a permanent member of the security council which confers to it considerable power. So, if we want a transparent UN system which is just and fair several systematic and operational procedures need to go through reform which in itself wont be easy but has to happen if equality and justice in the true sense are to prevail as only then can human rights be protected on a global scale."

World in reality has a lackadaisical approach to Tibet's Panchen Lama

Tibet Post International

May 18, 2016



Tsering Lhamo, Tibetan Settlement Officer Dharamshala, Kalden Tsomo, head of the DIIR UN, EU & HR Desk, Mr Ajai Singh, President of ITFA (c), Prof P.N Sharma, Ven Yeshe Phuntsok, member of TPIE during the panel discussion on 11th Panchen Lama which was held at Hotel Tibet, McLeod Ganj, Dharamshala, India, May 17 2016. Photo: TPI/Dawa Phurbu

Dharamshala — Tibetans living-in-exile in Dharamshala on Tuesday observed the 'disappearance' anniversary of the

second-most powerful figure in Tibetan Buddhism, 11th Panchen Lama, who has been missing since he was six.

A discussion on the enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima who happens to be termed by Human Rights organisations as the "youngest political prisoner in the world".

On 14 May 1995, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was named the 11th Panchen Lama by the 14th Dalai Lama. After his selection, he was kidnapped by authorities of the People's Republic of China and has not been seen in public since 17 May 1995.

On Wednesday, May 17, he completed his 21st year in captivity. His Capture also assumes a political intervention by the Chinese establishment to have a say in the re-incarnation of the next Dalai Lama. the Chinese have also appointed their own Panchen Lama who is also referred to as Panchen Dzuma(Fake Panchen).

"We are gathered here, we do not know his whereabouts, we do not know his address and we do not know where to send it, so through these letters, we are trying to create awareness about Panchen Lama, we are trying to tell the world that he has been abducted for too long and we are trying to tell the world that China has forcefully disappeared Panchen Lama and we do not know about his address," an activist said.

The coalition of Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, Students for a Free Tibet and Regional Tibetan Women's Association organised the "letters to Panchen Lama" and an open marathon race commemorative of the day.

The Indo-Tibetan Friendship Association held a panel discussion over the Panchen Lama's disappearance where educationist and author Prof P.N Sharma and Ms Kalden Tsomo from the CTA's DIIR spoke.

Tsering Tsomo, director of TCHRD, said that failing to provide any concrete evidence of Panchen Lama's health conditions, whereabouts and proof of life makes the Chinese government guilty of his enforced disappearance.

"The Chinese government can never hope to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people by using religion for political ends. The failure of the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, to command genuine devotion and loyalty from the Tibetan people attests to this fact," she added.

When asked about the United Nations resolutions and other documents being just recommendatory in nature and having no enforcing capabilities she mentioned that the UN is like a toothless tiger which without having any measures to force or impose changes focuses on talks between nations and hence takes a lot of time, this has

also been used by the Chinese establishment as a loophole numerous times in the past.

Prof P.N Sharma when asked to say how India's passive approach to china is going ahead called the government lackadaisical in its approach and gave numerous instances in history right from 1962 attack, the building of dams on the Tibet plateau through which a lot of fresh water as a resource has been denied to other Asian countries, he also mentioned that this country is now facing a drought scenario in several areas.

He further said that not only India but several countries in the world are equally taking a passive stance as who portray themselves as democracies which say that they respect the value of human life and the rights that come with it are simply not wanting to bell the cat.

"The perspective on Panchen Lama is both bleak and brilliant. It is bleak because the party on the other side is a shameless example of humanity. After the occupation of our land, the Chinese have pursued policies that have not only looted and destroyed the civilisation, culture, monastic system and all that Tibet stood for, they had the temerity to pass law to control incarnations and monastery," said Sharma.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama have been complimentary to each other, in the sense that both have helped in selection of the successor of one another and in education of one another. Now the Chinese have passed a law that no lama can be considered valid unless he has been recognised by the Chinese government, "he said, arguing that the CCP as an atheist government has no credibility to interfere in the religious practice of Tibetan people.

Sino-Tibetan conference urges China to engage dialogue on Tibet

Tibet Post International

May 5, 2016

Dharamshala — The Sino-Tibetan Friendship Associations Wednesday released what they refer to as the "Final Declaration of the First International Conference" on Tibet held recently in Taipei, Taiwan, that "affirms the principles and values of finding truth, environmental protection, constitutional government and dialogue."

In light of the continued deterioration in the state of environment, religion and culture and human rights in Tibet under the rule of Chinese government, Tibetan and Chinese associations and experts from across the globe have gathered in Taiwan for the First International

Conference of Sino-Tibetan Friendship Associations in 2016.

In the statement, the conference also urges all to cherish the democratic experience of Taiwan and to condemn the Chinese government's suppression of Taiwan's freedom and democracy as well as its international space.

The three-day conference features presentations and discussions on a whole gamut of issues related with Tibet and China by 150 people, including scholars, intellectuals, writers, activists and students from all over the world, including those from the US, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, India, Spain Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The Conference was organised by the Taiwan Office of Tibet in Taipei, claims it is a major project of the China Desk of the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR).

The Sino-Tibetan Conference "Finding Common Ground" was held in Taipei, the Capital of Taiwan, where the conference came to the following consensus:

The Common Consensus of the Conference;

1 According to historical facts, Tibet is historically an independent country.

2 The national self-determination is an innate right of the Tibetan people.

3 The realisation of a genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people is integral to the constitutional transformation in China.

4 While condemning the White Paper published by the Chinese Government in 2015, Tibet's Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide, for distorting and negating the Middle-Way Approach, the conference supports the Middle-Way Policy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

5 We oppose the Chinese government for stating that the Tibet issue is an internal matter. The concern for Tibet's human rights, religion and culture, language and environment is not only a right but a responsibility of the international community.

Appeal to the International Community;

1 To urge the Chinese government to initiate, under the supervision of the United Nations and the international media, dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

2 Since the protection of Tibet's environment is directly related to the environment and the future well-being of the entire humanity, we urge the international community to take collective responsibility for it.

3 To constitute an independent investigative group to probe the cause of Tülku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's death in prison and the truth behind the torture of Tibetan political prisoners and the deaths in detention centers.

4

5 Appeal to the Chinese Government;

6 Since the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of reincarnation is an integral part of Tibetan culture, we oppose the Chinese government's brutal intervention in the matters of recognising reincarnation. Only His Holiness the Dalai Lama has the right to make decision on the issue of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

7 The Chinese government should immediately release the Panchen Lama and all other political prisoners of Tibet.

8 Economic development cannot be undertaken at the expense of the destruction of Tibet's environment. The interest and opinion of Tibetan people must be taken into consideration in the decision-making process.

9 The Tibetan nomadic way of life must be respected. The economic development must not turn Tibetan nomads into environmental refugees.

10 The Tibetan language must be respected and protected. The Tibetan language should be made the first official language in all public and official spheres.

11 While writing the textbook of Tibetan language and history, their content should reflect Tibetan history and culture.

12

13 Appeal to the Central Tibetan Administration;

14 The Central Tibetan Administration, while conducting an annual survey of books published in Tibetan, English and Chinese as well as other languages, the promotion of Tibetan writing is important.

15 To convene a global conference of Tibetan Buddhism in order to strengthen better exchanges and cooperation among Tibetan Buddhist centers.

16 To continue organising Sino-Tibetan meetings to conduct discussions.

17

18 Appeal to the NGO's

19 On humanitarian grounds, [we] urge the cessation of the Tibetan protests in the form of self-immolation.

20 Making full use of the cyberspace to promote awareness about the reality in Tibet and the ideas of freedom and democracy as well as [in reaching out to] to the Chinese people and [raising their awareness]

21 To [oppose] the colonialism and the policy of cultural genocide carried out by the Chinese government in Tibet.

22 To establish a liaison office for coordinating the Sino-Tibetan friendship associations across the globe and facilitating implementation of future works.

Tibet's Environment

Xi's Green Teams Fight for the Environment

thehuffingtonpost.com

May 30, 2016

By Deborah Lehr and Leigh Wedell, former Chief Sustainability Officer of the Paulson Institute

Chinese President Xi Jinping was an unexpected saviour of the historic Paris Climate Summit last December. He offered far reaching Chinese commitments to reduce carbon emissions, and also provided necessary political momentum to finalise the difficult international negotiations.

Now Xi has turned his attention to the even more difficult task of delivering on those commitments at home. To do so, he's taking a page from his anti-corruption campaign: creating "Green Teams" or environmental experts tasked with conducting random inspections across China to ensure that provincial and municipal leaders are actually implementing his policies.

Xi's Green Teams are a broader symbol of his challenges to implementing his domestic reform agenda, particularly enforcing local compliance of his national policies. While President Xi may have consolidated power at the national level, he still has tremendous difficulty ensuring that policies issued from the center are carried out consistently at the local level. As the Chinese proverb goes, "the sky is high and the emperor is far away." And Xi's environmental effort will fail if he cannot get local leaders in line.

The new inspection unit at the Ministry for Environmental Protection (MEP) is 120 experts strong and will visit all of China's provinces every two years. They began their task this May in Hebei Province, adjacent to Beijing and home to the most polluted cities in China. It is ground zero in the war against pollution.

This initial Green Team's conclusion would come as no surprise to President Xi: Hebei officials are not enforcing the laws consistently. The inspectors found 2,856 environmental infractions, shuttered illegal companies, detained 123 individuals and investigated another 65. As a result, the province has conducted their own investigation and identified 13,784 issues to be addressed by the end of

2016. Local officials are now on notice, and will be held personally accountable for successfully implementing these changes.

To create some incentives to follow the rules, the Chinese have also changed the criteria for promotion of local officials to include implementation of environmental reforms as a key consideration for rising within the government system. Historically, the two main criteria were economic growth and job creation. Now mayors and governors are also ranked on their abilities to clean up the environment in their region.

President Xi has also taken the much needed step of changing the reporting structure for the MEP and its provincial and municipal branches. Previously, all MEP branches were under the authority of the local Mayor or provincial governor, allowing them to exert undue influence if the MEP policies differed from their own interests. Now local MEP leaders are under the authority of the MEP headquarters in Beijing, which should ensure more policy consistency in the provinces.

The concept of the "Green Team" is not new. Last year, the Xi dispatched eight SWAT-like inspection teams to the provinces to determine whether local officials were implementing Xi's ambitious economic plans. They came back with a 1,000 page report that basically concluded that local officials were not cooperating. The Party continues to investigate the lack of consistent policy implementation as part of its anti-corruption campaign.

Three years into his presidency, Xi is still struggling with implementing his sweeping agenda—with one of the main obstacles being local recalcitrance. In the case of the environment, China is making progress where the central government has authority. Investment in infrastructure is one of those areas: China now accounts for 30% of wind power and 17% of the solar power globally. China is also on track to become the world's largest green bond market, and is uniting its seven regional carbon markets into a unified nationwide system next year. The government is also exploring unique public-private partnerships models to "green finance" the implementation of these commitments. There is strong economic rationale for growing the environmental sector and transitioning to low carbon growth.

Xi is not taking this aggressive action however just to please the Paris signatories. At home, the number one source of protests is the poor quality of the environment. The growing Chinese middle class expects clean air to breathe, safe food to eat and pure water to drink. One Green Team member told the media he was receiving at least 100 calls a day from the public just in Hebei province with complaints about local environmental degradation.

Environmental protection has become a political imperative for the senior leadership as much as an economic one.

Yet the battle for the future of China's environment—much like the battle over curtailing corruption or spurring economic growth—will be fought as much in China's myriad provinces and cities as in the halls of power in Beijing. Which begs the question: when it comes to cleaning up China's environment, will the Green Teams be enough?

Ecological civilisation makes gains in Tibet

Chinadaily.com.cn

May 25, 2016

Tibet's Nyingchi City has gained some success as an ecological civilisation trail pilot in China, officials said on Tuesday.

The city government's latest survey shows that more than 85 percent of its commercial sites and more than 75 percent of its residents use solar water heaters.

Known as a "Green Land of Tibet," Nyingchi is about 400 kilometers from Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, and was ranked as one of China's first batch of ecological civilisation trail pilots in 2014.

Nyingchi has four regional level ecological counties, 38 township level ecological towns, and 336 village level ecological villages, local officials said.

Main rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests, water ecology and geological relics, and biodiversity all get proper protection," said Xiao He, the vice mayor of the city.

Xiao said his city has set environmental protection as a priority with any enterprises entering the city, and the city has decided to expand its economy by developing tourism, farming, hydrogen power station, Tibetan medicine and culture.

"We will work hard to transform the favourable ecological conditions into economic advantages," said Xiao.

The five above-mentioned industries generated revenue of 2.86 billion yuan in 2015, and the figure accounted for 27.5 percent of the city's GDP.

Located in southeastern Tibet autonomous region, Nyingchi is the gateway to Tibet from the provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan. It borders Lhasa in the west and shares a boundary with India and Myanmar in the south.

Nyingchi means 'the throne of the sun' in the Tibetan language, and it is one of the important cradles of ancient Tibetan civilisation, which has been settled as early as 4,000 to 5,000 years ago.

Three Gorges Dam braces for flooding on Yangtze

cctv.com

May 25, 2016

The El Nino weather system, which began in September 2014, has been the longest and strongest since records began in 1951. It's similar to the one that triggered heavy flooding of the Yangtze River in 1998. Flooding on that scale is possible on Asia's longest river yet again. So how is The Three Gorges Dam dealing with rising water levels? Xia Ruixue reports from Yichang, Hubei province.

Due to the El Nino weather effect, flood season is coming earlier this summer. Inflow from the upper streams of the Yangtze River has hit an eight-year high. That's forcing the Three Gorges Dam to drain off more of its stored water and brace itself for floods. As of May 21st, the water level stood at 153 meters. China Three Gorges Corporation aims to bring it down to just over 146 meters, a safer level to cope with floods.

"Starting in April, the Three Gorges Dam is discharging water everyday, according to a directive from the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters. It's expected to discharge a total of 22.15 billion cubic meters of water at the beginning of June," said Xing Nong, chief engineer of China Three Georges Corporation.

The Three Gorges project is on the stretch of the Yangtze River in Yichang City, Hubei Province. It's a multi-functional water control system consisting of a dam more than 2300 meters long and almost 190 meters high. The dam also features a five-tier ship lock and 26 hydropower turbo-generators. The reservoir stores flood water in summer and releases it during the dry season to ease droughts.

This year, the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters said that 21 dams in the reservoir will be brought on board to jointly cope with the possible flood.

"In 2010 and 2012, the Three Gorges Dam successfully coped with its biggest flood, far exceeding that of 1998. The dam was built to be able to protect the area below from major floods, which occur once every 100 years. I don't think it's a particularly great challenge to deal with this summer's heavy flooding as long as we do what the

State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters tell us," Xie said.

"The flood control and drought relief situation is extremely serious in the Yangtze River. But we can say that the risks are controllable," said Chen Min, Director of Flood Control and Drought Relief Office, Changjiang Water Resources Commission.

According to the Yangtze River Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, precipitation along the Yangtze River will rise by 10 to 50 percent this year, and in some areas that figure will hit 80 percent. But many experts said that the floods expected this year are unlikely to cause significant damage due to China's improved flood control capabilities.

The Three Gorges Dam was built to adjust the peak flood level of the Yangtze River. It has helped significantly with the flood control. Many hope it will continue to keep people living in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River safe this year.

Landslide destroys dam in Three Gorges region

eco-business.com

May 24, 2016

Geologists predict more frequent catastrophes in China's Three Gorges Dam region, after landslides wipe out a hydropower plant

When a landslip destroyed the Lifengyuan Hydropower Station in Hubei province's Zigui county in early September, it was the first time the Three Gorges region had seen one of its electricity-generating dams wiped out. But the collapse forms part of a growing nationwide trend as dam reservoirs and construction destabilise the terrain around China's hydropower stations.

"The destruction of a hydropower plant in the Three Gorges region was to be expected," geologist and anti-dam campaigner Yang Yong told thethirdpole.net.

The Three Gorges Dam has created a giant 600-kilometre reservoir, the water level and expanse of which change throughout the year, and this has two worrying consequences, said Yang. First, the banks of the reservoir are subjected to frequent changes, increasing the chances of landslides.

Second, the huge lake influences the local climate, making extreme weather events — particularly cloudbursts and heavy rain — more likely. Add in disturbances from construction for relocation of residents (1.13 million were moved for the Three Gorges dam project), road-building

and quarrying of stone and earth for hydropower projects and, he believes, all the conditions for geological disaster exist.

The Three Gorges region has already become disaster-prone, according to Fan Xiao, chief engineer to the Regional Geological Survey Team of Sichuan province's Geology and Mineral Bureau. He told thethirdpole.net that over 5,000 danger points — collapses, landslides, dangerous cliffs and banks — have been identified.

"The reason this incident got so much attention was because it was the first in which a hydropower plant in the Three Gorges has been destroyed," Fan said.

Fan has previously written that when the Three Gorges reservoir was first filled to a depth of 175 metres in September 2008 during the trial period, a spate of disasters began.

Until July 2011, there were 272 disasters or near misses in the Chongqing area alone. Of these, 243 occurred as the reservoir was filled between 2008 and 2009, and 167 (68 per cent) were sudden geological disasters. As a result, the Yangtze River Commission restricted water level increases to no more than half a metre a day; in the following two years only 16 and 13 incidents were recorded. But experts warn that since 2010 the water level has been kept at 175 metres for long periods, which may result in more problems over time.

The Three Gorges Dam is the world's largest hydropower scheme, and took more than 12 years to build, opening in May 2006. Its reservoir stretches from Chongqing in Sichuan to Hubei province.

Excavation and blasting during construction of the dams, tunnels and buildings for hydropower stations reduces local geological stability, making these locations vulnerable in the event of an earthquake

Fan Xiao, chief engineer to the Regional Geological Survey Team of Sichuan province's Geology and Mineral Bureau Scale of the problem 'unknowable'

Both Yang and Fan told thethirdpole.net there is no way to count the number of hydropower schemes in the Three Gorges area. Numerous tributaries flow into the reservoir, many of them with their own hydropower schemes, and no one knows how many.

Those built before the Three Gorges Dam may have seen their local geological environment become more perilous. This means new risk assessments should be carried out so hazards can be dealt with and prepared for, said Yang.

China has so many hydropower stations because any level of government — central, provincial, county or even village

– can approve a project, as Fan points out. China’s rivers are divided up across different local governments, and the upper Yangtze’s hydropower resources are already fully exploited.

In 2009, a State Electricity Regulatory Commission document indicated that China had huge potential for small hydropower schemes of 50 megawatts or less, identifying a total of 128 gigawatts of developable generating capacity distributed across 1,700 counties.

Currently, China has over 45,000 small hydropower plants nationwide generating over 51 gigawatts, with another 20 gigawatts of capacity under construction.

As many hydropower plants have been damaged, Yong and Fan were not surprised by the destruction of Lifengyuan; they are aware this is an occasional occurrence, and even large schemes are at risk.

Fan told thethirdpole.net that landslides and bank collapses caused by a magnitude 6.5 earthquake in Ludian this August blocked the Jinsha River (as the Yangtze’s upper reaches are called) and created a barrier lake. The Hongshiyuan hydropower station was buried and inundated, resulting in the almost complete loss of 800 million yuan of investment.

Excavation and blasting during construction of the dams, tunnels and buildings for hydropower stations reduces local geological stability, making these locations vulnerable in the event of an earthquake, he explained, adding that this occurred prior to Sichuan’s 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in which 69,000 people died and nearly 20,000 went missing. Fan said the situation at Hongshiyuan was no different.

For this reason, construction of hydropower stations and any major project in the earthquake and landslide-prone west of China should be approached with extreme caution, with independent and comprehensive risk assessments carried out, he said.

Wang Yongchen, founder of Chinese environmental group Green Earth Volunteers, recently revealed that the sluice gates at Ludila hydropower station, on the Jinsha, were washed away before the plant was even generating power. Nobody has taken responsibility for the 600 million yuan loss.

Yang, who heads Hengdun Mountain Research Institute NGO which focuses on the Jinsha’s dams, told thethirdpole.net that filling of the Ludila reservoir had started last year. The loss of the sluice gates was reported in the media, but no action appears to have been taken.

A number of hydropower stations were destroyed after a mudslide in Sichuan’s Ganzi prefecture in 2005. The West China City News said in its report at the time that the

mudslide damaged six hydropower stations at Hailuogou, four of which belonged to the Hailuogo Scenic Area Power Company. Three stations providing power to the scenic area were completely destroyed and two more effectively ruined.

Money means risks

The drive to build hydropower is motivated by profits. Xiao Qianjun, manager of the destroyed Lifengyuan hydropower station, told journalists that hydropower is profitable and that he would invest in it again, despite the loss: “Hydropower is a reliable source of income, and we’ve got plenty of water. There’s no danger of us not earning money.”

According to Xiao, the plant cost six million yuan when he took it over and another three million was spent on efficiency improvements. Installed capacity was originally 800 kilowatts, generating six million kilowatt hours a year. Sold to the grid at 0.3 yuan per kilowatt hour, the electricity reaped profits of about 1 million yuan a year; things were going well enough that another 200 kilowatts of generating capacity was installed.

A 2011 report on excessive and dangerous hydropower development in Zhouqu, the site of a deadly mudslide in 2010, the Jinghua Times said: “These hydropower stations have carried out neither environmental impact assessments nor assessments of geological risks.”

China warns of geological disasters as heavy rain batters

India Times

May 23, 2016

BEIJING: Chinese meteorologists have warned public of “relatively high risks” of geological disasters in parts of rain-battered Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, asking authorities to closely watch the bad weather and brace for any situations.

China’s Meteorological Administration (CMA) forecast possible mountain torrents in parts of rainy Hebei Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Sichuan Province and Yunnan Province in the same period.

The administration asked local authorities to closely watch the bad weather and brace for any disasters, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Torrential rain has battered several provinces in China, affecting hundreds of thousands of people and causing heavy economic losses in the last few days.

In the central province of Hunan, days of heavy rain have affected about 500,000 residents in 25 counties, with about 18,000 evacuated and 4,000 in need of emergency supplies, the provincial flood and drought relief headquarters said.

The rainstorms have also damaged 46,000 hectares of crops.

In south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, two people have died and 290,000 people in 16 counties have been affected by heavy rain.

Rainstorms battered Guangxi's north and east, forcing more than 12,000 people to evacuate, according to the regional department of civil affairs.

The disaster has affected some 17,460 hectares of crops and toppled 610 houses, causing a direct economic loss of 470 million yuan (USD 72 million).

In the past a few days, torrential rains have battered several provinces in China, killing at least 10 persons and affecting some eight lakh others besides causing heavy economic losses and toppling hundreds of homes. The extremely rare round of heavy torrential rainfall was stated to be once in more than 200 years.

5.3-magnitude earthquakes hit Tibet

Xinhua

May 22, 2016

Two 5.3-magnitude earthquakes hit the southern part of Tibet in southwest China on Sunday morning, with no casualties reported to local authorities so far.

The first quake happened at 9:48 a.m. in Dinggye County, Xigaze City. The epicenter was monitored at 28.36 degrees north latitude and 87.6 degrees east longitude, with a depth of 10 km.

The second, at 10:05 a.m. in Tingri County, was monitored at 28.41 degrees north latitude and 87.59 degrees east longitude, with a depth of 6km.

"We felt three quakes this morning. The one after 10 a.m. was the strongest. The houses were rocking, and the windows were shaking," said Wu Zongzheng, a frontier officer of Dinggye County.

No casualties or building damage has been reported so far, according to Soring, director of the regional seismological bureau.

China Voice: Iron-fist needed for China's green development

shanghaidaily.com

May 20, 2016

Dozens of high-level officials in Hebei are worried about their job security after the province failed a nationwide environment inspection.

The central environmental protection inspection group issued an unusually harsh report on malpractice in the province. During the inspection, 200 plants were shut down, 123 people were arrested and another 366 were held accountable.

This is the first time inspectors have been sent in the name of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, giving them unprecedented authority and power.

Inspectors spoke to and questioned at least 26 provincial-level officials, including Hebei's governor and party chief, a clear sign that the central leadership is taking a hard line on incompetence.

After Hebei, the group will dispatch inspectors to 15 more provinces and regions.

In the past, environment inspections were often ineffectual, and their resultant measures had little deterrent effect: As soon as inspectors leave, profit-driven polluters, after a silent nod from local politicians, return to their old ways and continue to contaminate the air, water and land.

The Hebei inspection, the first of a two-year nationwide inspection program, shows that the Chinese leadership means business when it speaks of preserving the "green mountain and clean water" and building a "beautiful China."

Since 2014, China has gone all-out to address environmental deterioration. The Environment Law, which came in force last year, allows authorities to impose unlimited fines on repeated polluters and file criminal charges.

There is significant political support for measures to improve the environment, but enforcement at the local level has long been a weak point, due to the opportunistic practice of "catch me if you can," and the shirking of responsibility.

As calls by the public to clean up the environment amplify -- the inspection team received about 100 phone calls every day from angry citizens reporting foul play -- China can not risk losing more ground in the war on pollution.

The inspection team takes a top-down approach to ensure efficient enforcement. In the coming months, these envoys may be feared and shunned by those the campaign aims to catch, but welcomed with open arms by the public.

Clear as mud: how poor data is thwarting China's water clean-up

eco-business.com

May 20, 2016

China needs consistent data on water pollution if promised improvements are to be met.

China's central and local governments have barely made a start in trying to clean up China's heavily-polluted water, despite fast-approaching deadlines for improvements and the launch of a comprehensive 'ten point plan' over a year ago.

Behind the apparent inertia is a lattice of overlapping responsibilities in government departments, contradictory statements from officials, incomplete and undisclosed data, and a lack of monitoring of just how big the problem of water pollution really is.

This is preventing policymakers from getting a clear picture of what needs to be done so that China's main watersheds can be made less polluted and that hundreds of millions in China can get access to clean, drinkable supplies.

Ma Jun, a high-profile environmentalist in China and a director with the Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs (IPE), points out that air quality, by its very nature, is more easily observed, but water pollution is often hidden from public view or isn't as obvious to the naked eye.

"A failure to make data public could result in ineffective treatment – or even no treatment at all," Ma told chinadialogue.

Last year's ten point plan called for nationwide improvements in water quality by 2020, with 95 per cent of water sources used for urban drinking supplies required to reach Class III or better, and to reduce the share of Class V (defined officially as 'very poor quality') to just 15 per cent. China has five classifications for drinking water, with Class I defined as the best, most drinkable water.

Under the same plan, areas currently failing to meet those targets are required to come up with improvement programmes, including specific measures and timetables, while a range of water-intensive industries will be subject

to **stiff penalties** if they continue to pollute rivers, lakes and the coastline.

These were to be regularly made public from 2016, but few local authorities have done so, putting 2020 targets at risk and rendering water policy a clear laggard in efforts to curb air pollution.

Two government departments – the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), and the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) – are responsible for prevention and control of water pollution, while a third, the Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR), is also responsible for monitoring water quality.

To fix the huge problems of water pollution in China, and to raise the standards of drinking water, the multiple authorities responsible need to have some idea of the scale of the problem.

The challenge could be summed up by a maxim used in western business: "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it."

A major lack of information makes it a huge challenge for policymakers to map out the milestones they need to reach if China is to meet its targets on clean water.

Much-reported figures released last month underline the scale of the problem with the data provided on China's water pollution.

The figures, which were contained in a monthly update on groundwater quality issued by the Ministry of Water Resources, generated headlines that 80 per cent of China's groundwater was not fit to drink.

Evaluation Results of Groundwater Quality (Provincial-based)

Jurisdiction	Monitoring stations	2015			Six months (2015)			2014		
		Category I/III%	Category II/IV%	Category V%	Category I/III%	Category I/III%	Category I/III%	Category I/III%	Category I/III%	Category I/III%
Beijing	134	55.2	33.6	11.2	56	75.4	24.4			
Chongqing	43	14.2	79.2	11.6	13.1	75.9	11.7			
Hubei	203	14.2	84.7	49.2	12.3	71	18.1			
Shandong	190	17.4	34.2	48.4	13.8	32.4	13.8			
Inner Mongolia	94	4.3	31.9	63.8	3.1	6.4	9			
Guangdong	136	7.1	24.6	68.3	6.3	4.8	14.4			
Zhejiang	170	14.2	33.3	49.2	20	28.8	24.3			
Henan	48	4.2	24.6	41.9	14.2	11.3	14.4			
Average	48	10.8	40	23.2	13.3	40.5	23.2			
Shanghai	70	15.8	48.2	14.3	11.4	15.7	12			
Shenzhen	123	25.1	27.1	49.8	23.1	22.4	14.6			
Shaanxi	122	7.7	47.7	44.6	9	6.5	7.3			
Shanxi	11	9.1	25.0	65.9	9.1	9	9			
Shanghai	143	10.1	30.2	36.2	11.7	11	14.6			
Guangxi	114	10.9	22.4	31.7	20.7	14	14.4			
Guizhou	11	10.2	4.5	20	11.4	48.3	13.3			
Shanxi	11	0	10.0	80.0	0	0	0			
Shandong	14	44.4	22.2	33.3	33.3	30.6	3.6			

Source: *Groundwater Monthly Update*, Ministry of Water Resources, January 2016

However the MWR said these reports were inaccurate.

Chen Mingzhong, head of the MWR's department of water resources, said that the data is related to shallow groundwater on the plains of northern China, which tends to be of worse quality than elsewhere.

He added: "This data doesn't refer to sources of drinking water. Currently drinking water comes mostly from deeper underground."

Chen contends that around 85 per cent of China's groundwater sources are up to the required standards.

However, it is hard to reconcile this assertion with figures in a 2014 report on the state of China's environment, which indicated that water at 60 per cent of groundwater monitoring sites was of 'poor' or 'extremely poor quality'.

Meanwhile a 2015 report from the MLR said that in testing of groundwater from 5,118 sampling points across 202 cities over 60 per cent were found to be of 'poor' or 'extremely poor quality,' with only 9 per cent of 'excellent' quality.

Discrepancies

Peng Yingdeng, is a member of the MEP's database of experts who contributes to environmental impact assessments, and a researcher at the State Laboratory for Urban Pollution Control Technology, gives the following reasons.

The use of different monitoring locations, varied methods of sampling and inconsistent expectations of the outcome, have all contributed to contradictory findings, he said.

China has allocated funding for water quality monitoring, but the work is usually split between different departments and much of the allocated work hasn't been completed.

According to a recent report in the Southern Weekend, well known in China for its investigative reporting, the State Council in 2011 approved a 2 billion yuan (US\$300 million) programme to test groundwater quality nationwide, to be completed by 2017.

The programme envisaged the construction or upgrading of over 20,000 monitoring points, to be carried out by both the MWR and the MLR, with each department in charge of approximately half of the locations.

But so far, the MLR has built only 326 of those 20,000 monitoring points, while it is unclear how many the MWR has established.

The MWR failed to disclose details on the progress of the project requested by Southern Weekend.

Its journalists wanted to know why there had not been any disclosure on why progress has been slow, and asked for details about penalties if the monitoring programme is delivered late.

Meanwhile, not much is known about who is meant to be overseeing the project.

Data on drinking water is also clear as the proverbial mud.

An attempt in 2009 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development's (MOHURD) Water Quality Centre to "broadly clarify" the quality of drinking water in a

nationwide survey of 4,000 sites has never been made public.

MOHURD officials have said that "authorisation" is necessary to see those results, effectively closing the figures off from public scrutiny.

In 2012, Chinese media reported industry insiders as saying the survey found half of all drinking water was not up to standard.

MOHURD responded that the latest samples, from 2011, showed 83 per cent of drinking water supplies met standards when leaving the water plant, and that overall urban water supplies are safe.

Nanjing-based lawyer Feng Ding submitted a freedom of information request to MOHURD.

The ministry failed to answer the lawyer's questions, which included requests for information on where the 17 per cent of sites were, and the metrics by which they failed.

MOHURD's own regulations on management of urban water quality oblige the ministry to collect and publish water quality data every year, Feng said.

He added: "But I have never been able to obtain these reports or data".

Meanwhile, the MEP publishes data from only 100 monitoring points, despite monitoring 1,000 of them, points out Liu Chunlei of environmental NGO Shanghai Minhang Qingrui Environmental Information Technology Services Centre.

Liu says openness and sharing of information should be a two-step process. First, each government department should carry out its monitoring and share that information. Then the MEP should be in charge of publishing that data.

When data differs across departments, an explanation should be provided. Are different monitoring points used, do instruments vary in accuracy, are different indices used, or is there some other reason?

None of this should be hidden, campaigners said.

Data-sharing

Using Beijing as an example, Peng Yingdeng explained the problem with data sharing often lies where environmental quality reports lack the input of full figures.

"Without a full data set it's hard to see the changes and trends in water quality over time and carry out a systematic analysis or come up with targeted solutions," explained Peng.

Ma Jun said data on water has been long regarded as a "departmental resource" to be hidden from the public.

He stressed that this data must be freely shared so that departments can compare figures, carry out analysis and then produce a more accurate and authoritative water quality data set, which one department should take the lead in publishing.

Lessons

Transparency and dissemination of good quality data on water lags far behind that of air quality, after public pressure prompted the wider collection of data and its public circulation.

Until the US embassy in Beijing in 2009 started collecting and publishing air quality data, few in China were aware of just how much smog they were breathing in, particularly PM2.5, one of the most toxic forms of pollution.

For a time, Chinese officials objected to the US embassy's actions. And when the US embassy was describing the air quality in Beijing as "hazardous", the city's environmental authorities classed it as "lightly polluted." Beijing officials were forced to explain the discrepancy.

Environmental officials admit that the contrast with the US embassy data showed that China wasn't not being open or accurate enough with realtime air quality information, and that the data released needed to be more accessible.

By 2012, the MEP said that data from all monitoring stations nationwide would be published, so the public could keep up to date with monitoring data. The Air Action Plan, launched in 2013, was a major turning point in management of air quality.

To ensure the plan was implemented, the State Council had provincial governments commit to targets, with annual audits of progress and officials held to account for failures.

On air quality, Chinese citizens can easily access realtime information that can be used to evaluate pollution levels and where the smog is likely to be coming from.

A pollution map and smartphone app updated by the IPE last year tracks pollution from 9,000 companies and gives users forecasts and advice on whether or not they need to wear gas masks, open windows, or undertake outdoor activities.

Measuring performance

Nationwide, 338 cities now publish live air quality monitoring data and are ranked accordingly by the government.

The responsible officials from the lowest ranking cities, or those which see air quality worsen, are summoned in for often-awkward 'chats' with senior officials.

But the modest improvements in China's air quality seem a long way off for water quality.

Peng Yingdeng said: "If we don't get disclosure of information (in the way China got for its air), auditing performance on water management is going to be a problem."

Crowdsourcing

But there are signs of solutions starting to emerge on tracking water pollution and closer scrutiny of the likely culprits.

A recently-updated version of IPE's pollution tracking map suggests that local governments (such as Beijing's city government) are being more transparent on the extent of water pollution.

For instance, IPE has secured the agreement of the MEP and MOHURD in a crowdsourcing initiative that will draw upon the experiences of the capital's citizens to identify the city's most polluted rivers.

Tibetan Fossils Reveal The Origins Of Ice Age Mountain Sheep

asianscientist.com

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AsianScientist (May 19, 2016) - The modern wild sheep, *Ovis*, is widespread in mountain ranges around the world. In Eurasia, ancient sheep fossils have been found at a few Pleistocene sites in North China, eastern Siberia, and western Europe, but are so far absent from the Tibetan Plateau. Now, an international team of researchers have reported a new genus and species of fossil sheep from the Pliocene of Zanda Basin in Tibet. The research team, led by palaeontologists from the Institute of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Paleoanthropology (IVPP) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, published their discovery in the *Journal of Vertebrate Palaeontology*. This finding extends the fossil record for the sheep into the Pliocene of the Tibetan Plateau, and suggests that the Tibetan Plateau, possibly including Tianshan-Altai, represents the ancestral home range(s) of mountain sheep. It is also possible that these basal stocks were the ultimate source of all extant species.

The fossils that were unearthed by the research team. Credit: Wang Xiaoming "With the present discovery of a primitive sheep in the Himalayas, we thus offer another example of our previous out-of-Tibet hypothesis—ancestral sheep were adapted to high-elevation cold environments in the Pliocene, and during the Pleistocene they began to disperse outside their ancestral home range in Tibet to northern China, northern Siberia, and western

Asia,” said Dr. Wang Xiaoming, a visiting professor at IVPP and a senior curator of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. The fossils were collected from the Tibetan Autonomous Region in the Western Himalayas during the 2006 and 2007 field seasons. The holotype specimen, forming the main basis of this new species, comprises nearly complete male left and right horncores. With a total horncore upper curve length of 443 mm, it is similar in size to some extant species of *Ovis*. The fossil sheep, *Protovis himalayensis*, has a combination of features distinguishable from other species such as *Ovis*, *Pseudois* and *Tossunnoria*. Smaller than the living argali, or mountain sheep, it shares with *Ovis* posterolaterally arched horncores and partially developed sinuses, and possesses several transitional characters leading to *Ovis*.

Map of extinct and extant species of *Ovis* in Eurasia and their evolutionary relationships. Credit: Wang Xiaoming
 Situated between the Himalayas and Ayilariju ranges, the Zanda Basin was formed in a tectonically active region. Along the shores of the paleo-Zanda lake, basement outcrops from residual topography and surrounding mountains offered plenty of rugged terrain and gentle hills. The environment occupied by *Protovis* is not far from one of the paleo-islands formed by metamorphic basement rock, and these cliffs probably provided protection from predators in times of danger. Ancestral sheep in the Tibetan Plateau, occupying a similar range as the extant argali, were adapted to high-elevation, cold environments during the Pliocene, when conditions elsewhere (including the high Arctic regions) were much warmer. By the time the Ice Age arrived around 2.6 million years ago, *Ovis* possessed a competitive advantage for surviving in freezing environments and spread rapidly to regions surrounding the Plateau and beyond. Most sheep species survived along their Pleistocene route of dispersal, the authors say. “Fortunately, wild sheep were able to take refuge in mountain ranges, possibly an important contributing factor in protection against early human hunting, and they have largely survived the end-Pleistocene extinction that befell many of their megafaunal contemporaries,” said study coauthor Dr. Li Qiang.

The article can be found at: Wang et al. (2016) Out of Tibet: an Early Sheep from the Pliocene of Tibet, *Protovis himalayensis*, Genus and Species Nov. (Bovidae, Caprini), and Origin of Ice Age Mountain Sheep. ——— Source: Chinese Academy of Sciences; Photo: Julie Selan and Wang Xiaoming. Disclaimer: This article does not necessarily reflect the views of AsianScientist or its staff.

One-third of China is now Desert, and it is Getting Worse

chinatopix.com

May 17, 2016



Fertile farmlands are turning into deserts in China because of desertification.

China stands to become the world's largest desert with a third of this country's huge landmass already turned into arid deserts unsuitable for human habitation or agriculture by unstoppable desertification.

But more than its economic and human impact, desertification has hit the hardest the neighboring northern provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet, the two most restive provinces in China where independence movements by restless Uyghurs and ethnic Tibetans still command respect.

Mongolia, another uneasy province also in the north. Political stability will become more uncertain in these three problematic provinces as desertification creeps forward.

The advance of desertification is alarming. Already over one million square miles or one third of China is classified as desert or wasteland. Creeping deserts are threatening 400 million people, or close to a third of the 1.4 billion people in China. Desertification costs China some US\$6.9 billion every year.

Over the past decade, Beijing reported that deserts have expanded 1,500 square miles a year. Since China's total land area is some 3,700,000 square miles, the desert will engulf all of China in some 2,500 years if nothing effective is done to stop this threat.

While this is still a long way off, the problems triggered by creeping desertification are urgent and dire. Beijing has mounted extraordinary efforts to reduce the rate of desertification, but admitted in 2011 that the "desertification trend has not fundamentally reversed." It remains this way today.

It is a staggering statistic that a third of China is desert or is turning into desert. One source said desertification is being caused by overgrazing by livestock, over cultivation, excessive water use and climate change

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization, however, said the major causes of desertification are climate change and human economic activities. FAO pinpointed human activities as a direct cause of land desertification. In other words, desertification is largely man-made.

The State Forestry Administration has identified land desertification as China's most important ecological problem, and climate change will only make it worse.

China's desertification is causing trouble across Asia

The Conversation

Marijn Nieuwenhuis

May 17, 2016

Creeping desertification in China is swallowing thousands of square kilometres of productive soil every year. It's a challenge of gigantic and unprecedented proportions.

The rate of desertification increased throughout the second half of last century and, although this trend has since stabilised, the situation remains very serious.

More than a quarter of the entire country is now degraded or turning to desert, thanks to "overgrazing by livestock, over cultivation, excessive water use, or changes in climate". The Gobi desert alone gobbles up 3,600km² of grassland each year. China's own State Forestry Administration has identified land desertification as the country's most important ecological problem, and climate change will only make things worse.

Ecological disasters have social effects. Desertification threatens the subsistence of about a third of China's population, especially those in the country's west and north, and could pose serious challenges to political and economic stability. It costs China roughly RMB 45 billion (US\$6.9 billion) per year.

Research shows that "for seriously decertified regions, the loss amounts to as much as 23.16% of ... annual GDP". The

fact that one third of the country's land area is eroded has led some 400m people to struggle to cope with a lack of productive soil, destabilised climatological conditions and severe water shortages. Droughts damage "about 160,000 square kilometres of cropland each year, double the area damaged in the 1950s".

Blaming the desertification on overgrazing and bad cultivation, the state has since 2005 started to reallocate millions of people from dry and barren territories under its controversial and hotly-contested "ecological migration" programme.

Deforestation has only made things worse. Greenpeace writes that only 3.34% of the country's original forests remain intact, of which "only 0.1% is fully protected".

Despite extraordinary efforts by the government to reduce the rate of erosion, culminating in the largest reforestation project ever undertaken, the government itself conceded in 2011 that the "desertification trend has not fundamentally reversed".

Stormy geopolitics

Dust and sand storms have intensified and now pose provocative geopolitical challenges. The Gobi desert which spans China and Mongolia is the world's second largest dust source, after the Sahara. Whirling soil sediments are an annual plague in western China but also move all the way across the Pacific and beyond. Traces of China's deserts have been found as far away as New Zealand or the French Alps, and "yellow dust" costs the Korean and Japanese economies billions of US dollars each year. Even worse off is Mongolia, which itself is facing desertification, and will be particularly affected by global warming.

Inhaling this dust has devastating effects on the health of animals and humans alike. Asian dust has in the past decade been linked to both cardiovascular and respiratory diseases while more recent research discovered "a statistically significant association between Asian dust storms and daily mortality".

Dust storms also transport toxic pollutants, bacteria, viruses, pollen and fungi. Microbiologists looked at a dust storm in South Korea and found big increases in aerial bacteria.

Working together to fight the dust

Dust and sand storms don't respect international borders, so it's no wonder they have become a big worry for multilateral governance. Back in 2005 the Asian Development Bank, together with several UN agencies and regional countries, drew up a master plan to promote cooperative solutions.

More recently, dust was on the agenda at a 2015 trilateral summit attended by South Korea, Japan and China. Environment ministers from the three countries meet each year and have established special working groups to “improve forecasting accuracy and to develop measures of vegetation restoration in source areas in China”.

These are positive steps. China can't pretend its desertification is its own problem as the effects on other countries are too obvious. Swirling dust storms have forced other states to take a direct interest in China's desert sands.

Nepal quake caused 4,312 landslides:Report

Hindustan Times

May 16, 2016

Almost a year after the devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal, a new international report said a staggering 4,312 landslides were triggered by the temblor and its aftershocks.

It said the major destruction by the landslides was of newly-developed settlements, and that the total loss and damage was estimated at \$7 billion.

The report “Impact of Nepal's 2015 Gorkha Earthquake-Induced Geohazards” said the lives of eight million people, almost one-third of Nepal's population, were impacted. But the damage due to landslides and glacier lake floods was less than anticipated, it added.

Supported by Skoll Global Threats Fund, the Kathmandu-headquartered International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), along with scientists from the US, Europe and the region prepared the report by mapping the landslides using satellite images, aerial surveys and field visits.

In Nepal, home to more than one-third of the Himalayan range, the damage by the quake was devastating, compared to the Tibet Autonomous Region in China or India and Bangladesh.

Within Nepal, more than 8,800 people died, 22,000 were injured and 100,000 displaced.

The earthquake on April 25, 2015, pushed an additional 2.5 to 3.5 percent of the Nepalese population into poverty in 2015-16, the researchers wrote in their 36-page report that aims to improve the management of geohazards.

Scientists have discovered that there was major destruction to the newly-developed human settlements compared to older ones.

These settlements were along the Pasang Lamu highway in the Trishuli valley and Kodari highway in the Bhotekoshi and Sunkoshi valleys. Tatopani village, bordering China, too was hit by rock falls.

According to the report, the temblor induced two disastrous avalanches -- one in Langtang valley and another at the Mount Everest base camp.

The most destructive and probably the largest landslide triggered was a massive one initiated nearly 7,000 metres above mean sea level which completely buried Langtang village.

The Mount Everest base camp was also hit by an earthquake-induced ice avalanche, even though the shaking at this point was light.

The collapsing icy mass swept away a part of the Everest base camp and claimed 22 lives.

It was the worst single day in the history of Everest and occurred a year after the previous worst day in the mountain's history on April 18, 2014, when ice avalanches hit the Everest climbing route over the Khumbu glacier, killing 16 people, the researchers wrote.

The indication is that ice on the mountain was ready to collapse. Springtime melting triggered the collapse in 2014 and probably conditioned the ice for collapse in 2015 so that only a light shaking was needed to break it loose, they said.

The saving grace is that the earthquake did not cause floods from the outburst of glacial lakes.

“This was both fortunate and surprising. The good news, however, does not necessarily indicate that future earthquakes will have a similarly low impact as they could strike closer to and more directly beneath the glacial lakes,” said the researchers.

They warned that many of the landslides and landslide dams and possibly the increased instability of glacial lakes have the potential to lead to a chain of hazards in the future.

The situation of Himalayan glacial lakes needs to be observed carefully in China, India and Nepal to confirm the preliminary conclusions that the risk of floods from the outburst of glacial lakes has not been visibly heightened by the earthquake, says the report.

“After the earthquake we joined hands with regional and international experts to map the positions of landslides and debris flows. We undertook several studies to assess its impact,” ICIMOD director general David J. Molden said.

New species from Tibet reveals origin of Ice Age mountain sheep

Tibet Post International

May 12, 2016

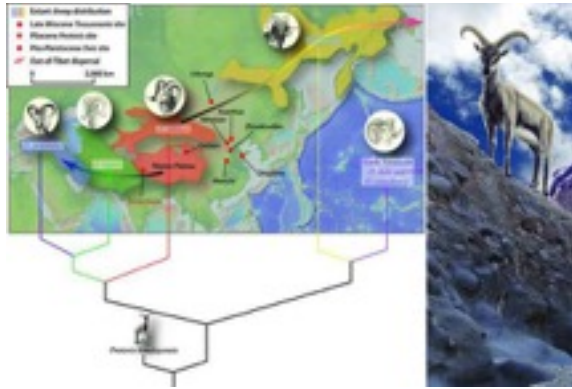


Fig.1 Holotype of *Protovis himalayensis*, in frontal-lateral view (A) and dorsal view of horncores (B), and cross-sectional shapes at four intervals along left horn. Credit: WANG Xiaoming Read more at: <http://phys.org/news/2016-05-species-pleiocene-tibet-reveals-ice.html#jCp>

Dharamshala — Modern wild sheep, *Ovis*, is widespread in the mountain ranges of the Caucasus through Himalaya, Tibetan Plateau, Tianshan-Altai, eastern Siberia, and the Rocky Mountains in North America.

In Eurasia, fossil sheep are known by a few isolated records at a few Pleistocene sites in North China, eastern Siberia, and western Europe, but are so far absent from the Tibetan Plateau.

In a paper published May 4 in the "Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology", palaeontologists from the Institute of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Paleoanthropology (IVPP), Chinese Academy of Sciences, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and La Brea Tar Pits and Museum at Los Angeles reported a new genus and species of fossil sheep from the Pliocene of Tsadha County in Tibet (Ch: Zanda County, TAR).

Researchers believe a new fossil -- and the new species it represents -- proves mountain sheep originated in the highlands of Tibet.

Scientists have long argued that the last ice age's megaherbivores originated in Tibet and spread out across the regions neighbouring the Tibetan Plateau as glaciation proliferated.

The only problem: until now, researchers weren't able to uncover the fossils of any ancient mountain sheep on the Tibetan Plateau.

The newly unearthed sheep fossil was discovered in a Pliocene layer of the Zanda Basin in Tibet. It belongs to a new extinct species, *Protovis himalayensis*. Scientists say the species is an ancestor of modern wild sheep, which

are organised under the genus *Ovis* and found in the mountains of North America, Eurasia and Europe.

This primitive horned sheep adapted to the cold, hard demands of mountain living during the Pliocene, when most regions outside of the Tibetan Plateau were relatively warm. *Protovis himalayensis* eventually gave way to more recent ancestors of *Ovis* species. Despite morphological changes, its unique disposition towards harsh, cold climates remained.

When the last ice age arrived 2.6 million years ago, *Ovis* species were primed to take advantage of new territory.

"With the present discovery of a primitive sheep in the Himalaya, we thus offer another example of our previous out-of-Tibet hypothesis," Wang Xiaoming, senior curator of Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, explained in a news release.

"Ancestral sheep were adapted to high-elevation cold environments in the Pliocene, and during the Pleistocene they began to disperse outside their ancestral home range in Tibet to northern China, northern Siberia, and western Asia," added Wang, a visiting professor with the Institute of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Paleoanthropology in Beijing. "The sheep thus joined several other mammals, such as big cats, arctic foxes, hypercarnivorous hunting dogs, and woolly rhinoceros in their expansion out of Tibet during the Ice Age and gave rise to elements of the Pleistocene megafauna."

Unlike other megafauna species like mammoths and saber-toothed tigers, which succumbed to climate change and human predation, wild mountain sheep were able to seek refuge in the high peaks as the planet once again warmed.

Nepal's power woes and Koshi basin

thestatesman.com

May 12 2016

American tourists Shana K and her husband Zulhk K were in for a shock when they found there was no electricity at the Janakpur airport for over an hour. But that's a constant reality for most Nepalese who face a severe power crisis every day. However, experts say the grim situation can change if Nepal utilises its water resources fully, notably that of the Koshi basin which can generate 37 times more energy than what Nepal annually imports from India.

"Nepal has a huge hydropower potential, thanks to plenty of available water in the Koshi basin. But till date the water resources have not been utilised," said Shahriar Wahid, programme coordinator, Koshi basin programme

of Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

Researchers at ICIMOD, in partnership with the International Water Management Institute, conducted soil and water assessment to determine future availability of water till the middle of the century.

"Research showed that the available water in the Koshi basin is largely untapped. Only seven percent is being currently utilised. The data also suggested that the Koshi river can generate 37 times more energy than what Nepal annually imports from India. This information can help planners to make decisions about the construction of hydropower infrastructure," Wahid said.

According to the latest research, Nepal has a hydropower potential of over 50,000 MW. But till now, only 800 MW are generated.

In November 2015, India and Nepal signed an agreement for setting up of a 900-MW hydropower plant on Nepal's Arun river that will generate power from 2021.

Soon after his visit to the Himalayan nation in March 2015, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar too had stressed that Nepal should focus on hydropower projects which can boost its economy.

As of now, Nepal's electricity requirements have been growing at about nine percent annually. But the supply isn't enough to match that need. And so even in capital Kathmandu, residents and industrial units face power cuts of eight to 12 hours every day.

"If hydropower potential of the Koshi river and other trans-boundary rivers are harnessed, then Nepal can easily sell excess electricity to India. Electricity can be a major revenue earner for the country," said Asit K. Biswas of the Institute of Water Policy at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore.

"Instead, Nepal currently imports electricity from India to supplement its grossly inadequate power generation," they added.

A good model is India-Bhutan collaboration, they pointed out. With India's cooperation, Bhutan now covers all its electricity needs through hydropower, and sells the excess electricity to its southern neighbour. Hydropower is now a major export of Bhutan.

Over the last four years, it has contributed to about 60 per cent of Bhutan's total export income.

"Both Nepal and India should realise that hydropower is not like oil or minerals that can remain in the ground until they are developed. If water is not used for electricity generation and agricultural production, these benefits are lost forever," Cecilia Tortajada of the Institute of Water

Policy at Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore stressed.

Water expert Santosh Nepal of ICIMOD pointed out that hydropower can be one of the "most environment-friendly source of energy" in Nepal.

"Moreover, energy security can open up opportunities for development and employment in Nepal, and contribute to the national GDP," he said.

China to Integrate Water and Environment Management with GEF support

The Financial

May 10, 2016

The FINANCIAL -- The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors approved a US\$9.50 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on May 9 to help China increase water productivity and reduce pollution discharges in the three river basins entering the Bohai Sea, by mainstreaming and scaling up an innovative approach to integrated water and environmental management.

China's Bohai Sea is one of the world's most ecologically stressed water bodies. The degradation of the Bohai Sea is mainly due to decreasing fresh water inflows and increasing pollution loads. Average annual fresh water inflows to the sea have been reduced by over 50 percent over the last few decades. More than 40 rivers that flow into the Bohai Sea are severely polluted. Among them, the Liao, Hai, and Yellow Rivers are the most important. Moreover, there are some 105 discrete pollution sources located along its coast that discharge directly into the sea.

"To maintain and restore the necessary water flows in the main rivers entering the Bohai Sea, the issues of both water scarcity and water pollution must be addressed in the upper reaches of the river basins. The project will adopt an integrated water and environment management approach that will simultaneously tackle these two issues, particularly overexploitation of groundwater," said Liping Jiang, World Bank's Senior Irrigation Specialist and the team leader for the project.

Built on the first GEF Hai River Basin project, the GEF Mainstreaming Integrated Water and Environment Management Project will refine and more fully integrate remote-sensing technology into integrated water and environment management approach to measure the consumptive use water in ecological, environmental, agricultural, and urban areas, and help develop action

plans and targets for a more balanced social and economic development and ecosystem preservation in river basins.

The project will support policy studies and preparation of operational manuals and guidelines on integrated water and environment management approach, demonstration of the approach in two sub-river basins of the Luan and Hutuo and two cities of Chengde and Shijiazhuang, and its scaling up to the Liao, Hai, and Yellow River Basins. Moreover, a water environment technology extension platform and a water consumption monitoring and management platform will be developed at the national level, according to the World Bank.

The people living in the project areas and along the Bohai coast will benefit directly from more stable access to water resources and improved water quality due to the project. Eventually the project will contribute to improvements in the Bohai nearshore coastal ecosystem.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) unites 183 countries in partnership with international institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. An independently operating financial organization, the GEF provides grants for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants.

Hydropower potential of GB enough to resolve country's energy crisis'

Dailytimes.com

May 8, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) on Saturday said hydropower potential of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) could change the fate of country by resolving energy crisis with its capacity estimated to be 50,000 megawatts.

Thermal energy is costly while hydel power offers cheapest source of energy for long term and permanent solution to the energy crisis, said FPCCI President Abdul Rauf Alam.

He said this while talking to Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman. FPCCI Vice President Johar Ali Raki and others were also present on the occasion.

Rauf Alam said that hydro energy is environment-friendly, low-cost and economically viable; it can save billions of dollars required to import fuel for power generation that result in costly agricultural and industrial production.

The potential of run-of-the-river projects in GB is phenomenal; 7,400 megawatts of energy can be generated at a power plant in Bunji with two additional projects of 2,000 megawatt each upstream from this location, he added

He said that the government as well as the private sector must exploit the enormous power production potential in GB, which could help us not only overcome energy crisis but also export electricity.

Moreover, the 72,000 square miles area with around 1.3 million people has the potential for rapid development based on tourism, hospitality, mining, food processing, dry fruits, gems and jewellery and farming, he said.

Alam noted that the number of tourists could be doubled with little effort while establishing tax-free zones could attract investment, adding that new policies should be evolved to facilitate local and foreign investments.

He said that FPCCI wants to establish a regional office in Gilgit-Baltistan for which it is looking forward for cooperation by the government. On the occasion, the Gilgit-Baltistan chief minister said that economic corridor would have a positive impact on every person in the country while it would transform Gilgit-Baltistan into an investment haven.

He asked the private sector to take interest in investment in the region and that they would be provided all the facilities possible. "We are planning to establish an investment board, boost tourism, generate additional power, and improve law and order situation to trigger economic activities which will reduce poverty and raise standard of living of people," he added.

India unaware of details of hydro projects on Brahmaputra

assamtribune.com

May 8, 2016

The Government of India is putting pressure on China to share the details of the hydropower projects being set up by the neighbouring country on the Brahmaputra river.

Highly placed sources in the Government of India told *The Assam Tribune* that till date, India is not aware of the full details of the projects being set up by China on the Brahmaputra river. The Government of China has been insisting that the projects would be run-of-the-river projects and those would not affect the flow of water to India.

However, the Government of India is of the view that those projects might affect the flow of water to the downstream areas. The experts of India, who were consulted by the government, were also of the view that with the construction of hydropower projects, China would be able to control the flow of water to India. As parts of China are facing severe water crisis, there is also an apprehension that the possibility of China diverting water of the Brahmaputra to the water-starved areas of the country cannot be ruled out.

In view of the possible dangers, the Government of India is putting pressure on China to divulge the details of the projects that are being set up on the Brahmaputra. Sources said that the Government of India is keen on signing a formal agreement with China so that the neighbouring country has to provide the technical details of the projects including water storage and release facilities. "The Government of India even wants that engineers and experts of India should be allowed to visit the projects in China so that they can have a first-hand look at the projects," sources added.

Sources pointed out that as per international laws, the interests of the water users of the lower riparian countries would have to be looked into by any country while constructing major projects in the upstream of major rivers. Though India has not constructed any major project on the Brahmaputra, the Government of India is of the view that setting up of projects in the upstream of the river would disturb the ecology of the downstream areas. Sources said that the Government of India is using this point to put pressure on China to share the details of the projects being set up in the upstream of the Brahmaputra.

It may be mentioned here that the reports of China constructing hydropower projects in the upstream of the Brahmaputra river is causing apprehension in the minds of the people living in the downstream areas. China has always been claiming that construction of the run-of-the-river projects would not affect the flow of water to the downstream areas, but so far, the neighbouring country has not shared the details of the projects with India.

Tibetans protest against Chinese mining in Minyak County, Tibet

Tibet Post International

May 6, 2016

Dharamshala — More than 100 Tibetans have protested against Chinese mining operations at a site considered sacred by local Tibetan residents, drawing a large police force to the area and prompting fears of clashes.

'The protest took place at Yulshok Gargye in Minyak County, Kham Province of eastern Tibet (Ch: Minya, Kangding County, Sichuan, China)," on May 4, 2016,' Aka Penpa, a monk from South India told the TPI.

He said that "the ongoing mining has led to toxic wastes being dumped into the river resulting in the death of a large number of fishes."

"About 100 local Tibetans then gathered in Yulshok Gargye to demand an end to the project and calling for urgent action to protect environment and wildlife," he added.

The locals have engaged in shouting slogans "there is no rule of law for the Communist Party" and saying they lied to us, they cheated on us, they betrayed us and broken promises.

'Chinese authorities deployed dozens of police forces in vehicles to the protest site, immediately after the event,' TPI's source said.

"The situation is still very tense, as there are growing fears among the locals that the security crackdown, may take place in the open sky," sources said, adding: "It is also unknown whether or not the Chinese authorities arrested any of these Tibetan protesters."

Yulshok Gargye is a sacred place located in the Minyak County, less than 20 minutes walk from the center of Pa-Lhagang, which is one of the holiest site in Tibetan Buddhism.

Waste from the mines, in operation since 2005, but stopped in recent years because local protests against the project, which has been dumped in the "Lhuchu River," resulting in the death of large numbers of fishes. Sources said "they restarted the mine in April this year, resulting in the death of another large numbers of fishes."

"Tibetan nomads have protested the Chinese mining operations, which poison drinking water and kill herd animals," he added.

The protest site is also located near Mt Minyak Gangkar, one of the highest mountains in Kham region of eastern Tibet, which is located near Dartsedo City. It is with elevation of 7556m. The town of Dartsedo was an important trade center between Tibet and China, and for

centuries its importance lay on the tea-horse trade. Mt Minyak Gangkar is also one of the most sacred snow capped mountain in the Kham region.

Mining operations in Tibet have led to frequent standoffs with Tibetans who accuse Chinese firms of disrupting sites of spiritual significance and polluting the environment as they extract local wealth.

The operations also have caused landslide, severe damage to local forests, grasslands, and drinking water. Waste from the mines has been dumped in the rivers, and mining activities have polluted the air.

Slower Evaporation Rate Spurs Tibetan Lake Growth

Glacierhub.org

May 4, 2016

A new study in the Journal of Hydrology uses a novel modelling technique that helps scientists understand the effect of evaporation on the expansion of lakes in the inner Tibetan Plateau. This research also has implications for the use of climate models on the Plateau. In addition, the work has broader significance for weather patterns beyond Tibet, due to the plateau's influence on the atmospheric circulation of the Asian Monsoon system.

The researchers focused on Nam Co Lake, the second largest of the more than one thousand lakes on the Tibetan Plateau. Unlike many lakes, which drain through rivers, this lake is in a closed basin, losing water only through evaporation. There is no bigger lake at a higher altitude than this body of water anywhere in the world.

In fact, Nam Co Lake is expanding, and the researchers wanted to better understand why. Seeking a fresh approach, the researchers aimed to specify the role of evaporation in this expansion.

Led by Ning Ma of the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences, they found that the expansion of Nam Co Lake is partly caused by decreased rates of evaporation, possibly due to declining wind speeds and decreased solar radiation.

There have been many studies exploring the rapid expansion of lakes in the region since the 1990's, but there is no agreement on the explanation for this phenomenon. Past studies have looked at increased glacial runoff or increased precipitation as the main drivers. But the authors of this study explain that to fully understand the expansion of this closed lake, evaporation, a factor often neglected by researchers, needs to be incorporated as well.

The authors indicate that evaporation in this lake, as in other lakes, depends on several factors: the radiation that reaches the lake's surface, air temperature, wind speed, and the dryness of the air. In order to find which of these variables has the largest effect, the scientists correlated the average values of each with the evaporation rates over the lake.

Wind speed, they concluded, was most plausible candidate. However, the lack of nearby weather stations and the mountainous landscape of the region pose an issue for the construction of accurate models which include wind speed. Because of this, the researchers used a different model than is usually employed during evaporation studies; this alternate method is called a complementary relationship lake evaporation (CRLE) model.

The CRLE model did not include wind speed measurements, but the researchers can estimate this factor by including an air stability factor that includes variables for heat and moisture content.

The study suggests that the ability to more accurately model the rates of evaporation without wind speed data is the key to counterbalancing the lack of meteorological observations in this area. Further, the need to examine the lake over decades can best be addressed by models, granted the lack of data from the weather stations in the region. Accurate models may be able to help those in the region better understand lake expansion.

The Tibetan Plateau is of great regional importance because of the role it plays in the Asian Monsoon system. Simply put, the heat energy (which is affected by evaporation) from the plateau thermally regulates the monsoon circulation patterns. Changes in evaporation rates from lakes may have implications for the many areas affected by the Asian Monsoon. By providing an assessment of the CRLE model, which the authors argue provides a more accurate representation of evaporation, this study may aid in the understanding of the processes taking place in this critical, but rapidly changing, region.

Environmental inspectors expose pollution in N China

Shanghai Daily

May 3, 2016

SHIJIAZHUANG, May 3 (Xinhua) -- The environment in parts of north China's Hebei Province has deteriorated sharply, a central inspection team said on Tuesday.

Four rivers, including the Canglangqu, Shibe River, Liaojiawa River and Cha River, are heavily polluted within Cangzhou City, with average pollutant concentrations in the four up 30 percent in 2015 from 2013 figures, inspectors noted.

A series of illegal projects were discovered, including construction of villas near the province's protected drinking water sources.

Inspectors attributed the environmental violations to ineffective supervision by local regulators.

"Former leaders of the provincial Communist Party of China committee didn't take environmental protection seriously and failed to make changes from 2013 until July 2015," said the team.

During the inspection, 200 enterprises were shut down, 123 people were arrested and another 366 were held accountable.

The inspectors, who were sent to Hebei from Dec. 31, 2015 to Feb. 4, ordered local authorities to submit rectification measures to the State Council within 30 work days.

Military and Infrastructure Development

Rs.1 lakh crore for road infrastructure in Northeast: Gadkari

The Statesman

May 29, 2016

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday said that the government will invest Rs.one lakh crore in the northeast region to develop road infrastructure in five years.

He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had instructed him to put special emphasis on infrastructural development in the northeast as the region remained deprived off the progress for years.

"In next five years we will build a road network, with investment of Rs.one lakh crore, in the northeast region of the country. This will enable fast and overall development of the entire region," Gadkari said from Nagpur while speaking at "Ek Nayee Subah" event to mark the Modi government's two years.

Development works estimated at Rs.40,000 crore have already started in the region, he added.

On development of waterways, Gadkari said that water transport is the cheapest way of travelling and with India having a 7500-km-long coastline which connects 78 districts of 13 states, the scope of water transport is immense.

"We are transforming the rivers -- which fall into the sea -- into waterways. We have also started working on strengthening our existing five waterways," he said.

He added that multi-modal hubs are being developed in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Haldia in West Bengal and Sahibganj in Jharkhand where Ganga flows. As many as 40 water ports are being made and work on developing waterways on Brahmaputra River will start soon.

"Development of waterways will be the biggest achievement of our government," he said.

Border Roads director general arrives today

Kuenselonline.com

May 29, 2016

The director general of the Border Roads Organisation, Lieutenant General Suresh Sharma, arrives in the country today on an eight-day visit to review works under taken by Project DANTAK.

He is accompanied by his wife, Simmi Sharma, who is also the president of the organisation's Wife's Welfare Association.

Lieutenant General Suresh Sharma is slated to visit both eastern and western Bhutan to generate a clear understanding of the road infrastructure requirements in Bhutan and the perception of His Majesty The King and government officials, it is stated in the press release issued by DANTAK.

With productivity and quality being the general's key result areas, he is also likely to spell out the future road map of Project DANTAK.

This is the first time a Border Roads director general will visit both eastern and western Bhutan in a single visit, which displays his commitment towards the cause of Bhutan, it is also pointed out in the press release.

Since the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru came to Bhutan on horseback, Project DANTAK has been associated with the development of Bhutan.

The visit of the director general during the start of the new working season will certainly cement the bond between the two nations and raise the morale of troops working in testing conditions, it is stated in the press release.

The director general is likely to have an audience with His Majesty The King of Bhutan and His Majesty The Fourth King. He will also call on Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and other senior government officials.

During his visit, the director general will perform the ground breaking ceremony of the much awaited Chuzom-Haa road on 01 June 2016 and inspect various road sectors including Damchu-Chukha, Damchu-Haa link Road, and Chuzom-Drugyal Dzong.

In the subsequent part of his visit, he will inaugurate the Druk Gaizam bridge in eastern Bhutan and will review the road works along Trashigang-Yadi and Darranga-Trashigang road sector.

Simmi Sharma will also inaugurate and dedicate the 'Friendship Park' constructed by DANTAK at Samdrup Jongkhar to the people of the region on June 4.

The proposed visit of the director general has generated a lot of hope amongst the people of Bhutan who are eagerly awaiting much needed impetus for the connectivity of its major road sectors and a subsequent boost to its economy, it is stated in the press release.

"Project DANTAK is set to gain a lot from the visit and is all geared up to bring about quantitative and qualitative change in road infrastructure sector of Bhutan," it is added.

China wants its Nepal rail link to touch Bihar

freepressjournal.in

May 25, 2016

Beijing : Having already expanded its influence in Nepal with road and rail network through Tibet, China is now looking to stretch its railway link to Bihar to improve connectivity with India and South Asia, state-run Chinese media reported on Tuesday.

Significantly, the indication has come on the heels of the trilateral economic corridor agreement that Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** has signed with Afghanistan and Iran.

A cross-border railroad link to the Rasuwagadhi area in Nepal has already been discussed between the two countries, it is learnt. China's railroad is expected to reach Nepal border by 2020, an article in the state-run Global Times said. This rail line makes it possible to connect China to India as from Rasuwagadhi to Birgunj, which borders Bihar, is only 240 km, the article said.

For Bihar, trade with China through the rail link will be easier along this route than through Kolkata, saving time, cost and distance, it said. "The railroad connection to China not only is important for Nepal and Nepalese people's future development, but also has the capacity to build connectivity with the whole of South Asia. The government of Nepal has the chance to make history," the article said.

While rail and road links with Nepal were regarded strategic for China to blunt India's influence in the country, analysts said the development of most expansive infrastructure through the rugged Himalayan mountains is viable only if get connected to India. India, China bilateral trade currently hovers around USD 70 billion with over USD 48 billion trade deficit in favour of Beijing.

Early this month, in a strategic move to cut landlocked Nepal's dependence on India, China opened a combined road and rail service to Kathmandu through the rugged

mountain ranges in Tibet to step up transportation of supplies to the Himalayan country. An international freight train from Lanzhou, the capital city of northwestern China's Gansu province has been operationalised.

The train will carry the cargo to Xigaze, the nearest Tibetan town close to Nepal from where the goods will be transported to Nepal by road. The whole journey will take 10 days. It includes 2,431 km of rail transport and 564 km of road transport to Geelong Port in Nepal.

From there it will take another 160 km of road transport to reach Nepal's capital Kathmandu. Altogether, the combined transport takes 35 days fewer than traditional ocean transport, the report said.

The combined rail and road service has been started as a follow up to Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's visit here in March during which the two countries signed the landmark transit treaty for Nepal to access supplies from China through the arduous route of Tibet.

Chinese officials said Beijing has also agreed to extend the rail link in Xigaze to Nepal border, which will enable Kathmandu to access growing rail and road infrastructure in Tibet. Nepalese officials say the new routes with China will cut down dependence on India, which till now is the sole supplier of goods.

Oli's government is keen on opening up new routes with China including access to its port Guangzhou to reduce dependence on India in the aftermath of the blockade along the Indian border imposed by Madhes in Nepal to express their resentment against the new constitution, analysts say.

China's supply of nuclear weapons to Pakistan pose threat to US, India, Obama administration warned

Indian Express

May 25, 2016

The two leading Congressmen have reportedly asked the Obama Administration to spell out what steps Washington will take to ensure that China halts the supply of such lethal systems to Pakistan.

Senior U.S. Congress members, led by Congressman Mike Rogers, Chairman of the Sub-committee on Strategic Forces, and Congressman Ted Poe, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Terrorism, Non-proliferation and Trade, have warned the Obama Administration that China is supplying super sensitive nuclear weapons systems to Pakistan which could pose a threat to the national security

of the United States and other nations like India. The U.S. Congressmen reportedly said that they are specifically alarmed over the supply of Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL) systems, which would provide instant mobility to Pakistan's medium range nuclear ballistic missiles like the Shaheen III. The Pakistan Army successfully conducted a training launch of the Ghauri medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) fired from the transporter erector launcher from Tilla Test Range in Jhelum District in 2015. Ever since it has been in the market for several TEL systems. Pakistan Army already uses Chinese origin 8x8 transporter erector launchers similar to the Russian MAZ-543/MAZ-7310.

US Congressmen have cautioned that availability of more such mobility vehicles would provide Pakistan's nuclear command with far reaching powers to strike anywhere in South Asia, including in Afghanistan and India and on targets that affect U.S. national security interests in the region.

The two leading Congressmen have reportedly asked the Obama Administration to spell out what steps Washington will take to ensure that China halts the supply of such lethal systems to Pakistan. This matter is being viewed seriously by the U.S. Congress, as it proves, that China continues to secretly assist in Pakistan's ballistic missile program by providing mobility to the nuclear missiles that would target "nations who are close friends of the United States, including India." Congressional sources said that while China and Pakistan have cooperated on military technology for decades and Beijing had announced in 2013 that it would be assisting with the construction of nuclear power plants in Karachi, the extent of Chinese cooperation in Pakistan's nuclear weapons program has always been a subject of speculation.

According to news agency reports, the U.S. Government has had its suspicions that China has assisted Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, and this move to transfer more Transporter Erector Launchers (TEL), confirms China's ongoing hand in Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. Pakistan is the largest recipient of Chinese weapons and Pakistan in turn provides Beijing with assistance in containing militants in China's western province. The supply of mobile launchers for the Shaheen III Missile is a direct threat to India, added well placed sources.

Beijing has also shown its hand in nuclear proliferation, which could trigger American sanctions against China, said Congressional sources. Senior U.S. Congressmen have called upon the Obama Administration to investigate this matter and if it is proven that China did supply the mobile launchers to Pakistan for the Shaheen nuclear missiles, then it ought to be sanctioned by Washington. Presidential

candidate Donald Trump is picking up this call by the two leading Republican Congressmen –Mike Rogers and Ted Poe –. In his speeches, Trump has drawn attention to China's 'devious track record' in nuclear material matters and the fact that Beijing has actively assisted Islamabad in its nuclear program in violation of global and United Nations norms. Trump has been calling for firm action against China and, if this illicit nuclear relationship is confirmed by the U.S. Government, then by law, it will have to impose economic and other sanctions on Beijing. U.S. sources said that in the days to come this issue would become a political battle between Republican and the Democratic candidates, with each side seeking answers from the Obama administration.

Centre seeks to connect to SAARC nations with more railway links

India Today

May 23, 2016

India, which already has direct train service with Bangladesh, has also announced two new routes. The two countries are currently operating Maitree Express between Kolkata and Dhaka.

After the India-Myanmar-Thailand road link, the government is considering seamless rail connectivity with SAARC nations. The Indian Railways is considering rail links from India to Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The most prominent is the Indo-Myanmar rail route for which railways plan to connect Jiribam in India to Kalay/Mandalay in Myanmar.

A senior railway ministry official said studies are being conducted on setting up at least five rail routes between India and Nepal while feasibility of another route is being examined between India and Bhutan. India, which already has direct train service with Bangladesh, has also announced two new routes. The two countries are currently operating Maitree Express between Kolkata and Dhaka.

Approval

Officials said initial work has started on rail projects from Tripura to Akhaura in Bangladesh and Haldibari in India to Bangladesh International Border. While the first project was announced in 2012-13, the latter was sanctioned in rail budget 2016-17. The projects are, however, subject to requisite government approvals in both countries.

"A feasibility study was done in 2005 by Indian Railway through its engineering consultant RITES for a link from Jiribam to Kalay/Mandalay in Myanmar. The Jiribam -

Imphal section (125km) which falls within Indian territory has been sanctioned and construction work taken up. Remaining portions from Imphal to Moreh (111km) within India and from Tamu to Kalay (128km) in Myanmar have not been sanctioned," said a railway board official.

India is also seeking rail routes to Bhutan and Nepal. While a small link between Raxaul in Bihar and Birganj in Nepal is operational, railway officials said four new routes could be explored between the two countries. At present, Nepal does not have a rail network. However, meter gauge lines exist in some parts of the plains or terai region in Nepal.

Geographical advantage

Officials said India has a geographical advantage that its northern plains connect seamlessly to Nepal's terai region. Also, many railway stations like Jaynagar, Jogbani in Bihar and Sonauli, Rupaidiha in Uttar Pradesh are located very close to Nepal border. Railway lines from these stations can be extended up to Nepal for better connectivity.

It may be noted that China has also announced constructing rail corridor to Nepal via Tibet. The connection, according to Chinese media reports, could include a tunnel under the Everest. It is to be an extension of the Qinghai-Tibet railway that links China with the Tibetan capital.

Meanwhile, officials said India was also keen on reviving the railway link connecting India and Bhutan announced in 2008. The Nehru Golden Jubilee Railway Link was proposed as 18-km link connecting Hashimara in West Bengal to Toribari in Bhutan. RITES was asked to prepare the project report with assistance from Northeastern Frontier (NF) Railways but the consultancy firm failed to complete the survey work.

China launches remote sensing satellite

Times of India

May 15, 2016

BEIJING: China successfully launched a remote sensing satellite on Sunday to carry out land surveys and disaster relief.

The satellite named Yaogan-30 was launched from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwestern China's Gobi Desert.

The satellite will be used for experiments, land surveys, crop yield estimates and disaster relief, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Yaogan-30 was carried by a Long March-2D rocket, the 227th mission for the Long March rocket family.

China launched the first "Yaogan" series satellite, Yaogan-1, in 2006.

Border Issue

China deploys new generation rocket for space missions

Times of India

May 8, 2016

BEIJING: China is deploying a newly-built medium-sized rocket to take heavy payloads - of up to 13.5 tonnes - to its space missions especially the space station currently under construction.

It has taken researchers eight years to develop the new-generation Long March-7 rocket, which can carry up to 13.5 tonnes to low Earth orbit, Li Hong, director of the Carrier Rocket Technology Research Institute with the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, said.

The rocket departed for its launch base in Hainan today from north China's port of Tianjin.

"The Long March-7 launch scheduled for late June will be of great significance as it will usher in China's space lab mission," state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Yang Baohua, deputy manager of the company as saying.

The space station regarded as a rival to Russian space station Mir being jointly operated with the US is expected to be ready by 2022.

China plans to launch second experimental orbiting space lab, Tiangong-2, this fall and it is scheduled to dock with manned spacecraft Shenzhou-11 in the fourth quarter.

Yang said that the Long March-7 carrier is more environmental-friendly than earlier Long March models.

The rocket will become the main carrier for space launches.

President Pranab Mukherjee lists eight steps to resolve issues between India, China

Economic Times

May 26, 2016

BEIJING: Outlining eight pillars for the future of Sino-India ties, President Pranab Mukherjee today underlined the need for resolving challenges like the boundary question through "political acumen" and "civilisational wisdom" so that the coming generations are not "burdened" by unresolved issues.

Delivering a lecture at the elite Peking University here, Mukherjee noted that there is bipartisan commitment to strengthening partnership with China, and said political understanding between the two countries is vital for "closer developmental partnership".

He said he was "confident that by placing these eight pillars at the foundation of a people-centric approach, we can sufficiently enhance and strengthen our cooperation to the mutual benefit of both our peoples".

"One of the ways it could be done is through enhanced political communication. In India, we have a bipartisan commitment to strengthening our partnership with China. The frequent contacts between our respective leaders bear testimony to this.

"We have broadened the 'common ground' and learnt to manage our differences. There are challenges - including the boundary question - that still need to be addressed comprehensively," he said while addressing the gathering on the topic "India-China Relations: 8 steps to a people-centric partnership".

India and China have differences over the 3,488 km-long border. While Beijing says that the boundary dispute is confined to 2,000 kms, mainly in Arunachal Pradesh in eastern sector which it claims as part of southern Tibet, India asserts that the dispute covered the whole of the Line of Actual Control including the Aksai Chin occupied by China during the 1962 war.

Making his first state visit to China as head of the state, Mukherjee said while it was natural for neighbours to have differences of views on certain issues from time to time, "I consider it a test of our political acumen when we are called upon to draw upon our civilisational wisdom

and resolve these differences to the mutual satisfaction of both sides".

Ready to 'accelerate' talks with India to resolve border dispute: China Economic Times

PTI

May 23, 2016

BEIJING: On the eve of President Pranab Mukherjee's visit, China today struck a positive note saying that both the countries have been taking positive steps to manage the border dispute and that it is ready to "accelerate" talks to resolve the vexed issue "at an early date".

"China is ready to work with India to accelerate negotiations and resolve this historic issue at an early date to move forward bilateral relations," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said, responding to Mukherjee's remark that India wants fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement to solve the border issue.

"We will extend warm welcome to President Mukherjee," on his first visit to China, Hua told reporters.

She said "China and India are committed to resolve territorial disputes through negotiations seeking a fair and reasonable settlement which is acceptable to all."

"In the past three decades and more the two sides have been taking positive steps to properly manage disputes and safeguard peace and tranquility of the border area creating favourable conditions for sound and sustainable development of bilateral ties," Hua said responding to a question on Mukherjee's comments to Chinese media on the issue.

Mukherjee, who arrives in the Chinese industrial city of Guangzhou on a four-day visit to China tomorrow, has told Chinese media that India seeks a "fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the (border) question."

He will reach Beijing on May 25 and is scheduled to hold talks with President Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders.

Outlining the steps taken by India and China to resolve the dispute, Hua said so far the two countries have established a series of working mechanisms including talks at the level of Special Representatives to resolve the issue besides reaching political guidelines and three step road map.

The two sides held 19th Special Representative talks here last month. Both also reached political guidelines and three step road map, she said.

Recalling Xi's 2014 visit to India which was followed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China last year, she said bilateral ties have entered a period of fast development.

"We can take that President Mukherjee's visit this time to implement important outcomes during the previous visits of practical cooperation and forge close partnership for development," she said.

India asks China to stop work in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

domain-b.com

May 20, 2016

India has asked China to stop all activities in parts of Jammu and Kashmir occupied by Pakistan, the external affairs ministry said Friday. China is undertaking construction activities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as part of its economic corridor project.

Vikas Swarup, the ministry spokesperson, told reporters here that the issue of "Chinese activities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir have been taken up with the Chinese side, including at the highest level,"

"Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India... We have asked them to cease all activities (there)," Swarup said.

China is believed to have made huge investments and is sponsoring development projects in Pakistan-controlled Jammu and Kashmir, including in the volatile Shia-dominated Gilgit-Baltistan area.

Meanwhile, the Indian government is planning to introduce a bill in Parliament known as the 'Geospatial Information Regulation Bill 2016', which will make it illegal for local and international geospatial mapping organisations along with individuals to depict India's map 'incorrectly'.

The draft bill particularly mandates that the states of 'Arunachal Pradesh' and 'Jammu and Kashmir', including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Gilgit-Baltistan regions, are to be depicted as union territories of India across all mapping groups in the world.

This includes navigation devices, paper maps and online depictions of South Asia. Any organisation or person (including Google and subsidiary Google Earth) failing to abide by the proposed bill will be liable to hefty penalty.

Pakistan is contesting this bill saying it is not in line with established norms of international law and is planning to

approach the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) regarding the legislation of the bill.

According to Pakistan, by introducing the geospatial mapping bill, India is not only breaking international law but also forcefully trying to depict a neighbouring country's region as its own.

Pakistan said it would aggressively lobby in the international community to force India to withdraw the controversial legislative draft bill.

The reality is that the regions of Occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are an integral part of India forcibly occupied by Pakistan and the people of the region have been fighting Pakistani occupation ever since.

Shillong ITBP hqr shifted to Itanagar, a move to leverage Indo-China border stalemate?

thenortheasttoday.com

May 23, 2016

ITANAGAR: Aksai Chin is one of the two main disputed border areas between China and India, the other being a part of Arunachal Pradesh. Chinese military activities along the forward areas of Arunachal Pradesh is heating up as the Centre is in the process of shifting the North East headquarters of border guarding force Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), 500-km from Shillong to state capital Itanagar.

Officials said the Central government had in 2014 approved a Rs 175 crore infrastructure package for Arunachal which includes deployment of eight fresh ITBP battalions with about 8,000 troops in it, opening of 35 new border roads, 54 border outposts and 72 staging camps along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force Director General Krishna Chaudhary confirmed the move stating the exercise of shifting the North East frontier headquarters from Meghalaya's capital Shillong to Arunachal's capital Itanagar is expected to be accomplished by next month. "The process is on. The ITBP North East frontier will soon be operating from Itanagar," the DG said.

A senior official in the security establishment said keeping in mind the military capabilities being created in Arunachal, it was essential to base the ITBP command in Itanagar rather than in far-off Shillong where there are no such huge developments taking place to bolster the strength and number of Indian troops and other logistical activities.

China has been objecting to any development of infrastructure along the LAC and setting up of border outposts at locations along Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh leading to instances of stand-offs between the two sides.

India is concerned that if the waters from dams such as The Zam Hydropower Station which was built at a cost of \$1.5 billion (approximately Rs. 9764 crores) if diverted, then projects on the Brahmaputra, particularly the Upper Siang and Lower Subansiri projects in Arunachal Pradesh, may get affected.

An official while interacting with newsmen said that at least eight more ITBP battalions are set to be inducted in this region keeping in view the sensitivity, operational requirement and border disputes that occur between ITBP/Army and the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) troops. Two other ITBP sectors under the NE frontier are located at Gangtok (Sikkim) and Tezpur (Assam).

China has been objecting to any development of infrastructure along the LAC and setting up of border outposts at locations along Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh leading to instances of stand-offs between the two sides.

Congressman Eliot Engel while speaking during a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on Challenges and Opportunities in Asia said that Asserting that India is a potential "counterweight" to China's growing regional influence in Asia, a top US lawmaker has urged the Obama Administration to strengthen its ties with New Delhi.

The huge logistical exercise entails shifting of over 2,000 troops and support staff, setting up of communications and border signals, residential logistics and transportation of heavy vehicles, weapons and artillery from Meghalaya to Arunachal Pradesh, both states on the eastern border flank of the country.

China says disputes not to prevent cooperation with India

Hindustan Times, Guangzhou

May 23, 2016

Despite outstanding historical issues like the border problem, India and China have reached a consensus to prevent disputes from clouding cooperation and stalling bilateral development, Beijing has said in the run-up to President Pranab Mukherjee's upcoming four-day visit beginning Tuesday.

Both India and China have the "ability and wisdom" to negotiate and properly handle existing problems between

the two countries, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs told HT.

"Historical problems such as boundary issues still remain between the two countries. It's an important consensus to prevent the disputes from affecting the development of the two countries. We believe both countries have the ability and wisdom to properly handle related issues, and continue to strengthen cooperation in various areas so as to ensure greater development of bilateral ties," Hua Chunying, foreign ministry spokesperson, told HT in a written statement.

Mukherjee will arrive in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong, China's richest and most populous province on Tuesday.

Guangzhou is home to some 5,000 Indians who are mostly into commodity trading.

After attending a reception of the Indian community, a business forum and a visit to the Hualin temple with ancient Buddhist ties to India in Guangzhou, Mukherjee will fly to Beijing a day later, where he has a series of bilateral meetings beginning with President Xi Jinping.

This is Mukherjee's first state visit to China as President and the first by an Indian President since 2010.

The foreign ministry did not respond to specific questions on the latest problems like China blocking India's bid for membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and the controversy over Beijing's stubborn stand on Indian attempts to designate JeM chief Masood Azhar a terrorist.

These are questions Mukherjee is likely to raise during his meetings, but the Chinese ministry said insisted that bilateral ties have entered a new era of development.

"The China-India relationship has maintained a good momentum of healthy and stable development in recent years, the ties between the two countries entered a new era of rapid growth since President Xi visited India in 2014 and Indian PM Narendra Modi visited China in 2011," Hua said.

"As rising powers in rapid development, both China and India are having increasing influence in regional and international arena, and have become major forces for the maintenance of world peace and stability. We would like to work with India to implement the important consensus between the leaders and the outcomes of practical cooperation, as well as establish a stronger partnership of development," she said.

Hua said Guangzhou was chosen as the first stop for Mukherjee on India's request.

"Guangzhou serves as a window of China's reform and opening-up policy. During President Xi Jinping's visit to

India, Guangzhou and India's city Ahmedabad established sister-city relationship. President Mukherjee will visit Guangzhou at the request by the India side. We believe the visit will further promote regional interaction and cooperation in various fields," she said.

As per diplomatic tradition, the leaders of the two countries are expected to exchange gifts during the visit.

"If China gives a gift, it will be a symbol of friendship between the two countries," Hua said.

India wants fair settlement of boundary issue with China: Pranab Mukherjee

Livemint.com

May 21, 2016

President Pranab Mukherjee, who is set to visit China next week, says both sides should expand defence exchanges and increase economic engagement

New Delhi: Ahead of his state visit to China starting next week, President Pranab Mukherjee on Friday said India seeks a "fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question", which will help in achieving the full potential of India-China relations.

Talking to state-run *Chinese Central Television* and *Xinhuanews* agency ahead of his state visit beginning 24 May, Mukherjee spoke on various issues including India's concerns on terrorism, bilateral trade and cultural and educational exchanges.

Responding to a question on "sensitive problems" between India and China, Mukherjee said India would like to expand and diversify its engagement with China across various fields while "proactively addressing outstanding issues" including the boundary question.

"We seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question and, pending the boundary settlement, to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

"Both sides should strive to ensure that the outstanding issues are addressed in a manner that demonstrates mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns, interests and aspirations," he said, and added that it was only in this manner that "we (can) ensure that these differences will not come in the way of continued development of bilateral relations".

The President also favoured increasing mutual trust and understanding through stepped-up dialogue on political, security and strategic issues.

"We should expand our defence exchanges and increase economic engagement, especially through greater investments," he said.

Responding to another question, Mukherjee said: "We are doing well but the full potentiality is yet to be achieved. That is why we want to resolve all outstanding issues in a mutually acceptable manner, keeping in mind the aspirations, concerns, sensitivities of each country."

Mukherjee's first stop on his four-day visit will be the highly industrialised Chinese city of Guangzhou.

Besides interacting with the Indian community, which has over 3,000 businessmen, Mukherjee will also address the India-China Business Forum to highlight the investment opportunities in India.

He will arrive in Beijing on 25 May and will address a meeting at the Peking University the next day. Mukherjee will also meet President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang along with other Chinese leaders before leaving on 27 May.

GOC-in-C Central Command reviews operational preparedness along Tibet border in Himachal

Indian Express

May 19, 2016

The Lucknow headquartered Central Command is responsible for looking after the border with China along the UP-Uttarakhand axis.

A US Department of defence report had recently stated that it had been observed that the Chinese had increased its force levels in areas close to the border with India. (Courtesy: Google Maps)

Amidst reports of increased Chinese troop build-up along the border with India, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Central Command, Lt Gen Balwant Singh Negi on Thursday carried out reconnaissance of the border with Tibet in Himachal Pradesh.

Although this part of the border comes under the operational control of the Chandimandir-based Western Command, however, Lt Gen Negi took stock of the deployment of Indian troops as a composite look at the preparedness all along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) stretching from Cental and Western Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to Himachal Pradesh. During his visit to the forward areas in Himachal Pradesh where he was briefed on operational issues.

The Lucknow headquartered Central Command is responsible for looking after the border with China along the UP-Uttarakhand axis. Lieutenant General Negi started the reconnaissance on Wednesday and concluded it today with a visit to Shimla. He visited Headquarters of Army Training Command (ARTRAC) at Shimla and interacted with the GOC-in-C ARTRAC, Lt Gen PM Hariz.

A US Department of defence report had recently stated that it had been observed that the Chinese had increased its force levels in areas close to the border with India. The Chief of Army Staff, General Dalbir Singh, has also visited the Lucknow-based headquarters of Central Command a few days back to take stock of the situation while the Eastern Army Commander, Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi, has also been visiting his forward operational areas in the past couple of days.

US trying to sow discord between China and India

Tibet Sun

May 16, 2016

Accusing the US of "sowing discord" between China and India, Beijing today said the two neighbours are wise enough to resolve their boundary dispute peacefully through talks and asked America to respect their efforts.

Dismissing as groundless a Pentagon report that claimed the Communist giant was deploying more troops along the Sino-India borders, China said that it was a misrepresentation of its military development.

"Maintaining peace and tranquility along the China-India border areas is an important consensus reached between the leaders of the two countries," the Chinese Defence Ministry said in written response to PTI here about the US report.

"Currently, the border forces of China and India are actively carrying out exchanges, working towards establishing hotline between the two militaries, and are in close communication through the mechanism of border personnel meetings," it said.

"The situation in the China-India border is overall peaceful and stable. The relevant statements by US defence officials are clearly unsubstantiated and intended to sow discord," between India and China, the ministry said.

Earlier, Chinese Foreign Ministry in a written response said the US must respect India-China efforts to resolve the boundary dispute peacefully through negotiations.

India and China last month held the 19th round of talks to resolve the border dispute stretching along the 3488 km long Line of Actual Control (LAC).

While China says that the boundary dispute is confined to 2,000 kms, mainly in Arunachal Pradesh in eastern sector which it claims as part of southern Tibet, India asserts that the dispute covered the whole of the LAC including the Aksai Chin.

"The Chinese side is committed to safeguarding peace and tranquility of the border areas between China and India, and resolving the boundary question through negotiation with India," the Foreign Ministry said in written response to PTI.

"China and India are wise and capable enough to deal with this issue. It is hoped that other country would respect efforts made by China and India for the peaceful settlement of dispute, rather than the opposite," the Foreign Ministry said, without directly referring to United States.

The US report also warned of increasing Chinese military presence in various parts of the world, particularly Pakistan.

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for East Asia Abraham M Denmark told media in Washington on May 14 that "we have noticed an increase in capability and force posture by the Chinese military in areas close to the border with India."

"It is difficult to conclude on the real intention behind this," Denmark said after submitting Pentagon's annual 2016 report to the US Congress.

"It is difficult to say how much of this is driven by internal considerations to maintain internal stability and how much of it is an external consideration," he said when asked about China's military command in Tibet.

"We have noticed an increase in capability and force posture by the Chinese military in areas close to the border with India," Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for East Asia Abraham M Denmark said over the weekend.

In its annual report to Congress on Chinese military activities, the US Defense Department said on Friday that China is expected to add substantial military infrastructure, including communications and surveillance systems, to artificial islands in the South China Sea this year.

China's Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun expressed "strong dissatisfaction" and "firm opposition" to the Pentagon report and said it has "severely damaged mutual trust", state news agency Xinhua reported.

The report "hyped up" China's military threat and lack of transparency, "deliberately distorted" Chinese defense policies and "unfairly" depicted Chinese activities in the East and South China seas, Yang was quoted as saying.

"China follows a national defense policy that is defensive in nature," Yang said, adding that the country's military build-up and reforms are aimed at maintaining sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and guaranteeing China's peaceful development.

The Pentagon report comes at a time of heightened tension over maritime territories claimed by China and disputed by several Asian nations. Washington has accused Beijing of militarising the South China Sea while Beijing, in turn, has criticised increased US naval patrols and exercises in Asia.

The US report renewed accusations against China's government and military for cyber attacks against US government computer systems, a charge Beijing denies. The Pentagon said attacks in 2015 appeared focused on intelligence collection.

China Furious With Pentagon Report Citing More Troops Along India Border

ndtv.com

May 16, 2016

A report by the Pentagon that said China has increased its defence capabilities and added more troops along the border with India has been condemned by Beijing as deliberate distortion that has "severely damaged" mutual trust.

High-end SUVs for troops on India-China border

Deccan Herald

May 16, 2016

Four white-coloured Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs), 2 Toyota Fortuner and as many Ford Endeavour, with a price tag of around Rs 25 lakh each, have been deployed by the border guarding force at some of its forward locations over 13,000 ft above the sea level at Burtse and Dingt in the Ladakh sector and Menchuka, over 6,000 ft, in Arunachal Pradesh.

No other border guarding force or army formations in forward areas have ever used high-end SUVs for troops, usually found zipping across roads in urban locations.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) headquarters here has issued a directive that the troopers and officers will use these vehicles only for operational tasks to prevent their misuse.

ITBP Director General Krishna Chaudhary said while the force has several types of four-wheelers, including those with 4x4 drive facility for high-altitude driving at its border locations, SUV platforms, which are powered by diesel-run heavy-duty engines were required for quick movement in these mountainous areas.

"We were looking for some good high-power vehicles at those heights where regular vehicles are not as adept as an SUV. The Ministry of Home Affairs sometime back approved our proposal and we purchased four such four-wheelers in the first batch.

"I can tell you that none of the senior officers in the force including me have such smart and powerful vehicles for their movement as compared to what our men have now," he said. In order to make sure they are utilised for the task they have been sent for, the ITBP boss said, strict instructions have been issued that these vehicles will carry troops while on duty and during patrol, officers can utilise them only when leading such tasks, in order to prevent their misuse.

China is raising troop strength on border with India: Pentagon

Times of India

May 15, 2016

WASHINGTON: China is deploying more troops on the border with India while modernising its nuclear force and improving its strike capabilities, the Pentagon has said, even as the Obama administration challenged Beijing's assertion that New Delhi does not meet the criteria to be a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The state department, referring to Obama's statement in 2015, said India "meets missile technology control regime requirements and is ready for NSG membership".

The shadow play between Washington, Beijing, and New Delhi was very much in evidence on Friday as the US defence establishment highlighted China's growing military strength in the region, ostensibly with an eye on courting India as a strategic counterweight.

"We have noticed an increase in capability and force posture by the Chinese military in areas close to the

border with India," US deputy assistant secretary of defence for East Asia Abraham Denmark said during a news conference after Pentagon submitted its annual 2016 report to the US Congress on 'Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China'. "It's difficult to say how much of this is driven by internal considerations to maintain internal stability, and how much of it is an external consideration."

But as far as Washington is concerned, he added, it would continue to enhance bilateral engagement with India "not in the China context but because India is an increasingly important player" by itself. "We are going to engage India because of its value," Denmark said.

Beijing increasing military presence

A series of reports and remarks from Washington amid continuing tensions with China is coming just ahead of PM Narendra Modi's visit alongside India's own issues with Beijing, notably its use of Pakistan to needle India on issues such as terrorism and access to advanced nuclear technology. But in a report to the US Congress, the Pentagon warned of China's increasing military presence including bases in various parts of the world, in particular Pakistan — with which it has a "longstanding friendly relationship and similar strategic interests".

China's expanding international economic interests are increasing demands for the PLA Navy (PLAN) to operate in more distant seas to protect Chinese citizens, investments, and critical sea lines of communication, it said, adding, "China most likely will seek to establish additional naval logistics hubs in countries with which it has a longstanding friendly relationship and similar strategic interests, such as Pakistan, and a precedent for hosting foreign militaries."

The US navy itself is now working even more closely with the Indian Navy, outlining the emerging contours of efforts to dominate the sea lanes in the Indian Ocean through which some 60% of the world's energy trade passes.

Meanwhile, Washington also endorsed India's claim for a membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group that the China-Pakistan axis has been thwarting.

"I'd point you back to what the President said during his visit to India in 2015, where he reaffirmed that the US view was that India meets missile technology control regime requirements and is ready for NSG membership," State Department spokesman John Kirby said when asked about reports about Beijing and Islamabad joining hands to stall India's NSG membership.

China has claimed that many members of the 48-nation NSG share its view that signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an "important" standard for

the group's expansion, an assertion that Washington does not agree with. The western world's support for India's membership is based in part on its sterling non-proliferation record, which Pakistan, as a rogue proliferator, and China as an illegal enabler, cannot match.

All these issues are being thrashed out in private ahead of PM Modi's visit to Washington on June 7-8 in what promises to be one of the most consequential visits by an Indian leader to the US.

Villagers along China-India border receive suspicious calls from 'spies'

Times of India

May 15, 2016

LEH/NEW DELHI: An alert has been sounded along the Sino-India border after local residents, including a village head, got several telephone calls from "spies" either from Pakistan or China about army deployment along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The caller, posing himself as either a colonel or a local official, made queries about the army presence in the area and the timings of their movement, official sources said.

Recently the 'sarpanch' (village head) of Durbuk village, located at an altitude of 13,500 feet above sea level between Chang La and Tsangte village, received a call in which the caller asked whether "outstanding" issues with the army had been sorted.

The sarpanch, who was sitting inside an army camp at the time of receiving the call, got suspicious and enquired from the caller about his identity.

Despite the caller identifying himself to be from Deputy Commissioner's office, the sarpanch identified as Stanzin snubbed him and said he should get in touch with the army.

He also inquired from the local DC's office only to find that no one from that number had called. The number was shared with the army which found that the number appearing on the sarpanch's phone had been masked and it was a computer generated call.

Talking to PTI over phone, Stanzin said he received the call only once. "The caller was asking about the movement of troops and whether the roads had been built in the area for their movement.

"He claimed that he was from the army headquarters but with his stupid queries, I did get suspicious and informed the army officer standing next to me," he said.

Later, the army found that several people in villages along the Sino-India border had been receiving calls from such unknown numbers and in a few cases basic information had been shared out of "pure ignorance" by the villagers.

The army took the help of the state administration and a mass campaign has been launched to educate people in general and those living along the Sino-India border not to share any information with any unidentified caller.

The army has also asked its formations along the LAC to educate all the civilians in their Areas Of Responsibility (AOR) so that such spies do not get any information about the movement of troops.

The army has laid special emphasis on educating the elected members and office bearers of Hill Council as they had some information pertaining to army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which man the borders with Pakistan and China, to remain alert and not to give any kind of information to these suspicious callers.

This was based on an analysis by the army that calls were being received by only those people who were either sarpanch or working in state government and were privy to some information about the troops and ITBP officials.

The army has asked people to get in touch with the nearest army unit with names of the callers and telephone numbers, name and telephone number of the recipient, details sought by the caller and queries raised by him.

'China elevates Tibet command to prepare for likely conflict with India'

Hindustan Times

May 13, 2016

China has elevated the status of its Tibet Military Command as part of preparations for a possible conflict with India, placing the formation under the control of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) so that it can take on "more combat assignments", state media reported on Friday.

Placing the Tibet command directly under the PLA ground forces suggests the formation might "undertake some kind of military combat mission in the future", a source told the Global Times, a tabloid closely linked to the Communist Party of China's mouthpiece, the People's Daily.

"The Tibet Military Command bears great responsibility to prepare for possible conflicts between China and India, and currently it is difficult to secure all the military resources they need," Song Zhongping, a Beijing-based military expert, told the newspaper.

The Global Times noted that border disputes between

China and India “have not been completely resolved”. “The elevation of the authority level is not only an improvement for the troops’ designation, but also an expansion of their function and mission,” Zhao Zhong, deputy director of the Political Work Department of the Tibet Military Command, was quoted as saying by China Youth Daily.

The formation in Tibet is currently under China’s Western Theatre Command, with its headquarters at Chengdu in Sichuan Province. Defence minister Manohar Parrikar visited the Western Theatre Command when he visited China last month.

After recent military reforms, most provincial military commands are under the control of the new National Defense Mobilisation Department of the Central Military Commission under the chairmanship of President Xi Jinping, and their importance will be diminished, the source said. But the Tibet Military Command still holds a “very important position” and its elevation will place it “one level higher” than its counterparts in other provinces, the state media reported.

“The promotion shows China is paying great attention to the Tibet Military Command, which will significantly improve the command’s ability to manage and control the region’s military resources, as well as provide better preparation for combat,” Song said.

Military action under the Tibet command requires “specialist mountain skills and long-range capabilities, which need the deployment of special military resources”, Song added.

The elevation of the command reflects the attention placed by China on defending its southwestern borders. The higher the authority level, the more military resources the command can mobilise, he said.

India and China share a nearly 4,000-km disputed border and fought a brief but bloody war in 1962 over it. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) has mostly been quiet since, though the two armies have been involved in stand-offs caused by differing perceptions of the LAC.

In April, defence minister Chang Wanquan said China had reacted positively to setting up a military hotline with India on border security after talks with Parrikar in Beijing.

Committees to implement pacts with India, China

kathmandu Post International

May 13, 2016

The government has formed two different committees led by Foreign Secretary Shankar Das Bairagi to oversee implementation of the agreements signed during the PM’s official visits to India and China.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli visited India on February 19-24 and China on March 20-27, during which several deals and understandings were reached with the two neighbouring countries. Nepal and India signed seven agreements related to reconstruction, trade and transit, energy and infrastructure while 10 memorandums of understanding and agreements were inked with China.

The team to monitor the enforcement of deals with India includes joint-secretaries from the ministries of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Finance, Commerce, Energy, Irrigation, Home, Law, Culture, Tourism and Education, the National Reconstruction Authority and the PM’s Office as members and the joint secretary at the South Asia division of the Foreign Ministry as the member-secretary.

The foreign secretary will head another team for monitoring of the agreements and deals reached with China. The 15-member team includes joint-secretaries from the PM’s Office, the ministries of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Finance, Commerce, Energy, Home, Law, Tourism, Education, Supply, Industry and General Administration, and NRA as members and North Eastern Asia division at the ministry as member-secretary.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet meeting endorsed the National Security Policy-2073 and decided to present the bill on management of National Security Council’s tasks, duties, authority and working procedure at the legislation committee. Information Minister Sherdhan Rai said the meeting also decided to provide free dialysis to kidney patients. A team of kidney patients including Yagya Nidhi Dahal had met with PM Oli recently to request him to make the service free.

The meeting also formed an Information and Technology Council chaired by the prime minister, said Minister Rai, who is the Cabinet spokesperson. Minister for Information and Minister for Science and Technology will be the co-chairs at the council while the chief secretary, a National Planning Commission member, secretaries of the Ministries of Finance, Home Affairs, Information and Communications, Industry and Urban Development are the members.

Others include the chair of Nepal Telecommunications Authority, two persons related to information and

communications to be appointed by the government, two professors or academicians, and two IT experts. The Cabinet also appointed Krishna Nath Khanal as member secretary of the Arrears Clearance Evaluation and Monitoring Committee.

No 'border haats' with China in Arunachal Pradesh: Govt

Deccan Chronicle

May 10, 2016

The Minister said without cooperation from the other country, no trade can take place in any 'border haat'.

New Delhi: India on Tuesday ruled out setting up trading centres along its border with China in Arunachal Pradesh saying such an initiative could be taken only when Beijing agrees to it.

"China has to agree. We can't enforce anyone. There has to be mutual consent, then only 'border haats' can be set up," Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju said in Lok Sabha during the Question Hour.

Rijiju's statement came when Congress MP from Arunachal Pradesh Ninong Ering asked why India can't set up 'border haats' along the Sino-Indian border in the state.

The Minister said without cooperation from the other country, no trade can take place in any 'border haat'.

Currently, India has a border trading post with China at Nathu La in Sikkim.

Rijiju said India and Bangladesh have agreed to set up six more 'border haats' soon for promotion of trade along the international borders.

At present, four 'border haats' -- two in Meghalaya and two in Tripura -- are functional along Indo-Bangladesh border and the four new 'border haats' -- two in Tripura and four in Meghalaya -- will be set up soon.

"The establishment of 'border haats' is expected to promote the well being of the people in areas across the borders of the two countries, which in turn will maintain peace and tranquility in the border regions," he said.

Replying a supplementary question, Rijiju said the Home Ministry facilitates safety and security of border areas so that proper trading could take place between the people of two nations.

"We are not here to do business but to ensure safety and security of people and facilitate that proper trade could take place in border haats," he said.

The Minister said during two years of the Modi government, various efforts were taken for promotion of trade along the international borders.

"But we are not satisfied with whatever we have done so far and want to do more. We are committed to do more," he said.

Rijiju said government has adopted multi-pronged strategy to secure effective management of Indian borders, curb insurgency as well as to maintain peace and security in the border regions.

Adequate steps are taken to curb human trafficking like issuing advisories to state governments and sensitising law enforcement agencies, he said.

India to Revive World War II Era Airfields Along China Border

sputniknews.com

May 5, 2016

To strengthen security preparedness in its strategically important north eastern region, India is restoring World War II era airfields.

Taking further its ambition to enhance the capability of the country's Air Force, India plans to revive 39 abandoned airfields; mostly along the Himalayan region which lies in the north east. These airfields were used by air forces of Britain and the United States during World War II.

Out of 39 abandoned airfields, the Indian Air Force has identified 24 for operational use, such as deployment of long range vectors, radars, Weapon Storage Areas (WSAs) and emergency recovery strips for helicopters and fixed wing aircraft.

The Parliamentary Panel on Defense submitted its report on unused airfields this week. The Committee says, "work on these airfields should be started without further delay and also remaining 15 airfields be assessed for being used."

Former Commander in Chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Marshal A K Singh, says, "There are hundreds of airfields throughout India that were used during World War II and earlier. Even Americans have made a large number of airfields in India to go across the Himalayas and to traffic men and materials to China."

This is not the first time that the Indian Air Force has revived defunct airfields. Air Marshal Singh says, "Airfields of strategic importance are already in use. If you (Indian Air Force) want to revive other airfields, you are welcome

depending on who pays for them and who exercises control."

Meanwhile, by September this year, the construction of six Advance Landing Grounds will be completed in the north east region.

In 2015, a milestone was achieved in relation to military aircraft landing when the Mirage 2000 Aircraft had landed on Yamuna Expressway near the capital Delhi. According to the parliamentary panel report, more roads and stretches are being identified to facilitate the emergency landing of aircraft.

Tibet in Exile

Tibet group asks Kerry to dump trust holding in abusive bottler

newbostonpost.com

June 1, 2016

International human rights organisation Free Tibet is urging Secretary of State John Kerry and his wife Teresa Heinz to end a Heinz family trust's investment in a Chinese-owned company that operates in Tibet.

In a May 17 letter to Kerry, Free Tibet Director Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren called the investment in a Chinese company, called Tibet Water Resources, Ltd. "inappropriate" and encouraged Kerry to "ensure that this investment comes to an end." The company bottles and sells premium "luxury water" in competition with brands like Evian and Fuji.

"Free Tibet appreciates your personal support for human rights in Tibet," the group wrote to Kerry, adding "it is, therefore, with concern and urgency that I am contacting you now about the reported Heinz family trust shareholding in Tibet Water Resources Ltd, a Chinese-owned company producing bottled water in the most repressed region of Tibet. I urge you to ensure that this investment comes to an end."

The controversy erupted May 4 when The Daily Caller News Foundation reported on investments made by a Heinz family trust called "HFI Imperial," based on information in Kerry's official financial disclosure report. The trust doesn't list Kerry as a beneficiary, a State Department spokesman told the foundation.

"Mrs. Heinz Kerry also exercises no control over the investment decisions made by the independent trustees," said John Kirby, the spokesman. The department declined to describe the nature of the trusts or identify the individuals making the investments earlier this month.

The trust holds equity investments in 12 companies inside the People's Republic of China, including Tibet Water Resources.

Free Tibet also told Kerry many Tibetans are being forcibly removed from their ancestral villages as Tibet Water imposes a 60-square-kilometer "water protection zone" for its bottling plant. "As you may be aware, Tibetan pastoralists have been relocated from their traditional areas in the millions, often leading to impoverishment and social problems."

Free Tibet is one of the world's leading Tibet advocacy organisations, with more than 140,000 Facebook followers and half-a-million unique visits each year, according to an organisation spokesman. The group protests Chinese domination of Tibet, its culture and religion.

The organisation recently contacted all investors asking them to end their investment in Tibet Water Resources, but reminded Kerry none of the others have "your public position or standing."

The State Department hasn't responded to Free Tibet's plea for divestment and a department spokesman refused to comment to TheDCNF on the group's letter.

But the human rights group noted Kerry's investment was directly at odds with official State Department policy, which has denounced China's repeated violation of civil and religious rights of native Tibetans.

The 2015 State Department human rights report said the Chinese government is engaged in "the severe repression of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage by, among other means, strictly curtailing the civil rights of China's Tibetan population, including the freedoms of speech, religion, association, assembly, and movement."

Tibet Water Resources, Ltd. operates in the "Tibet Autonomous Region," or TAR, where in 2008 Chinese authorities launched a wave of arrests that resulted in the imprisonment and torture of Buddhists and other political and religious activists.

While the State Department has remained silent about the Kerry-Heinz investments, The People's Daily, China's official news agency, denounced Free Tibet's criticism of the Heinz trust's investments in a May 30 news article. "The Dalai Lama clique," the People's Daily wrote, "is attempting to hype up the issue as it 'politicises' a foundation's normal investment activity."

Tibet Water Resources was chosen as the "official drinking water" at the 11th National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and at the powerful 17th and 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

Environmentalists also denounced water diversion to produce the premium water, telling Kerry in the letter, "water bottling in Tibet is contributing to the destruction of Tibet's environment and the depletion of its water resources."

Heinz, now 77, may be withdrawing from some of her financial management duties. On May 24, the Heinz Endowment, which makes grants to activist groups, reported Heinz was stepping down from that part of the family's \$6.1 billion financial empire and turning it over to her sons.

Free Tibet is pressing for a quick resolution on the Heinz trust's investments in Tibet Water. Appealing to their previous support for human rights, Free Tibet told Kerry, "I hope you will now recognise that any investment in this company is inappropriate and counterproductive. On behalf of Free Tibet and our supporters, I urge you to ensure that the Heinz Family Trust divests its shares in Tibet Water Resources Ltd."

Sangay adopts new strategy for Tibet autonomy

Business Standard

May 27, 2016

Tibetan Prime Minister-in-exile Lobsang Sangay, who took the oath of office for his second consecutive term here on Friday, announced a new multi-pronged strategy to achieve genuine autonomy for people in Tibet.

Toeing the path adopted by the Dalai Lama for years to resolve the issue of Tibet with China through the 'middle-way approach', Sangay said: "His Holiness the Dalai Lama has time and again advised us to hope for the best and prepare for the worst."

"Therefore, I had proposed the strategy of five-50."

Explaining the strategy, the elected head of the Central Tibetan Administration said "In the next five years, it's clear that we must put maximum efforts in achieving genuine autonomy for all Tibetans based on the middle-way approach."

"However, in case, we have to continue our struggle for many years, we need to strategise in order to strengthen and sustain our cause for the next 50 years. We have to protect and preserve our unique Tibetan identity and tradition."

Sangay, who was re-elected on April 27 after defeating his only rival Penpa Tsering, said: "We need to build self-reliance in the Tibetan world, in both education and economy."

"Five-50 is a strategy for success. In five years we can achieve genuine autonomy or in the next 50 years China will gradually change for the better. Either way we will gain basic freedom," he explained.

The Dalai Lama, who is revered as a spiritual leader, presided over the oath-taking ceremony in this north Indian hill town that also saw attendance from Tibetan diaspora settled across the globe.

The 48-year-old prime minister, a senior fellow of Harvard Law School, took over the reins of the government first

time on August 7, 2011, from Samdhong Rinpoche, who held the post for the previous 10 years in two five-year terms.

A confident Sangay believes in dialogue to solve the Tibetan problem with China.

"We remain committed to the middle-way approach and reiterate that dialogue is the most realistic approach and the only way to find a mutually beneficial solution to the Tibet issue," Sangay told IANS in an interview.

"The middle-way approach neither seeks separation from the People's Republic of China nor high degree of autonomy but genuine autonomy for all Tibetan people under a single administration," he said.

On the ongoing deadlock over the talks between the Dalai Lama's envoys and China, Sangay said in his address: "We are committed to make efforts towards and resolve the issue of Tibet peacefully during His Holiness the Dalai Lama's lifetime."

The Dalai Lama's envoys and the Chinese have held nine rounds of talks since 2002 to resolve the Tibetan issue but no major breakthrough has been achieved so far.

The last talks were held in Beijing in January 2010.

On the ongoing self-immolations in Tibet to protest Beijing's "repressive policies" and demand the return of the Dalai Lama to his homeland, Sangay said their sacrifices would not go in vain.

"In order to exercise the right to administer internal affairs and be the masters of our own areas, I urge the youths in Tibet to put maximum efforts in their studies," he said.

With the Dalai Lama stepping down from diplomacy and active politics, the elected leader of Tibetan people, also known as Sikyong, has acquired added stature.

The Dalai Lama has lived in India since fleeing his homeland in 1959. The Tibetan administration in exile is based in this north Indian hill town.

Tibetan spiritual leader calls for concerted effort to resolve Tibet issue

Tibet Post International

May 27, 2016

Dr Lobsang Sangay, the newly re-elected Sikyong, or political leader, was sworn in on Friday at a colourful ceremony attended by thousands of Tibetans and supporters, as he reaffirmed his commitment to the

"Middle Way" approach of engaging China through dialogue to achieve a meaningful autonomy for Tibet.

Addressing a crowd at the ceremony in India's quaint Himalayan town of Mcleodganj, to swear in Dr Lobsang Sangay as the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, His Holiness urged Tibetans to remain united on Friday, May 27, 2016.

"Tibet is called the roof of the world. Similarly, the rich Buddhist culture and tradition of Tibet is also one of the best traditions in the world," His Holiness said, explaining that his statement is not borne out of loyalty but through reason.

"Over the years I have met numerous people, including scholars, scientists, politicians and spiritual leaders. In my interaction with these people, I have come to realise that the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, derived from the Nalanda tradition of India, is among the best, primarily because it is based in scientific analysis and logical study."

"Many Buddhist traditions trace their root to Nalanda. However, Tibetan Buddhism seems the only one, which contains the purest essence of the tradition. It is truly a universal treasure, which the Tibetan people have preserved for centuries," His Holiness said.

His Holiness also emphasised the importance of preserving Tibet's script and linguistic traditions. "The Tibetan language is the only language wherein the pure essence of the Nalanda tradition is preserved. Therefore, it is extremely important to study and preserve it," His Holiness said.

"The most important aspect of the Tibetan movement should be to fulfil the aspirations of the majority of Tibetans who continue to remain inside Tibet. And emphasised that the Tibetan movement should be based solely on the principle of non-violence," His Holiness said while peaking on the Tibetan struggle.

"I have worked wholeheartedly for the Tibetan cause for over 57 years. However, I have devolved my political responsibility to an elected leadership since 2011 but I will continue to work for Tibet's culture and religion," His Holiness said.

"As Sikyong rightly pointed out, with our hard work and the generous assistance of the Indian and other foreign governments and organisations, we Tibetans have reached a stage where we are unique among equals. But it doesn't mean we can get complacent," His Holiness said, calling for a concerted effort to resolve the issue of Tibet.

At the same time, His Holiness lamented the negative campaigns that took place in the lead up to the final Tibetan general elections. "I was pained to see the degradation of morality in our society and the overtones

of regional loyalty during the election campaign. It is very unfortunate," he said.

"The unity of the three traditional provinces of Tibet is of primary importance. Despite the passage of time, we have preserved our traditions and culture based on this unity of the three provinces for thousands of years. Therefore, we should do away with this warped sense of loyalty to regions and move on as one," His Holiness said.

"Moreover, we are all followers of the Buddha. We should be embarrassed of what we have done during the election campaign. I don't blame the majority. However, there are some fringe elements within the community who take pleasure in dividing the society on regional lines," His Holiness noted, urging the Tibetan leaders, staff, and public to keep the unity of Tibetan people in mind.

His Holiness further called for a renewed emphasis on holistic education for Tibetan children. "There are over 150 thousand Tibetans in exile. We should not just be satisfied with a successful livelihood. We should focus on a holistic education for our children," His Holiness said.

"Despite the great heights that modern education has reached, it is still inadequate when it comes to inner values. It is obvious when you see that most criminals and anti-social elements are quite advanced in modern education. Moreover, the prevalence of social ills like corruption and dishonesty are a result of the lack of moral principle in modern education," His Holiness asserted.

His Holiness concluded his speech by extending his heartfelt greetings to the audience. "If you consider me your friend, please pay consider to what I have said. Then please be united irrespective of your region or religious lineage," he told a the large crowd that had gathered to to witness the swearing-in of Dr Lobsang Sangay as prime minister of Tibet.

Tibet ready for dialogue with China under Dalai Lama's guidance

The Hans India

May 27,2016

Tibetan Prime Minister-in-exile Lobsang Sangay, who will take the oath of office for his second consecutive term here on Friday, is hopeful that sooner or later China will change for the better.

He's believes in Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama's dictum: "Hope for the better, but prepare for the worst too".

"The issue of the dialogue between the envoys of the Dalai Lama and Chinese representatives is delicate and sensitive," Sangay told IANS in an interview here.

"However, it's clear that there is no lack of effort on our part on restarting the dialogue under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama," said the 48-year-old Harvard-educated elected head of the Central Tibetan Administration.

He replied in affirmative when asked: Are you expecting some changes in the mindset of the Chinese over granting greater autonomy for Tibetans?

"I remain hopeful that sooner or later, China will change for the better."

Sangay was re-elected on April 27 after defeating his only rival, Penpa Tsering. He polled about 57 percent of the 58,740 votes cast across the globe on March 20.

It was the second election since the Dalai Lama stepped down as head of the government-in-exile in 2011.

Since then, the significance of the prime minister's post has gone up.

About on the ongoing deadlock over talks between the Dalai Lama's envoys and the Chinese since January 2010, Sangay said: "It's evident that we must put maximum efforts in achieving genuine autonomy for all Tibetans based on the middle-way approach".

"However, as advised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama time and again, we must hope for the better but prepare for the worst. We may have to continue our struggle for many years. Therefore, it's critical that we are able to sustain our cause"

A confidant Sangay believes in dialogue.

"We remain committed to the middle-way approach and reiterate that dialogue is the most realistic approach and the only way to find a mutually beneficial solution to the Tibet issue."

"The middle-way approach neither seeks separation from the People's Republic of China nor high degree of autonomy but genuine autonomy for all Tibetan people under a single administration," he said.

"The Chinese leadership should adopt a policy that keeps up with the ground reality," added Sangay, who did his early education from a refugee school in Darjeeling and studied law from Delhi University before moving to Harvard for his doctorate.

His priorities in his second and last five-year stint would be to resolve the issue of Tibet, besides making efforts to introduce new projects wherever and whenever necessary to improve political and administrative efficiency.

Asked about the possible shape and size of his new Kashag (cabinet), he replied diplomatically, saying the most suitable candidates would be inducted, irrespective of their experience or gender.

According to him, the coming 15th cabinet will also continue the many tasks started by the previous cabinet based on the founding principles of unity, innovation and self-reliance.

Sangay reiterated: "We are ready to have dialogue with China anytime and anywhere."

In his first stint, Sangay toured the globe trying to build up support for the Tibetan cause.

European Council President Donald Tusk told Chinese premier Xi Jinping during a press conference last year that the Tibet issue should be resolved through dialogue.

In 2011, the White House released a press statement after President Barack Obama met with the Dalai Lama, applauding the middle-way approach.

The Dalai Lama has lived in India since fleeing his homeland in 1959. The Tibetan administration in exile is based in this northern Indian hill town.

Sooner or later China will change: Tibetan PM-in-exile

newkerala.com

May 26, 2016

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Chinese ambassador to UK tells Tibetans their cause is 'doomed' and will 'never succeed'

hongkongfp.com

May 19, 2016

The Chinese ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming, told Tibetan activists and supporters at a public talk in the city of Bath that their cause was "doomed to failure" and that they will "never succeed, period", as he boasted about the happiness of Tibetans under Chinese rule.

The comments were made at a talk entitled "World Affairs through our eyes – China", organised by the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution on Tuesday evening. Prior to the start of the event, attendees at the talk were asked by the organisers to remove or conceal items of clothing bearing Tibetan symbols so as not to "embarrass" the Chinese ambassador, according to activist group Free Tibet.

Among the audience during the talk were Tibetans and pro-Tibet campaigners, who had held a peaceful demonstration outside the venue before the event. A Tibetan, Sherab Gyaltzen, raised issues such as the calls for freedom and the incidents of self-immolation in Tibet, and challenged the ambassador about the disappearance of Tibetan boy Gedhun Choekyi Nyima – later identified as Tibet's no. 2 spiritual leader the Panchen Lama – who was reported to have been arrested by the Chinese authorities 21 years ago. Liu said that he was just an "ordinary boy" and that he was never recognised.

Liu also spoke at length about the happiness of people in Tibet, saying, "There are 3 million people in Tibet, everyone would agree that Tibetan people are much happier, they live much longer and are much freer." Gyaltzen then replied, "Not according to my family in Tibet". Liu then tried to prevent Gyaltzen from speaking any further.

In an angry exchange with a human rights activist, Liu said that the campaigners were "violating [the] human rights of the majority audience in this meeting". When a campaigner said "that's nothing compared to torture", Liu called it "absolute lies".

"Your cause is doomed to failure... you try to separate Tibet from China, you will never succeed, period," Liu said.

'Chinese propaganda and lies'

"I've heard Chinese propaganda all my life but it is still shocking to hear someone telling lies in person about your country and the experiences of your own people," Gyaltzen later said. "I know Tibetans in Tibet are not happy as the ambassador claimed, because Tibetans in Tibet tell us of the oppression they endure. Tibetans want freedom and no one has the right to tell them they cannot have it. Tibet will be free."

Free Tibet campaigns manager Alistair Currie, who was present at the meeting, said, "The ambassador let the mask slip after being rattled by activists challenging him. After lengthy propagandising he found himself dealing with persistent and unapologetic campaigners holding him accountable for his government's actions."

Currie also criticised Liu for trying to impose Chinese influence not just in Tibet but also in the "free and democratic" UK by denying the rights of Tibetans to display symbols of their identity at the talk. "The Chinese ambassador is a representative of a human rights-abusing regime, responsible for the occupation of Tibet and the brutal repression of the Tibetan people. While he tours the country spreading China's lies and showing a friendly face, no one must forget that."

Tibet has been under Chinese control since the 1950s. Beijing claims that Tibetans enjoy extensive freedoms and has long denied accusations of political and religious repression. The current Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, was exiled from Tibet in 1959 after a failed uprising against the Chinese occupation. Recently, exiled Tibetans have re-elected Lobsang Sangay as their leader, five years after the Dalai Lama ceded political power in a bid to foster democracy and secure his succession.

The Tibet Museum portrays "truth about Tibet's history": Sikyong

Tibet Post International

May 18, 2016

Dharamshala — The Tibet Museum of Department of Information and International Relations, CTA, commenced its three-day celebration of 39th International Museum

Day by launching the museum's exhibition catalog, "A Long Look Homeward" and a promotional video.

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay was the chief-guest and launched the catalog. Mr Sonam N. Dagpo, Secretary of DIIR launched the promotional video of the museum. The Tibet Museum was established in 1998 and graced by His Holiness Dalai Lama, with the purpose to document, preserve, research, exhibit and educate on the matters related to Tibetan history, culture and the present issue.

The event saw Dr Sangay, Mr Tashi Phuntsok, Secretary of DIIR and Mr Tashi Phuntsok Director of the *Tibet Museum* addressing the audience on the importance and success of the museum in preserving the Tibetan culture, heritage and the stories of undying struggles of Tibetan people under the Chinese oppression. The museum is the proof of China's attempts to create a false image of contentment and prosperity in Tibet.

Speaking to TPI, Sikyong said "Tibet issue is an issue of truth and justice. Truth is on our side and Justice is what we deserve, so this is the truth about Tibet's history, this is the truth about occupation and oppression. China's narrative says that Tibet is happy and content with the Chinese government. This is our true narrative in response to Chinese narrative."

His message to the current world leaders regarding their passive approach towards the Tibet issue is "What Tibetans are facing and suffering is real so if they see, they must stand for the basic principles of their country which they claim to be democracy and freedom for all".

Every year May 18th is celebrated as International Museum Day with the participation 142 countries and more than 35,000 museums.

TYC rallies for release of Panchen Lama

Tibet Sun

May 17, 2016



Mussoorie BJP MLA Ganesh Joshi begins cycling as TYC President Tenzing Jigme looks on, in Dekiling Tibetan Settlement, India, on 17 May 2016.

TYC/Handout

Forty-five members of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) have started a cycle rally to bring awareness about the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who has been out of public view since 1995.

"We seek accurate information about Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's whereabouts and well-being, and we urge the United Nations as well as governments of the world to pressure the Chinese government to show us concrete evidence that Panchen Lama is indeed alive and well," a TYC statement said.

The seven-day rally began from Dekiling Tibetan Settlement in northern India, and will end in Delhi. Local Indian politician Mr Ganesh Joshi from India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party briefly joined the rally to show his support for the cause. TYC Vice-President Tamding Hrichoe is leading the cyclists.

The day marks the kidnapping of the Panchen Lama by the Chinese authorities in 1995 when he was six years old, days after he was recognised as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama.

The last time any information was heard about his whereabouts was in 2010 when Chinese-appointed Tibet Governor, Padma Choling, told reporters that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family are now living a good life as ordinary citizens in Tibet.

TYC says that China seeks to legitimise its rule in Tibet by claiming it plays a crucial role in the identification of Tibet's two most important spiritual leaders, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

After repeated attempts to gain access to the boy, no international agencies or human rights organisations have been allowed to visit Gedun Choekyi Nyima or his family, and their condition remains uncertain.

In an attempt to establish their authority, in November 1995 the Chinese leadership nominated and enthroned their own choice for 11th Panchen Lama in Gyaltzen Norbu.

"Their selection of six-year-old boy named Gyaltzen Norbu, is another young victim in China's plan to undermine and control the Tibetan people, their faith, religion, and their nation," says TYC in their statement.

The ending of the rally on 23 May coincides with the day of the signing of the 17-Point Agreement between Tibet and China in 1951. The signing was said to be done under Chinese pressure.

"Ending the rally on May 23rd will highlight the facts about the 17-Point Agreement and our position which is

we do not accept the agreement as it was signed under duress”, TYC statement said.

During the week’s rallying in various Indian cities and towns, the cyclists are demanding that China: give evidence that the 11th Panchen Lama is alive, address the demands of the self-immolations in Tibet, allow a fact finding international delegation to assess the situation in Tibet, and release all political prisoners.

Tibetan Youth Congress is the largest Tibetan NGO in exile struggling to achieve independence for Tibet.

Re-election of Exiled PM Spurs Hope for Renewed Tibet Talks

Voa.org

May 16, 2016

The re-election of Lobsang Sangay as prime minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile has renewed hopes among some that dialogue between the Dalai Lama and China’s central government, which stopped in 2010, will begin again.

On the day of his election, Sangay vowed to push for autonomy for the Tibetan people and restart talks with the Chinese government.

“We remain fully committed to the Middle Way Approach, which clearly seeks genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within China. It is hoped the leaders in Beijing will see reason with the Middle Way Approach, instead of distorting it, and step forward to engage in dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s envoys,” he said.

No talks since 2010

Representatives of the Dalai Lama held several rounds of talks with China until they were stalled in 2010 by protests and a subsequent crackdown in Tibet.

Tsering Passang, Chair of the Tibetan Community in Britain, said whether or not talks restart is in Beijing’s hands.

“It’s really up to the Chinese, and due to the current reality, the geopolitical situation, as well as the economic situation, China has the upper hand, so it’s going to be a challenge for the Tibetan leadership,” he said.

Sangay defeated challenger Penpa Tsering

Sangay ran against the speaker of the Tibetan Parliament, Penpa Tsering and received 58 percent of nearly 60,000 votes cast. About 90,000 exiled Tibetans are registered to vote in 40 countries.

However, China has largely ignored the elections, with the foreign ministry only making terse remarks on the ballot results when pressed to comment at a recent briefing. Spokesman Hong Lei said the voting was nothing but a “farce” staged by an “illegal” organisation that is not recognised by any country in the world.

Robert Barnett, the director of modern Tibet studies at Columbia University, is not very optimistic about the resumption of talks.

“It’s quite disheartening at the moment because there are no signs from the Chinese side of any concession at all, in fact very much the opposite. But of course the Chinese side would not disclose if it was going to make a move. It would be in its interest to move very quickly at a time of its own choosing,” he said.

China claims control of Tibet for centuries

China says it has maintained control of the Tibetan region since the 13th century, and the Communist Party says it has liberated the Tibetan people through removing monks from power who the party says presided over a feudal system.

But many Tibetans argue they were independent until Communist forces invaded in 1950. Nine years later the Dalai Lama fled into exile after a failed uprising against the government.

While the Dalai Lama remains the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, he gave up political authority in 2011, and called for democratic elections to choose a prime minister to lead the parliament of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, India.

With the current Dalai Lama now in his 80s, the issue of who will select the next Dalai Lama is gaining in importance.

But P.K. Gautam, a Research Fellow at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses in India, said any political talks that may develop should not be confused with discussions over who will select the next Dalai Lama.

“So who selects the Dalai Lama is a very separate process, but the political negotiations, for the autonomous region, the way it is desired, that can be taken on by this central administration. So it’s a long term process; it’s just one of these steps that may lead to a solution so that the Tibet autonomous region regains its pillars,” he said.

Many Tibetans hope Sangay’s election is also a step towards easing discontent throughout the Tibetan community. More than 100 Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against the Chinese government since 2009.

German legislator denied visa by China for pro-Tibet remarks

Indian Express

May 13, 2016

German legislator Michael Brand, who reportedly criticised China's human rights record, sought a clear response from the German Foreign Ministry about the denial of visa to him.

China has denied visa to a German legislator heading the human rights panel for his remarks backing "Tibetan independence", saying his position is against Germany's one-China policy, state media reported on Friday.

Michael Brand, Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of the German Bundestag, is not welcome to China, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said, defending Beijing's move to deny him a visa.

Brand's position of backing "Tibetan independence" is against Germany's one-China policy, Lu said on Friday.

Brand was denied permission to visit China purely because of his position on Tibet, not for his comments on the human rights situation in China, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency. Brand, who reportedly criticised China's human rights record, sought a clear response from the German Foreign Ministry about the denial of visa to him. Lu said the Chinese Embassy in Germany and relevant departments have done a lot of work preparing for the visit of the Human Rights Committee of the Federal German Parliament. "The German government knows that very well. The remarks by the specific person you mentioned are calling white black," Lu said in his comments posted on the Chinese Foreign Ministry website. "We don't invite him to China, not because of what he said about China's human rights, since you know that he is not the only one that has something to say about China's human rights. But a lot of people still made their visits to China." "He cannot come because he blatantly breached the commitment of the German government to the "one China" policy and stuck his heels in advocating "Tibet independence" which is so wrong," he said. "I can say for sure that China will not welcome such a man. I have to say that the Human Rights Committee of the Federal German Parliament is very unwise in issuing the statement and hurling accusations at China," Lu added.

Only a free China can free Tibet

Tibet Sun

May 12, 2016

I am not pretending that I represent the majority view of the Chinese either in or outside China, even not that of Chinese human rights and democracy activists for that matter. But I am glad to tell you that the number of Chinese who share my views, although small, is growing.

1 The Tibetan people have suffered so much at the hands of the Communist regime, consisting mainly of the Chinese and with the support and help from many ordinary Chinese people. I am a Chinese and feel guilty and obliged to do what I have done in the past nearly 30 years to support the cause of a free Tibet and try to bring about peace and harmony to the two peoples. And I will continue.

2 No Chinese, either as a part of the PRC government or of the democratic opposition, can or should claim to represent the will of the Tibetan people. The right to choose the future of Tibet ultimately resides with the Tibetan people and nobody else. Tibet has not always been part of China, as the Chinese regime is claiming. The Tibetans, as a people, have a different biological, historical, and cultural identity. As such, they are entitled to the right of self-determination. I respect the Tibetans' right of self-determination.

The Chinese people as a whole must eventually accept this principle, or the current problem will remain or reoccur no matter what political setting will be arranged in the future.

3 That said, my point will not be complete if I don't add this warning. Tibet and China have so intertwined historically, politically, culturally, and religiously in the past two thousand years, and the reality of Tibet being part of the PRC is so entrenched in the minds of not only the Chinese people but the world leaders for whatever reasons, that the Tibetan issue cannot be resolved according to the will of the Tibetan people and based on universal values without the support and understanding of many many Chinese. There will be a long and difficult way to go for the Tibetans to eventually be able to enjoy and exercise their right of self-determination, and they need the Chinese to walk with them very step on the way toward that end. So you probably have no choice but relentlessly reaching out to the Chinese for your cause no matter what, where, and when. This leads to ...

4 Speaking from my personal experience, the Dalai Lama's Middle-Way approach has played the most important and most effective role in winning the Chinese to the Tibetan cause. To many

Chinese democrats, me included, the Dalai Lama's Middle-Way approach has proved indispensably instrumental in getting our Chinese compatriots to be interested in Tibetan history, culture, and religion, and most importantly, to recognise the true reality and just aspiration of the Tibetan people. I understand there are different views among the Tibetans from the Middle-Way approach, but as far as the issue of winning support from the Chinese concerns, I urge my Tibetan brothers and sisters to deeply appreciate His Holiness' wisdom in this.

5 There has been a cliché among Chinese democrats. Most repeated. "There is no hope for a free Tibet if the nature of the Chinese regime does not change, so we must work first to democratise China." One of reasons this has become a cliché is that it does contain some truth. But I don't like the sino-centric position on which it is stated. And, given the permeating Han Chauvinist mentality among the Chinese, even with democracy in China, the resolution of the Tibetan issue will not be easy. So China's democracy is only necessary but far from being sufficient. So we must continue what I call the "truth campaign", making particular efforts now to bring the truth about Tibet to the Chinese people and engage in real heart-to-heart dialogues with them and discuss with them the future for both peoples. I have engaged this campaign in the past 26 years, and will continue to expand the campaign and dialogue to include more people.

6 People have begun talking about the post-Dalai Lama era. I personally think, although it will be very far away, it is always good to make hay while the sun shines. We will eventually face the reality without His Holiness. To me, the best way to prepare for the worst is protect and sincerely practice the democracy that you have established under the guidance of His Holiness.

The Tibetan issue is one of most difficult issues facing humanity. It is a test on mankind's morality and wisdom, especially on the Tibetans and Chinese and the world leaders.

To me, the things we have to do, with or without the Dalai Lama, are the things I advocated for above: Respect the Tibetans' right of determination; take the Middle-Way approach seriously; reach out to the Chinese; commit to non-violence; continue the truth campaign with the international community and the Chinese; promote Tibetan culture and language and environmental protection in Tibet; practice and perfect democracy; and last but not the least, join the effort to democratise China.

Sikyong releases book titled 'The Old and New Century of Tibet'

Tibet Post International

April 30, 2016

Dharamshala — Dr Lobsang Sangay, Sikyong or the democratically elected political leader of the Tibetan people released a new book written by late Mr Gonpo Dorjee, a former Tibetan parliamentarian, at a function in Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamshala, India, on Friday, 29 April.

The book titled 'The Old and New Century of Tibet' documents the history of Tibet from Nyatri Tsenpo, Tibet's first king in recorded history, till 1986.

The two-volume book is a culmination of a decade-long effort by the writer to record Tibetan history as well as his personal experience of escaping into exile, following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice to elderly Tibetans to write about their personal experiences of Tibet for future references.

The function was attended by senior officials and MPs, including Rinchen Khandro former Kalon and Director of Tibetan nun's project, Dongchung Ngodup former Kalon for Department of Security, Sonam Choephel Shosur Chief Election Commissioner, Tashi Tsering Director of Amnye Machen Institute, Ngawang Yeshe LTWA General Secretary.

Addressing the book release function, held at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) in Dharamshala, The chief guest Sikyong Dr Sangay said: "Some of my staff at the Kashag Secretariat have read the book and they told me that the book is very well written, easy to understand and contains a lot of vital information on Tibetan history."

"Therefore, I applaud the hard work put in by the writer as well as by the staff of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives to publish this book," Sikyong said, while urging the younger Tibetan generation to read the book.

He also urged the younger generations to study the hard work of the elder generation of Tibetans and the real situation in Tibet, by reading the books written by those elder generations.

Mr Dorjee, passed away on 26 April, just three days before the launch of the book. Sikyong also expressed his profound condolences at Mr Gonpo Dorjee's demise and prayed for his swift rebirth.

A Brief Introduction of Gonpo Dorjee's life history and his works made by Ngawang Yeshe, LTWA General Secretary.

Tashi Tsering extended his deep sympathy and sincere condolence to Dorjee's family. 'We recently planned it well that he will join us in Dharamshala, after completing the

book publishing process. But unfortunately he passed away on Tuesday morning, April 26, at 6.am,' said Tsering.

He said that the book documents the history of Tibet from Tibet's first king, Nyatri Tsenpo to history of Tibetans, inside and outside Tibet, till 1986. The book also has a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.'

Mr Dorjee served his community as a MP, an journalist, and then an author, till 2016. He had served as MP from U-Tsang province in 1972. However, he resigned and returned to his home in Darjeeling two years later due to health issues. But, he continued working for the "Tibetan Freedom" newspaper till 1992.

The publication of the new Tibetan history book came at a significant time as the Chinese government has further strengthened its sovereignty claims over Tibet.

A group of the Chinese Communist party puppets from Tibet recently visited few countries, include the United States and during their meetings with the foreign officials, they said that "Tibet has always been part of China, and there is no basis for Tibet issue."

47 Tibetans cycle to spread awareness on Panchen Lama's fate

Times of India

May 20, 2016

To highlight the "pitiable condition of Tibetans under the Chinese rule" and to spread awareness about the 11th Panchen Lama - Gedhun Choekyi Nyima - the second most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism, as many as 47 cyclists reached Meerut on Friday afternoon.

The bicycle rally named 'Cycle Rally for Panchen Lama' has been organised by the Tibetan Youth Congress, the largest Tibetan NGO in exile.

Several youngsters - in the age group of 17-28 - had started their cycling journey from Dehradun on Tuesday and reached here on Friday. The group plans to reach New Delhi on May 23, the day the '17-Point Agreement' was signed between Tibet and China.

Tenzin Tsukte, president, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, said, "Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was just six years old when he was recognised as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important religious leaders of Tibet. Soon after, Chinese authorities took him and his family into custody. For twenty years, people and human rights entities across the world have urged the

Chinese government to release Panchen Lama but to no avail."

To spread awareness about Panchen Lama, the Tibetan Youth Congress organised the cycle rally on May 17, the day Panchen Lama was arrested and the same will conclude in Delhi on May 23, the day the agreement was signed between Tibet and China.

"So far, we've halted at Haridwar, Roorkee and Mansoorpur. We will reach Delhi on May 23 and assemble in front of Jantar Mantar where we will submit a memorandum of our demands to the UN," said Tsukte.

Tibetans from Deokhaling in Dehradun, Poanta Sahib, Puruwalla, Raipur, Rajpur, Herbertpur, Nainital, Mussoorie, Delhi, Dharamsala and Bir Tibetan Settlements are taking part in the rally.

Tibet also needs China's help for economic growth: Dalai Lama

Business Standard

May 9, 2016

Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, on Monday said that since countries cannot survive in isolation in this era of interdependence, Tibet too needs China's help to develop economically.

"As for Tibet, we have a huge land and a rich culture but we need China's help to develop economically," he told reporters in Osaka in Japan.

"I really admire the concept of federation, such as the European Union, where countries are foregoing their sovereign rights to join the union," the Dalai Lama said.

The Tibetan spiritual leader, who was given the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his non-violent struggle for Tibet's autonomy, believes in the "middle path" policy that demands "greater autonomy" for the people of Tibet under the Chinese constitution.

"The Tibetans should be realistic and preserve their rich cultural traditions through genuine autonomy," he said.

Secretary of State Kerry invested in a Chinese company that exploits Tibetans

examiner.com

May 8, 2016

While often ranting about human rights abuses in China and other nations worldwide from a nation which is seen as a leading human rights abuser itself by people all over the world United States Secretary of State John Kerry has been investing in a Chinese company which exploits Tibetans. Phayul.com reported on May 6, 2016, Kerry has invested in an exploitative company which is headquartered in Tibet. Kerry's wife Teresa Hienz is also involved in this investment.

It has been reported that Kerry and his wife have invested in many companies in China. One of these companies has its headquarters in Tibet and is said to exploit Tibet's natural resources while undermining the ecology of the region according to the Washington based Daily Caller News Foundation. The investment front for the Hienz family trust which is known as "HFI Imperial" has invested in Tibet 5100 Water Resources Ltd or Tibet Water. This firm is a Chinese-owned bottled water company which has its plant in Tibet.

Tibet Water has its headquarters inside the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Tibet. The firm harvests water for commercial bottling. It is seen as tapping into the water reserves of the Tibetan region. Experts have said that the siphoning off of the natural reserves could result in severe environmental consequences in the region. Matteo Mecacci, who is president of the International Campaign for Tibet, says this control by Chinese businesses of the bottled water industry in Tibet without any involvement and consultation with Tibetans is an example of the exploitation of Tibet by Beijing.

The Daily Caller reports Kerry and his wife are invested in a Chinese firm which exploits and represses Tibet. Kerry and his wife are investors in a dozen firms in the People's Republic of China. Tibet 5100 Water Resources, Ltd clearly represents the most controversial Kerry-Heinz investment in China. The company sells a luxury brand of bottled drinking water to compete with Evian and Perrier. The diversion of water from Tibetan glaciers has alarmed environmentalists.

Alistair Currie, a spokesman for the Tibetan advocacy group Free Tibet, and others want this investment by Kerry ended. The investment in a Chinese state-owned company which exploits Tibet by a sitting secretary of state and his wife seems to represent very poor judgement on their part and could raise many problems.

This investment by Kerry and his wife raises serious questions about hypocrisy by the government of the United States in dealing with human rights issues which the public has a right to raise.

Activist group demands Shokjang's release on world press freedom day

phayul.com

May 4, 2016

The Activist group Students for a Free Tibet staged a street theatre in protest of the incarceration of Tibetan writer Drukar Gyal, known more prolifically by his pen name Shokjang, on the World Press Freedom Day at McLeod Ganj's main square yesterday.

The street theatre dramatised the court proceeding of the intermediate public court in Malho prefecture which sentenced the writer to three years in Chinese prison on charges of 'inciting separatism'.

SFT India's Grassroots Director told journalists, "With this street theatre action, we want to highlight Shokjang's case and at the same time bring to light the plight of other writers and intellectuals who are suffering under the CCP's regime. We urge you all to take action for his immediate release."

Shokjang was sentenced on Feb. 17 this year after almost a year since he was arrested on March 19 last year.

Gu Chu Sum, a former political prisoners' movement earlier said that a group of almost 40 Tibetans including his family and friends visited officials in Rebkong who read out the charges against Shokjang. Any trial or court proceedings leading up to the sentencing did not take place, the NGO citing sources from inside Tibet, mentioned.

The students' activist group had made huge replica of a pen symbolising the annexation of freedom of expression of intellectuals inside Tibet, urging people to take action through a petition calling for the writer's release. The petition is addressed at the Malho Peoples Court and China's Minister of Justice Wu Aiyang.

Tenzin Tselha, National Director of SFT India, said that Shokjang's case shows that China's claim of being a country with 'rule of law' is nothing but a "symbolic entity". "The hand written appeal letter by Shokjang from prison is a new form of resistance by Tibetans inside Tibet. I believe that Shokjang chose to directly challenge the CCP regime by writing this letter," Tselha said.

Following his sentencing, the Tibetan writer appealed against his wrongful punishment in a 17 page appeal letter, written in Tibetan and Chinese and asserting his innocence to the Higher People's Court in Qinghai where he hopes "the objective truth" will be sought.

The writer charged for 'instigating separatism' says his written work did not amount to him being deemed a separatist. "If one talks about instigating separatism, I have not written even a word of separatism, much less instigated it. If I write about an incident in which I suffered harm, and that becomes an unfounded accusation against me, and I write an appeal to the court about the incident, that does not make me a separatist," he wrote in the letter dated Feb. 24.

China says Tibetan "election" is just "political slapstick"

Tibet Post International

May 4, 2016

Dharamshala — China on Tuesday reiterated that the Tibetan "government-in-exile" has no legitimacy and its "election" is just "political slapstick," the state-run media Xinhua reported Wednesday.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei made the remarks in response to the final "election" results announcement by the Tibetan officials on April 27, 2016. He added that the so-called "government-in-exile" is not recognised by any country.

As for the claim by the "government-in-exile" that fewer Tibetans-in-exile have gone to India because of hindrance by China's national security department, Hong said "this only reflects the unpopularity of the overseas Tibetan separatist groups."

Dr Lobsang Sangay has been re-elected as Sikyong of the Central Tibetan Administration amid hopes that the democratically elected political leader will vigorously pursue the cause of a genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet within the framework of the People's Republic of China.

A total of 150,000 Tibetan refugees live across the world, a majority of them in India. Of more than 90,000 registered voters, nearly 60,000 cast ballots on March 20, election officials said on April 27 in declaring that Dr Sangay had been re-elected as Sikyong, or political leader. Election officials also declared that a 45 parliamentarians have been elected and most of them are younger generation.

Dr Sangay, 47, was born and brought up in India. He won 57% of the vote to defeat his only rival, the Tibetan

parliament speaker Mr Penpa Tsering, according to the Tibetan election officials in the northern Indian city of Dharamshala, where the CTA, is headquartered.

Both Sangay and Tsering have taken up the "middle way" approach advocated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 80, that seeks "genuine autonomy" for Tibetan people living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet rather than independence from China.

However, the CTA is nothing more than the Government of Tibet who was forced to accept the Seventeen Point Agreement in 1951.

China has ruled Tibet with an iron fist since Chinese troops invaded Tibet, in 1949. After the invasion, Tibet was divided into six parts of which five were incorporated into neighbouring Chinese provinces. What China refers to as Tibet nowadays is only a part of the original Tibet, called the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and covers an area of about 122,200 sq, of Tibet's 850,000 sq, roughly the size of Western Europe.

The TAR is strictly governed by the Chinese Communist Party, with the active support of the military. The Party rules through branch offices in each province, autonomous region and autonomous prefecture. Subordinate to the Party is the government, which carries out policies designed by the Party.

China has established the full panoply of Party and government offices to administer TAR as exists in China. In Lhasa alone, there are over 60 departments and committees almost all of which are directly connected to their national offices in Beijing. Thus, TAR is "autonomous" in word only; in fact, the TAR has less autonomy than Chinese provinces. The top TAR post, the Party Secretary, has never been held by a Tibetan.

Localist activist Edward Leung Tin-kei in talks with Dalai Lama

scmp.com

May 1, 2016

Hong Kong Indigenous spokesman was among 60 people at meeting in Dharamshala, India

Radical localist activist Edward Leung Tin-kei met with Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India, along with 60 other individuals from the mainland, Macau, Taiwan, Europe and the United States.

The two-hour meeting took place on Thursday according to *Radio Free Asia*, with the Hong Kong Indigenous

spokesman describing the encounter as a “rare opportunity”.

“I’ve never thought [I could meet] Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader. This doesn’t happen everyday,” Leung said.

The Hong Kong Indigenous spokesman said since there were politicians from India and the European Union in attendance as well, he could learn firsthand how they perceived the mainland.

Chow Hang-tung, an Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China volunteer, was another Hongkonger who attended the meeting.

“It was very inspiring,” Chow said.

Others present included Canadian beauty queen and activist Anastasia Lin and Katrina Lantos Swett, the daughter of late American politician Tom Lantos.

Radio Free Asia claims the meeting in Dharamsala was “under pressure” from multiple parties, particularly from the mainland.

The media outlet also said in its report that security measures were tight at the meeting, as no media was allowed inside the venue, while participants had to leave their mobile phones and cameras with security guards.

Leung had earlier travelled to India to attend the 11th Interethnic Interfaith Leadership Conference held at Dalai Lama’s residence.

The conference was organised by US-based group Initiatives for China. According to its Facebook, the group aims to advance “a peaceful transition to democracy in China through truth, understanding, citizen power, & cooperative action”.

Co-founder of Leung’s group Ray Wong Toi-yeung and former secretary general of Hong Kong Federation of Students Alex Chow Yong-kang were scheduled to attend the event as well but were unable to do so as their applications for travel visa were rejected.

Wong, who was earlier granted permission by the court to leave Hong Kong for the conference, said he doesn’t know why his application was turned down, explaining he had applied the same way as Leung.

The localist activist added he was scheduled to speak at the conference on Saturday.

“But since I can’t travel, [Leung] would have to deliver the speech on my behalf,” he said.

The Indian consulate in Hong Kong declined to comment on the reasons for rejecting Wong and Chow’s visa applications.

Regional News

Russia and China Seeking mutual Support in Territorial Disputes

Sputniknews.com

May 31, 2016

Russia and China are eager to take their relationship of regional security to a new level with one of the main areas of cooperation aimed at dealing with issues relating to the situation in neighbouring regions, according to a report by CCTV.

A conference on bilateral Russian-Chinese relations, which is being held in Moscow currently, will highlight the need for some sort of transformation and revision of bilateral relations under the new situation, according to Zhang Xin, researcher of the School of Advanced International Studies at East China University.

“Let’s take a look at the past year or two. We know that Russia is under increasing pressure from Western sanctions and this seriously affects the country’s economy.

China, on the other hand, is getting more and more involved in a complex situation in the region,” Xin said in an interview with CCTV.

These new factors are pushing both the sides to reconsider and possibly revise bilateral relations. Here, on one hand, it means ‘a new quality of bilateral relations.’

The analyst pointed out that the conference itself is a meeting of experts, so one should not consider statements made at these meetings by experts and specialists, as official.

Nonetheless, judging by what has been heard at the conference, the analyst has highlighted three main directions of cooperation in the sphere of regional security.

According to the analyst, first of all it is important to understand if the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation can be reorganised into a regional platform for cooperation in the field of security to include participants apart from the current ones.

“Secondly, we see a clear trend in Russia’s active attempts to increase its presence in the Asia-Pacific region, which is widely manifested, in particular, in security cooperation,” Xin said.

He further said that both the countries have discussed this during the recent Russia-ASEAN summit, which was held a

week ago. This is another recent trend, the importance of which in the context of regional security in the Asia-Pacific region may further increase.

Thirdly, it is interesting to see whether the two sides will start expressing mutual support for each other's basic positions on regional security more openly and loudly in the surrounding regions.

In these areas, both sides seek to achieve a higher level of cooperation and support from each other. I believe that these three areas are probably the main points in the context of cooperation between Russia and China in the field of regional security.

Construction Work on RCC Bridge over Indus River in Skardu to be Started Soon

RADIO.GOV.PK

MAY 31, 2016

All formalities are completed and construction work will be started within next 15 days.

Construction work on big RCC Bridge over Indus River in Skardu will be started soon at a cost of 420 million rupees.

Spokesman of Public Works Department Skardu told over representative in Skardu on Tuesday that all formalities are completed and construction work will be started within next fifteen days.

Spokesman said that budget allocation has been made in the current ADP and this two way Bridge will facilitate the passengers of the regions.

Nepal-India Security Meet to be Held on June 9-10

My Republica

31 May 2016

KATHMANDU, May 31: The 12th meeting of Nepal-India Bilateral Consultative Group Meeting on security issues is scheduled for June 9 and 10 in New Delhi, India.

The meeting could not be held in 2015 as the country was devastated by the earthquake that struck Nepal in April of that year. According to Spokesperson at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tara Bahadur Pokharel, a team led by Joint Secretary Prakash Kumar Subedi will lead a Nepali delegation comprising of secretary of the Defense Ministry and representatives from the Nepalese Army, among others.

During the meeting, senior officials from Nepal and India will discuss bilateral security concerns--security challenges, porous border, upgrading military support, modernising security forces and carrying out joint exercises, trainings to fight regional security challenges, among others.

The meeting will evaluate the security challenges and come up with new security measures to tackle them, said Joint Secretary Shiva Prasad Simkhada, who is also the spokesperson at the Ministry of Defense, adding that officials were still discussing the agendas to be taken up during the bilateral meeting. The two sides will also review the progress made so far in connection with the decisions made earlier.

The bilateral meeting that are held every year alternatively in both countries will be helpful in enhancing military relations between the two countries, Defense Ministry Spokesperson Simkhada said.

During the 11th Bilateral Consultative Meeting held in 2014 in Nepal, the two sides had agreed to share information at operational level to effectively address cross border crimes such as smuggling of drugs and arms, human trafficking and wildlife poaching. The two sides had also agreed to extend cooperation in dealing with natural disaster.

China and Bangladesh Pledge to Boost Cooperation, Military Exchange

China Topix

May 30, 2016

China and Bangladesh reached an agreement on Sunday to deepen their cooperation and military exchange.

The pledge comes after a meeting between Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan and Bangladeshi President Abdul Hamid. Chang also met with Bangladesh's Chief of Army Staff General Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiuul Hug, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Mohammad Nizamuddin Ahmed, and Chief of Air Staff Marshal Abu Esrar.

The Chinese defense minister said in a statement that both nations should boost their bilateral cooperation in culture, some sectors of politics, as well as economy and trade. China and Bangladesh established diplomatic ties in 1975.

Chang said that the development of military ties between the two countries has maintained a good momentum and it will continue to improve in the coming months and years. The Chinese military wants to work with the Bangladesh military to implement the accord reached by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The boosting of military ties will also strengthen the strategic exchange and support between the two countries, increase personnel training and cooperation when it comes to equipment technology, and promote military exchanges between young military officials.

The Bangladesh military also released a statement regarding the latest agreement noting that China is a trustworthy and strategic partner. The military leaders of Bangladesh said that both nations have developed high-level political trust as well as fruitful economic and trade cooperation.

The Bangladeshi military expressed willingness to take part in joint efforts with China regarding personnel training, military medical care, peacekeeping, and military equipment.

China and Bangladesh are set to work together to promote the "Belt and Road" initiative. As part of the "Belt and Road" initiative, scholarships will be awarded to students from the nations that are involved in the project to study in China.

Bangladesh is one of the nations that support China's position on the South China Sea dispute. Bangladeshi officials have said that the dispute should be settled via a direct negotiation amongst the parties involved.

President: Serbia can be "pillar for China" in Europe

b92.net

MAY 30, 2016

Serbia can be a pillar for China in Europe and its significant partner for the future, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic said on Monday.

He made the comments as he received Li Wei, president of the Development Research Center of China's State Council.

The development of Serbia-China economic ties points to a clear interest of both countries, and several joint projects of great significance to Serbia have been launched to date, Nikolic said.

Nikolic noted the significance of a recent agreement on the Smederevo steel mill and the fact that the arrival of Chinese partners in the Serbian meat industry will revive Serbia's rural regions and encourage people to return there after seeking better life in cities, Nikolic said.

Nikolic said that he was "delighted with China's support for Serbian diplomat Vuk Jeremic's bid to become the new UN secretary-general."

Li thanked Nikolic for his immeasurable contribution to enhancing the cordial relations between Serbia and China.

He briefed Nikolic on activities concerning the implementation of China's One Belt, One Road project, expressing the wish that efforts to make full use of potentials for cooperation will be maximised, the presidential press office said in a statement.

Multi-sports facility to be constructed in Babena

Kuenselonline.com

May 29, 2016

Thimphu will soon have a new multi-sports complex at Babena in Jungshina.

President of Bhutan Olympic Committee (BOC) HRH Prince Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck graced the salang tendril (groundbreaking ceremony) of the complex yesterday.

The multi-sports hall will have an indoor basketball court, three badminton and two volleyball courts of international standard. A cricket ground and chain-linked fencing will also be constructed.

The project worth USD 600,000 is fully funded by the Korean Sports Promotion Organisation (KSPO) of the Republic of Korea. The fund will also be used to the procure sports equipment at the complex.

BOC secretary general, Sonam Karma Tshering, said the new sports infrastructure will help promote and develop sports in the country.

"While we [BOC] continue to work zealously to make Bhutan a sporting country, the development of sports infrastructure in the country is one of our main priorities," said Sonam Karma Tshering. "We cannot thank enough to the government and the people of the Republic of Korea for this wonderful gift to Bhutan."

In 2014 Asian Games in Inchoen, Korea HRH Prince Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck and the Bhutanese delegation met with Elisa Lee, a Member of Parliament of the Republic of Korea. Elisa Lee, a former world table tennis champion,

expressed her willingness to support the development of sports in the country.

"I visited Bhutan in March 2015 and met with the officials from the BOC and also some of the athletes here," said Elisa Lee. "I could see the passion and enthusiasm for sports in young Bhutanese. But to encourage such passion, the country lacked basic facilities, equipment and infrastructures."

Elisa Lee said that after returning to Korea, she discussed the issue with the government and decided to render possible support for the development of sports in Bhutan.

"As a former athlete and now a parliamentarian, I feel the need to promote the friendship and relation between the two countries, not only through political avenues, but also through sports," said Elisa Lee. "I'm hopeful that once the facility is completed, it will foster further development of sports in Bhutan and also generate more collaboration opportunities between the two countries."

The multi-sports complex will be constructed on a six-acre land that has been leased for a period of 30 years from Thimphu Thromde.

Similar constructions are ongoing in Samdrupjongkhar, Bumthang and Punakha. A multi-sports hall in Phuntsholing will be completed in December.

The first multi-sports hall was constructed in Trashigang in December 2014.

Pakistan cannot accept China's rejection of Islam: Hafiz Sayeed

newsx.com

May 28, 2016

Lahore: Pakistan's hardline leader and the head of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), Hafiz Mohammad Sayeed, has rejected China's call to stop the practice of Islam which was made by the Chinese leadership at the recently held Second National Conference on Religion in Beijing.

Speaking to his congregation of hardline Islamists in Lahore, Sayeed said that it was true that China is Pakistan's all weather friend, but "any comment that hurts our religion, Islam, is not acceptable and we urge the Chinese leadership to take it back."

"By uttering such statements, China is hurting its time-tested relations with the people of Pakistan," said Sayeed.

Sayeed's unusual statement directed at China comes amid a strong reaction in Pakistan to China's crackdown on the practice of Islam.

While guarded in his use of language against China, Sayeed made it clear that Beijing must not take Islamabad for granted by telling its people to desist from practicing Islam.

Sayeed said that this statement by the Chinese leadership was a "challenge to the Islamic way of life" and, he called upon the Pakistan Government to "show some courage and direct China to stay away from hurting Islamic sentiments".

The hardline leader told his followers that he plans to meet the Chinese Ambassador in Islamabad to lodge his protest.

Sayeed's counter to the Chinese leadership comes in the wake of the latter warning its people, especially those living in Xinjiang province to shun Islam and to stick to China's state policy of "Marxist Atheism".

Large parts of the Chinese population living in Xinjiang province are said have become radicalised and Beijing is desperately looking at ways to de-radicalise them.

Xinjiang borders Pakistan from where China says the hardline Islamic teachings flow. China has also been subtly warning Pakistan to stop the flow of Islamic messaging to Xinjiang but to no avail.

Communist Party Officials had strongly backed President Xi's statements and cautioned citizens to be vigilant against Islamic tendencies like Halal products. They made it clear that Halal products will remain banned in China as these "promote religious segregation."

China has already declared 2016 as the "Year of Ethnic Unity and Progress", a move aimed squarely at ridding the nation of Islamic influences.

President Xi Jinping is making efforts to tighten control over religious practices, as it is his belief that religion, especially Islam, could emerge as a competing force in society unless it is nipped in the bud now.

Making China's State policy of intolerance towards Pan-Islamic tendencies very clear, President Xi warned Chinese citizens "not to confuse themselves with non-CCP approved tendencies" and to "never find their values and beliefs in this religion or any religion."

Other senior Communist Party Officials who spoke on this occasion highlighted the dangers that Islam is assuming in some parts of China, making the nation vulnerable to extremist infiltration.

Communist Party Officials strongly backed President Xi's statements and cautioned citizens to be vigilant against Islamic tendencies. While coming out strongly against Islam and Islamic traditions, the Second National Work

Conference on Religion also promoted a number of articles that expressed support for the new policies.

President Xi has now made it clear that these policies will be reinforced with renewed vigour, as China is looking at Pakistan-sponsored Islamic radicalism as the number one threat to its society.

Nepal, India discuss energy bank

The Statesman

IANS

May 28, 2016

Nepal and India have discussed setting up an energy bank to address power shortages in times of crisis.

Nepal on Friday proposed the idea at a meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Standing Committee, a bilateral mechanism on water resources, power and irrigation projects, the Kathmandu Post reported.

Both countries have discussed the idea earlier, but this was the first time that Nepal made a formal proposal.

Through the energy bank set-up Nepal would export electricity to India during the summer season and import power from India in winter, when output drops sharply resulting in crippling power shortages.

The Power Trade Agreement signed by Nepal and India in 2014 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kathmandu has opened the way for to establish an energy bank.

"The concept of an energy bank is clear: We export to India when our production exceeds domestic consumption and import during the times of crisis," said Mukesh Raj Kafle, managing director of the Nepal Electricity Authority.

India agreed to the concept, but there was no open access due to legal complications.

"The proposal is good, but we have to clear a number of regulatory provisions. We will start to work on it," he quoted Indian officials as saying.

According to Nepali officials, it depends on India's willingness to accept the idea.

Nepali officials also requested India to resume production from the 15 mw Gandak powerhouse. The plant was constructed as per the Gandak Agreement.

They requested New Delhi to build the Birpur powerhouse as soon as possible.

The two sides also discussed the construction of roads on the border.

India raised the issue of security at the border areas, and Nepal has pledged to address its concerns. The two sides also assessed the ongoing irrigation projects.

The meeting was the first official engagement between the two countries after the cancellation of President Bidya Devi Bhandari's visit to India and recalling of Nepal's ambassador Deep Kumar Upadhyay.

NCCCI, CCPIT sign MoU to promote investment in Nepal

Myrepublica.com

May 27, 2016



KATHMANDU, May 27: Nepal-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCCI) and China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to bring Chinese investment in Nepal.

Tribhubandhar Tuladhar, vice president of NCCCI and Gao Shuqian, CCPIT consultant for Gansu Province of China, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

A 13-member CCPIT team, which is currently in Nepal, also signed different MoUs with several other Nepali organisations to promote hydropower, solar energy, tourism, copper mining, logistic business and cooling houses in Nepal.

While Gansu Electric Power Investment Group Company Ltd of China and Nepali firm PK Associates have signed an agreement to promote investment in hydropower sector of Nepal, Jinchuan Group Company Ltd and S2 Solar Power have signed a pact to harness solar energy in Nepal.

Similarly, Gansu Provincial Highway Aviation Tourism Investment Group Co Ltd and Destination Management Tour and Travels Pvt Ltd of Nepal have agreed to work together for tourism promotion in Nepal. Likewise, Jinchuan Group Co Ltd of China and Asiatic International Trading Pvt Ltd of Nepal have signed agreement to promote logistic businesses in Nepal.

Addressing the signing ceremony, Rajesh Kaji Shrestha, chairman of NCCCI, said that Gansu has become an

important Chinese province for Nepal for trade especially after China started combined transport service to Nepal on March 13.

An international freight train departed from Gansu for Nepal on March 13.

"Nepal is still an unexplored country for big investments. Investors can put their money into different sectors," Shrestha said, adding: "Chinese traders can reap huge benefits by investing in sectors like tourism, construction, agriculture and hydropower."

Informing that Nepal was demonstrating its products and services through a fair in China in July, Shrestha urged Chinese trade delegation to put Nepal into priority and help to promote its products and services in China.

Speaking on the occasion, Zhang Fukul, deputy director of Commission of Industry and Information Technology of Gansu Province who is also the leader of the visiting Chinese trade delegation, said that they were in Nepal to assess investment environment in sectors like tourism, construction and agriculture, among others. "We are confident that the team finds things friendly here and brings investments to this country," said Fukul.

Strong ties with China constitute bedrock of our foreign policy: Sartaj

Business Recorder

May 23, 2016

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz on Sunday said that China was the largest trading partner of Pakistan with \$18 billion that reflected strong political links and growing economic ties between the two countries. Speaking at Pakistan-China Joint Cultural Performance here, Sartaj said that "strong relations with China were, and are, and will always, remain the bedrock of Pakistan's foreign policy." "The bond between Pakistan and China has received continuous nourishment from the leadership of both sides over the last six decades and especially in the past two years," he maintained. The adviser appreciated the cultural performance to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. "I specially welcome my Chinese friends, particularly the artists from Hunan Provincial Performing Art Group, who have travelled all the way from China to participate in this event. It shows the love and close brotherly ties which exist between our two countries," he added. Sartaj said that the 65th anniversary was not just a formal occasion as it was a unique celebration of a unique relationship, the

like of which would be difficult to find in human history. "Relations between countries experience high and low period, but not between China and Pakistan. Our relations are higher than Himalayas, deeper than oceans, sweeter than honey, dearer than eyesight, stronger than steel, and valuable than gold," he added. He said that CPEC was no doubt the latest landmark in our relations but our friendship had deep historical roots. "Monks and envoys traversed the challenging heights of the Karakorum, Hindukush and the Himalayas to connect the Gandhara and the Indus Valley Civilisations with the Chinese Civilisation," he added. "Fa Xian and Xuan Zang, in the fourth and seventh centuries respectively, crossed inaccessible altitudes of these mountain ranges. Many scholars from the territory, that is now Pakistan, travelled to China to imbibe the glorious civilisation of China," he said. Sartaj said that the reason behind the long-lasting relations was absolute mutual trust. The people of our countries rejoiced on each other's achievements and felt as one during sorrows, he said, adding both countries firmly believed in the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference. "China has always extended solid support to Pakistan's territorial integrity and independence," he added. He said that Pakistan too had upheld the one-China policy and supported China on issues concerning Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang.

Pakistan-China fibre cable project goes live in Gilgit

telecompaper.com

May 23, 2016

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has launched the Pakistan-China Optical Fiber Cable Project, which is part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Daily Pakistan reports. The project is expected to improve connectivity in Gilgit-Baltistan. Customers in the area will soon have access to 3G and 4G services, the minister said.

The Optical Fiber Cable project will involve overall investments of USD 44 million and will be completed in two years. The Special Communication Organisation will lay 820 kilometres of cable from Rawalpindi to Hunjarab. Following deployment completion, the cable is expected to provide an alternate telecommunication route between Pakistan and China.

China keen on India joining Tibet-Nepal railway network

The Hindu

May 22, 2016



AFP

The first train to depart the Lhasa railway station crosses the Lha Sa Te bridge, along the new China-Tibet rail line. File photo

Beijing is aggressively pushing connectivity in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

China is keen that India join the Tibetan rail network, a senior adviser to the Chinese government on Tibetan affairs told a group of visiting journalists at the end of a tour deep into Tibetan territories spread across three provinces.

“According to Chinese and Nepalese Prime Ministers’ discussions, this rail line should link all three sides,” said Zhang Yun, director of the Institute of History Studies at the government-run China Tibetology Research Center in Beijing. He was referring to the discussions between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and his Nepalese counterpart, K.P. Oli, during the latter’s visit to China in March.

Mr. Zhang said the Chinese side is very proactive in completing the rail link. “On the Nepal side, there is strong support for the link. On the Indian side, there is one group that believes it will help improve bilateral relations. But there is a second group which argues that it will undermine India,” he pointed out.

Mr. Zhang is part of a research team that is advising the Chinese government on Tibetan affairs.

He said the railway network of China, Nepal and India would be connected soon. “It is the only way they can benefit,” he said. “It is our strong will to form synergy between the rail networks of all three countries,” he said.

The modern high-altitude rail network in Tibet that snakes through tunnels and rises to thousands of metres, is not just an engineering marvel, but a determined showpiece of China’s ambitious financial intervention in regions

where Tibetans live. Tibetans are a majority in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and have large settlements in a few other provinces such as Sichuan and Yunnan.

Two-digit growth

Despite the slowdown in Chinese economy in recent times, the TAR continues to record two-digit growth, thanks significantly to the massive financial intervention from Beijing. According to the Chinese vision, by 2020 no region or ethnic group should be left behind in achieving a per capita of \$12,000. “Infrastructure growth will keep progressing. Farmers and herdsman will get development, not just cities,” Mr. Zhang said, justifying the broad roads and flyovers that link up even remote Tibetan villages.

As part of its aggressive investments in Tibetan regions, China is developing rail networks, roads and airports across the region at high altitudes.

The world’s highest railway station (Tanggula), the highest civilian airport (Daocheng Yading Airport) and some of the finest roads at a few thousand metres altitude are already built across provinces where Tibetans live.

China has a two-front strategy for rail networks to Tibet and within TAR. One is to build a new rail line from TAR to the mainland, which would link Sichuan’s capital Chengdu with Lhasa. This is in addition to the existing Qinghai-Tibet rail link.

Authorities are also adding six more rail lines to the Qinghai-Tibet railway line. One of them, Lhasa to Xigaze (or Shigatse), is closer to Nepal’s border.

Last week, China flagged off its first transport service to Nepal along this line. The freight train departed from Lanzhou in Gansu province for Kathmandu. At Xigaze, the freight will be moved onto trucks.

Mr. Zhang repeated the strident stand on Dalai Lama, saying he should give up the demand for independence.

Pakistan Important Partner in One Belt One Road Project: Xi

pakobservew.net

May 21, 2016

65th Anniversary of Sino-Pak ties

President, PM confident of further enhancing Pak-China ‘time-tested’ friendship

Islamabad—Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang on Friday extended felicitations to Pakistani government and people on the 65th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, terming

Pakistan a “good neighbour, close friend, trusted partner and dear brother of China”.

In their separate messages addressed to President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on the 65th anniversary falling on May 21, the Chinese leadership said China- Pakistan relations had stood the tests of changes of international and domestic situations and made headway constantly.

President Xi Jinping said China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic partners and mentioned that in recent years, their ties had maintained strong momentum of development.

“We have made positive progress in the all-round substantive cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between our two countries,” he said.

Xi Jinping said China regards Pakistan as an important partner in promoting the construction of the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’.

“The construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will lay a solid foundation for building China-Pakistan community of shared destiny,” he said.

“I attach great importance to the China-Pakistan relations, and stand ready to work with you to create a better future,” President Xi said, wishing Pakistan prosperity and well-being of its people.

Premier Li Keqiang in his message to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif termed Pakistan a “good neighbour, close friend, trusted partner and dear brother of China”.

He mentioned that over the past 65 years, both China and Pakistan had adhered to the five principles of peaceful coexistence, enjoyed political trust, carried out mutually-beneficial economic cooperation besides supporting on issues related to core interests to each other.

“China has always treated and developed the China-Pakistan relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective,” he said.

Premier Li said China stands ready to work with Pakistan to expedite the construction of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and constantly promote the development of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

He expressed confidence that China-Pakistan friendship would be carried forward from generation to generation and become even stronger with time.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in his message to Prime Minister’s Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said China and Pakistan have always enjoyed mutual understanding, respect and support from each other.

“Our two countries have established a rock-solid political mutual trust, developed all-weather friendship and carried out all- round cooperation,” he said.

Wang Yi said China has always taken Pakistan as the priority of its foreign policy and expressed commitment to make unremitting efforts to promote the development of closer all- weather strategic cooperative partnership.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Sun Weidong in his message titled ‘China-Pakistan friendship: Common dreams, Shared destiny’ said the multi-faceted, time-tested and long-enduring China-Pakistan relationship had become a shining example for South-South cooperation and relations between countries.

“The past 65 years have witnessed that China and Pakistan always extend sincere understanding, firm support and selfless assistance to each other, in particular on the issues of core interests,” he said.

He mentioned that China-Pakistan relations had entered into the new stage of grand development with Chinese President Xi Jinping’s successful state visit to Pakistan last year.

“The relationship is featured with frequent exchange of high- level visits, enhanced strategic mutual trust, extensive and fruitful cooperation with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as the main platform, vibrant people-to-people contacts, and much closer collaboration on international and regional issues,” he said.

The ambassador emphasised that achievements of China-Pakistan relations over the past 65 years are hard won and should be carried forward from generation to generation.

“In the days to come, we should take the consensus reached by our leaders as the guidance for our future cooperation,” he said.

Wishing “China-Pakistan dosti Zindabad (long live Pak-China friendship)”, he said, “We should safeguard our common interests and realise our common dreams”.

Meanwhile, President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif have expressed confidence that Pakistan and China would continue their efforts to enhance and reinforce friendship between their two peoples.

The President and Prime Minister expressed this confidence in their separate messages on the occasion of 65th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China falling on Saturday (May 21). President Mamnoon Hussain in his message said, “Pakistan and China enjoy time-tested and all-weather friendship. It is a unique friendship. We are good neighbours, close friends, trusted partners, and iron brothers. We have elevated our

relationship to all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.”

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in his message said, “Pakistan and China enjoy a unique, close and durable relationship. China is a true, time-tested and all-weather friend of Pakistan. This year we are celebrating the 65th anniversary of establishment of our diplomatic relations with China. Over these 65 years, our relationship has grown from strength to strength.”

“Relations between Pakistan and China are marked by a high degree of understanding, trust and goodwill. At the official and popular levels, there is strong resonance of the long and rich history of close and cordial ties,” he added.

The Prime Minister said, “We have endeavoured to strengthen and deepen our all-weather strategic cooperative partnership with China. Our two governments have designated the China Pakistan Economic Corridor as the flagship project for economic rejuvenation, a peaceful neighbourhood and for building a ‘Community of Common Destiny’.”—APP

Gilgit-Baltistan police starts patrolling CPEC route

newkerala.com

May 26, 2016

Gilgit (Pakistan), May 26 : To ensure security as work on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is under way, the Gilgit-Baltistan police have started patrolling in the Diamer district.

Muhammad Wakeel, a police inspector, said that at least 10 police vehicles have been set aside for the purpose.

"The SHOs and SDPOs in the valley will monitor the patrolling process under the supervision of SSP Shoaib Khurram," the Express Tribune quoted him as saying.

Wakeel added that the officers, who are patrolling the district, have been adequately trained and they will be available round-the-clock to help the people and respond to any eventualities.

The move comes two months after Beijing donated twenty-five vehicles to the Gilgit-Baltistan government as part of CPEC.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had inaugurated the CPEC patrolling police headquarters during his visit to Gilgit earlier this month.

The patrolling force comprises 300 personnel and twenty-five vehicles which will help ensure safe and smooth flow

of traffic on the 439-kilometre chunk of the CPEC project in the region.



Nepal PM Oli is committed for development of Lumbini

Business Standard

May 22, 2016

Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said that his government is committed for the development of Lumbini, the birth place of Buddha by implementing the Lumbini Development Master Plan.

Speaking at a special ceremony organised on the occasion of 2560th Buddha Jayanti in Lumbini on Saturday, the Prime Minister said that the Lumbini Development Master Plan should be taken ahead as soon as possible.

'Lumbini is not only the birth place of Lord Budhha, but also the fountain of love and compassion,' he said.

He went on to say that the government has been doing its best to bring peace and prosperity in the country after the twin earthquakes last year.

Prime Minister Oli further said that the unity shown by the people after the devastating earthquake of April 25 last year was extra ordinary.

Oli said that the post-quake reconstruction works will be completed within five years.

'We have settled most of the political issues after the promulgation of constitution,' the Prime Minister said.

He further said that his government's topmost priority was development.

He further said that his government's topmost priority was development to change the economic landscape of the country.

Govt told to start work for granting transit rights to India, China

myrepublica.com

May 20, 2016

Experts have proposed to the government start homework for granting transit rights to both the neighbours.

Presenting a paper entitled 'Toward a New Framework for Nepal's Trade and Industrial diversification' at the International Conference on Key Trends in China-Nepal-India Relations and New Development Strategy for Nepal in Kathmandu on Friday, former finance secretary Rameshwar Khanal said that the two neighbors - India and China - will, sooner or later, ask for transit rights. "Nepal should start homework right now to make sure that transit agreements would be in its favour," he added.

He also proposed implementing connectivity infrastructure projects that support transit and trade diversification in the changed context of recent trade and transit blockade.

As the need of the hour is to diversify trade for a self-reliant economy, Khanal also proposed promoting energy-intensive industries, developing cross-border energy market and economic corridors along north-south transit routes, and promoting high value niche products and specialised services for trade diversification.

"Nepal has failed to diversify trade and transit even though each periodic plan - after the second periodic plan - has been emphasising on trade diversification, export promotion, foreign investment promotion," Khanal said, adding that the country is still harping on trade diversification after six decades of the planned development practice.

Nepal started planned development practice from 1956 when over 95 percent of its trade was with India. Trade with Tibetan Autonomous Region of China was confined to border region and most of it was bartering. Nepal had little to export to outside world then.

With foreign assistance, particularly from the then Soviet Union and China, critical manufacturing factories that aimed at import substitution were established in the decade following 1956. But following the calibrated reforms of 1985-86, policy reforms spanning all sectors of the economy were implemented between 1990 and 1992, he added. "The reforms led to trade diversification, growth of manufacturing sector, export growth, and some of the positive changes could also be seen lasting until 1998."

However, overall development policy did not support the Trade and Industrial Policies started during the economic reforms of post-1990.

Lack of continuity of reforms, weak institutions, and above all no infrastructure support held back the growth, Khanal said.

Commenting on his paper, CEO of Investment Board Nepal Radhesh Pant said that finance is not the problem for infrastructure development in Nepal. "Finance is the least of the problems," he said, giving examples of how foreign investors have been eager on putting money on Nepal's infrastructure development ranging from hydropower projects to cement factories.

Nepal needs huge investment in infrastructure development to meet the gap that can fuel economic growth, according to former member of the National Planning Commission (NPC) Swarnim Wagle. Hailing Chinese approach to development, Wagle said that quick delivery of aid without strings attached is also key to infrastructure development in Nepal.

In his paper on 'Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Infrastructure Construction in South Asian Countries', Prof Dai Yonghong, Director -- Center for Myanmar Studies in Sichuan University and Deputy Director -- Center for Nepal Studies in Sichuan University, highlighted benefits of Nepal as a transit economy. "It will help strengthening sub-regional cooperation between Sichuan-Tibet and SAARC, adjusting the area of cooperation, establishing Sino-Nepal FTA, and build Nepal overland trade route," he said, adding that it will also strengthen infrastructure development in border areas, apart from expansion of trade preferences and encourage investment, and expanding tourism cooperation, innovation and tourism business one-stop service mode.

imported goods from China arrive in Kyirong

Kathmandu Post-

May 19, 2016

After a week-long journey, Nepali goods dispatched on China's freight train from Lanzhou, capital of Gansu Province in Northwest China, arrived in Kyirong on Tuesday night.

More than a dozen traders had ordered the goods, including readymade garment, electronic appliances and kitchenware, through the route.

The train travelled 2,431km from Lanzhou to Shigatse carrying 20 tonnes of goods each in 50 wagons on its

maiden journey. From there, the goods were transported to Kyirong—160 km north to Kathmandu --by cargo trucks.

The traders said the transportation distance on the Lanzhou-Shigatse-Kyirong route has been cut down to 10 days from usual 45 days on the sea route—China-Kolkata port to Kathmandu. Transporting goods through the Lanzhou-Shigatse-Kyirong using cargo trucks takes some 21 days.

Kumar Karki, president of Nepal Trade Association, said shipping goods in railway through the northern border has significantly reduced the time.

“The shipping cost has also been reduced to some extent. If the goods are transported to Kyirong directly through railway, the cost will go down sharply,” he said.

The Chinese railway service is extended only up to Shigatse. The distance between Shigatse and Kyirong, from where goods have to be ferried in cargo trucks, is 564km. “As loading and unloading goods in Shigatse and Kyirong need to be done multiple times, the cost has not dropped, but the travel distance has been reduced by one-fourth,” said Karki.

He said it costs Rs34 per kg while transporting goods by cargo trucks on the route, and the cost is almost the same if the goods are transported through railway.

Traders normally use two routes—China-Kolkata-Kathmandu sea route and Lanzhou-Shigatse-Kyirong—for importing goods from China. However, most of them prefer to use the sea route due to low shipping costs.

Karki said the transportation cost on the China-Kolkata-Kathmandu route is Rs350,000 per container, while the cost is almost double on the Lanzhou-Shigatse-Kyirong route.

He said they have to hire truck drivers from Rasuwagadhi to transport goods from Kyirong.

“As the Chinese authority in Kyirong does not allow other than locals of Rasuwagadhi to cross the border, we have to hire drivers from there,” said Karki. “Due to the reason, importers could not travel to Kyirong to check their imported goods.”

Karki said the government should hold bilateral talks with China to allow other truck drivers to travel to Kyirong.

Beijing ‘sends’ freight train for Nepal

Kathmandu Post

May 13, 2016-

Departed from Lanzhou as first combined transport service to Kathmandu on Wednesday

China has opened its first combined transport service (rail and road) to Nepal with an international freight train departing from Lanzhou, the capital city of northwestern China’s Gansu province, for Kathmandu, on Wednesday.

People’s Daily of China reported that the final destination of the international freight train is Kathmandu, but rail transport will change over to road transport in Shigatse (Xigaze), Tibet.

It will take 10 day for the consignment to reach Kathmandu, the newspaper reported.

The journey includes 2,431 kilometres of rail transport from Lanzhou to Shigatse, 564 kilometres of road transport from Shigatse to Kyirong (Geelong Port) and 160 kilometres of road transport from Kyirong to Kathmandu.

Altogether, the combined transport takes 35 days fewer than traditional ocean transport would, according to the paper.

On the development, Nepali officials and businessmen said though Nepal and China have recently signed Transit Transport Agreement, it will take great commitments from both the sides to make this combined route commercially feasible.

Nepali officials in Beijing and Kathmandu, however, said they were not aware about the international freight train leaving China for Kathmandu and that they had read reports about it.

The Nepali Embassy in Beijing said it has no official information regarding the international freight.

“I got to know about the freight train with destination Kathmandu through news reports. The event seems to be private in nature,” said Nirmal Raj Kafle, deputy head of Nepali mission in Beijing. “It could be an one-off event as well.”

An official at the Ministry of Commerce in Kathmandu said “multiple talks” were held in the past with the Chinese government for connecting Shigatse-Keyirong, the border point of Nepal-China through railway. “However, no further efforts have been made by our government in recent times,” said the source.

Purushottam Dhungel, consul officer at Lhasha, Tibet, also seemed to have received the information through media reports. Nevertheless, Dhungel said that officials from

Lanzhou had visited Nepal on multiple occasions. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen economic cooperation between Kathmandu and Langzhou, according to him.

“On March 4, Deputy Party Secretary of Lanzhou Municipality Wuduo Mao

had visited Nepal,” said Dhungel. “We had informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kathmandu about the visit.”

On May 5, an official of Langzhou Municipality had visited consul office at Lhasa and informed that a cargo train would leave for Nepal this week, according to Dhungel.

“The official neither informed about goods being shipped nor about the receiver of the goods in Nepal,” he added.

The consul officer at Lhasa said they have got unconfirmed information that

these goods have been ordered by traders who used to import products via Tatopani route.

Around six Chinese people including two journalists have acquired visa for Nepal and are on board the train.

Int'l Conference on Key Trends in China-Nepal-India Ties Starts

myrepublica.com

May 19, 2016

KATHMANDU, May 19: A two-day conference on the key trends in China-Nepal-India relations and new development strategy for Nepal has begun in the capital on Thursday.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Physical Infrastructure Transport Management, Bijaya Kumar Gachchhadar, inaugurated the conference organised by South Asian Institute of Management, the Institute for Integrated Development Studies and Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

In his inaugural statement DPM Gachchhadar said that in consideration of the recent developments in terms of China in 2013 announcing to revive the Land-based Northern Silk Road and the Great Maritime Highway under the 'One Belt, One Road' and India's recent policy of 'neighbours first' and 'look east and act east' with both countries emphasising on improved connectivity within Asia and the rest of the world, it was high time for Nepal to review its past, understand the present and chart a suitable strategic path for its development.

Nepal lies between two fast growing nations of the world - India and China and this in itself provides a great opportunity for Nepal, he argued.

"China's shift in its economic policy and gradual tilt towards private sector, its entry into WT, expansion of manufacturing base and activities, increasing role in the global trade have made China a very attractive market," DPM Gachchhadar, said, referring to the economic opportunities that could be capitalised by Nepal for its economic development..

Stating that China's recent attempts to revive Land-based Northern Silk Road and the Great Maritime Highway under the 'One Belt, One Road', announced in 2013 are expected to enhance connectivity of Asian nations with those of Europe, he said a country like Nepal facing the problem of high trading costs could benefit from this improved connectivity within Asia and also globally.

"At the same time, India has always been a trading partner of Nepal from the time immemorial. Nepal's binding with India culturally, socially, religiously and economically has always been a solid basis for relations which lies above petty squabbling between the two nations noe and then. India's recent policy of neighbour first and 'look east and act east' is expected to add a new dimension to the relations between Nepal and India," he said.

Noting that the earthquake of April and the unpleasant situation created through disruption of supply of essential goods last year made the lives of people difficult and hard, he said despite the grave problems facing the nation, people showed their patience and unity, which is highly appreciable. "Nepal is currently passing through a time which is tumultuous as well as challenging. The people showed that they are eager to solve the problems through mutual understanding and cooperation, despite of some discrepancies and misunderstandings here and there," he added.

Chairman of the South Asian Institute of Management and former Foreign Minister Dr Prakash Chandra Lohani said both China and India are Nepal's well-wishers but Nepal has much connection and interaction with India due to the open border and the cultural and religious ties.

He stressed that Nepal needed to collaborate both with India and China for the proper development of its vast water resources.

SAIM Dean Prof Dr Bijaya KC, IIDS executive director Dr Bishnu Dutta Panta and professor of the Nanyang Technological University Ming Jiyang emphasised on the need of focusing the Nepal's strategic location between India and China for the prosperity of the three countries.

Former Indian ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood, Nepal expert Mahendra P Lama, professor Jiyang, former Finance Minister Madhukar Shumsher JB Rana, water resource expert Deepak Gyawali, former vice-president of the Asian Development Bank, Bindunath Lohani, former Finance Secretary Rameshwar Khanal, among other experts will present working papers in the conference.

PM Performs Groundbreaking Pakistan-China Optical Fiber Cable Project in Gilgit

radio.gov.pk

May 19, 2016

Nawaz Sharif says the federal government is determined to steer the country out of all challenges.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif says China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project will put the country on the path of sustainable development.

He was addressing ground breaking ceremony of Pakistan-China Optical Fiber Cable project in Gilgit on Thursday.

The Prime Minister said the mega project will not only bring economic benefits to the people, but also help to address the issue of extremism by creating job opportunities for the youth.

Nawaz Sharif said the federal government is determined to steer the country out of all challenges and has also achieved significant success in this regard.

He said Pakistan-China Optical Fiber cable project will bring 3-G and 4-G services to Gilgit Baltistan. He said Gilgit-Baltistan will soon emerge as the most developed area with the launching Optical Fiber like projects.

The Prime Minister directed the authorities concerned to expand the network of Pakistan-China Optical Fiber cable project to Gwadar and other areas of the country.

He also announced the construction of a technical training institute in Gilgit to equip youth of the area with the modern technical education.

Earlier, the Prime Minister inaugurated Gilgit Baltistan CPEC Patrolling Police in Gilgit.

The patrolling force, comprising three hundred personnel, will help ensure safe and smooth flow of traffic on the 439 Kilometer long chunk of the corridor project in Gilgit Baltistan.

China has gifted twenty-five vehicles for the patrolling police. Later, addressing a ceremony after administering oath to newly elected members of Gilgit-Baltistan Council, the Prime Minister said construction work on Diamer-

Bhasha Dam will soon be started to meet the growing energy requirements of the country.

He said the federal government has approved one



hundred and five billion rupees for the acquisition of land for the dam.

Nawaz Sharif said work on Dasu will also start very soon. He said that a hydel project will also be installed at Attabad lake, which will help produce twenty seven megawatt of electricity.

Chairing annual meeting of the Gilgit-Baltistan Council in Gilgit, the Prime Minister directed for launching Prime Minister Youth Loan Program in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Seeking report on promotion of tourism in the area, he said special measures should be taken for security of the Chinese tourists.

The meeting approved Council's annual budget of over 831 million rupees for 2015-2016. Policies for tourism promotion and protection of forests were also given approval.

During the visit, Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif also launched the website for Diamer Bhasha Dam.

Deputy Commissioner Diamer Usman Ahmed informed the Prime Minister that high-resolution satellite imagery was being used to help identify and demarcate the lands of the affected people and pay them compensation in transparent manner.

Diamer residents threaten to halt dam construction

tribune.com.pk

May 11, 2016

"We will not allow work on the dam unless the boundary issue is settled," Lambardar Bashir said during a press conference in Gilgit on Tuesday. "The demarcation should be done under the supervision of the army."

The elders of Thore Valley accused Kohistan MPA Abdul Sattar of taking money from the Indian intelligence agency, RAW, for sabotaging the dam and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The notables with Bashir said the strip of land belonged to the forefathers of people who are settled in Thore since long.

They added commute on the Karakoram Highway has become a nightmare due to the dispute. Therefore, they demanded police take action against those disrupting law and order. "If the situation is not settled amicably, there are chances it will be settled after bloodshed."

The elders also refused to accept the report of a commission which was formed to settle the dispute.

The nearly 10-kilometre stretch of land on both sides of the Basari check post, which separates Kohistan from G-B, has long been a bone of contention between people of Thore Valley in Diamer and Harban Nala in Kohistan. The disputed land is among the areas being demarcated for acquisition for the much-awaited dam.

Pak-origin Brussels MP signs petition against illegal annexation of Gilgit Baltistan

hindustantimes.com

May 10, 2016

Brussels Capital Region lawmaker Dr Manzoor Zahoor Ellahi has signed a petition extending his support in creating awareness regarding the proposed annexation of Gilgit Baltistan and the construction of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Ellahi, a Pakistani-born lawmaker and a member of the Socialist Party of Belgium (Parti Socialiste), also happens to be the doctor of Pakistani embassy in Brussels.

He signed the petition along with Motaher Chowdhury, the local councilor for Ixelles-Brussels.

The Europe-wide signature campaign is being organised by Junaid Qureshi, a Kashmiri writer, international human rights activist and a senior leader of the Jammu Kashmir Democratic Liberation Party (JKDLP).

In Brussels, the Signature Campaign was held on May 7 and 8.

The organiser for Overseas Affairs of United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP) based in Pakistani Administered Kashmir, Dr. Ishaq Khan, also visited the venue of the signature campaign to sign the petition and expressed his support.

"We stand against all designs which divide our motherland

further and we will not allow anyone to loot our resources. We stand against the division of Jammu and Kashmir, the proposed annexation of Gilgit Baltistan by Pakistan and the construction of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor which is being built without any say or consent from the people of Gilgit Baltistan," he said.

Meanwhile, Qureshi expressed his satisfaction regarding the progress of the Signature Campaign.

"Hundreds of signatures were already collected in the first leg of the signature campaign in The Netherlands. Brussels, being the unofficial capital of Europe, seat of the European Parliament and home to other European institutions, proved to be a very successful city for our Campaign," he said.

He hoped to gather the same positive response from the public in Vienna, Geneva, Paris and various cities of UK.

Talking about the campaign, he said, "More than three thousand pamphlets and flyers were distributed to the public and more than 500 signatures were collected in just 2 days. I am also very humbled by the visit and support of MP Manzoor Zahoor Ellahi and Councilor Motaher Chowdhury. It clearly shows that human rights issues stand above party politics or other sentimental alliances".

Expressing his delight over Ellahi's support, Qureshi said, "It is very encouraging to see that a Pakistani MP is supporting our efforts against the annexation of Gilgit Baltistan and the construction of CPEC. This should serve as a wake-up call to the Pakistani establishment and all other supporters of Pakistan's duplicitous policy on Jammu and Kashmir."

Chinese Team Starts Hydrocarbon Exploration in Nepal's Western District

May 9, 2016

KATHMANDU: A team of Chinese experts on Sunday launched a study on prospects for minerals, gas and oil at Shreesthan in Dailekh, a western district of Nepal, which, officials claim, holds petroleum products in abundance.

It is after a gap of two decades that the Nepal government has allowed Chinese geologists to begin hydrocarbon exploration in the western part of the country in a bid to become self-reliant.

Six Chinese experts are involved in the exploration bid, according to a government statement issued here.

The Chinese team will carry out the feasibility study on all 10 petroleum blocks in Nepal sprawled from east to west.

The Chinese team will report its findings in about a month on the exploration prospects apart from the amount of petroleum products that could be harnessed in the district.

The study comes in the wake of an agreement between Nepal and China during Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's visit to the communist country in March, said Minister for Industry Som Prasad Pandey, who kick-started the exploration venture.

Under the agreement, China was also to help in the construction of at least three petroleum reservoirs in Nepal.

China will also extend technical and financial help to Nepal in exploration.

Nepal began exploring for hydrocarbons some three decade ago and awarded several contracts to international firms. But the attempts were not a success due to lack of political will and adequate budget.

China pips India in aid to Nepal; Delhi out of top five donors' list

Times of India

May 9, 2016

NEW DELHI: If it is Nepal's growing proximity with China that is making PM K P Sharma Oli act in a cavalier fashion, some of the resultant damage for India could be self-inflicted. While India denies that it was responsible for the blockade which threatened to cripple Nepal's economy, the fact is that the recent strain in India-Nepal relations has coincided with China surpassing India in the list of top aid donors to Nepal.

The latest report by the Nepal government on official development assistance (ODA) shows that in FY 2014-2015, India's ODA disbursement to Nepal plummeted by over 50 per cent in the first year of the NDA government, allowing Beijing to overtake India in the list of top assistance providers.

While China's disbursement of ODA stood at \$ 37.95 million, India accounted for a little over \$ 22 million. This is the first time in the past 5 years that India is not in the list of top 5 ODA providers (in terms of disbursement) among Nepal's bilateral development partners. China is now in 4th position, after UK, US and Japan, and followed by Switzerland.

Nepal's latest Development Cooperation Report acknowledges that India and China have also provided technical assistance to Nepal through scholarships, training and study tours conducted in their countries and

which is not fully reflected in the total volume of assistance.

“Though, both of these countries are very important aid providers to Nepal, the assistance received from them has not been well reported as in the previous years,” it says. India has also committed \$ 1400 million for Nepal's earthquake reconstruction work as against China's \$ 766 million.

The problem for India though, not unlike what it faced in Sri Lanka when Mahinda Rajapaksa was president, is China's increasing involvement in landmark infrastructure projects in the Himalayan nation, including the construction of Nepal's second international airport in Pokhara, which is helping it win the battle of perception.

Oli stunned New Delhi last week by blocking President Bidhya Devi Bhandari's visit to India because of, as has been widely reported from Kathmandu, India's “intervention in the internal affairs of Nepal”. As PM, Oli pulled himself back from the precipice last week with a last minute agreement with UCPN (Maoist) Chairman P K Dahal Prachanda who, in the end, decided not to wreck the Left alliance. The 2 leaders' mutual suspicion of India seems to be one of the reasons for the deal, which could soon see Oli vacating PM's chair for Prachanda.

Oli was always uncomfortable with India's resistance to Nepal's new and divisive Constitution which has turned the Madhesis restive. He now seems convinced India was trying to engineer an alliance between Prachanda and Nepali Congress, the main Opposition party, to topple his government.

Oli has clearly sought to get his own back on India by feeding New Delhi's insecurity about China's growing engagement with Nepal, most notably with his visit to China in March which saw him signing 10 agreements with Beijing. As the Chinese foreign ministry said after his visit, Oli proposed extension of the planned Chinese rail link to Gyirong near the Tibet-Nepal border further into Nepal, an attempt to neutralise in the future India's advantage of geography in the region. To further reduce its dependence on India, Nepal also signed a trade transit treaty with China during Oli's visit, which will allow Nepal to access Chinese ports, and is also discussing the possibility of an FTA with China.

Arunachal MP Wants to Visit China But not on Stapled Visa

Northeasttoday.in

May 3, 2016

Declaring himself as a “proud Indian”, Congress lawmaker from Arunachal Pradesh Ninong Ering on Monday said in the Lok Sabha he wishes to visit China to meet the members of the Lohoba tribe but asserted that he will not do so on a “stapled visa”.

“I want to visit China as a proud Indian and not go there through the backdoor like other MPs have done. I will go there on a regular visa and not a stapled visa,” Mr Ering said. “I will prefer to take the bullet on the chest,” said the lawmaker from Arunachal East.

China, which lays claim over Arunachal Pradesh, has a policy of issuing stapled visas to residents of the state. Mr Ering, who belongs to the Adi tribe, said he wanted to visit China to meet the members of the Lohoba tribe.

“We speak the same dialect and have the same dress code. On the Chinese side the tribe is known as Lohoba while on the Indian side its known as Adi,” Mr Ering added while participating in a debate on Demand for Grants of the Ministries of Civil Aviation and Tourism.

When later asked about the issue, Mr Ering said some “BJP MPs” had visited China through “backdoor”

Other News from the PRC

Political Motives Seen in Beijing's Warning on 'Himalayan Viagra'

Voice of America

June 1, 2016

In high-alpine meadows of the Tibetan Plateau, early May is an auspicious time to prostrate oneself on the loamy, reclining slopes and dig around for desiccated remnants of a medicinally hallowed caterpillar fungus.

Revered as the “Viagra of the Himalayas,” *Cordyceps Sinensis* is better known across Asia by its traditional Tibetan name, yartsa gunbu, which literally translates as “summer grass, winter worm.” Neither grass nor worm, the coveted delicacy—blended in health drinks or sprinkled over entrees in China’s swankest restaurants—is the fungal bloom of mummified Ghost Moth larvae. Fetching thousands of dollars per pound, its storied powers as a medicinal cure-all have been overshadowed only by its more marketable reputation as a high-octane aphrodisiac, the result of commercial initiatives that have enriched many of Tibet’s struggling nomadic pastoralists.

That’s why a handful of noted research scientists wonder why there’s been such little scrutiny of the research backing a public health warning from China’s State Food and Drug Administration (CFDA). Citing unsafe levels of cancer-causing arsenic in the fungus, the February 2016 announcement triggered a moratorium on pilot programs designed to expand the organism’s commercial development and distribution. While scientists question the research supporting the decision, some free Tibet advocates say science has nothing to do with it.

Tracing Source of Elevated Arsenic

As the Himalayan winter sets in, parasitic fungi nestled in tundra some 3,000-5,000 meters above sea level begin preying upon burrowing caterpillars, consuming their innards before sending a slim horn up through the dead insect’s head. The matchstick-thin protuberances—difficult to spot in the springtime scrub-grass and weeds—often require the sharp-eyed vision of young children, whose schools typically close to accommodate families that depend upon the harvest.

“*Cordyceps* are considered one of the most valuable medicines in Chinese medicine, historically,” says Professor

Karl Tsim of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, explaining that the rare fungus allegedly boosts the immune system, restores youthfulness, improves sexual vigor and even treats some forms of cancer. Records of its health benefits can be traced for nearly 1,000 years, which is why Tsim decided to investigate soil samples from several Tibetan harvesting grounds.

Commissioned with funding from government officials in Hong Kong—a thriving market for the fungus—Tsim's study began when CFDA officials doubled down on their public health warning, announcing plans to end a yartsa gunbu pilot program launched in August 2012. According to state-run *Xinhua* news, the five-year pilot program had permitted several large pharmaceutical companies to use yartsa gunbu as a raw ingredient in a range of health food products. If the programs had become permanent, harvest contracts likely would have provided a windfall for people in the Tibetan areas where yartsa gunbu is already a backbone of the rural economy.

What Tsim's team found, however, produced more questions than answers. While arsenic levels in three Tibetan soil samples were slightly higher than those found near Hong Kong, preliminary results show no indication that resulting crops could be contaminated.

Normal levels

Naturally present in the earth's crust, trace concentrations of arsenic are commonly found in staples such as brown rice. However, a 2012 joint working document of the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture and World Health organisations indicates that rice-paddy irrigation practices, not soil contamination, were the culprit.

"As a result of naturally occurring metabolic processes in the biosphere, arsenic occurs in a large number of organic or inorganic chemical forms in food," the documents says, adding that "analysis of total arsenic in food has up to date suffered from difficulties with respect to accuracy and precision."

"Available data about the possible human exposure to inorganic arsenic ... suggest that the [permissible human weekly exposure] will normally not be exceeded, unless there is a large contribution from drinking water," it says.

Because arsenic-concentration levels fluctuate across different harvesting grounds, Tsim says trace amounts of the substance are to be expected, and that his soil samples reveal no indication of inorganic contaminants, let alone grounds for a public health warning. Furthermore, alpine meadows—exposed only to rainwater and, sometimes, glacial runoff—aren't irrigated. Indeed, the only quantitatively provable threat to public health

would be if the fungus, which is literally worth its weight in gold, were consumed in unreasonably large quantities.

"Nobody can eat 100 grams at one time," let alone afford that type of routine diet, he said. "If we look at numbers, whatever arsenic that we intake for a certain period of time is very minimal."

Dr. Michelle Stewart, an Amherst College-based conservationist who conducted field research on Tibetan yartsa gunbu production, says although traces of arsenic in various individual caterpillar fungi "could be possible," cases are typically isolated.

"I wouldn't call it grounds to issue an alarmist reaction to caterpillar fungus broadly," she told VOA. But a sustainable and financially vibrant yartsa gunbu industry could, she added, impede some of Beijing's long-term regional development strategies.

"China's idealised development model [for Tibet] would probably be based on settling nomadic populations in urban areas and transitioning their livelihoods into, if possible, non-skilled labor positions in towns or small-scale businesses," Stewart said. "But the caterpillar fungus economy has actually been able to allow Tibetans to stay in their pastoral livelihoods and make money."

For staunch critics of China's Tibet policy, the sudden cancellation of pilot programs smacks of economic hegemony.

"The Chinese are the colonisers in Tibet," said Lhukar Jam, a Dharmasala-based advocate of self-rule who recently ran for head of Tibet's exiled government.

"The colonisers don't want their subjects to become politically, economically and culturally ... equal to them," he said, accusing Beijing of conspiring to undermine Tibet's growing middle class. "The Chinese government fundamentally feels threatened when they see people on the Tibetan Plateau gain power through the economy. They don't want to have genuine economic development in Tibet."

Kalsang Gyaltzen Bapa, a China analyst and member of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, also cites a relationship between stable livelihoods and political activism in some Tibetan communities.

"The Chinese government uses the economy to gain people's obedience, which has achieved some success," Bapa told VOA, calling Tibetans who are financially dependent upon Beijing's sustained rule—government employees or retired people, for example—"politically paralysed."

Financially independent Tibetans, he added, are more likely to think independently, and therefore support movements for a return to self-governance.

Over the course of three months, at least four email requests and phone calls seeking CFDA commentary on the public health warning, and response to its subsequent criticism, went unanswered.

Pattern of controlled development

Ever since Ex-Premier Jiang Zemin's "Great Western Development" policies, China has expanded efforts to lure Tibetan farmers and nomads into new housing developments with a combination of subsidies and interest-free loans. Coupled with high-tech rail and infrastructural development campaigns designed to create a widespread middle class by 2020, none of Beijing's grand economic strategies have supplanted the tiny parasitic worm's power to elevate the average Tibetan household.

According to one yartsa gunbu dealer who asked to remain anonymous, a family with good harvesters stand to make as much as 1,000,000 yuan (about \$150,000) within the two month harvest window. One tangible sign of the economic progress is visible on the roads. In 2014, Xinhua reported that the Tibetan Autonomous Region had an estimated 325,000 privately owned cars—one for every 10 people in the region, with the highest concentration of ownership in yartsa gunbu harvesting hotspots.

According to chinadialogue.com, Tibet's annual yartsa gunbu haul earns local collectors some \$1 billion annually. But reports from the bi-lingual environmental publication also suggest production may well exceed what's reported to authorities. Daniel Winkler, a Seattle-based ecologist who has done extensive research on the fungus, puts annual global yields closer to 100 to 200 tons. With 96.4 percent of global supply coming from Tibet, annual revenues may well exceed the \$2 billion mark.

Anti-corruption parallels

The specter of greed and corruption inevitably shadow high-volume sales of any precious commodity. As President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign was launched, yartsa gunbu, which is often exploited to leverage "Guanxi"—the personal connections and networks in which the exchange of expensive and often exotic gifts are key to building influence in politics or business—was an easy target.

February's CFDA announcement declaring yartsa gunbu a threat to public health occurred just as President Xi's anti-corruption campaign gained nationwide momentum.

"The place within the Guanxi—which some people say is bribery—within that economy, the value (of yartsa gunbu) has diminished slightly in the past year," she said.

Whether any political motivations are driving the Chinese government's claim to public health concerns about the fungus is yet to be seen. But Professor Tsim, who continues evaluating soil samples, says any regulatory action on the fungus inevitably affects the livelihood of Tibetans. The CFDA announcement has yet to impact Hong Kong prices, he said, and one eBay seller recently posted the fungus for about \$78,000 per pound.

"[For] many of those of people, their lives all depended on collection of Cordyceps," Tsim said. "So in Tibet, many of those local people, their daily income [depends upon] the collection of Cordyceps. So I suppose that before we place that hold [on pilot projects], we need to know what we are talking about."

In a first, China's Tibet think-tank to open doors to India

India Today

May 31, 2016

The China Tibetology Research Centre (CTRC) in Beijing, which this week hosted Bharatiya Janata Party leader and MP Subramanian Swamy as well as Indian Embassy officials, has discussed expanding links with India.

China's premier government think-tank that advises Tibet policy has for the first time signalled its readiness to open its doors to India, officials said, with moves underfoot to initiate exchanges between Indian and China-based Tibetan academics.

The China Tibetology Research Centre (CTRC) in Beijing, which this week hosted Bharatiya Janata Party leader and MP Subramanian Swamy as well as Indian Embassy officials, has discussed expanding links with India. In the past, India has always been viewed with particular sensitivity, officials say, given the Dalai Lama's presence and the sizeable Tibetan community.

Indian scholars in Tibet universities

While the CTCR is an official think-tank that parrots Beijing's views on Tibet, exchanges could for the first time open up universities in Tibet to Indian scholars on a large scale considering the CTCR's ties.

"The CTCR said they had cooperation with 22 countries but I was surprised to find very little with India," said Dr. Swamy. "I will write to the Prime Minister and suggest we look at a joint formal collaboration between the CTCR and an institution such as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), which is currently headed by Professor Lokesh Chandra, who is himself a prominent Tibetologist."

Swamy said this could open up Tibet and its universities to Indian scholars and vice-versa. He has also proposed installing a first ever chair on Hindu religious studies in a university in Tibet as well as a chair on Mahayana Buddhism in an institution in India.

"The time has come for us to normalise our relations with China to the extent that we can interact across the border, whether in Tibet or Xinjiang, which would boost economic cooperation and the ability of tourists to travel," he said.

China to reconsider UNSC stance?

Dr. Swamy, who is in China at the invitation of a foreign ministry-linked think-tank and will undertake the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage in Tibet starting this week, said he was of the view following interactions with officials in Beijing that recent strains in ties, such as over China blocking India's moves at the United Nations Security Council to list the Jaish-e-Muhammad chief Masood Azhar, could be ironed out. Among the officials he met was the head of the foreign affairs committee of the Chinese upper house, as well as a vice-minister of the finance ministry.

China would likely be amenable if India submitted an application that focused primarily on hard evidence linked with Azhar rather than generally censure Pakistan as an epicentre of terror.

"If India in the UN concentrated more on getting Azhar rather than seeking a censure of Pakistan as a sponsor of terror, as a tactical move that would be more prudent," he said. "Based on what I have learnt here, I would be very surprised if China continued to obstruct, once it is limited to hard evidence."

"My impression is India can expect cooperation from China on the issue of dealing with Masood Azhar as a terrorist who should face trial in India," he said, adding that a tripartite approach with China, India and Pakistan could help iron out differences on the terror issue, especially with China becoming, like India, a party increasingly affected by terror emanating from Pakistan.

CCP shoulders mission of national revival

cctv.com

May 31, 2016

By Li Cunnan, special commentator with Panview

July 1, 2016 is the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. The Party began as a small boat, and despite experiencing strong winds and rain, it made every effort to move forward, and had emerged into a big ship.

Today, the international community is paying close attention to the future direction of the Chinese Communist Party. We have entered an era, which means not knowing the CCP indicates not knowing China.

What does the 95-year-old Chinese Communist Party look like? Panview column invited experts to write articles on the subject matter.

95 years is not very long for a modern political party. The Conservative Party has existed for more than 300 years history in Great Britain. The Democratic Party of United States has survived for over 200 years, and the French Socialist Party has been around for 100 years.

Nevertheless, scholar Zhang Weiwei said the Chinese Communist Party is a national political party, which is far different from others. It is a product originating from a long history of the Chinese nation, and has played a central role in the nation's historical progress from weakness to revival.

Historically, political parties have rises with the decline of monarchy. They are associated with social changes in their respective countries. Most modern political parties are embedded in the grand picture of the nation's modern transformation.

The Famous British political thinker Stuart Mill said the fundamental political system is a product growing out of the characteristics and life of the people in the country. They form political parties and systems suitable for their national conditions.

Great Britain has seldom been invaded by foreign countries, so its social development is stable. Therefore, it formed a cautious, rational, and reconciling ethos.

The governing philosophy of the Conservative Party, which is the main British political party, suits their purposes. However, Americans favour individualism, liberalism, and do not trust government.

In the history of Western countries, political parties were often formed to represent the interests of different social groups in electoral politics. The parties are born for elections to complete their missions of governing. Political parties promote dynamic adjustments of social patterns to safeguard stability and development.

The situation is different in China. The earliest Chinese Parties had stemmed from the early 20th Century. After establishment of the Republic of China, numerous political parties had emerged. There were expectations to establish a parliamentary system with multi-party politics, but that turned into a mere fantasy.

Due to internal and external troubles, along with sovereignty loss in modern times, China cannot bear the

fruit of a Western election political party. In fact, many Chinese political parties, including the early China Revival Society, the Chinese Revolutionary League and later Kuomintang were not election political party apparatuses but revolutionary parties.

They sought not to win elections, but to deliver the long-suffering nation out of darkness, and to build an independent modern state, which had ultimately been realised by the Chinese Communist Party.

Faced with numerous challenges, initially there were only a few dozen founding members of the Communist Party of China, and they had combined an advanced theory from the West and local cultural wisdom to create a new China.

The Communist Party of China had set up a new type of army from the people. They started from the bottom of society to reshape grass-roots organisations, and to refresh the national mentality of inferiority in modern times and to unite all Chinese people.

They trained people to govern, united elites and organised people against foreign aggression and domestic dictatorship forces. After some 30 years of struggles, they had established a thriving new China in 1949, and had brought forth an ancient nation into the light.

The 95-year-old Chinese Communist Party was born under the 170 years of development of the Chinese nation, but also hails from the 5,000 years old Chinese civilisation heritage, which enjoys deep historical roots.

In the past 60 years of new China construction and 30 years of reform and opening up, the Communist Party of China has scored great achievements and forged itself as the core for Chinese governance, integrating it with the national fate.

The Communist Party of China remains committed to adjust to the reality of interests, promote social transformation, and move forward on a great journey of national rejuvenation.

China Sees First-ever Monorail Train Powered by Magnetic Motors as Solution to Traffic and Air Pollution

en.yibada.com

May 30, 2016

China has just finished testing a newly developed monorail train powered by permanent magnet synchronous motors as the country pursues its goal to get rid of two major problems: traffic jams and air pollution.

A subsidiary of the country's biggest train manufacturer China Railway Rolling Stock Corp., the CRRC Qingdao Sifang Co. had successfully tested China's first-ever monorail train that runs on magnetic power on Sunday, China Daily reported.

According to the outlet, this marks a significant milestone for the transport industry in the country as the government continues to look for alternative public transportation vehicles to promote less use of private cars, thereby eradicating traffic gridlocks and alleviating air pollution at the same time.

The Maglev Train

According to the train's chief designer Zhong Yuanmu, the magnetic levitation technology that runs CRRC's monorail train not only is efficient in terms of transporting people from one place to another, but it is also an effective alternative to traditional trains since it saves 10 percent of energy.

Aside from that, the train also produces much less noise compared to its ancestors since it runs smoothly at a regulated speed.

"The train will produce even less noise than a car, even as it goes [at] speeds of 70 km/h," Zhong said.

In terms of safety measures, Zhong said that the train has a state-of-the-art fire prevention system that has sprinklers that automatically turn on in case of fire.

So far, the technology has been tested in the transport industry by only a handful of countries including China.

Solution to Traffic and Pollution

According to CRIEnglish, the Chinese government is planning to pursue this project even if a number of countries who have tried the technology have scrapped the idea due to high development costs.

The outlet said that the authorities see the potential of the maglev monorail train as a possible solution for both the nightmarish traffic jams and the life-threatening air pollution in China.

Aside from the train, China is also considering pursuing an innovative new commuter transport called the "straddling bus," which is primarily designed to beat traffic jams.

According to The Guardian, the so-called Transit Explore Bus or TEB, which was introduced during a technology expo in Beijing, is designed to glide above cars stranded in traffic.

Many were impressed at the idea, especially after the project's chief engineer Song Youzhou explained that the bus is energy-efficient and environment-friendly.

However, a blogger in Greater Washington said it would be better if China removed the traffic congestions instead of building a run-around to actually solve its traffic problem.

China Detains Two Over '1989' Tiananmen Crackdown Labels on Spirits

rfa.org

May 30, 2016

Authorities in the southwestern Chinese province of Sichuan have detained two people who tried to sell and promote limited-edition bottles of liquor commemorating the bloody military crackdown on the student-led democracy movement of 1989.

Teahouse proprietor Fu Hailu and poet Ma Qing were taken away by police in the provincial capital Chengdu after they brought out the alcohol, which bore the words "June 4, 1989" and a cartoon of a man in front of an advancing column of tanks on the label. The label also says "Never forget, never give up."

The label says that the "baijiu" spirit has matured for 27 years, the length of time since People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops put an end to weeks of student protests on Tiananmen Square, using tanks and machine guns on largely unarmed civilians.

Fu, 30, is now being held under criminal detention on suspicion of "incitement to subvert state power," while Ma was brought back to her home to attend a police search in handcuffs, before being taken away again, according to posts by supporters on Twitter.

Fu was taken away from a teahouse he has just opened in Chengdu on May 28, and police in his home district of Chenghua later issued a formal notification of criminal detention. He is being held in the Chengdu Detention Center, Hong Kong's Ming Pao newspaper reported.

"The police didn't give me an explanation. They didn't say that it was to do with the [commemorative bottles of] spirit, or whether it was something else," Fu's wife Liu Tianyan told RFA.

"It had stuff printed on the label that was to do with June 4, 1989, but I saw that online; he never mentioned it to me," she said.

"If it is about the spirits, I have my doubts that this amounts to incitement to subvert state power," Liu added.

According to the Ming Pao, the drink had been designed for private circulation among groups of friends on social media, rather than for public sale.

It said Ma hadn't been involved in producing the bottles, but had used her WeChat social media account to promote them.

The detentions came as China implements nationwide security measures aimed at preventing any public memorials linked to the June 4 crackdown, which was styled a "counterrevolutionary rebellion" by the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

High-profile figures, including the relatives of those who died, have been told to leave town under police supervision, or placed under tight surveillance ahead of the politically sensitive anniversary.

Retired Shandong University professor and veteran democracy activist Sun Wenguang said the detentions in Chengdu reflect suppression of dissenting voices across the whole country.

"Governments around the country are getting the paranoid jitters, because it's nearly the anniversary of June 4," Sun told RFA.

"I am on the 21st floor, and the authorities have stationed police officers round the clock outside the door of my apartment," he said.

"They are sleeping in the corridor, round the clock."

Souls of the dead

Beijing-based rights activist Hu Jia said the alcohol would have been popular among those who have called repeatedly for a reappraisal of the official view on the student-led protests.

"I don't even drink, but I would have wanted to buy one of these bottles very much indeed," Hu said. "I would have taken it to make offerings to the souls of the dead on Tiananmen Square."

"Nothing could be more apt."

Earlier this month, in the northern city of Zhengzhou, rights activist Yu Shiwen began refusing food in protest against his prolonged pretrial detention, his wife and lawyer told RFA.

Yu, who was detained during an event marking the 25th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre two years ago, is charged with "picking quarrels and stirring up trouble," but his case has been subjected to prolonged and repeated delays.

"They are acting in breach of the Criminal Procedure Law," Yu's wife Chen Wei told RFA in a recent interview. "His

case doesn't fit under any of the exceptions [allowing pretrial detention to be extended]."

Hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Hong Kong on Sunday to mark the massacre, prompting minor scuffles with police as they approached Beijing's Central Liaison Office in the former British colony.

Lee Cheuk-yan, who heads the organising Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China group, played down a split with student unions in the city, who will hold their first separate candlelight vigil on June 4 since the memorial gatherings began.

"I don't see this as a conflict with the younger generation, because everyone sees the dictatorship of the central government as oppressive to the people of Hong Kong," Lee told reporters.

"If that's the case, they we should be able to work together to end one-party rule, to change China, and to build democracy, shouldn't we?" he said.

"I believe that there is a consensus on this issue."

China to launch first 'hack proof' quantum communication satellite

India Times

May 29, 2016

BEIJING: China will launch its first experimental quantum communication satellite in July, whose communications cannot be intercepted, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) said.

"It will be the first quantum communication through a satellite in the world," said Pan Jianwei, professor with University of Science and Technology of China.

Quantum communication boasts ultra-high security as a quantum photon can neither be separated nor duplicated.

"It is hence impossible to wiretap, intercept or crack the information transmitted through it," Pan said.

The CAS's project includes launch of a satellite and building of four ground stations for quantum communication and one space quantum teleportation experiment station.

Upon completion, the satellite will be able to establish quantum optical links simultaneously with two ground bases thousands of kilometres apart, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Chinese scientists have taken five years to develop and manufacture the first quantum satellite.

It will be transported to Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in June, CAS said.

Drone delays 55 flights in China

India Today

May 29, 2016

Beijing, May 29 (PTI) A drone flying over an airport in southwest China has grounded 55 flights, official media reported today.

The unmanned aerial vehicle, spotted at 6:20 pm yesterday above Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport of Sichuan Province, caused the eastern runway to halt operation, leaving 55 flights delayed, state-run Xinhua news agency was quoted as saying by airport staff.

It is the first time that a drone has grounded flights at the airport. The runway resumed operation at 7:40 pm.

Hope for Maharashtra: China offers to bring artificial rain in drought-hit state

Hindustan Times,

May 29, 2016

China has offered to share its cloud seeding technology with India, which could be used to artificially induce rain in drought-affected regions.

Cloud seeding, a technique mastered by the Chinese, is a form of climate modification that is used to form rain by either using artilleries to fire shells containing rain-inducing chemicals into the cloud cover or by dropping the said chemicals from an aircraft. A team of top meteorological scientists from Beijing, Shanghai and Anhui are in Mumbai to study drought patterns in Maharashtra, where the first such project is likely to be implemented.

The offer to share the technology free of cost was made during Communist Party of China's (CPC) Shanghai secretary, Han Zheng's visit to India earlier this month. During a meeting with Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, Han offered Chinese assistance in mitigating the drought situation in the state. The offer attains significance because China has historically not been keen on sharing this technology with other nations.

China has been using cloud seeding since 1958 to not only alter weather conditions but also clear air pollution. The process was famously implemented in the run-up to the

2008 Beijing Olympics to clear the city's notorious smog and ensure weeks of "clear blue sky".

However, it remains to be seen how effective the technique will be in India. Cloud seeding works best when precipitation levels are at least normal. In 2009, excess cloud seeding over Beijing resulted in more than usual snowfall that triggered an unexpected cold wave. Experts also warn of secondary air and water pollution as an outcome of chemicals used in the process.

China opens socialist journalism research centre

Times of India

May 29, 2016

BEIJING: China today opened a teaching and research centre for socialist journalism to train personnel for its expanding official media.

The teaching and research base, a joint project between Tsinghua University and Fudan University, will facilitate the implementation of instructions on news reporting issued earlier this year by the central authorities, Deng Wei, deputy secretary of Tsinghua University's Communist Party of China Committee.

We should develop journalism in China with a thorough understanding of the good aspects of journalism in other countries so that wrong or harmful content can be identified," Tong Bing, a professor at Fudan University was quoted by state-run Xinhua news agency.

It focuses on socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics.

John Kenneth Knaus, 92, CIA officer who aided in Tibetan struggle

Washington Post

May 28, 2016

WASHINGTON — John Kenneth Knaus, a CIA case officer who in the late 1950s and the 1960s helped train and direct Tibetan guerrillas against Chinese occupiers, only to see US support for the policy later evaporate, died April 18 at a hospital in Washington. He was 92.

The cause was an intracranial hemorrhage, said his son, John Kenneth Knaus Jr.

During a 43-year CIA career, Mr. Knaus was based at times in India, Japan, and Canada, and a substantial focus of his

work involved aiding Tibetan guerrillas in their resistance against communist China.

After retiring in 1995, Mr. Knaus wrote two books based on his Tibetan experience, "Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival," (1999), and "Beyond Shangri-La: America and Tibet's Move into the Twenty-First Century" (2012). In his Los Angeles Times review, journalist and longtime China scholar Orville Schell called "Orphans of the Cold War" "superbly well-researched and written."

Mr. Knaus first met Tibetans in 1958 when he was asked by the CIA to deliver a lecture to a group of "foreign nationals" on international communism and Chinese communism. This evolved into a program of support for Tibetan fighters challenging Chinese invasion and occupation of their country. It included training of 300 soldiers in guerrilla warfare at Camp Hale, Colo., a site chosen for its physical similarities to Eastern Tibet, where the guerrillas would be airdropped.

Working from India and Colorado, Mr. Knaus was a key operations officer for this program.

But the guerrilla campaign was seriously flawed, Mr. Knaus wrote in "Orphans of the Cold War." An airdrop, for example, attracted flocks of Tibetans to a drop site, but it also alerted the Chinese to a location for an effective attack. By the 1970s, support dwindled as the United States began to make diplomatic overtures to China.

"As Knaus concedes, the CIA trainers knew next to nothing about Tibet," wrote Jonathan Mirsky, former East Asia editor of the Times of London, in a New York Times review of the book. "They thought of Buddhism only as the Tibetans' religion and not as the bedrock of their nationalism. No agent had been to Tibet; only one knew any of its languages; and the maps they used to locate the first parachute drops for the Tibetans trained in Colorado had been drawn by a British expedition in 1904."

John Kenneth Knaus, who lived in Washington, was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on May 30, 1923. After Army service in World War II, he graduated from Stanford University, where he also received a master's degree in political science.

He joined the CIA in 1952. His last post before retiring was CIA officer in residence at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. In retirement, he was a research associate at Harvard's Fairbank Center for East Asian Research (now the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies).

He leaves his wife of 56 years, Lois Ann Lehman Knaus; three children; and four grandchildren.

Soon after his retirement from the CIA, Mr. Knaus spoke with the Dalai Lama, who in 1959 had fled to India from Tibet and headed a Tibetan government in exile.

Mr. Knaus asked whether US support for the Tibetan guerrillas in the 1950s and 1960s had been helpful. “Thousands of lives were lost,” he quoted the Dalai Lama as having said in “Orphans of the Cold War.” Furthermore, the spiritual leader said the US intervention in Tibetan affairs had principally been a Cold War tactic to challenge China.

In “Orphans of the Cold War,” Mr. Knaus said that one of his reasons for writing the book was “to alleviate the guilt some of us feel over our participation in these efforts, which cost others their lives, but which were the prime adventures of our own.”

Alibaba tale of counterfeiting, politics

sfgate.com

May 28, 2016

SHANGHAI — In 2011, a respected anti-counterfeiting coalition in Washington escalated its fight against the Chinese e-commerce giant **Alibaba**, saying its websites served as a 24-hour market “for counterfeiters and pirates” and should be blacklisted.

Fast forward to 2016. The same lobbying group, the **International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition**, reversed its position. Alibaba had become “one of our strongest partners.” The group welcomed Alibaba as a member and invited its celebrated founder, **Jack Ma**, to be the keynote speaker at its spring conference in Orlando.

This is the tale of how one of China’s corporate giants won — and ultimately lost — a friend in Washington, using legal methods long deployed by corporate America: money and influence. But those time-honored tools weren’t enough to defuse the deep loathing that has greeted one of communist China’s greatest capitalist success stories.

Alibaba, which includes Yahoo among its major investors, is at the forefront of China’s rise on the global stage. The anxiety and suspicion that have greeted the company abroad are, to some extent, anxiety and suspicion about China itself. A month after it became the first e-commerce company to join the anti-counterfeiting coalition, Alibaba got kicked out.

An Associated Press analysis of public filings shows that the coalition’s public comments shifted from criticism to praise as the personal and financial ties between Alibaba

and the group deepened, even as other industry associations — and the U.S. and Chinese governments — continued to take a harder line. A probe by the Securities and Exchange Commission into Alibaba’s accounting practices and sales data, disclosed last week, has raised further questions about how the company does business.

Today, Alibaba is a \$15.7 billion e-commerce conglomerate that supports the livelihoods of tens of millions of merchants. Some 423 million shoppers last fiscal year picked through the billion listings that Alibaba’s platforms host on any given day.

Making its money

Alibaba doesn’t sell any merchandise. It merely facilitates transactions, deriving much of its revenue from advertising. Alibaba’s core is Taobao, a Chinese consumer-to-consumer platform much like eBay, only bigger. The company also operates Tmall, which offers merchants, including Nike and Macy’s, official storefronts to consumers in China. Two export platforms, Alibaba and AliExpress, connect businesses in China with buyers around the world.

Critics, among them some top brands and intellectual property lawyers, say Alibaba’s ecosystem has proven remarkably conducive to counterfeiting. They feared Alibaba’s inclusion in the anti-counterfeiting coalition would lend it undeserved credibility. In U.S. court filings, Gucci America and other brands belonging to France’s **Kering Group** have accused Alibaba of knowingly profiting from the sale of fakes — a charge Alibaba has dismissed as “wasteful litigation.”

Alibaba and its advocates argue that the only way to fight counterfeiting is to fight together. The company says it works diligently to improve its systems, and that it proactively took down 120 million listings of suspicious products on Taobao last year.

Still, it remains relatively easy to find knock-offs. Chat with a vendor on Taobao and the price of a **Louis Vuitton Rivoli** handbag listed at \$2,318 may magically drop to \$150. And despite the company’s repeated admonitions that it stands with brands in the global fight against fakes, skepticism reigns.

After Robert Barchiesi, a gruff-talking former New York cop, took over the anti-counterfeiting coalition in 2008, the group took a hard line, singling out Alibaba and Taobao for facilitating the large-scale sale of fakes.

The **U.S. Trade Representative** listened, and in 2008 placed Taobao on a blacklist of markets notorious for sales of fakes.

Alibaba responded by upping its game in Washington. In 2012, Alibaba’s spending on lobbying shot up from

\$100,000 a year to \$461,000, and has remained fairly steady ever since, according to Opensecrets.org.

Among its lobbyists was **James Mendenhall**, former general counsel for the U.S. Trade Representative. Mendenhall was part of a string of high-profile people that Alibaba hired, including a former chief of staff for the **Treasury Department** and a former White House staffer who went on to GE Capital. In April, Alibaba announced a further expansion of its government affairs office in Washington, hiring three people with experience in the White House, the **Commerce Department**, Congress and several blue-chip U.S. companies.

"Alibaba has engaged in a thoughtful, customer-focused dialogue with policymakers," said **Eric Pelletier**, head of international government affairs for Alibaba Group. "Enabling U.S. businesses greater access to global markets, including China, will create more American jobs, which is good for everybody."

The anti-counterfeiting coalition told the trade representative in 2012 that Taobao topped its list of concerns. "Advertisements for fakes of (coalition) member brands are often in the thousands and even millions," the coalition wrote.

By the end of 2012, Alibaba was off the notorious markets list anyway. The U.S. Trade Representative commended Taobao for its "notable efforts" to work with rights-holders.

Taobao agreement

The next year, the coalition signed an agreement with Taobao to expedite the removal of counterfeit goods through a pilot program it called MarketSafe. The coalition charged its members \$12,500 last year to participate, on top of annual dues as high as \$8,400.

The coalition had found a way to make money from the frustration with Alibaba's take-down procedures. It was also starting to look like a family business. Barchiesi's daughter-in-law, Kathryn Barchiesi, provided "investigative support" for MarketSafe. The coalition says the program is not profitable, but those fees helped it more than double its revenue, to \$2.6 million, under Robert Barchiesi's leadership.

In 2011, a fresh-faced man named **Matthew Bassiur** hired Barchiesi's son, **Robert Barchiesi II**, to work as an investigator at **Apple**. Two years later, Bassiur was on the board of a foundation that awarded a private company run by Barchiesi's other son, James Barchiesi, a contract for "fiscal and operational management."

Big payouts

The coalition paid companies belonging to James Barchiesi nearly \$150,000 from 2012 to 2014 for accounting,

advertising and rent. The coalition says those contracts were market-rate or better.

Five weeks before Alibaba's 2014 public offering on the New York Stock Exchange, Barchiesi went on CNBC and deflected attention from Alibaba, saying counterfeiting on Alibaba's sites was a "microcosm of a bigger problem." He praised the company for working "in good faith" with the coalition.

What Barchiesi didn't say is that he too would buy shares in Alibaba Group Holding Ltd.

He bought shares on that first wild day of trading, at \$91 each, according to the coalition, which also says his holdings represent a "small percentage" of his portfolio. Alibaba's new shares shot up 38 percent in one day. It was the largest IPO in history, catapulting co-founder Jack Ma to near-mythic status.

By 2015, the coalition had stopped complaining about Alibaba to U.S. officials, focusing instead on the "true cooperation and partnership" they enjoyed with Alibaba through the MarketSafe program. But neither the U.S. nor the Chinese governments were convinced the company had turned a corner.

In January 2015, Chinese regulators published a report stating that just 37 percent of the goods purchased on Taobao were genuine. Alibaba disputed the accuracy of the report, which disappeared from the Chinese Internet.

Meanwhile, the American Apparel & Footwear Association, which represents over 1,000 brands, urged U.S. authorities to put Taobao back on the counterfeiting blacklist. It asked the Securities and Exchange Commission and the U.S. Trade Representative for help with "rampant proliferation" of counterfeit goods on Taobao, which it said had been getting worse. "The slow pace has convinced us that Alibaba is either not capable of or interested in addressing the problem," the group concluded.

Brands were quietly dropping off the membership roster of the International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition. LVMH holding, Tory Burch, Hunter Boots, Columbia Sportswear, Cath Kidston, Sony Corp. and Lucasfilm all vanished between October and March. Those companies either did not respond or declined requests for comment on their reasons for leaving.

In December, the U.S. Trade Representative reported that Alibaba's platforms had been "widely criticised" for selling large quantities of counterfeit goods. It urged Alibaba to "enhance cooperation."

The next month, Robert Barchiesi's friend, Bassiur, started work as Alibaba's chief of global intellectual property enforcement.

The coalition continued to praise Alibaba to U.S. officials and in April welcomed it as the first e-commerce member, under a special new category that precluded voting and leadership rights.

Many protests

U.S. luxury brand Michael Kors was the first to quit in protest. Its general counsel, Lee Sporn, told the coalition's board in an April 21 letter that it had "chosen to provide cover to our most dangerous and damaging adversary."

Then Gucci America defected.

The coalition and Alibaba jumped into action, announcing that MarketSafe would be free for all companies, whether or not they were members. The financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The storm soon intensified. The morning of May 11, an anonymous email went out to board members threatening a mass walkout unless Alibaba was kicked out. The email contained a list of concerns, including personal ties between Bassiur and Barchiesi.

The coalition, the email said, "has become a revenue generating business rather than the nonprofit organisation we all so desperately need." Alibaba's membership, it added, "damages and weakens the enforcement and legal remedies we have with Alibaba group."

Tiffany resigned its seat on the board that same evening, citing governance concerns.

On May 13, the AP reported Barchiesi's ownership of Alibaba stock. The AP investigation also mapped the personal and financial ties between Barchiesi and Bassiur, and documented Barchiesi's use of family members to help run the coalition, including hiring his son's firm as the coalition's "independent" accountant.

The board convened a call at noon that day. Barchiesi spoke first, defending his achievements. He did not offer to step down.

At 2 p.m., less than 12 hours after the AP's report, the board informed members that the coalition was suspending Alibaba's membership category, pending "further discussion."

The board said Barchiesi's "performance and accomplishments as president have been exemplary, and he has the board's full confidence and support."

China is encouraging its citizens to eat less meat — and that could be a big win for the climate

washingtonpost.com

May 27, 2016

An updated set of dietary guidelines just released by the Chinese government could be a boon not only for public health, say some environmentalists, but also for the environment. They're arguing that the new recommendations have the potential to reduce China's meat consumption, or at least slow its growth, which can help save land and water resources and put a substantial dent in global greenhouse gas emissions.

The actual differences between the new guidelines and the previous ones, which were released in 2007, are slim. Both recommend an upper limit on meat and poultry consumption of 75 grams per day — but the new guidelines reduce the lower daily value from 50 grams to 40 grams. Altogether, the guidelines suggest limiting meat, poultry, fish and dairy consumption to 200 grams daily.

The real problem is that average meat consumption in China is still higher than either the old or the new guidelines recommend. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), daily meat and dairy consumption in China still averages more than 300 grams per day — and that value is expected to keep increasing over the next few decades. The country's meat consumption alone comes to about 62 kilograms per capita annually, while the dietary guidelines would limit it to just over 27 kilograms.

If such reductions were to actually occur, it could be a major win for the environment. Agriculture is one of the primary contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions, mostly in the form of methane and nitrous oxide — when forestry and other land use changes are factored in, the agriculture sector may account for as much as a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, a recent study suggested that farm emissions need to fall by a [billion tons](#) per year by the year 2030 if we're to meet our global climate goals under the Paris Agreement.

The meat industry — and particularly beef production — is one of the biggest culprits. In addition to the huge amounts of land, water and food required to raise livestock, cattle are infamous for belching large quantities of methane into the atmosphere. And cattle raising, in particular, is known for being a major contributor to deforestation, which also drives up global carbon emissions.

Numerous studies have emphasised the environmental benefits that would come from a global reduction in meat

consumption — particularly beef. Last month, for instance, the World Resources Institute released a report outlining the changes in land use and greenhouse gas emissions that would accompany a number of hypothetical global diet shifts, including reductions in the consumption of beef and animal products as a whole. And earlier this year, researchers from the University of Oxford published a paper suggesting that a more plant-based diet worldwide could cut food-related greenhouse gas emissions by anywhere from 29 to 70 percent.

The lead author of that paper, Marco Springmann of the University of Oxford, noted that such changes in China, alone, could have major health and environmental impacts. According to his research, reducing China's average red meat consumption by about 100 grams per day in the year 2050 could help avert 2.2 million deaths and cut food-related greenhouse gas emissions by more than a billion metric tons.

"Any changes in dietary recommendations that move into that direction would represent a step in the right direction," he told *The Washington Post* by email.

Additionally, an upcoming report from environmental organisation WildAid estimates that adherence to the dietary guidelines could cut greenhouse gas emissions by an amount equal to 1.5 percent of total global emissions.

Whether the new guidelines can actually bring about such changes, though, is another question. Since the guidelines haven't changed dramatically from their 2007 version — and average meat consumption has remained high (and growing) in China — it appears that more efforts may be necessary to draw consumer attention to the recommendations.

Springmann, for instance, suggested that a good step forward would be "to explicitly include the sustainability and environmental impacts of food consumption," an approach that he said has been used in places like Brazil, Germany, Sweden and even the U.S. And, in fact, this is a strategy that WildAid is now working on in collaboration with the Chinese Nutrition Society, which prepared the new guidelines.

"WildAid was not involved in the creation of the guidelines, but we are involved in the promotion of them," said Matt Grager, WildAid's climate program officer. He said WildAid and the Chinese Nutrition Society have been working together to produce billboards featuring celebrities and other public figures that advertise the key messages from the new guidelines. These materials are being distributed throughout the country.

One point that's important to remember, however, is that the meat consumption reported in China represents an

average across the country. But, in fact, "there's a big divide between consumption patterns in urban versus rural areas," said Richard Waite, an associate in the World Resources Institute's food program and one of the authors on the recent WRI report, by email.

"According to the China Health and Nutrition Survey, in 2011, per capita consumption of meat and dairy was nearly twice as high in urban areas as in rural areas," he said. "So the new guidelines might still mean that some people...would actually consume more meat and dairy than they do now."

This is not necessarily a bad thing, as malnutrition remains a problem in some areas, and the primary purpose of the dietary guidelines is to encourage citizens to eat a healthy and balanced diet. And universal adherence to the guidelines would even out in a way that would reduce the nation's overall average meat consumption.

That said, Waite agreed that merely updating the guidelines may not be enough to spur action among consumers. "However, guidelines can be a valuable ingredient in broader efforts to shift consumption habits — by raising the profile of the issue, prompting food manufacturers to reformulate products, and prompting food service providers like cafeterias and restaurants to change what's on their menus," he added.

The focus on China is important, given the country's large (and increasing) population and its current status as the world's leading contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. But the fact remains that average per capita meat consumption in other countries — notably, the U.S. — remains even higher. So while efforts in China are a step forward — and environmentalists remain optimistic about the changes that may come from the new guidelines and education campaign — global change in the agriculture sector will require a worldwide effort.

"What our program tries to do is communicate the benefits of climate friendly behaviours," Grager said. "In the interest of eating healthy or eating reduced meat, the idea is that this is healthy for you and it's healthy for the planet, so it's a win-win situation. I would say that any country where it's either a large population or that consumes a lot of meat, this would be a key message both for personal health and for climate change."

China will never forego rights on regulating cyberspace

ecns.com

May 27, 2016

Since 2011, China has been repeatedly given "negative evaluations" over its Internet regulation by some western countries and non-governmental organisations. In a time, criticism and smearing of China prevail on the Western media.

China will never forego its rights on regulating Internet

However, under no circumstances would the Chinese government forego its rights on regulating Internet, as the cyberspace is filled with threats.

China has all rights to decide its way of regulating Internet based on its actual conditions and its cultural and historical traditions, and in line with rule of law and the common practice of countries.

The Chinese society has been significantly pushed forward and most Chinese people have enjoyed the benefits after connecting with the Internet, however, this is against the wills of some western politicians and organisations.

Cyberspace, for them, is a space where they could try to overthrow, infiltrate and disintegrate China.

According to statistics, there are altogether two thousand oversea websites built specifically against China, with three hundred of them built by the cult group Falun Gong and two hundred by the "Tibetan independence".

A series of illegal gatherings and terrorist violent attacks were incited by these websites, tremulously aggravating the anti-terrorism situation in China's Tibet and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regions.

With the development of social network, oversea hostile forces have shifted their base to Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites and continue to support these illegal gatherings and terrorist violent attacks.

Without effective regulations over these illegal online activities, the national security, the stability of society as well as the life and property safety of the Chinese nationals would be severely threatened. Any responsible government won't tolerate such things.

Internet regulation in western countries

In 2010, the British Financial Times disclosed that over 40 countries worldwide, quoting the OpenNet Initiative, had set up online barriers of a kind. Even countries which didn't use digital methods to monitor the Internet were gradually enhancing surveillance over the Internet. In fact, quite a number of western countries which pretend to

hold a negative attitude towards "Internet censorship" have laid hands on the Internet.

Among them, Germany acted relatively faster in passing laws and regulations on freedom of information transmitted online. In October 2008, the Australian government initiated a national program on Internet security to block websites conveying information. Not as imagined, the American government tightly controls the Internet.

In September 2011, the White House shielded Twitter as the Occupy Wall Street Movement went fast. Again in this January, the American government pressed giant Internet companies in the Silicon Valley about online propaganda of IS and other terror organisations, after which 125,000 Twitter accounts were shut down.

It is clear that, though always blaming others in the name of "Internet freedom", some western countries led by the United States will act without hesitation when any cyber threats come.

Cyberspace is not a space beyond the rule of law. No country will allow criminal activities with the use of cyberspace.

Hence, it is hoped that some western countries will not adopt double standards in Internet regulation, nor look at China through coloured glasses. After all, cyber threats are common enemies of human beings and all countries should join hands in dealing with the threats.

Beijing Calls South China Sea Island Reclamation a 'Green Project'

Chinafile.com

May 26, 2016

and, cement, and Chinese military facilities now sit on top of some of the South China Sea's once-thriving reefs; China has built over half a dozen new artificial islands in a bid to bolster its territorial claims in the hotly disputed region. Such reclamation devastates the local marine habitat. But according to China, these activities do not cause significant ecological damage. Beijing increasingly insists that the island-sized piles of sand and concrete now burying the highly biodiverse coral reefs are, in fact, environmentally friendly.

"It's a green project," claimed Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Director-General Wang Xining in a May 10 meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing. All land reclamation and construction activity in the region "is carefully designed, carefully built, [to] try to minimise ecological effect," Wang told a group of journalists visiting

Beijing on a May reporting trip organised through the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Wang's comments reflect an official position that has been percolating for some time within the Chinese establishment. In March 2015, the South China Sea Institute of Oceanology at the state-affiliated Chinese Academy of Sciences convened the "South China Sea Artificial Island Ecological Security and Sustainable Development Seminar." At the event, an emphasis on "national maritime power" accompanied discussion of "blue eco-building" on the artificial islands, suggesting that geopolitics might be prevailing over scientific considerations. In June 2015, China's State Oceanic Administration (SOA), the agency tasked with monitoring the country's maritime environmental policies, picked up on this line of reasoning. In a statement titled "Spratly Reef Expansion Project Will Not Cause Damage to the Marine Environment," posted to its website on June 18, 2015, SOA gave its stamp of approval to the island building, calling it a "green project."

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently begun to emphasise that phrase. "China's activities on the Nansha Islands strictly follow the principle of conducting green project[s] and building ecological islands and reefs," remarked Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei during a May 6 press briefing, using the Chinese term for the Spratly Islands. "The impact on the ecological system of coral reefs is limited."

China claims most of the South China Sea, a busy waterway through which over \$5 trillion in trade passes every year. Taiwan, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines hold competing claims over the resource-rich sea. Over the past three years, Chinese dredgers have worked quickly to pull sediment from the ocean floor surrounding reef and atolls in the Spratly Islands, located more than 500 miles south of the Chinese coast. While other claimants in the South China Sea have also built up features on islands or reefs in the South China Sea, China's reclamation activities far outpace those of other countries. U.S. officials estimate that China has created more than 3,200 acres in the Spratlys alone. China has also installed military hardware on the artificial islands, including airstrips, radar, port facilities, multi-story buildings, surface-to-air missiles, and an anti-ship cruise missile. But China's claims of environmental friendliness contradict the findings of leading marine biologists, who say the island building is devastating South China Sea's coral ecosystems, which are among the most productive in the world. The reefs include hundreds of species of coral and a dizzying variety of fish that form the backbone of local fishing communities along the coasts of neighbouring countries.

Looking at satellite photos of Mischief Reef in the Spratlys, John McManus, a marine biologist at the University of Miami, told *The Guardian* in September 2015 that strands of white silt streaming visibly into the lagoon were evidence of the mucus emitted by millions of dying corals smothered by sediment. The mass reclamation has imperilled more than coral. "The sand and silt stirred up by the dredgers covers most of the lagoon and is settling out on most of the remaining reef," McManus said. "The sand will kill nearly any bottom-dwelling organisms on which it settles in large quantities, and clog the gills of most fish. I don't expect to find any fish surviving within that lagoon except in the very southern areas."

Even if all land reclamation ceased immediately and recovery efforts begun, McManus said, it would be too late for much of the life originally found around Mischief Reef. "A substantial amount of this damage is irrecoverable and irreplaceable."

The Spratlys alone are home to 571 coral species and a huge variety of fish. But the "dredging and building on coral reefs in the South China Sea," Alan Freidlander, a biologist at the University of Hawaii, told journalists in May 2015, "is causing irreparable damage to one of the most diverse ecosystems on earth." The resulting depletion of fishing stock could cost the Philippine economy and its fishing industry \$110 million annually, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Philippines, which also maintains claims in the Spratlys.

It's not just the coral reefs, and the fish that breed and feed there, that could suffer. Frank Muller-Karger, a biological oceanographer at the University of South Florida, told *The New York Times* in 2015 that the material dredged from the sea floor to form the islands "can wash back into the sea, forming plumes that can smother marine life and could be laced with heavy metals, oil, and other chemicals from the ships and shore facilities being built."

Not everyone in China holds the party line. In response to an article posted on May 6 on Chinese microblogging platform Weibo about Hong's "green project" comment, some Chinese web users expressed doubt, even disdain. "China still deigns to say that it cares about ecology and the environment? I'm kind of disgusted," wrote one in a popular comment. Another user complained, "You beat your kid into a pulp, then a neighbour comes to stop you; then you say, 'We don't allow outsiders to interfere in our private affairs.'"

An impending ruling from a U.N. tribunal may be one cause for the rapid build-up, as China seeks to establish de facto control over the South China Sea in case a court

ruling undermines its activities there. In March 2014, the Philippines brought a case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration, a U.N.-appointed tribunal, challenging the legal basis for some of China's claims in the region. China has consistently maintained that it will not participate in or accept the court arbitration. In a May 6 press briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei repeated that stance, stating, "Whatever decision the arbitrary tribunal makes on the South China Sea case, it is illegal and null and China will not accept nor recognise it."

Seeking to further defend its construction of artificial islands and military facilities in the region, Beijing has refused to acknowledge the environmental havoc its activities have wrought. Such a defense may itself serve as an attempt to boost claims to sovereignty, by portraying China as a responsible steward of what it views as its own backyard. In May 2015, Zhang Haiwen, Director General of the Department of International Cooperation at SOA, said that China's goal in the region was to "achieve the sustainable development of the marine economy." Zhang also insisted that the SOA "closely reviewed" all reclamation activities in the South China Sea, but refused to discuss the evident damage to the reefs. Hong even described land reclamation as similar to natural weather phenomena. "China takes the approach of 'natural simulation' which simulates the natural process of sea storms blowing away and moving biological scraps which gradually evolve into oasis on the sea," he said.

Wang denied the claim that dredging had caused significant or irreparable damage to ecosystems in the sea. "[The builders] have carefully calculated how much damage—there won't be zero damage of course—how much damage it will cause and how to control it, minimise it," he said. "They have to finish their job."

"This is a sensitive building project. Everybody is very concerned," added Wang. "But this sea is where our people will live on. We have to go there for fishing."

That echoed Hong's more forceful statement on May 6. "As owners of the Nansha Islands," said Hong, "China cares about protecting the ecological environment of relevant islands, reefs, and waters more than any other country, organisation, or people in the world."

China's Premier urges less red tape to bolster economy - Xinhua

in.reuters.com

May 23, 2016

China should reduce red tape to ensure the development of a healthy economy, the official Xinhua news agency reported Premier Li Keqiang as saying.

Li also pledged to further cut administrative examinations and approvals, cut the process of establishing businesses and give colleges and scientific research institutes more autonomy, Xinhua said late on Sunday, citing a transcript of a speech Li delivered on May 9.

Li added that a level playing field will be created for private investors, adding that the State Council is mulling detailed measures to promote private investment.

Li said that although China has to some extent streamlined administration, overhauled market regulation and optimised government services, there is still much work to be done.

He cited unfair law enforcement, arbitrary inspections and inadequate supervision as loopholes in market regulation.

The premier said China's traditional international competitiveness has weakened, leading to a decline in growth of foreign trade and use of foreign capital.

"This is associated with changes in our resources, sluggish external demand and business environment," said Li, citing the relocation of some foreign-funded manufacturers from China to other countries.

"We should guide some of them to move from eastern coastal areas to the central, western and northeastern regions," said Li, adding that manufacturing could create jobs and help address China's "great employment pressure".

No country for academics: Chinese crackdown forces intellectuals abroad

theguardian.com

May 24, 2016

Political scientists and law experts flee to America as Beijing's grip on freedoms in China intensifies under President Xi Jinping

A Chinese activist and scholar Teng Biao sat at home on the east coast of America, more than 13,000km (8,000 miles) away his wife and nine-year-old daughter were

preparing to embark on the most dangerous journey of their lives.

“My wife didn’t tell my daughter what was going on,” said Teng, who had himself fled [China](#) seven months earlier to escape the most severe period of political repression since the days following the Tiananmen massacre in 1989.

“She said it was going to be a special holiday. She told her they were going on an adventure.”

One year after their dramatic escape through southeast Asia, Teng’s family has been reunited in New Jersey and is part of a fast-growing community of exiled activists and academics who feel there is no longer a place for them in Xi Jinping’s increasingly repressive China.

Jerry Cohen, a veteran China expert who has offered help to many of the new arrivals, said he had seen a significant spike in the number of Chinese scholars such as Teng seeking refuge in the US last year.

Until about 12 months ago China’s top universities “remained islands of relative freedom”, said Cohen, who has studied the Asian country for nearly six decades.

“[Now] I think there is much more attention to what you teach, what materials you use, what you say in class, what you can write and publish, whom you can contact, where you get your support. I think a lot of people are just getting disillusioned and feel at least for a few years they’d better ride out the Xi Jinping storm [overseas].”

Cohen likened the influx of intellectuals – mostly political scientists or international relations and law experts who have sought permanent or temporary positions at US universities – to previous waves of refugee scholars who fled the Nazis during the 1930s and 40s, and China following the Tiananmen crackdown.

The most famous was Albert Einstein, who moved to Princeton in October 1932 and campaigned to help other Jewish refugees secure asylum.

“It is not as dramatic as the refugees from Hitler; not as dramatic as the enormous number who turned up [after Tiananmen] and we had to deal with,” Cohen said. “But it is growing and I am seeing them.”

Carl Minzner, an expert in Chinese law and politics at Fordham University in New York, said he had also noticed an increase in Chinese academics “strategically opting to have one foot out of the door” by relocating to the US.

“You are a small ship that is being tossed in the storm and everybody is looking for their safe harbour,” he said.

When Xi came to power in November 2012, some observers hoped his 10-year reign might usher in a period of political and economic reform. They pointed to Xi’s father, the reform-minded party elder Xi Zhongxun, as

evidence of the liberal tendencies of China’s incoming leader.

Instead Xi’s ascent marked the start of what many observers now call an unprecedented crackdown designed to silence opposition to the Communist party ahead of a painful economic slump.

Activists, journalists, bloggers, feminists, labour campaigners, religious leaders and rights lawyers have been interrogated, harassed or even disappeared and jailed. Liberal academics have also come under increasing pressure.

Despite the fact that Xi’s own daughter studied at Harvard University, a series of Communist party decrees have ordered a purge of hostile western liberal ideas such as democracy and rule-of-law from Chinese campuses.

In a recent interview with the New York Review of Books, the head of one prominent thinktank said the situation had become intolerable. “As a liberal, I no longer feel I have a future in China,” said the academic, who is in the process of moving abroad.

Teng, 42 and a former lecturer at Beijing’s University of Politics and Law, said Xi’s rise to power had been a turning point.

“Things got worse rapidly after Xi came in,” he said, speaking in his office in New York University, where he is now a researcher. “President Xi lowered the threshold for imprisoning people, and adopted a zero tolerance policy on human rights.”

As one of China’s most prominent civil rights lawyers Teng found himself at the eye of the storm. He was one of the founding members of the New Citizens’ Movement – a now defunct civil rights coalition wiped out by security services after Xi came to power – and, even before Xi’s rise, faced repeated spells of house arrest and surveillance.

In September 2014, as Beijing’s crackdown deepened, he decided to abandon China, flying out of Hong Kong with his youngest daughter to take a position at Harvard University through its Scholars At Risk program.

“I felt that the space of civil society had become so limited I had to leave,” said Teng, a graduate of the prestigious Peking University.

Many of the Chinese academics now rolling up on American shores prefer to keep a low profile to avoid attracting unwelcome attention from Chinese secret police.

“A lot of these people are not overt defectors,” said Cohen. “They are just people who are wisely adjusting their behaviour to a future that is ever more uncertain.”

But Teng has refused to go quietly.

Since touching down in the US he has remained as active as ever, posting on Twitter and other social media and keeping in touch digitally with a global network of human rights lawyers, officials, politicians and international campaigners. On Wednesday he will appear at a session of the Conservative party human rights commission in London for the launch of a report about the deteriorating situation under Xi.

Recently Teng has also been hyperactively disseminating material from the Panama Papers in an attempt to try and pierce the Chinese government's severe censorship of documents revealing that relatives of some of the top leaders had been hiding wealth in secretive offshore companies.

"We've tried to spread the information on WeChat and Twitter. They delete the posts, but we then re-post it. Even though the censorship is very strict we can play this cat and mouse game, and then some Chinese people will know about this and the authority of Xi Jinping and the top leaders and their family members will be impacted."

The life of an exile does not come without a cost.

Teng, originally from Jilin province in northeast China, says he misses his family and friends back home, "but mostly I miss the feeling I had when fighting for freedom and human rights together with my fellow lawyers and defenders. It was both interesting and meaningful. We knew it was risky, we knew we could be put into prison or have other trouble, but all of us thought it was worth trying to do something to push forward with the law and freedom in China."

He said he also suffers from what he called "survivor's guilt": "So many lawyers, many of them my close friends, are in prison and in detention. I am free, so I feel I have a special obligation to speak for them."

Cohen said he sensed great sorrow among many of the uprooted academics he met.

"They don't want to leave. They were playing important roles in their universities or their law schools or whatever," he said. "Of course if they end up getting a professorship at Columbia or Singapore they have to see the virtue of that – they have children to take care of.

"But it is a sad thing for them to be stimulated by repression to have to leave their own country, even if some of them are lucky and land on their feet."

Cohen predicted that in exile many would simply become "second-class citizens and will never achieve what they could have had they stayed home".

For now, Teng said his family was happy in New Jersey. His two daughters, now eight and 10, have enrolled in a primary school where he said they were no longer forced propaganda about "the Great Chairman Mao Zedong" or Lei Feng, a Mao-era military officer held up by Beijing as an example of devotion to the Communist party.

Despite having to live thousands of miles from home, he tries to keep his children in touch with their Chinese roots. "We tell them that Chinese culture is wonderful but that the current political system is not good."

In April, amid the intensifying crackdown, Xi said the Communist party "should fully trust intellectuals and create a favourable environment for them to exercise their talent and develop their careers" in China.

Scholars "should not be blamed or punished for expressing their opinions," Xi said, according to the official Xinhua news agency – but they should also be sure to follow the "right path".

For now a return to China, where some of Teng's best friends still languish in jail, is not on the cards. "I want to, but I'm quite sure that Xi Jinping and the Communist party will not allow open society and political reform, and they will not give up their power. Life will remain very difficult for human rights activists," he said.

Yet even in these dark times, he remains optimistic, vowing to continue fighting from afar so his daughters might one day return home to a changed country.

"I'm quite sure they will come back to a free and democratic China," Teng said. "I don't know how long it will take but many dissidents and activists are fighting for a better China. They don't want the next generation living in fear."

China mulls new ways to control video websites

India Times

May 23, 2016

BEIJING: Chinese authorities are exploring new ways of imposing controls on the Internet, state-run media cited experts as saying Monday, after reports said state-owned enterprises may be encouraged to take stakes in video streaming websites.

The Communist country restricts access to foreign websites including Google, Facebook and Twitter with a vast control network dubbed the Great Firewall of China, and under President Xi Jinping it has tightened its grip on broadcast, print and online media.

Content deemed politically sensitive, violent or morally "unhealthy" is regularly blocked.

New regulations being considered by China's censorship authority would allow a select list of SOEs to buy "special management stakes" of up to 10 percent in the country's popular video streaming websites, giving them the right to oversee production and decision-making, respected business magazine Caixin reported.

The Chinese-language report was later removed from Caixin's own website, although the text was widely reposted elsewhere.

Video sites such as Youku Tudou, acquired last year by tech giant Alibaba for an estimated \$4.8 billion, and Baidu's iQiyi.com could be affected, with greater scrutiny over content and potential modifications to in-house productions.

The move showed that the government hopes to tighten its grip on websites -- mostly privately run -- over which they have had "little influence" in the past, the state-run Global Times newspaper on Monday cited Xiang Ligang, CEO of telecommunication industry portal cctime.com, as saying.

"The government cannot punish [the websites] on a daily basis or shut down [a website] at will as it would trigger a backlash," he explained.

The paper cited communications law professor Zhu Wei as adding that the new mechanism would be a preventive measure capable of blocking objectionable content before it was even released, unlike current regulations which only punish perpetrators after the fact.

The initial list of SOEs to take part in the venture included state broadcasters China National Radio and China Radio International, among others, the Global Times added.

The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) met with video websites last week to discuss the plans, and suggested non-binding agreements between them and the SOEs as soon as June 10, Bloomberg News reported.

Some websites present at the meeting objected, but it remained unclear what the consequences of non-participation might be, it added.

'In-depth' talks needed for India's entry into nuclear group: China

Hindustan Times

PTI, Beijing

May 23, 2016

China on Monday called for "in-depth" talks to build consensus over India's admission into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), days after Pakistan staked claim to join the 48-member grouping with purported backing from Beijing and just ahead of President Pranab Mukherjee's visit to that country.

China also rebutted India's assertion that France was included in the Nuclear Suppliers Group without signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty, saying France was a founder member of the elite group and so the issue of accepting its membership does not arise.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying sounded firm about China's stance that all new members that join the NSG must sign Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Hua rebutted India's assertion that France was included in the elite group without signing the NPT.

"When France joined the NSG it was not a party to the NPT: France was the founder member of the NSG so the issue of acceptance to the NSG does not exist", Hua said responding to ministry of external affairs spokesman Vikas Swarup's comment last week.

"The NSG is an ad hoc export control regime and France, which was not an NPT member for some time, was a member of the NSG since it respected NSG's objectives," Swarup had said on May 20, rejecting China's oft-repeated assertion that India should sign the NPT to join the NSG.

"The NSG is an important component of the non-proliferation regime is founded on the NPT. This is a long term consensus of the international community which was reaffirmed last year by the NPT review convention," Hua said.

That is why the NSG has been taking NPT signatory status must status for new members, Hua said.

The issue was expected to figure in the talks during President Mukherjee's visit to China from Tuesday.

Mukherjee would arrive in Chinese city of Guangzhou and later go to Beijing on May 25 during which he is scheduled to hold talks with Chinese leaders including his counterpart Xi Jinping.

Acknowledging differences among the NSG members in the backdrop of US supporting India's bid to join the grouping based on its non-proliferation record, contrary to

Pakistan's history of clandestine export of nuclear technology, Hua said the NSG members needed "in-depth" talks on the issue.

"Pakistan is not a party to the NPT. For whether the non-NPT countries can join the NSG there are discussions with in the group and there are major differences that is why China along with other countries have been maintaining that there should be through discussions whether non-NPT countries can join the NSG and decision shall be made upon consensus", Hua said.

"This applies to all non-NPT countries including Pakistan", she said.

Pakistan is an all weather strategic partner of China for coordination and a close neighbour.

"Our position is not targeted against Pakistan and applies to all non-NPT countries", the spokesperson said.

"We support the NSG members having in-depth discussions on this so as to reach a consensus at an early date and we continue to take constructive part in the relevant discussions", she said.

Tibetan Flag unfurled in Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests

Tibet Post International

May 19, 2016

A three-day trip by a high-ranking Chinese government official was met with protests by the pro-democracy supporters as the semi-autonomous Hong Kong tightens under Beijing's grip.

Zhang Dejiang on his arrival on May 17, Tuesday faced protestors unfurling banners that read, "I want genuine universal suffrage" and "an end to Chinese communist one-party rule". These were similar to the ones seen during the 2014 Umbrella Revolution.

Among the protestors were an old couple, Uncle Wong and Mrs. Wong displayed the Tibetan national flag proposing the right to self determination for Tibet as well as Hong Kong. Uncle Wong reportedly said, "Hong Kongers need self determination. Tibet people need self determination, too," according to activist Rose Tang's Facebook post.

According to a recently surfaced video a woman also unfurled the Tibetan flag. "An unidentified woman holding a Tibetan flag is mobbed by a dozen police officers who try to grab the flag from her. The male voice in the video: 'I have my rights to protest.' The female voice: 'Down with

the Communist Party!' It's not known if she has been arrested," says Rose Tang's Facebook post.

Despite heavy security, Hong Kong authorities had to increase the police deployment for Zhang's business conference on Wednesday. Throughout his visit, the pro-democracy and the pro-China demonstrations were reported.

Zhang Dejiang is the chairman of National People's Congress Standing Committee and a top official of the Hong Kong and Macau affairs office. He was in Hong Kong to speak at a business conference on 'One belt, one road project'.

China's business registration streamlined to unlock economic potential

Xinhua

May 18, 2016

BEIJING, May 18 (Xinhua) -- China will intensify its reform efforts concerning business registration procedures to reduce administrative costs and enhance economic restructuring from the supply side.

A series of measures was adopted at the State Council's executive meeting on Wednesday, presided over by Premier Li Keqiang.

"Business registration reform is crucially important this year to achieve stable economic growth and stabilize employment," Li said.

"Noticeable achievements have been made in recent years, yet there are still problems to be solved."

The reform aims to simplify administrative procedures and lower requirements for business registration. Since it started in March 2014, the reform achieved noticeable achievements and this was reiterated time and again by the Premier.

It was decided at the Wednesday meeting that further efforts will be carried out in 2016 to streamline business registration.

This includes creating negative lists for business registration and realising the integration of business licenses, certificates for taxation, organisation codes, social security and statistic codes into one certificate.

Efforts to streamline business administration will also be given policy support, such as tax and fee reductions, to workers who may face job relocations during the country's effort to reduce excess capacity.

"The government at all levels should keep working hard to integrate business certificates when possible and reduce institutional costs for enterprises," Li said.

Meanwhile, the integration of multiple certificates will be further expanded to individual businessmen, with their taxation certificates and business licenses being integrated into a single document this year. The meeting also urged the need for more efforts in building a fair market environment and a comprehensive market exit mechanism.

Streamlining the business registration procedure has been promoted across the country in 2016, and has achieved results.

A more developed market exit mechanism was put in place to help businesses exit the market with more efficiency. Authorized by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC), such trials have already started in Pudong in Shanghai, Yancheng in Jiangsu Province, Ningbo in Zhejiang Province and Shenzhen in Guangdong Province. From now on, less documentation is required from enterprises if they want to exit the market, efficiently creating space for new businesses to enter the market.

Detailed requirements for business sites have also been lowered, removing what was once a difficult prerequisite for entrepreneurs. The business site registration procedure will be streamlined based on field research. In some cities such as Shanghai, certain residential buildings are allowed to be converted to business venues after due procedures.

New businesses will require fewer procedures for their names. The SAIC will further promote a full online registration procedure that will first go through trial runs in designated places, including Jiangsu and Hebei Provinces, before being applied across the country.

Efforts will be continued to integrate business licenses, the certificates of organisation code and the certificates of taxation into one certificate. By the end of April, a total of 8.89 million new certificates of this type has been issued.

From January to April 2016, about 4.6 million new businesses were registered, a 13.1 percent year-on-year increase. The total amount of registered capital reached 12.3 trillion yuan, marking 66 percent year-on-year growth.

During a press conference in February, Zhang Mao, head of the SAIC, the ministry that leads the reform, said that 12,000 new enterprises were registered every day in 2015, a 20 percent increase compared to 2014.

Before the reform started in 2014, if someone wanted to start a new business, they had to get a series of approvals

before getting a business license, a process that usually took months. Part of the reform is to turn 152 pre-approval items into post-approval items, which both saves time and requires stronger supervision. Such efforts have greatly improved China's business environment, as higher requirements are set for business and social credit.

At the same time, more than 90 percent of businesses which used to require a business registration with the SAIC can now be registered at places where these enterprises are located.

"We should work to build a fairer market and create negative lists for business registration, especially in the finance-related sector," Li said. "Deregulation and the faster business growth it promises are only possible when regulation is sound and effective."

Meanwhile, government departments, such as the central SAIC and the State Administration of Taxation, need to coordinate more closely in providing enhanced services for businesses.

Senior Chinese Leader Vows to Hear Hong Kong's Autonomy Concerns

bloomberg.com

May 17, 2016

National People's Congress Chairman Zhang Dejiang vowed to listen to Hong Kong's suggestions regarding its autonomy, as he began the highest-level visit by a state leader since pro-democracy protests paralysed the city two years ago.

Hong Kong was on high alert for the three-day tour by Zhang, the No. 3 official in the ruling Communist Party and the first top leader to visit since 2012, when then-President Hu Jintao celebrated the anniversary of the city's return to China. In the intervening years, Hong Kong has convulsed over escalating campaigns for greater autonomy, including protests in 2014 that shut down key business districts for months and a February riot involving a "localist" group that injured more than 90 police officers.

"I want to see new and old friends, and how ordinary Hong Kong people live their lives," Zhang said upon arrival at Hong Kong International Airport. "I want to hear suggestions and requests from all walks of society on implementing 'one country, two systems,' 'Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong,' a 'high degree of autonomy,' the Basic Law and on the country's building and development."

Citing the threat of radicals and international terrorists, Hong Kong has raised its alert level to "high" and plans to

deploy as many as 6,000 police officers for each day of Zhang's visit, twice the manpower assigned to secure Hu, the South China Morning Post reported. That visit prompted violent clashes between demonstrators and police.

The security cordon for Zhang is focused on the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai, where he is staying and scheduled to speak at an event Wednesday on President Xi Jinping's signature "One Belt, One Road" plan to build a loose network of roads, railways, ports and pipelines across Asia and Europe.

Water Barricades

"Zhang comes to assess Hong Kong's political situation; the Belt-and-Road summit alone wouldn't bring him here," said Ding Xueliang, a social science professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, noting that Zhang's oversight portfolio includes the city. "He should have come earlier. Current Hong Kong-mainland relations have sunk to their lowest point probably since the handover."

About 200 barricades filled with water were set up near the convention center and hotel and rubbish bins appear to have been removed from the area, the Ming Pao newspaper reported. Paving tiles, which were tossed at police during anti-Chinese protests in February, had been glued together near the Wan Chai venue. Protesters from the League of Social Democrats hung banners calling for free elections from Lion Rock, one of the city's most prominent overlooks, despite a police presence there, said Avery Ng, the league's chairman.

"We'll have a series of actions, but I can't give any details," Ng said by phone on Tuesday. "The police are trying to wipe out the voice of the opposition and we can't let that happen."

In a sign of the anxiety surrounding the visit, authorities in the adjacent mainland city of Shenzhen detained a Hong Kong resident who they said bought a consumer-style drone to disrupt the event. Barricades will keep protesters at least 100 feet from the Wan Chai venue. The Civil Human Rights Front announced rallies there to coincide with Zhang's events there on Wednesday, while other groups said they're planning their own actions.

Democrats Boycott

In August 2014, Zhang's National People's Congress handed down guidelines requiring a panel dominated by Beijing loyalists to screen candidates for what was to be Hong Kong's first citywide election for chief executive in 2017. The plan sparked the student-led Occupy protests, which lasted 79 days and brought global attention to the city's pro-democracy movement. Chief Executive Leung

Chun-ying's attempt to enact the guidelines was defeated in Hong Kong's Legislative Council last June.

Zhang's itinerary includes a Wednesday banquet at the convention center, an event being boycotted by several lawmakers from the so-called "pan-democratic" camp. He has invited 10 legislators, including four of the more moderate democrats, to meet him at a cocktail reception before the dinner.

"The most important thing we want to tell him is that the situation in Hong Kong is really very bad," said Democratic Party leader Emily Lau, who'll attend the meeting.

National Party

Zhang's visit comes ahead of key Legislative Council elections in September, when pro-Beijing parties hope to secure a veto-proof super-majority in the 70-seat body and several new, more radical groups plan to seek a voice in government. City authorities have threatened to bar the Hong Kong National Party, which was founded in March on a platform seeking independence from China, from registering on grounds that its positions would violate Hong Kong's Basic Law.

The trip may also help Xi lay the ground for a pair of milestones next year. In March, a committee of 1,200 local elites will meet to select the next chief executive, who must be approved by the National People's Congress. Then, in July 2017, Hong Kong will hold events to mark the 20th anniversary of its handover from the U.K., an occasion that could bring Xi to town for the first time as president.

'Mutual Distrust'

In 2012, Hu was greeted by hundreds of protesters seeking answers to questions surrounding the death of mainland dissident Li Wangyang, who weeks earlier had been found hanged in a hospital ward in the Chinese city of Shaoyang.

During his trip, Zhang is expected to tour the Hong Kong Science Park, a hi-tech business development hub near the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the South China Morning Post reported. He'll also visit a public housing complex, in keeping with a tradition of Communist Party leaders visiting homes while in the city.

"Mutual distrust is abundant, and both sides are ready to see each other from a worst-case-scenario perspective," said Ding, of the University of Science and Technology. "This is going to be an entirely different visit than Hu's trip in 2012. The situation he faces is much more complex."

Hong Kong Police Arrest Pro-Democracy Protesters During Chinese Official Visit

rfa.org

May 17, 2016

Hong Kong police manhandled and arrested protesters after building a security "fortress" around a visiting Chinese official, pan-democratic politicians said on Tuesday.

At least seven people were arrested as members of the pan-democratic League of Social Democrats (LSD) tried to approach Zhang Dejiang, head of China's legislature, to tell him their opinions, LSD lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung said.

Meanwhile, across the harbour in Kowloon, fellow LSD members hung a huge yellow banner from Beacon Hill, which read: "We want true universal suffrage," echoing a previous banner hung on adjacent Lion Rock during the 2014 Occupy Central pro-democracy movement in the city. Approaches to Lion Rock were under police guard on Tuesday.

"Seven of our members were arrested," Leung told RFA.

He called on Hong Kong people to wear yellow, the color of the pro-democracy movement that occupied key districts of the city from October to December, 2014, as a form of silent protest during Zhang's trip.

Citing fears of a potential terrorist attack, police set up a "security fortress" around the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wanchai where Zhang will stay during his three-day trip, government broadcaster RTHK reported.

"The fortress comprises two-meter high water barricades, metal barricades as well as no-go zones for the public," the station said, adding that police were unable to specify a legal justification for cordoning off such large parts of the city.

'Total security lock down'

Leung dismissed fears of a terrorist attack, saying the tight security was a violation of people's rights as citizens.

"Every time [a Chinese official comes here] we have these kinds of protests, but it is only this time that we have had this total security lock down," he said.

"Basically, they want to make sure that nobody gets to say anything to Zhang's face, whether it be through protests and demonstrations or whatever," he told RFA.

"They are using police powers to suppress our human rights. When some young people went over to the cordon to check it out, the police pinned them to the ground,

while somebody else was arrested for ... hanging up a banner."

Meanwhile, former Occupy Central student leader Nathan Law said he was wrestled to the ground after he and a group of fellow activists tried to approach the area to tell Zhang their opinions.

"When we stepped out of the hotel to this red carpet where we are standing now, they pulled me down," Law told reporters after the scuffle. "There were 8-10 police officers to each protester."

"So we didn't get the chance to express our demands directly to Zhang Dejiang," he said.

Zhang is the chairman of the National People's Congress standing committee, the body that decreed on Aug. 31, 2014 that candidates in 2017 elections for Hong Kong's next chief executive would have to be vetted by a Beijing-backed committee.

The decree, which was rejected by pan-democratic campaigners as "fake universal suffrage," sparked a week-long student class boycott in September that culminated with the occupation of the central business district by thousands of protesters.

On Sept. 28, hundreds of thousands of people poured onto the streets in protest at the use of tear-gas and pepper spray by riot police against the occupiers, who remained in smaller numbers until early December at three locations in the city.

Remove Beijing's man

Beijing's electoral reform plan was defeated in June 2015 in the city's Legislative Council (LegCo), and the next chief executive will be picked, as before, by a Beijing-backed election committee.

Pan-democrats have vowed to call for the reinstatement of political reforms and the removal of chief executive Leung Chun-ying when they meet with Zhang at a cocktail reception on Wednesday.

Democratic Party lawmaker Emily Lau said politicians will also raise concerns about the disappearance of five Hong Kong booksellers, particularly the case of Lee Bo, who was taken across the internal immigration border in opaque circumstances last year after planning to publish a book on Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"Of course we will bring up the Lee Bo incident," Lau told RFA. "People have been calling me saying they don't mind whether they have universal suffrage or not, but that the Lee Bo incident has really frightened them."

"If the central government sent its agents to arrest people in Hong Kong, [Zhang] would need to know about it."

Zhang was met by chief executive Leung Chun-ying and a brass band at Hong Kong's International Airport on Tuesday, and pledged immediately to listen to its people.

"[I will listen to] people from all walks of life about any suggestions and demands regarding the implementation of 'one country two systems'," Zhang said, in a reference to the high degree of autonomy promised to Hong Kong under the terms of its 1997 handover accord with its former colonial ruler, Britain.

He also said he would listen to "any suggestions and requests regarding the nation and Hong Kong's development."

Eddie Choi, senior politics lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said Zhang's promise may mean little in practice, however.

"Of course people here hope he will listen, but nobody knows how much he will actually listen, or see [while he's here]," Choi said.

"We don't want him just to reiterate central government policy; we want him to pay genuine heed to the voices of local people."

Zhang's trip comes as the U.S. and U.K. governments have sounded alarm bells about the apparent cross-border arrest of Lee Bo, and the detention of four of his colleagues, one of them a Swedish national detained in Thailand.

In a May 11 report, the State Department said Lee's unofficial departure from Hong Kong had raised serious concerns, and appeared to be "the most significant breach" of the handover agreement since 1997.

Under the terms of the handover and the city's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, China has promised to allow Hong Kong to continue with its existing way of life until 2047.

But journalists and political analysts cite growing evidence of self-censorship in the city's once freewheeling media and publishing industries, as well as apparent political interference in the running of the its universities.

Hong Kong officials warned last month that free speech has "limits" despite constitutional protections, and that the city's police would consider investigating members of political groups advocating independence for the city.

Repeat of Cultural Revolution 'Impossible,' Says China

rfa.org

May 17, 2016



Bereaved relative Yu Luowen (L) and U.S.-based veteran dissident Wei Jingsheng (R) at a symposium marking the 50th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, Washington D.C., May 16, 2016.

State media controlled by the ruling Chinese Communist Party on Tuesday broke an official silence on the decade of political violence known as the Cultural Revolution, which began 50 years ago this week, saying China should put the past behind it and avoid further discussion of the "huge disaster."

"The decade-long internal chaos was a huge disaster," the *Global Times* newspaper, which has close ties to the party, wrote in an opinion article published in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

China on Monday marked the 50th anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which some political commentators fear could still return in another guise.

The decade of factional armed struggle, mob lynchings, and kangaroo courts turned the country upside down, as late supreme leader Mao Zedong took on his political rivals, using the "revolutionary masses"

as political support.

The *Global Times* said the "decade of calamity" that began with a red block headline "Announcement" in the *People's Daily* on May 16, 1966, had left many in China with permanent psychological scars.

"It is not possible for such a revolution to be repeated," the paper said, adding: "We have bid farewell to the Cultural Revolution. We can say it once again today that the Cultural Revolution cannot and will not come back."

Official verdict

Meanwhile, an editorial in the party's own *People's Daily* newspaper, said the party would be sticking to its

official verdict as laid down in a Communist Party resolution in 1981.

"History has shown that the Cultural Revolution, initiated by a leader labouring under a misapprehension and capitalised on by counterrevolutionary cliques, led to domestic turmoil and brought catastrophe to the party, the state, and the whole people," the paper said, echoing the earlier resolution.

"The harm caused was comprehensive and serious," it said. "History has fully proved that the Cultural Revolution was a complete mistake in both theory and practice."

"It was not and cannot be a revolution or social progress in any sense," the paper said.

The 1981 Central Committee resolution "on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the People's Republic of China" found that Mao was a good leader whose tragedy was that he couldn't see his own mistakes.

"We should be brave enough to face up to the mistaken actions of our leaders," the paper said, in an article titled "Take warnings from history for a better tomorrow."

It said the party would unite around President Xi Jinping as general secretary, omitting the term "core" which had begun to appear in official media in recent months, sparking concern that Xi was consolidating his power as a strongman.

Dissident Chinese author Xu Lin said the articles reflect the deepest fears of China's rulers.

"The government is maintaining its stance of repudiating the Cultural Revolution ... because their worst fear is that it will repeat itself," Xu said.

"During that time, the masses held struggle sessions against officials, which was Mao Zedong's whole aim in starting it."

"I think they are afraid that if things get out of hand, they won't be able to hold onto power," Su said.

Campaigns 'never stopped'

Cato Institute visiting fellow Xia Yeliang said many in China are now asking themselves whether the mentality that created the Cultural Revolution is still alive in today's society.

"The Chinese Communist Party has had a political campaign running pretty much every year since it took power in 1949," Xia said. "You can see it in the editorials run by the *People's Daily*, *Red Flag* magazine, *People's Liberation Army Daily*, and so on."

"These political campaigns have never stopped in that time, whether they are large or small."

Retired Shandong University professor Sun Wenguang said Tuesday's editorials are likely a response to a feared backlash over a recent "private" performance of Mao-era revolutionary songs at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

The Communist Party has long been ambivalent about the Cultural Revolution, happy to encourage red nostalgia for Mao suits, rousing revolutionary anthems, and Little Red Books on the one hand, while playing down the deaths and torture of large numbers of people at the hands of Red Guards and lynch mobs on the other.

"They played red songs and displayed portraits of Mao Zedong with his Red Guards armband," Sun said. "That song, 'Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman,' was basically the theme tune of the Cultural Revolution from start to finish."

"People thought they were trying to advocate [a return to] the Cultural Revolution."

Struggle sessions

Fifty years ago, Mao exhorted China's youth to eliminate "members of the bourgeoisie threatening to seize political power from the proletariat," initially a reference to Mao's premier Liu Shaoqi and his "Soviet revisionist" supporters within the party.

But the violent "struggle" sessions, at which figures of respect like teachers and parents were humiliated and sometimes killed, often made little political sense to anyone, with targets selected seemingly at random or to settle old grudges, witnesses have said.

According to veteran Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng, much of the violence and armed factional fighting was instigated by the sons and daughters of high-ranking party officials.

"All it took was a few of these children of officials with a bit of nerve, to incite a crowd to start something," Wei told an anniversary symposium in Washington on Monday.

"The majority of these were supporters of [then premier] Zhou Enlai, although there were also some offspring of officials from the party central office," he said.

"When people see those around them deifying Mao Zedong, then they deify him too. People are like sheep," We said. "Everybody was playing a role together."

No one dared oppose

Meanwhile, the Cato Institute's Xia said nobody at the top dared to oppose Mao, and nobody could make any sense of his actions at the time.

"We have no idea what Mao was thinking ... and I'm not sure I could even follow his thinking if I did," Xia said.

"Zhou Enlai didn't know what was going on, and neither did Liu Shaoqi. Nobody did."

Xia said the "struggle" sessions escalated out of fear of reprisals. "Why did they struggle people to death?" he said. "Because they were afraid that the person would come and struggle them back and denounce them."

"They killed people in struggle sessions to preserve their own personal safety."

The official death toll by 1976 numbered more than 1.7 million, with much of the country's cultural and artistic heritage destroyed in campaigns to eradicate traditional Chinese culture to make way for a new, revolutionary culture, arbitrated by the "proletariat."

Xia estimated the economic losses of the era at no less than three trillion yuan (U.S.\$153 billion at today's exchange rate).

China marks 50 years since Cultural Revolution with silence

The Guardian

May 16, 2016

Beijing shuts down any mention of the mayhem unleashed by Mao's declaration of war against the 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie'

Beijing has marked the 50th anniversary of one of the most devastating and defining events of 20th century China with silence.

Chairman Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – a decade-long period of political and social turmoil – began exactly 50 years ago on Monday.

On 16 May 1966 a Communist party document fired the opening salvo of the catastrophic mobilisation warning that counter-revolutionary schemers were conspiring to replace the party with a "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie".

What followed was an unprecedented period of upheaval, bloodshed and economic stagnation that only ended with Mao's death, in September 1976. However, on Monday newspapers in mainland China were bereft of any coverage of the Cultural Revolution's anniversary.

The party-run Global Times tabloid completely ignored the event leading instead with a story about Beijing's anger over a Pentagon report detailing its land reclamation activities in the South China Sea.

Stories about Donald Trump and Boris Johnson's comparison of the EU with Hitler both found their way into the pages of the Beijing Morning Post but there was

not a single mention of Mao Zedong or his mass mobilisation.

The Beijing Times also shunned the anniversary dedicating its front page to a story about police efforts to find missing children.

No official memorial events were reported by China's heavily controlled media and Chinese academics were forbidden from talking about the sensitive period.

"Researchers cannot accept any interviews related to the Cultural Revolution," one scholar told Canada's The Globe and Mail.

"They think that if we expose the Cultural Revolution's dark side people will doubt the political system," Wang Youqin, author of Victims of the Cultural Revolution, a three-decade investigation into Red Guard killings, told the Guardian.

Roderick MacFarquhar, a Cultural Revolution expert at Harvard University, said president Xi Jinping would be wary of anyone attempting to use Monday's anniversary "to bring up uncomfortable facts" about the party's past.

Particularly unwelcome was any reflection on Mao's central role in orchestrating the mayhem that consumed China from 1966 onwards and is estimated to have claimed up to two million lives.

"The really uncomfortable fact which Xi Jinping in particular cannot really stomach is Mao's role [in the Cultural Revolution]," MacFarquhar said. "Mao actually gloried in the chaos. He loved the idea of civil war ... The last thing Xi Jinping wants to do is raise anything to do with the Cultural Revolution because it inevitably affects Mao's reputation."

Only in Hong Kong, which is part of China but enjoys far greater political freedoms thanks to a deal governing its return to Chinese control in 1997, was the media able to mark the painful anniversary.

An opinion piece published in the South China Morning Post said: "Fifty years on, and the party has failed to bring any kind of justice to address the traumatic event.

"If the party fears disclosing the truth about its own past and refuses to learn from it, how can it have a clear vision of the right direction for the future?" it added.

Half a century after the Cultural Revolution kicked off with an explosion of Red Guard violence in Beijing, academics are still debating the period's impact on contemporary China.

Daniel Leese, a Cultural Revolution expert from Freiburg University who is researching the legacies of the Mao era, said one consequence was the fixation of Chinese leaders with political stability.

"From the view of the party it is very clear that one of the main legacies is that you should never let go of control, you should always maintain the commanding heights, there shouldn't be factionalism at all within the party," he said.

For today's leaders it was still paramount that "the 10 years shouldn't appear as a period of complete anarchy because, after all, the party was still at the helm," Leese added.

MacFarquhar, the author of *Mao's Last Revolution*, said half-a-century on the role of ordinary Chinese citizens in the violence had still not been sufficiently interrogated.

"I think that the most terrible aspect of the Cultural Revolution was not just that the chairman threw the whole country into chaos. It was that having fired the starting gun, Chinese became immensely cruel to each other," he said.

"It wasn't as if some Nazi boss had said, 'Kill these 6,000 Jews'. People just fought each other, killed each other – especially in the Red Guard factional fights ... It was just a case of letting them off the leash and they did it."

Outspoken groups of leftists who view the Cultural Revolution as a golden age of social equality and ideological righteousness have defied Beijing's attempt to downplay the anniversary.

At one commemorative event in Shanxi province neo-Maoists held up red banners reading: "Mao's thoughts are invincible" and "Long Live the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution!"

At a rally in the northeastern city of Dalian demonstrators brandished portraits of Mao and banners that read: "Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman."

Zhang Hongliang, a prominent Maoist scholar, claimed critics of the Communist party were manipulating Monday's anniversary to destabilise China's current regime.

"[Their purpose] is not only to reject the Cultural Revolution... they are taking advantage of these 10 years to entirely negate the leadership of the Communist party of China," he said. "Even if it was a wrongful campaign, 40 years is enough time for people to move on."

Wang Youqin, the Cultural Revolution researcher, said such voices should not be allowed to continue their denial of the bloodshed and suffering.

She lamented how, unlike Cambodia, where the Khmer Rouge tribunal has investigated crimes committed under Pol Pot victims of the Cultural Revolution had been denied any historical reckoning. "I am shocked that after 50 years

we still don't have a complete report on the Cultural Revolution. It is a shame."

The academic said she was convinced that ordinary people could make a difference by remembering and recording the events of that tumultuous decade.

"Things will change," Wang said. "If we make the effort, if we tell the truth, people will listen."

How the Chinese Cultural Revolution Came to an End

History News Network

May 15, 2016

On a cold day in Hangzhou in early February 1976, several young men gathered at the home of Li Junxu, a 23-year-old worker nicknamed "Cricket." They often gathered like this to talk about current affairs and politics, underground style. This time, "Cricket" showed his friends two letters he had written – to be precise, two letters he had forged as the last wills of the late Premier Zhou Enlai, who had died on January 8. The first will was written to Zhou's wife Deng Ying-chao, addressing her as "Comrade Little Chao." The second will was addressed to Mao and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. It began by telling Mao that his cancer had spread and he would soon "go to see Marx." Then it shifted gear and began to praise Deng Xiaoping's energy and accomplishments, hinting to Mao that Deng could succeed him as the premier.

Marvelling at how genuinely these letters sounded like Zhou speaking, the young men copied them by hand and later showed them to their friends and families. Two months later, these two letters had spread far and wide in China -- gone viral. An alarmed Party Central issued an urgent notice charging that the so-called premier's wills had been forged and were nothing but baseless counter-revolutionary rumours. In the nation-wide witch hunt that followed, over a thousand people were arrested, investigated, and implicated in other ways. "Cricket" and his friends in Hangzhou were no exception.

Told in a memoir published in 2009, this was a story of secrecy, intrigue, persecution, youth, friendship, and more. But above all, it was a story about the unraveling of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the undoing of the Maoist era.

Exactly when the Cultural Revolution ended does not have an unequivocal answer. Mao's death on September 9, 1976 was a critical turning point. The coup that led to the arrest of Mao's wife and her fellow "Gang of Four" on October 6, 1976 was another milestone. Yet the Cultural

Revolution may well have been unraveling since at least 1968. Later that year, having outlived their use as Mao's political pawns, millions of young Red Guards were banished to the villages to become peasants.

Contrary to what they had learned from the media and their school textbooks, these "sent-down" youth saw few signs of a prosperous rural socialism. Poverty was everywhere. Many began to pull strings in order to move back to the cities.

It was during these times of hardship that an underground cultural movement appeared. "Sent-down" youth read, hand-copied, and circulated banned books, sang forbidden love songs, and DIY-ed their own short-wave radio sets on which they listened to forbidden foreign programs. They wrote diaries, poems, letters, and even novels. Letters were written not just to families, but also to friends and former classmates who had been dispersed to different parts of the country. Some letters were circulated among friendship circles because they contained in-depth and insightful social analysis.

These activities could be politically risky. Ren Yi, who wrote a popular song about the lives of "sent-down" youth, was sentenced to ten years in prison because the song allegedly spread bourgeois ideas and was thus counter-revolutionary. Zhang Yang, the author of a novel in underground circulation who was also charged of being a counter-revolutionary, almost faced a death sentence. His novel, titled "The Return," is a love story about a female Chinese scientist trained in the US who had returned to China to look for her past lover.

Despite risks, these activities spread. Consequently, as a former "sent-down" youth in Beijing told me, many small "islands" of underground culture appeared around the country. The small group in Hangzhou where the premier's wills were forged was one such small island.

The two forged texts were symptomatic of the ambivalent and yet transgressive character of this underground culture. The wills were not exactly oppositional. The one addressed to Mao read like the sincerest words of a loyal minister to his monarch qua closest comrade-in-arms. And yet by praising Deng Xiaoping, it made a veiled attack on Deng's political rivals who were none other than Mao's wife Jiang Qing and her lieutenants. Such a veiled attack could be interpreted as a challenge against Mao and his Cultural Revolution policies. That two short texts forged by a few young men spread all over the country in a matter of two months suggested that its political message resonated with the public.

Writing the two wills in Zhou Enlai's personal tone was less an act of irreverent parody than one of sincere emulation of the style of a popular leader. In a political culture that

apotheosised the emulation of revolutionary heroes, with Mao being revered by youth as the greatest of all heroes, political emulation had become second nature. Except that this time, emulation was a means of critique and protest, not one of enacting loyalty.

Such was the underground culture that fermented in the small "islands" of "sent-down" youth around the country. In the middle of these activities, official ideologies became gradually eroded, losing their magic hold over the population. By the end of March, 1976, open protest activities erupted in the city of Nanjing in the name of mourning the death of Zhou Enlai. Days later, the April Fifth movement broke out in Beijing. Again in the name of mourning Zhou's death (April fifth was the memorial day on traditional Chinese calendar), students and workers poured onto Tiananmen Square, where they put up poems and posters eulogising the virtue and integrity of Zhou and making not so subtly disguised attacks at Jiang Qing and other radical Maoists.

When the Tangshan earthquake hit on July 27, 1976, felling a quarter million of its residents, the rumour that the earthquake was a foreboding that Mao had exhausted his Mandate of Heaven became as credible as the premier's wills. In imperial times, natural disasters on such a tragic scale were omens of dynastic change. And dynasties did change soon, when Mao died less than two months later.

Today, with the internet, a mysterious letter of the 1976 type needs only two hours, not two months, to spread around the country -- that is, if it is not censored. Such a letter appeared recently on the Chinese web, calling on China's top party leader Xi Jinping to resign. It was quickly removed. Yet years of censorship has proved incapable of cleansing the web of dissent. In recent years, the Chinese leadership has responded by strengthening ideological control and promoting the "positive energy" of patriotism and national pride. There are even efforts to tap into Maoism and Cultural-Revolution-style "red culture" as potential cultural resources for gaining legitimacy and winning popular support. Is the idea of building a new political culture to bamboozle the public thinkable in the information age? I will wait until November 8 this year to attempt an answer.

China to Launch Platform to Refute Online Rumours

womenofchina.cn

May 13, 2016

China plans to launch a national whistleblower platform Thursday to crack down on online rumours, a measure to further manage cyberspace security.

China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and Sina Weibo jointly launched the online platform for tips from netizens on false online information and will release monthly reports to publicise such rumours and related data, according to an e-mail Sina sent to the Global Times on Wednesday.

The platform allows netizens to provide links or upload screenshots of the alleged false information on any social media platform, including Sina Weibo and other online forums.

News about the platform, "The National Platform to Refute Rumours," has been read more than 620,000 times as of press time.

"Starting a platform where rumours could be quickly quashed meets the netizens' need for sound information but also echoes President Xi Jinping's call for a better Internet environment," Shen Yi, deputy director of the cyberspace management center of Fudan University, told the Global Times.

In a speech at a symposium in April, Xi suggested that China must improve cyberspace management and work to ensure high quality content with positive voices to create a healthy, positive culture.

Xi said that the cyberspace should be imbued with positive energy and mainstream values to create a clean and righteous environment.

According to Sina, Sina Weibo users' accounts will be suspended if they are found spreading rumours, and the police will handle these cases in accordance with laws and regulations.

In June 2015, Chinese Internet police in 50 cities and regions launched accounts on social networking platforms to further combat cyber crimes.

According to the MPS, the cyber police teams are tasked to identify "illegal and harmful information on the Internet, deter and prevent cyber crimes and improper words and deeds online, publish case reports and act on information provided by the public."

"It is necessary for authorities to organise such a platform to deter malicious online rumours and remind netizens that the Internet is not a platform for lawlessness," Xie Yongjiang, deputy director of the Institute of Internet

Governance and Law at the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, told the Global Times on Wednesday.

Origin of rumors

Figures released by Sootoo, an Internet data research institution, in August 2015 show that more than 90 percent of netizens are exposed to rumours on their mobile devices, and 45.9 percent of the rumours were started on WeChat and Sina Weibo. The most widely-spread rumours were those related to security - including terrorism, AIDS and infectious diseases.

Xie said that rumours on public events can easily spark panic since they could be quickly and widely spread on social media, whose effects are usually difficult to contain.

"The MPS is trying to provide a netizen-friendly way of safeguarding cyber security and Sina should also be responsible for building a better Internet environment," Shen said.

Some 197 people were punished for spreading rumours about stock market fluctuations and the Tianjin explosions on social media in April 2015. Beijing police detained a 24-year-old netizen surnamed Ding for saying "at least 1,000 people were killed in the Tianjin blasts."

But the platform can be run more effectively in improving the cyber environment with the joint efforts of different departments, especially the Office of the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs, said Shi.

The Beijing Office of Cyberspace Affairs likewise assists the platform, according to Sina.

As Tiananmen Anniversary Nears, June 4 Disappears from the China's Web

rfa.org

May 5, 2016

China's Internet giant Baidu.com is blocking keyword searches linked to the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen Square protests as Beijing attempts to throttle discussion ahead the 27th anniversary of the bloody military crackdown on the pro-democracy demonstrations.

The move follows a period of relative freedom to search for June 4-related "sensitive words" in recent months. It was not clear if the brief relaxation of stringent censorship was deliberate or accidental.

A keyword search for "June 4" in Chinese resulted in the following message on Thursday: "We are unable to show you the relevant results, because the search term contravenes relevant laws and regulations."

The anti-censorship website GreatFire.org confirmed the findings, reporting that the keyword "June 4" in Chinese was 100 percent blocked on Baidu, although it appeared to be uncensored on the Twitter-like platform Sina Weibo.

Meanwhile, the tabloid Global Times newspaper, which has close ties to the ruling Chinese Communist Party, attacked recent reporting in Western media outlets of the scheduled release of Miao Deshun, the last prisoner jailed in the wake of the 1989 democracy movement.

Wrong side of history

"It is no cause for regret that Miao has spent the last 27 years in prison, where barely a note of his threnody for democracy has been heard," the paper wrote in a commentary in its Chinese edition on Thursday.

"How many people have been so sure of their opinions, so adamant that they were writing history, only to find that they were actually on the wrong side of it," the article reads.

"If you bet the wrong way, your life is worth less than a feather's weight," the article warned, apparently suggesting that the economic downturn is making Western countries more amenable to Beijing's way of doing things.

"There aren't many Western countries whose economies are doing well these days, and it seems that their financial support for the so-called democracy movement in China is tailing off," the article said. "They may say encouraging things, with the help of the Internet, which has just given a fresh minority of people some new illusions."

Germany-based journalist Su Yutong said dissidents in exile still remember the sheer number of people who fled the country, often at considerable personal risk, or who were jailed in the political crackdown that followed the bloodshed.

"They were forced to leave their homeland, and many of them continue to support the human rights movement in China to this day," Su said. "Personally, as an exile myself, I maintain close but very secret connections with people inside China."

He added: "How can they say we are on the wrong side of history? They are talking about themselves."

Meanwhile, Beijing-based rights activist Wang Debang said the editorial represents the view of the ruling party on the 1989 student-led protests, which Beijing regards as a "counterrevolutionary rebellion."

But he said the attempt could backfire.

"The Global Times ... is bringing up 1989 ... because it is on the side of continuing repression by the Chinese government," Wang said. "But this will have the effect of lifting the taboo on discussion of such sensitive words," he said. "It will bring such events and people more clearly into the spotlight."

Economic analysis targeted

China is also seeking to extend ideological controls to the realm of economic analysis and forecasts, according to a recent report in the Wall Street Journal.

The country's economists, analysts and business reporters are being ordered by securities regulators, media censors and other officials to bring their forecasts into line with more upbeat statements from the government, the paper cited sources close to the industry as saying.

Veteran financial journalist Ching Cheong said the attempt is part of a wider bid to get any form of public expression in China singing from the same hymn sheet, whether politically or economically.

"In the past, it was just aimed at foreigners, people like George Soros, but now they are extending that to cover your average analyst," Ching said. "This shows that, under the rule of Xi Jinping, they don't want to hear any critical voices."

Economics professor Hu Xingdou of the Beijing University of Science and Technology said the move might not work, however.

"Everyone knows that the economy is a matter of objective fact, and not something that can be used to sing the praises of China," Hu said. "Personally, I don't agree with this, because trying to talk up the economy will put people on their guard."

China Voice: No need to overreact to China's overseas NGO law

Xinhua

May 4, 2016

Some people appear to have misunderstood China's new law on overseas NGOs.

They seem to have failed to notice anything beyond the law's restrictive provisions. News flash: There are few laws that only forbid, and this is not one of them.

When the new law takes effect in January, overseas NGOs will walk out of the shadow they have long stood in. Those with solid reasons to operate in China will have a legal

identity, a clear code of conduct and protection of their rights and interests from the government and legal system. They will also be subject to supervision, just like their domestic counterparts are.

One issue that drew much concern is the involvement of the police in the registration and regulation processes.

China is hardly the only country in the world to place trust in law enforcement and, as lawmakers have repeatedly pointed out, the police have the resources and expertise to deal with foreigners. Rather than this being the "hostile setup" espoused by certain parties, it is a pragmatic arrangement to ensure an efficient and professional service.

The police have not been handed unrestricted power, and systems will be in place to assure accountability and, should they fail in their duty, suitable punishments.

When comparing previous drafts of the law, which went through three readings, it is clear that great effort has been made to develop a balanced and comprehensive law.

Gathering opinions from different parties including foreign NGOs that already operate in China, the top legislature made notable changes through every reading.

For instance, the adopted law removed a provision in the original draft that limited foreign NGO offices on the Chinese mainland to one, and deleted the five-year operational limit on representative offices. Restrictions on staff and volunteers were also lifted.

The draft had required a permit for NGOs that wanted to operate temporarily on the mainland. In the adopted law this has been changed to a compulsory report with the regulator 15 days before the program begins.

The Ministry of Public Security has promised to work out detailed protocols and publish this code of conduct as quickly as possible so that overseas NGOs will have enough time to prepare for registration.

China is still in the process of modernisation, not only economically but also in governance. It is in its best interest to have a dynamic NGO sector, which features both domestic and foreign entities. From education, environmental protection to poverty relief, NGOs have an important part to play.

The law may not be perfect but it is a good beginning. It is likely that problems may emerge as it is enforced but, with the support and cooperation of NGOs, these problems can be properly addressed.

The law was drafted to give NGOs a more stable and positive environment in which to work in China. It will be a mutually beneficial relationship, better than letting the good and bad mix into the grey.

China trains 'fishing militia' to sail into disputed waters

thanhniennews.com

Reuters

May 01, 2016

The fishing fleet based in this tiny port town on Hainan island is getting everything from military training and subsidies to even fuel and ice as China creates an increasingly sophisticated fishing militia to sail into the disputed South China Sea.

The training and support includes exercises at sea and requests to fishermen to gather information on foreign vessels, provincial government officials, regional diplomats and fishing company executives said in recent interviews.

"The maritime militia is expanding because of the country's need for it, and because of the desire of the fishermen to engage in national service, protecting our country's interests," said an advisor to the Hainan government who did not want to be named.

But the fishing militia also raises the risk of conflict with foreign navies in the strategic waterway through which \$5 trillion of trade passes each year, diplomats and naval experts say.

The United States has been conducting sea and air patrols near artificial islands China is building in the disputed Spratlys archipelago, including by two B-52 strategic bombers in November. Washington said in February it would increase the "freedom of navigation" sail-bys around the disputed sea.

Basic military training

The city-level branches of the People's Armed Forces Department provide basic military training to fishermen, said the Hainan government advisor. The branches are overseen by both the military and local Communist Party authorities in charge of militia operations nationwide.

The training encompasses search and rescue operations, contending with disasters at sea, and "safeguarding Chinese sovereignty", said the advisor who focuses on the South China Sea.

The training, which includes exercises at sea, takes place between May and August and the government pays fishermen for participating, he said.

Government subsidies encourage fishermen to use heavier vessels with steel - as opposed to wooden - hulls.

The government has also provided Global Positioning Satellite equipment for at least 50,000 vessels, enabling them to contact the Chinese Coast Guard in maritime

emergencies, including encounters with foreign ships, industry executives said.

Several Hainan fishermen and diplomats told Reuters some vessels have small arms.

When "a particular mission in safeguarding sovereignty", comes up government authorities will coordinate with the fishing militia, the advisor said, asking them to gather information on the activities of foreign vessels at sea.

Row with Indonesia

That coordination was evident in March, when Indonesia attempted to detain a Chinese fishing vessel for fishing near its Natuna Islands in the South China Sea. A Chinese coast guard vessel quickly intervened to prevent the Indonesian Navy from towing away the fishing boat, setting off a diplomatic row. Beijing does not claim the Natunas but said the boats were in "traditional Chinese fishing grounds".

China claims almost all of the South China Sea. The Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and Brunei also have conflicting claims over the islets and atolls that constitute the Spratly Archipelago and its rich fishing grounds.

State-controlled fishing companies dominate the fleets that go regularly to the Spratlys and are recipients of much of the militia training and subsidies, industry sources said.

China has by far the world's biggest fish industry, but depleted fishery resources close to China's shores have made fishing in disputed waters an economic necessity, fishermen and industry executives say.

State-owned Hainan South China Sea Modern Fishery Group Company says on its website it is "both military and commercial, both soldiers and civilians". One of its aims, the company says, is to let the "Chinese flag fly" over the Spratlys.

"Defending sovereignty is primarily the government's concern," said Ye Ning, the company's general manager, in an interview at his office in Haikou. "But of course, regular folks being able to fish in their own countries' waters should be the norm. That goes for us too."

The company provides fishermen who sail to the Spratlys with fuel, water, and ice, and then purchases fish from them when they returned, according to a written introduction to the company's work executives provided to Reuters.

'Lot more risky'

"It's gotten a lot more risky to do this with all kinds of foreign boats out there," said Huang Jing, a local fisherman in the sleepy port town of Baimajing, where a

line of massive steel-hulled fishing trawlers stretches as far as the eye can see.

"But China is strong now," he said. "I trust the government to protect us."

Chen Rishen, chairman of Hainan Jianghai Group Co. Ltd, says his private but state subsidised company dispatches large fleets of steel-hulled trawlers weighing hundreds of tons to fish near the Spratly Islands. They usually go for months at a time, primarily for commercial reasons, he said.

"If some foreign fishing boats infringe on our territory and try to prevent us from fishing there ... Then we're put in the role of safeguarding sovereignty," he said in an interview in Haikou, the provincial capital of Hainan.

China does not use its fishing fleet to help establish sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said: "This kind of situation does not exist."

China had taken measures to ensure the fishing fleets conduct business legally, he told a ministry press briefing last month.

Rules of engagement

Chen said his fishermen stop at Woody Island in the Paracel islands, where China recently installed surface-to-air missiles, to refuel and communicate with Chinese Coast Guard vessels.

They look forward to using similar facilities China is developing in the Spratly Islands, he said.

China has been pouring sand from the seabed onto seven reefs to create artificial islands in the Spratlys. So far, it has built one airstrip with two more under construction on them, with re-fuelling and storage facilities.

"This all points to the need for establishing agreed protocols for ensuring clear and effective communications between civilian and maritime law enforcement vessels of different countries operating in the area," said Michael Vatikiotis, Asia Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, which is helping claimant states design such confidence building measures.

A regional agreement on communications and procedures when rival navies meet at sea applies only to naval ships and other military vessels, he said.

News Analysis: Broader tax overhaul to pep up China's economy

Xinhua

May 1, 2016

Source: Xinhua | 2016-05-04 15:22:17 | Editor: huaxia

FUZHOU, May 1, 2016 (Xinhua) -- Guest Xie Ping shows his value-added tax (VAT) invoice offered by Fuzhou Hotel in Fuzhou, capital of southeast China's Fujian Province, May 1, 2016. VAT refers to a tax levied on the difference between a commodity's price before taxes and its production cost. Business tax refers to a levy on a business's gross revenues. The VAT began in 2012 to replace business tax in certain industries, as a major step in China's structural reform. Starting from May 1 this year, the replacement was extended to construction, real estate, finance and consumer services to avoid double taxation. (Xinhua/Lin Shanchuan)

BEIJING, May 4 (Xinhua) -- As China waves goodbye to business taxes (BT) with one hand, it is welcoming a fairer business environment with the other.

As of May 1, China now follows a value-added tax (VAT) system, which is set to pep up the broader economy.

Starting on Sunday, the BT-to-VAT transition, which began in 2012 in certain industries, was applied to the remaining four sectors -- construction, real estate, finance and consumer services.

Construction and real estate will be subject to 11 percent VAT, while a 6-percent levy will be imposed on finance and consumer services.

VAT is a tax calculated by the difference between a commodity's price before taxes and its production cost, while BT was a levy on gross revenues. Tangible goods have been subject to VAT for some time, but the levy on services was BT: A crude system that often results in double taxation.

The BT-to-VAT transition has proven to reduce the tax burden of enterprises, most of which are small companies. During its test phase, it had reduced the tax burden of companies by 641.2 billion yuan (99 billion U.S. dollars) by the end of 2015.

These newly-encompassed sectors had a combined BT scale of 1.9 trillion yuan, accounting for some 80 percent of all BT across the board and involving over 11,000 taxpayers, according to data from the State Administration of Taxation.

By 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 1.36 million VAT invoices had been issued to 147,000 taxpayers across the country, involving 25.86 billion yuan.

Authorities estimate that now VAT has been applied to all sectors, businesses will make savings of more than 500 billion yuan.

Besides, other links in the production chain will also benefit from the overhaul. The unified VAT system will create a fairer environment for businesses as the government seeks to tap growth momentum in the relatively underdeveloped service industry.

China's service sector is increasingly picking up the slack of manufacturing as the government tries to shift to a more sustainable growth model.

In the first quarter, the service sector grew 7.6 percent year on year, outpacing a 2.9-percent increase in the primary industry and 5.8 percent in the secondary industry. It accounted for 56.9 percent of the overall economy, up 2 percentage points from a year earlier, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

The government is also looking to the broader reform to stimulate mass innovation and create an amicable climate for private enterprises, which play a central role in job creation.

China's economy expanded 6.7 percent year on year in the first quarter, slowing further from the previous quarter.

In the face of continued economic headwinds, China has made supply-side reform an economic priority, and tax cuts to lower the cost of business are a major policy option.

To cover the tax reductions for enterprises, the government has decided to increase its deficit-to-GDP ratio to 3 percent this year from 2.3 percent last year.

The government deficit for 2016 is projected to be 2.18 trillion yuan, an increase of 560 billion yuan over last year.

Chinese Leadership & Anti Corruption Campaign

Rising political star, former top aide to China's Vice-President Li Yuanchao, put under probe for corruption

scmp.com

June 1, 2016

A rising political star and the former right-hand man of Vice-President Li Yuanchao is under investigation for suspected serious violations of Communist Party discipline, a euphemism for corruption.

The party's graft watchdog, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, announced the investigation into Jiangsu vice-governor Li Yunfeng in a statement on its website on Monday.

Li Yunfeng, 59, was the director of the provincial party committee's general office between 2003 and 2007, when Li Yuanchao was Jiangsu's party secretary.

He was generally regarded as one of Li Yuanchao's top aides when the latter oversaw the province.

The 59-year-old became an alternate member of the party's Central Committee during the 18th national congress in late 2012, when Li Yuanchao was the top official in charge of promoting senior cadres.

Given his relative youth and good party ranking, Li Yunfeng was widely considered a strong contender to be named Jiangsu's governor in the next major personnel reshuffle in 2018.

Li Yunfeng is the fourth "tiger", or high-ranking official, to fall from grace in Jiangsu in the past 2½ years.

In October 2013, former Nanjing mayor Ji Jianye was the first provincial-level official to go in the wake of the 18th congress. Roughly a year later, Zhao Shaolin, who had retired eight years earlier as secretary general of the provincial party committee, came under investigation. Nanjing party chief Yang Weize followed in early 2015.

Li Yunfeng made his last public appearance on Wednesday last week when he presided over a conference on coastal development in the province, according to state media.

China's Xi Faces Pushback on Economic Policy

rfa.org

May 31, 2016



Chinese workers stand below a live video image of Chinese President Xi Jinping during the opening session of the National People's Congress in Beijing, March 5, 2016.

AFP

As China's economy struggles, officials are turning increasingly to anonymous statements on policy differences in a sign that political tensions are rising while economic growth falls.

On May 9, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) leading paper *People's Daily* carried a lengthy front-page interview with an unnamed "authoritative person," outlining the government's policies on debt risks, economic pressures, restructuring and reforms.

In one of the most widely quoted excerpts, the anonymous official warned that rising debt levels "can trigger a systemic financial crisis, cause negative economic growth and even eat up people's savings—and that's fatal."

"Big stimulus will only result in bubbles, which is a must-learn lesson," said the authoritative person in a translation by Bloomberg News.

As Bloomberg noted, this was the third economic commentary by the unidentified authority during President Xi Jinping's time in office with previous policy pronouncements in January and last May.

But the latest interview on economic policies may be more than one in an occasional series, since it follows an extraordinary open letter from unnamed "loyal party members" in March, calling for Xi's resignation and citing

"consideration for your personal safety and that of your family."

The letter posted on the Canyu (Participation) and Wujie (Watching News) websites at the start of China's annual legislative sessions blasted Xi for his "excessive concentration of power" and criticized his economic program.

Xi's direct involvement in policy development had led to stock market instability and losses for "hundreds of thousands of ordinary people," the critics charged.

"Supply-side reforms" and production capacity cuts had forced layoffs at state-owned enterprises (SOEs), while his "belt and road" trade plans had reduced foreign exchange reserves and brought the economy "to the verge of collapse," they said.

Exposing cracks

Whether justified or not, the anonymous broadsides have exposed cracks in the government's facade of unanimity on economic policies as it battles to keep growth from further declines.

While the secret CPC members blame Xi for weakening gross domestic product growth, which slipped to 6.7 percent in the first quarter, the "authoritative person" appears to be blaming Xi's underlings for issuing rosy assessments and running up debts after first-quarter bank lending jumped 25 percent.

China's economic performance "cannot be described ... (as) a 'good start'," the authority argued, citing a term used repeatedly by officials and the state-controlled press.

The country's recovery will be L-shaped, or slow, "not U-shaped and absolutely not V-shaped," the person said, adding that "it is neither possible nor necessary to force economic growth by leveraging up."

Analysts have been divided on whether the remarks reflect the collective views of top party and government officials or those of a single leader like Xi or Premier Li Keqiang.

"Yes, the 'authoritative person' was Li," wrote *South China Morning Post* commentator Shirley Yam, noting the pointed denial that the first-quarter GDP was a "good start" to growth for the year.

Yam called it "a resounding slap in the face" for Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli who used the words in March to describe his expectations for the first quarter.

But the words were repeated in April by a spokesman for the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the top economic planning agency, and used again in the official first-quarter press release from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

On April 29, a statement by the Politburo of the party's Central Committee also described "a good start to the year" following a meeting chaired by Xi, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

An anonymous persona?

It seems possible that Xi may have spoken through an anonymous persona to push back against official optimism after the loan surge failed to produce quick results. But there is also uncertainty about who the "authoritative person" really is and what it means for political conflict over policy.

Some analysts shied away from attributing the critique to any single figure.

"It should be understood as a consensus view reached at the senior level, rather than an individual point of view," said Han Meng, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Economics, quoted by Bloomberg News.

The mask of anonymity may keep Xi's detractors guessing about how much internal support he has for an economic policy that may be slow to produce positive results.

"Putting it in the paper as from an authoritative spokesman is an attempt to show that it isn't just Xi speaking. It's the collective leadership of the party, giving you the lowdown on what's what," said David Bachman, a professor of international studies at University of Washington in Seattle.

After the reference to "personal safety" by the "loyal party members," Xi may see the ambiguity of anonymity as preferable on several counts for some of his stronger statements.

"The slowing of the economy is creating real tension," said Bachman in an interview. "No one has a good answer for what to do about it."

"Xi has tried so hard to centralise decision making under his auspices that he has become the obvious person to blame for whatever problems there might be, even though he's trying to deflect some of that back onto Li Keqiang and some of the others," he said.

Last week, *The Wall Street Journal* may have added to the anonymous sniping over the economy with a report claiming that the People's Bank of China (PBOC) has secretly abandoned a policy reform announced last August for setting daily exchange rates based on market forces.

The report, based on minutes of PBOC meetings with unnamed economists and bankers, said the daily exchange rate "is now back under tight government control."

On Friday, the PBOC posted a statement on its Weibo social media account, denying the report as "fabricated"

and misleading. A spokeswoman for *The Wall Street Journal* said the paper stood behind the story, Reuters reported.

Shifting into a higher gear

The anonymous back-and-forth may only be getting started as the government prepares to shift its overcapacity-cutting policy into a higher gear.

If the government follows through on Xi's plans to restrict lending to deeply-indebted SOEs and "zombie companies," job losses and loan defaults are likely to rise far above current levels.

So far, officials have downplayed the employment impacts and have only repeated forecasts of 1.8 million job cuts in the coal and steel industries, although many other sectors are suffering with similar overcapacity.

On May 18, a meeting of the cabinet-level State Council chaired by Premier Li decided that 345 state-owned "zombie companies ... will be reorganised or left to the market within three years," Xinhua said.

The government has tried to minimise reactions to plans for factory shutdowns by talking in terms of "supply-side reforms."

But resistance from SOEs, local officials and the unnamed party members is likely to rise as the reforms unfold, particularly if economic growth continues to fall.

Xi appears to be bracing for more internal conflict. One week after the anonymous interview, Xi called for "unswerving efforts" from "local authorities and various departments" to advance supply-side reforms, according to Xinhua.

On May 3, *People's Daily* also reprinted a speech that Xi gave in January at a plenary session of the corruption-fighting Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), warning against internal dissent.

Xi said that "some officials have been forming cabals and cliques to covertly defy the CPC Central Committee's decisions and policies." They "risk compromising the political security of the Party and the country," he said.

Xi Jinping has changed China's winning formula

ft.com

May 30, 2016

The country's most important policies have been overturned by its strongman leader

Politics in the west are so dramatic at the moment that China can look relatively staid and stable by comparison. But that impression is deceptive. [Xi Jinping](#) is taking his country in radical and risky new directions.

If the president's new policies succeed, then the Xi era will be remembered for the achievement of his often-stated goal of the "great rejuvenation" of the Chinese nation. But if Mr Xi's experiments go wrong, then his legacy is likely to be political turmoil, economic stagnation and international confrontation.

What Mr Xi has done is essentially to abandon the formula that has driven China's rise over the past 30 years. That formula was created by Deng Xiaoping, after he came to power in late 1978, and then refined by his successors. It consisted of three ingredients — political, economic and international.

In economics, Deng and his successors emphasised exports, investment and the quest for double-digit annual growth. In politics, China moved away from the charismatic and dictatorial model created by Mao Zedong and towards a collective leadership. And in foreign affairs, China adopted a modest and cautious approach to the world that became colloquially known in the west as "hide and bide", after Deng's famous advice to his colleagues to "hide your capacities, bide your time".

Under Mr Xi, who assumed the leadership of the Chinese Communist party towards the end of 2012, all three key ingredients of the Deng formula have changed. In politics, China has moved back towards a model based around a strongman leader — Mr Xi himself. In economics, the years of double-digit growth are over and China is groping towards a new model, driven more by domestic consumption than exports. And in international affairs, the Xi era has seen a move away from hide and bide towards a foreign policy that challenges US dominance of the Asia-Pacific region.

The three big policy shifts have different origins. In economics, the old model of growth based on exports, high-rates of investment and low wages could not go on forever. The sheer size of the Chinese economy, combined with rising costs in China and slower growth in the west, made change inevitable. But the shift to a new model is perilous. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, China launched an unsustainable splurge of credit and investment that could yet culminate in a financial crisis.

Even if that unpleasant fate is avoided, China still has to get used to lower rates of growth. The party leadership used to encourage the idea that China had to grow at 8 per cent a year to maintain social and political stability. But now growth of 6-7 per cent would be regarded as a good result.

A healthy economy is crucial to internal stability. The Communist party still resolutely rejects any move towards democratic elections as unsuitable for China. Instead, the country's leaders have relied on rapid economic growth to give the political system a "performance legitimacy", which party theorists have argued is far deeper than the mandate endowed by a democratic election. But a faltering economy — or, worse, a financial crisis — could well undermine the party's legitimacy.

When it comes to politics, in the post-Mao era the Communist party has sought a middle path between dictatorship and democracy. The idea was to embrace a collective style of government, with smooth transitions of leadership managed by the party itself. Hu Jintao, Mr Xi's colourless predecessor, epitomised this system. He never encouraged a cult of personality, served two terms in office, and then left power.

Mr Xi has broken with this model. He is now widely said to be the most powerful leader of China since Mao. A sycophantic official media is encouraged, literally, to sing his praises. (The most noted ditty is called "Uncle Xi Loves Mama Peng", a saccharine reference to the president's wife, Peng Liyuan.) At the same time, Mr Xi has launched a crackdown on corruption that has resulted in hundreds of thousands of convictions, terrifying much of China's business and political elite. The result is fevered speculation in Beijing — including rumours of purges, attempted coups and assassination attempts. Many pundits believe that Mr Xi is now determined to serve more than two terms in office — a development that would overturn the model of collective leadership.

At the same time as economic and political tensions within China have risen under Mr Xi, so the country's foreign policy has become more nationalistic and more willing to risk confrontation with the west and with China's Asian neighbours. Beijing's increasingly tough assertion of its territorial and maritime claims, epitomised by its "island-building" in the South China Sea, has led to stand-offs with the US and Japanese navies. These near-clashes may serve a political purpose. In harder economic times, the Communist party may need new sources of legitimacy, and confrontation with Japan and the US at sea is liable to stir patriotic support for the government.

The key to the Deng formula that created modern China was the primacy of economics. Domestic politics and foreign policy were constructed to create the perfect environment for a Chinese economic miracle. With Mr Xi, however, political and foreign policy imperatives frequently appear to trump economics. That change in formula looks risky for both China and the world.

Three Communist Party cadres receive promotions crucial to China's power transitions next year

scmp.com

May 28, 2016

Three cadres with links to the top leadership are given new roles in a move seen as a prelude to next year's Communist Party National Congress



About 18 months away from the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party, three cadres with links to the top leadership recently received important promotions, including two being named provincial governors.

The appointments were crucial to next year's power transition, midway through the present term of President Xi Jinping (習近平) and Premier Li Keqiang (李克強), and the appointees all stood a good chance of being promoted further during the party congress, said Chen Daoyin, an associate professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law.

"The year before Xi's second term [as party general secretary] starts is crucial for cadres' appointments and could be seen as a prelude for next year's reshuffle," he said. "The appointments would look too rushed if they were made next year."

To the surprise of some, Lin Duo, considered a protege of the party's anticorruption chief Wang Qishan, was appointed governor of Gansu (甘肅) province in April. The appointment of Lin, 60, was unusual as he has never worked in the western province, nor has he been a governor of any province. Lin's appointment, which made him a provincial cadre, effectively postponed his retirement for five years until 2021.

Lin was Wang's subordinate during his four-year stint in the Beijing city government. Lin again reported to Wang in 2014, when Lin oversaw the provincial anticorruption body of Liaoning (遼寧) province.

Wang has been head of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the party's top anticorruption body, since 2012.

The previous governor of Gansu, Liu Weiping, is still two years shy of retirement for his level and was named deputy principal of the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, a position with very limited political power.

Meanwhile, Hu Heping, 54, was also promoted in April as governor of Xi's home province of Shaanxi (陝西), his third new position in 21/2 years. The appointment makes Hu, with a doctorate of civil engineering from the University of Tokyo, the country's second youngest provincial governor.

Hu's career in Shaanxi started as late as last April, a year and a half after he entered politics. For more than 10 years, Hu was a Tsinghua University colleague of Chen Xi, who is now the first ranking deputy director of the Communist Party's powerful organisation department, which oversees cadres' appointments at vice-ministerial level or above. Chen was Xi's classmate and roommate at college.

Xi's former subordinate, Wang Xiaohong, now Beijing's police chief, was appointed deputy public security minister earlier this month. Wang was Xi's former subordinate during the president's entire stint in Fujian (福建) province. Wang, 57, began his career in Fujian, where he remained until August 2013.

During that time, Wang held various positions such as director of the Minhou county public security bureau and director of the Fuzhou (福州) public security bureau. He later became

the police chief of Xiamen (廈門) before moving to Henan (河南) province. He was appointed city police chief of Beijing last March.

The Ministry of Public Security has seen major personnel movements since Xi came to power. Four of the seven deputy ministers have been appointed since 2012.

"Whoever holds power will trust those with common experience," Chen said. "The Ministry of Public Security is responsible for political safety and its absolute loyalty must be guaranteed."

The ministry was once heavily influenced by Zhou Yongkang (周永康), the party's former security tsar and Xi's political foe. Zhou was jailed for corruption and abuse of power last year.

The 19th party congress, which will see a major power-reshuffle at the the top of the party, is scheduled for autumn next year. Five of the seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the party's top decision-making body, will reach retirement age.

'It was a grave mistake': tearful former top graft-buster admits taking 140 million yuan in bribes

scmp.com

May 26, 2016

In a tearful court apology, the former top graft-buster of Guangdong province has admitted to taking more than 140 million yuan (HK\$166 million) in bribes.

"I've made a mistake. It's a grave mistake. I've also committed crime, which is serious," Zhu Mingguo, his voice choked with sobs, told the Liuzhou Intermediate People's Court in Guangxi province yesterday.

Zhu, 59, pled guilty to abusing his position to reap financial gain, being unable to account for some of his assets, and violating the family-planning policy.

Reports said Zhu had raised a son and a daughter with his ex-wife. It is unclear how many children he had with his current wife.

"Referring to the trial by judicial system and the legal punishment given to me, I've no complaint at all," he says in a video published by China News Service. "I earnestly and sincerely plead guilty and show my repentance, with no intention to appeal."

Zhu has not appeared in public since his detention in 2014. Apart from the 141 million yuan in bribes, he could not account for some 90 million yuan in assets.

In the video, Zhu takes off his glasses, steps back and bows before the camera, saying that he wants to express his deep apology to the Communist Party, the state and his compatriots.

Zhu was regarded as a protégé of Wang Yang, the former party boss of Guangdong. They worked together in Chongqing between 2002 and 2006 and in Guangdong from 2007 to 2013.

Wang is a vice-premier and a member of the party's decision-making Politburo.

With Wang's blessing, Zhu managed to peacefully settle massive anti-corruption protests in Wukan township in 2011, which won him political credit.

Zhu was deputy party secretary and the chief of the political and legal committee in Guangdong before he was promoted to chairman of the provincial political advisory body in early 2013.

The trial ended yesterday and a verdict has yet to be delivered.

China's 'feud' over economic reform reveals depth of Xi Jinping's secret state

theguardian.com

May 26, 2016

Speculation is rife that Xi wants to curb debt-fuelled growth before it destroys the economy and oust premier Li Keqiang. But experts suggest a more complex picture of leaders scrambling to fix the same problem

It was hardly a headline to set the pulse racing.

"Analysing economic trends according to the situation in the first quarter: authoritative insider talks about the state of China's economy," read [the front page](#) of the Communist party's official mouthpiece on the morning of Monday 9 May.

Yet this headline – and the accompanying 6,000-word article attacking debt-fuelled growth – has sparked weeks of speculation over an alleged political feud at the pinnacle of Chinese politics between the president, Xi Jinping, and the prime minister, Li Keqiang, the supposed steward of the Chinese economy.

"The recent People's Daily interview ... not only exposes a deep rift between [Xi and Li] ... it also shows the power struggle has got so bitter that the president had to resort to the media to push his agenda," one commentator said in the South China Morning Post.

"Clear divisions have emerged within the Chinese leadership," wrote Nikkei's Harada Issaku, claiming the two camps were "locking horns" over whether to prioritise economic stability or structural reforms.

The 9 May article – penned by an unnamed yet supposedly "authoritative" scribe – warned excessive credit growth could plunge China into financial turmoil, even wiping out the savings of the ordinary citizens.

As if to hammer that point home, a second, even longer article followed 24 hours later – this time a speech by Xi Jinping – in which the president laid out his vision for the Chinese economy and what he called supply-side structural reform.

"Taken together, the articles signal that Xi has decided to take the driver's seat to steer China's economy at a time when there are intense internal debates among officials over its overall direction," Wang Xiangwei argued in the South China Morning Post. Like many observers, he described the front page interview as a "repudiation" of Li Keqiang-backed efforts to prop up economic growth by turning on the credit taps.

China's economy stabilised in the first quarter of this year as a record 4.6 trillion yuan (£477.3bn) of credit was released, leading some to question Beijing's commitment to structural reforms.

China watchers have been left bamboozled at the mystifying way in which top-level policy making debates have played out in the pages of the party newspaper.

Some read the articles as a sign relations between Xi and Li are breaking down and predict the latter could be replaced next year by the president's current anti-corruption tsar Wang Qishan.

As evidence they point to the widespread suspicion that the first People's Daily article was the work of Liu He, a Harvard-educated economist who went to school with Xi during the 1960s and is now one of his closest advisers.

Others believe the articles suggest major policy changes are imminent or are designed to remind provincial officials that a massive new stimulus campaign – similar to that seen during the global financial crisis in 2009 – is off the menu.

"The very fact that this gets played out in the People's Daily leaves us all thinking, 'What is going on?'" said Fraser Howie, the co-author of *Red Capitalism: the fragile financial foundation of China's extraordinary rise*.

"Yes, it's indicative of something – but like so much in China we are not exactly sure what it is indicative of."

Bill Bishop, the publisher of *Sinocism*, a newsletter about China's politics and economy, admitted he was also struggling to untangle the "crazy speculation". "We all have to start exercising our atrophied Pekingology muscles to figure out what is really going on."

Bishop said one plausible scenario was that Li would be sidelined from economic affairs at next year's 19th Communist party congress and replaced by Wang Qishan in a bid to advance painful but necessary economic reforms.

"From the perspective of reform, Wang has got a great reputation and in many ways would be much more effective within the bureaucracy. Certainly people are afraid of him."

During a tour of China's northeastern rust belt this week, Xi reaffirmed his commitment to reforms. "If we hesitate in making decisions and do things halfway, we will lose this rare opportunity," he said, according to China's official news agency.

Howie said he saw the battles over economic policy less as a boxing match, in which red and blue teams traded punches, and more as a raging forest fire where police officers and fire fighters were tripping over each other as

they tried different techniques to extinguish the flames of a rapidly fading economy.

“There is this mismatch of endeavours. They all understand they need to solve the problem. I just don’t think they fully appreciate the coordination that is needed to solve it,” the financial markets expert said.

Howie said Li could not have been thrilled about having his policies rubbished so publicly by the president’s team. “Clearly... [Xi] is saying: ‘What’s gone before isn’t working. We can’t continue to do it.’ This is hardly rousing support for Li Keqiang and what has gone before.”

But he rejected the idea that a Tony Blair-Gordon Brown-style feud was playing out between China’s two most powerful men. “I don’t believe it is that vitriolic or open or contentious,” he said.

Bishop said he also believed there was more consensus over the economy than many outside observers admitted.

“The idea that the leadership doesn’t understand how bad the problems are and that foreign experts have a much better idea of what is going on in the Chinese system I think are hogwash. I think they are very clear how bad it is.”

Whatever the truth, the saga has underlined how under Xi, a centralising strongman president dubbed the “Chairman of Everything”, China’s already intensely secretive political system has become even more opaque.

“The fact that we are even speculating about this is quite remarkable because frankly nobody has any idea,” said Bishop. “And I guarantee you that most people at the top level of Chinese government probably have no idea what is going to happen.”

China expected to intensify probes into commercial bribery next year: report

scmp.com

May 25, 2016

New tide of investigations likely after impending change to law against unfair competition

Investigations into commercial bribery are tipped to surge on the mainland once a change to its law against unfair competition kicks in and market supervisors are freed up from overseeing institutional reforms, according to a joint report.

“China is strengthening its anti-commercial-bribery measures with improved legislation and strengthened law

enforcement,” Kate Yin, the main author of the report and a partner at mainland law firm Fangda Partners, said yesterday.

“We are likely to see a new tide of anti-commercial-bribery investigations next year once the amendment to the Anti-Unfair Competition Law is passed. A burst of law-enforcement measures usually follows a newly amended law.”

The “China Anti-Commercial Bribery Blue Paper” was jointly released by the China Institute of Corporate Legal Affairs and Fangda Partners, and based on a survey of 277 companies on the mainland in March and April.

China released a draft of the amended law, which covers business-related bribery, for public feedback in February. The present law came into force in 1993 and is widely seen as not keeping pace with changes in the market.

The draft stipulates that commercial bribery applies not only to sales and purchasing but also to gaining a competitive edge. It can also apply if the bribes are channelled through a third party or an agent.

Some analysts expect the changes to go through this year because of enthusiasm for it among policymakers.

Mainland authorities have pursued several high-profile bribery cases against companies in recent years. In 2014, a mainland court fined British pharmaceutical firm GlaxoSmithKline a record 3 billion yuan (HK\$3.57 billion) for bribery.

The joint report said industries at highest risk of bribery were the pharmaceutical and health care, fast-moving consumer goods, real estate and construction, and finance and investment sectors.

But the number of commercial bribery investigations initiated by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce dropped sharply last year, partly due to institutional overhauls.

The SAIC recorded a combined 7,507 investigations in 2014 and 2013, but just 669 in the first half of last year, according to administration figures.

Some local parts of the SAIC – one of the key bodies responsible for ensuring fair competition – are being merged with food, drug and quality inspection watchdogs as part of government reforms. In some regions, branches at the city and county level are reporting to local governments, rather than to provincial administrations, in a push for greater cooperation.

About 22 per cent of the firms that took part in the survey were state-owned enterprises, one in four were private businesses, and 53 per cent were multinational companies or joint ventures.

Yin said that many of the respondents said they were not prepared for surprise visits by inspectors. "Dawn raids ... are increasingly common in anti-commercial bribery investigations as a quick and effective measure," she said. "But only 30 per cent of respondents said they had a relevant crisis management mechanism [to deal with them]."

Some companies destroyed documents, lied or even fought with government officials during such raids, leading to higher compliance costs, the report said.

The multinational firms surveyed said about 40 per cent of investigations they were subject to began with a dawn raid, a figure that rose to more than half in the pharmaceutical and health care industry.

Though most of the respondents said they welcomed tougher action against business-related bribery, about 6 per cent said the measures would have a negative effect on their business.

They said they would have higher exposure to investigations and fines, fewer business opportunities, and less chance to meet business targets, indicating that bribery was still a means for some businesses to seal deals in the world's second-largest economy.

China declares cultural revolution a 'total mistake'

Financial Times

May 17, 2016

Fifty years on from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which unleashed a decade of violence across the country and caused more than 1m deaths, China has reminded citizens it was a "total mistake".

During Mao Zedong's cultural revolution, which he saw as a path towards absolute power, as many as 36m people were persecuted and up to 1.5m were killed. At its vanguard were millions of young "red guards" who attacked the country's institutions, including the party, and worshipped Mao as his personality cult took root.

Mao, who died in 1976, has since been judged "70 per cent correct and 30 per cent wrong".

An editorial in Tuesday's People's Daily, mouthpiece for the Communist Party, revived the party's original harsh verdict on the anniversary of the revolution as it sought to quell a wave of leftist nostalgia for a ruinous decade that nearly tore the Communist party apart.

"History has proven that the cultural revolution was a complete mistake, it is not and could never be a revolution

or social progress in any sense," it read. "We won't and will never allow a mistake like the 'cultural revolution' to happen again."

The party had braced itself for critical recollections from intellectuals and others hurt in the movement, but appeared unprepared for the wave of revulsion triggered by a lavish celebration of the cultural revolution held in Beijing earlier this month.

The revolution, in addition to depriving a generation of an education, indirectly put China on the path towards today's status as one of the world's most vibrant economies. Paramount leader Deng Xiaoping adopted market reforms a few years later to restore the economy and the credibility of the party.

But as China has developed, so too has an element of nationalism that draws on Mao's ideology of Communist equality to criticise widening class differences today. That helps foster current president Xi Jinping's vision of a stronger China internationally and a stronger Communist party at home.

A gala held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing earlier this month celebrated that version of history with cultural revolution-themed singing and slogans, including "people of the world unite to destroy American imperialism!".

After word leaked out on social media, the sponsors quickly claimed they had been duped by an "unauthorised" event organiser while censors raced to delete all pertinent posts.

"We must firmly keep in mind the historic lessons we learnt from 'cultural revolution', firmly adhere to the party's political conclusions on the cultural revolution, and resolutely prevent and combat the interference from the 'left' and the right concerning cultural revolution issues," the People's Daily concluded.

"History has proven that the cultural revolution was a complete mistake, it is not and could never be a revolution or social progress in any sense"

- Editorial in the People's Daily

China Silence on Mao's 'Catastrophe' Role Fuels Revival Fear

Bloomberg

May 16, 2016

China's Communist Party has a deep appreciation for its anniversaries. The 50th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution is one they'd rather not talk about.

Monday marked five decades since Mao Zedong launched China into one of its most chaotic and destructive periods, a campaign to remake society that pitted children against parents and turned friends to foes. While the party officially considers the 1966-76 movement "10 years of catastrophe," reflections on its extremes and why it happened remain censored from public discussion.

In a rare commentary published Tuesday, the party's flagship People's Daily newspaper called the Cultural Revolution a "complete mistake in theory and practice" that won't repeat. The 1,400-word piece reaffirmed past rulings on the movement without expanding on Mao's role or the political foundation that allowed the movement to spin out of control.

The statement comes amid growing nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution and the re-emergence of some tactics associated with it. President Xi Jinping, whose revolutionary father was purged by Mao, has overseen a renewed anti-Western nationalism, increased the use of public confessions and crafted a budding personality cult.

'Never Settled'

"The issue of the Culture Revolution has never been settled," said Zhang Qianfan, a professor of law and public affairs at Peking University, who compared the period to a frozen tumour that could spread if allowed to thaw. "Without fully accounting for that tragic episode, the country can never come to terms with its past and will always live in lingering uncertainty: would the similar tragedy come back again, in some other forms?"

On May 8, a group of Mao supporters in Shaanxi, Xi's home province, organised a symposium to mark the start of the campaign, raising a banner that read, "Long Live the Great Proletariat Culture Revolution."

Girl Band

A week earlier, the Great Hall of People, a venue usually reserved for senior leaders' activities, hosted a concert by an all-girl band paying tribute to both Mao and Xi, opening with the movement's signature song, "Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman." The venue was decorated with red banners with slogans like: "People of the world, unite and defeat the U.S. aggressors and all their running dogs."

Meanwhile, the run-up to the Monday anniversary passed with virtually no critical comment in the state-controlled media. A progressive political magazine, Yanhuang Chunqiu, canceled plans for a special Cultural Revolution issue this month under pressure from propaganda authorities, according to one editor at the publication. The magazine had last month pressed its luck by publishing six pieces by prominent authors on the subject in violation of

an edict from propaganda authorities to limit mentions of the Mao era to one article per issue, the editor said.

Invoking Mao

Since Xi came to power, he and the party have walked a fine line in invoking certain aspects of Maoism, including centralising power, promoting the leader as a hero of the masses and enforcing ideological controls in art and literature. Amid a sweeping anti-graft campaign that exposed corruption at high levels, Xi has pressed for a return to the ideological focus of Communism, while party officials have sought to elevate him as the party's "core" leader.

In February, when Beijing-based property tycoon Ren Zhiqiang questioned Xi's demand for the media's absolute loyalty to the party, he was attacked in state media as an anti-party, capitalist traitor and a bourgeois liberal, language that reminded many of the insults hurled by mobs during the Cultural Revolution.

The events raise concerns about whether China might turn away from "opening" policy launched under Deng Xiaoping more than 35 years ago and continue building greater rule of law and a modern economic society. By some estimates the Cultural Revolution left more than 1 million people dead and many more traumatised as students beat teachers, children denounced parents, schools shut and thousands of ancient monuments and cultural relics were destroyed. Xi himself was "sent down" to the countryside during the period, like millions of young people, to learn from peasants.

No Repeat

"We will not repeat and will absolutely not allow a repeat of mistake like 'Cultural Revolution,'" the People's Daily said Tuesday, urging the party to "tightly gather" around Xi to complete China's rise.

Unlike most announcements intended to have a big impact such as the May 16 Circular that fired Mao's first shot in the Cultural Revolution 50 years ago, the commentary was published on the newspaper's fourth page, not its first. The piece hewed closely to the party's official 1981 verdict on the movement, as well as Xi's own statements on it, that the first three decades of the People's Republic of China shouldn't be used to "negate" its next three decades, and vice versa.

"The commentary reminds us of the fragility of the legitimacy of the PRC," said Joseph Fewsmith, a political science professor at Boston University who studies China's elite politics. "Xi Jinping has been trying hard to say the Maoist period was, overall, good, but the Cultural Revolution should nevertheless be 'totally negated.' It is difficult to make that case."

'Residual Impact'

The movement was used by Mao to reassert his authority over real and perceived rivals such as Deng after the failed economic policies of the Great Leap Forward and didn't end until Mao's death in September 1976. The party's 1981 ruling, which was released under Deng, concluded that, while Mao made mistake in initiating the Cultural Revolution, it was "exploited" by a "Gang of Four" radicals led by his wife, Jiang Qing, who were later convicted for their roles.

The lack of official or public discussion about the period could facilitate a twisted historical outlook without a thorough repudiation of Mao, according to Zhang Lifan, a Beijing-based historian whose father was persecuted in the Cultural Revolution after being a vice minister. A widening wealth gap, inequality and corruption are providing some ground for neo-Maoist ideas, especially among disadvantaged people who feel left out by economic reforms, he said.

"The residual impact still poisons the country," Zhang Lifan said. "Especially some of its key ingredients, such as randomness and capriciousness in the use of power and political violence in crushing opposition."

Interview: 'Dear Chairman Mao, Please Think About What You Are Doing'

rfa.org

May 16, 2016

In September 1966, four months after late supreme leader Mao Zedong unleashed the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) on China, plunging the nation into a decade of political violence and social turmoil, a foreign language university student named Wang Rongfen wrote him a letter. "Dear Chairman Mao Zedong," the letter said. "The Cultural Revolution is no mass movement. It consists of a single man holding a gun to the heads of the people." Before announcing her resignation -- almost unthinkable in the China of the day -- from the Communist Party's youth league, Wang urged Mao: "As a member of the Communist Party, please think about what you are doing." Wang, then a final-year student of German at what is now the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), was jailed for life for her audacity. Now retired and living in Germany, she spoke to RFA's Mandarin Service about her experiences, 50 years after the Cultural Revolution began:

RFA: So how did you come to write that letter to Mao?

Wang Rongfen: When the Cultural Revolution started, a month after the May 16 directive [published on the front page of the People's Daily], we were asked to offer suggestions to our leaders. I was class captain at the time, so it fell to me to send the suggestions and to write the big-character posters about what we felt wasn't right at the time, mostly with the quality of our teaching and that sort of thing. But a delegation from the foreign ministry came to our university a few days later and students like me were singled out for political study sessions, as counterrevolutionaries. So I went from being a student invited to offer my suggestions to the Communist Party to somebody who was reviled as a bookworm with no interest in politics. Basically, anyone who got good grades and whose political pedigree wasn't ideal was in trouble. The Cultural Revolution had arrived. Later on, the delegation, which had been sent by [then president Liu Shaoqi], dispersed, apparently caught up in all the power struggles that rocked the party at the time.

RFA: What was your motivation as a mere college student, to write to Mao Zedong?

Wang Rongfen: Some reports said I was on the podium when Mao Zedong rallied the Red Guards on Tiananmen Square on Aug. 18, 2016, but that's rubbish. I was sent to Tiananmen Square as a student delegate to represent the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, just around the time that the foreign ministry delegation left campus. By then, everything had been turned on its head, and people like me who'd been struggled against [by Liu Shaoqi's faction] were the heroes of the hour. So I was brought in to make up the numbers, by a strange twist of fate.

RFA: So you were able, at the time you wrote that letter, to see just how disastrously wrong Mao was?

Wang Rongfen: To start with, everyone there was full of warmth and tears of gratitude for our great leader, because he was the one who had changed our status from counterrevolutionary students to progressive intellectuals. But the struggle sessions continued, on the streets, in the college campuses. People would disappear in the blink of an eye, their lives obliterated like ants. They would beat them with clubs, poles, drive belts with nails attached into their flesh.

RFA: How did you find the courage, the anger, to do what you did? I mean, you were just a student of German, right?

Wang Rongfen: Actually that was rather relevant, because back then, we had no diplomatic ties with West Germany. All of our foreign teachers were from East Germany. But we put on a play, Professor Mamlock, which was about the Nazi persecution of the Jews. And yet the things we saw happen before our very eyes were far, far worse than

the things we saw in the play, where all they did was put a guy on train and take him away to a concentration camp, or wherever, we didn't know. We would see people paraded on the streets, bereft of all dignity, their heads stuck all over with used toilet paper and excrement.

RFA: So what happened when you sent the letter?

Wang Rongfen: I wrote four letters to Mao Zedong, all of them saying the same thing, as a formal suggestion made to a party leader. Then I said goodbye to my mother, to the foreign ministry and to my college, and I went to a night-time pharmacy on Wangfujing and bought a small bottle of the insecticide Dichlorvos, which was pretty strong, and hid it in my pocket. From there I went to Tiananmen Square, and then to the Soviet Embassy in Dongzhimenwai. Just before I got to the embassy, I drank the whole thing down in a few glugs. Then I passed out.

RFA: Didn't you want to wait for a response?

Wang Rongfen: I knew there wouldn't be a reply. I knew from that time on Aug. 18, 1966, when (Mao) appeared before the Red Guards. I'd seen through him, and I was in utter despair for my country. Otherwise I would never have written that letter.

RFA: What did you see when you regained consciousness?

Wang Rongfen: I was surrounded by police officers in a police-run hospital. I had been out for a day and two nights, and I'd been arrested. I was locked up in the jail on Gongdelin Street. When I arrived, they strip-searched me and tried to have me sign something admitting that I was the counterrevolutionary, traitor and enemy of the people Wang Rongfen. I refused. I told them to get me a pen and paper and I'd write a big-character poster denouncing them. Then they locked me up in my cell. Actually, I wouldn't have lived long on the outside.

RFA: Were you mistreated in jail?

Wang Rongfen: Actually, the prison guards were very civilized, and the manacles we had to wear weren't too bad in Beijing. They were imported from the Soviet Union, and they were called wolf's teeth manacles. The more you fought against them, the tighter they bit into your flesh. But it still wasn't too bad.

RFA: So, you were sentenced in 1976?

Wang Rongfen: After I was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1976, I was taken to a labor camp. When I was transferred to Shanxi, they didn't beat me up or yell at me, and I had smaller manacles, which bit into my flesh and had a huge lock attached to them. Three hours later, I was taken ill, because they stopped me from standing up, and my heart gave out. They still didn't take the manacles off until they took me to a prison doctor, who said I was

about to die, and that it couldn't go on. It took an eternity to get them off me because the steel was embedded in my flesh, which was growing around it. They took my flesh off with it, and when they threw it in the fire, it made a hissing sound like a barbecue. That was my own flesh and my own blood cooking there.

RFA: How did you manage to eat, go to the toilet?

Wang Rongfen: What toilet? When we ate, we were on the floor like beasts, and they didn't have toilets. When my period came it just went into my trousers. You'd have thought that when Mao died, they'd let up a bit, but actually the killing was at its worst in the immediate aftermath of Mao's death. Anyone who so much as smiled, or suggested eating something was treated as a criminal on the day he died, as if they were celebrating his death. They treated livestock better than they treated us.

RFA: How long were you in there for?

Wang Rongfen: Nearly three years. Two women came from Beijing, out of the blue, and read out a judgement, which declared that I was not guilty. I was released that same day. I had no idea what was happening. I was pronounced not guilty and released on March 11, 1979. I had been locked up for 12 and a half years. My mother came to pick me up. Then the two women went off to other prisons, rehabilitating people as they went. The Beijing Intermediate People's Court was pretty busy in those days. I later learned that this was the work of Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang, who were overturning these miscarriages of justice. They started with the bigger cases, which was anyone who had been sentenced to more than 20 years.

Ling is among the most high-profile party targets of an ongoing anti-corruption campaign that has ensnared more than 100,000 officials since Xi came to power. Party members have tied Ling to Zhou, former top General Xu Caihou and former Chongqing party secretary Bo Xilai as making up a "New Gang of Four," even though the links between them aren't clear. Xu and Bo were also charged with corruption.

U.S. negotiations

In January, Xi warned top graft-busters that some officials were "forming cabals and cliques to covertly defy" the leadership and that such groups risked "compromising the political security of the party and the country," according to a transcript of the remarks first published on May 3.

Ling's prosecution could reverberate in the U.S., where his youngest brother, Ling Wancheng, has been living. In January, Chinese anti-graft authorities acknowledged for

the first they were "investigating the case and negotiating with the U.S." about the younger Ling.

Li Xiaolin, a Beijing-based lawyer who has defended senior officials and their families, said the verdict in Ling Jihua's case would depend on the amount of money involved, as well as the particular secrets taken and who ended up with them.

"The state secrets Ling could have leaked could be more than any one else could possibly have, and it's also a serious problem that his brother is in the U.S.," Li said. "Based on the charges, he's likely to receive serious punishment and could face the death penalty if convicted."

China's Great Leap Backwards: Xi Jinping and the cult of Mao

smh.com.au

May 15, 2016

Beijing: Today marks the 50th anniversary of the start of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. From what would become known as the "May 16 notification", Chairman Mao plunged China into a decade of brutality and upheaval in the name of purging bourgeoisie and traditional cultural elements and consolidating Mao Zedong Thought as the dominant ideology.

Tens of millions identified as "rightists" or class enemies were subjected to violent struggle sessions, systematic harassment, abuse and forfeiture of property.

As many as 1.5 million were killed or driven to suicide, unable to withstand the torture. Tens of millions were uprooted and sent down to the countryside. Some 200 million were left malnourished as the economy collapsed.



"It does harken back to Mao, this personality cult": souvenir plates bearing images of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mao Zedong at a shop near Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Photo: AP

The legacy of one of China's darkest decades has bled through subsequent generations of Communist Party leadership. Deng Xiaoping's son, Deng Pufang, was left

paraplegic after falling from a four-storey building while being interrogated by Red Guards.

Current leader Xi Jinping's older sister died in the mayhem. His father, a war-time hero, was subject to public humiliation, struggle sessions and repeated beatings. And Xi himself, then a teenager, was paraded in the streets as an enemy of the revolution, berated by his own mother, and almost thrown in prison for being the offspring of bourgeoisie party elite. He was famously sent down to a rural backwater in Shaanxi province – his old cave dwelling now a popular tourist attraction.

"I always had a stubborn streak and wouldn't put up with being bullied," Mr. Xi recalled in an interview in 2000. "I riled the radicals, and they blamed me for everything that went wrong."

In the context of 2012, with convulsive political tumult shrouding an imminent once-in-a-decade leadership transition, Wen Jiabao's words into his final news conference as premier represented an elegant yet excoriating final nail in the coffin for Bo Xilai, whose brand of neo-Maoist "red nostalgia" whipped Chongqing into nationalistic fervour –and manoeuvred himself into position as a pretender to the throne. The Communist Party machine instead backed Xi Jinping and Bo Xilai was swiftly sacked, charged with corruption, and eventually jailed for life.

Pausing frequently for effect and with his voice quivering with emotion, the grandfatherly figure Wen warned urgent political reforms within the Communist Party were paramount in order for both China's economy and society to continue to modernise and open up.

Failure to do so, he said, would mean "the new problems that have popped up in China's society will not be fundamentally resolved".

"And such historical tragedies as the Cultural Revolution may happen again."

While Wen Jiabao's final address at the 2012 National People's Congress repudiated Bo's legacy and foreshadowed his political execution, it was also tinged with apology and regret.

The Wen and Hu Jintao era had by then already been widely dismissed as the "lost decade", with both men lacking the necessary personal clout to either curb institutionalised corruption or push through necessary reforms to put the economy on a more sustainable footing.

"I feel truly sorry," he said. "Due to incompetent abilities and institutional and other factors, there is still much room for improvement in my work."

The message, implicitly, was for Xi to push on where he had fallen short.

Before his elevation into power, the expectation was that Xi's personal experiences in his formative years under Mao's rule would, as Wen had earnestly urged, prompt him to learn from the mistakes of the past and plot China on a continued course of reforms and liberalisation, both in its economy and its society.

But 40 years on from his death, Mao remains central to the Communist Party's narrative of ruling legitimacy. His embalmed body lies in state in a mausoleum overlooking Tiananmen Square, while his portrait smiles over the Forbidden City and graces every Chinese banknote.

By Mao's own measure, the mass campaign was his greatest achievement after leading the Communists to victory over the Japanese and the Kuomintang government which was exiled to Taiwan.

"It goes to the core of Maoism because Mao himself considers the Cultural Revolution one of his best achievements – you have to deal with that," says Monash University historian Warren Sun.



Xi Jinping and his father Xi Zhongxun, a war hero who later suffered during Mao's Cultural Revolution. *Photo: Supplied*

Xi has steered clear of refuting Mao's legacy and instead in landmark remarks made in 2013, implored the party to reconcile what he referred to the "first 30 years", leading up to 1978, and the following 30 years, marked by Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening up and the explosive growth that followed.

"The dictator, who caused his own father so much suffering, and who had such an impact on his own early life, may not be a person Xi harbours fond memories of," Kerry Brown, professor of Chinese Studies at King's College, London, writes in his new book *CEO, China*, which catalogues the rise of Xi Jinping.

"But the propagandist, the master of Chinese symbolic politics, the person in modern China who could be said to have most truly understood where power was located, how to use it and how to keep it – his was an inheritance worth tapping into."

The early hope from more liberal elements within the Communist Party was that Xi would display a greater reformist bent after taking necessary steps to consolidate his power, including through a shock-and-awe anti-corruption campaign that has served to purge his rivals and appease public anger that official graft had gone too far.

But China's slowing economy, and the manifest social problems it threatens to entail, has heaped pressure on the Xi administration. Radical reforms, particularly in a monolithic state-owned sector laden with vested interest groups, have remained difficult to push through.

Paranoid about the infiltration of Western influence and the ability for the internet and social media to disseminate unfiltered information at warp speed, Xi has doubled-down on the government's control of its people, coming down harder on dissent than any of his recent predecessors.

"The problem is connected with the threat to the political regime," says Mao Yushi, an internationally renowned veteran economist, who at 87, remains a prominent liberal intellectual. "China's rapid economic growth since reforming and opening up has protected the Communist Party's political legitimacy, now that there is no high growth, what can Xi depend on?"

Lawyers, intellectuals, activists, journalists and, most recently, foreign NGOs have come under pressure in a pervasive crackdown. Foreign criticism, whether of China's island-building program in the South China Sea, the government's chequered human rights record, or controversial ethnic minority policies in Xinjiang and Tibet, are all cast as a plot by a cabal of Western "hostile foreign forces" designed to undermine China and perpetuate US hegemony.

The creation of various party sub-committees, reporting directly to him, has centralised decision-making on matters pertaining to the economy, national security, cybersecurity and the military.

But perhaps the most stunning characteristic shared with Mao has been a growing personality cult around Xi fanned by the central propaganda department, which has produced some jarring results: newspaper front-pages dominated by Xi's every move, saccharine music videos professing love and loyalty to the leader.

"It does harken back to Mao, this personality cult, the concentration of power by casting aside the collective leadership ... now his style is quite dictatorial, demanding loyalty ideologically," says Sun, the historian. "He's anti-Western, dismissive of universal values and he also rules by fear, in the form of the anti-corrupt campaigns and

cracking down on dissent and tightening the control on media, education, culture – all this does harken back to Mao's practice."

Now approaching his 90s, Mao Yushi's body may have slowed but he recalls vividly the turmoil from the day he and his family were identified as rightist counter-revolutionaries at the start of the Cultural Revolution. Then an engineer at a state railway authority in Beijing, he would later be sent to hard labour at a factory in central Shanxi province.

His wife, Zhao Yanling, says Red Guards harassed them in their home on a daily basis. "When we were down to our last 50 cents, I asked my son if he knew how to buy meat from the market, he said yes and went," she told Fairfax Media from the couple's Beijing home.

"So I started cooking it, and the aroma from the meat, it smelt so good. But the Red Guards walked in and said 'f---, what, are you eating again?'. I threw the meat into the coals and said, 'no, we're not eating anything'. We had to sneak around like a thief."

The hordes of young Red Guards returned days later and shaved the heads of their whole family.

"What does that signify? It's to defile you. It's to tell everyone that your family belonged to one of the 'five-category elements' [landlord class, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, rightists and other bad elements], you can be beaten at will, abused at will."

For a government fond of elaborate observations of anniversaries – the 70th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II last year was marked with a military parade of unprecedented scale in Beijing – Monday's milestone will slip past quietly with little official recognition. After the fall of the Gang of Four, the party and much of the Chinese public have elected to move on, as market-oriented economic policies ignited an all-out pursuit of material wealth.

But just last week, ahead of Monday's sensitive anniversary, a Mao-themed revival show – staged at the Great Hall of the People sparked controversy for its renditions of revolutionary "red songs" harking back to the days of Mao, with giant images of Mao and Xi projected on stage.

It drew sharp criticism from even Xi's long-running supporters, including Ma Xiaoli, whose father Ma Wenrui was close to Xi's late father, Xi Zhongxun. The extravaganza was so over the top Ma speculated it was staged by political rivals to undermine the Chinese President.

"We must raise our strong vigilance against the comeback of the Cultural Revolution and [against] extreme leftist

ideology making waves again," she wrote, accusing the show of "taking a step back in history".

But rather than rejecting Mao Zedong's methods, Mao Yushi says Xi has actively sought to embrace, what after all, had been brutally effective methods of propaganda control and inspiring loyalty and adulation.

"Though Mao killed tens of millions, he is still seen as a saviour, people idolise him till this day. Xi is learning from him," he says.

Brown, meanwhile, says that Xi's tactic has been to restore the party to its idealistic roots, to cleanse its elite leaders in order that they can perform their function as leaders, rather than wealth dispensers, and to do this "through a mixture of managed crisis and fear".

"This, in essence, is his political program. And it is why Mao is still of immense importance for him."

China accuses ex-presidential aide of bribery, secrets theft

thanhniennews.com

May 14, 2016

Chinese prosecutors formally charged a former top aide to retired President Hu Jintao, setting the stage for a trial of the last member of a Communist Party faction dubbed the "New Gang of Four."

Ling Jihua, 59, who had served as Hu's chief of staff, was accused of taking bribes, illegally obtaining state secrets and abusing power, the official Xinhua News Agency said, citing a statement by state prosecutors. He'll be prosecuted in Tianjin's No. 1 Intermediate People's Court, the same tribunal that oversaw last year's secret conviction of former security czar Zhou Yongkang, a retired member of the Politburo's supreme Standing Committee.

The indictment comes almost 10 months after the party expelled Ling and accused him of corruption and discipline violations, including carrying on extramarital affairs. He was previously stripped of his post as vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The trial represents the closing chapter of a far-reaching corruption probe under President Xi Jinping that toppled Zhou and two of the country's top generals. Ling was considered a top candidate for the ruling Politburo before his ascent was cut short by claims that he tried to cover up details of the March 2012 death of his son in a Ferrari crash, the South China Morning Post reported in September that year.

"Ling's offense in illegally obtaining state secrets is serious; he also committed extremely serious offense in abusing his power and causing major losses to public property and the interests of the country and its people," Xinhua said, citing the indictment.

Ling may face a secret trial as similar charges over state secrets were cited by Xinhua in June as the reason for the closed-door trial for Zhou, who was sentenced to life in prison.

China Has Biggest Number of Links to Panama Papers

rfa.org

May 10, 2016

China-linked offshore companies in the Panama Papers far exceed the number of entities from other countries and regions of the world, reports indicate.

Some 25,000 offshore companies with owners -- either companies or individuals -- from China have been listed in a mass online leak of data from Panama law firm Mossack Fonseca, according to initial analysis of the data.

Of those, around 13,000 are traceable to Hong Kong, which has long been suspected as a major staging post for offshore Chinese funds re-entering the country as "foreign direct investment."

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists made public information on around 210,000 companies listed in the records of Mossack Fonseca, which helps clients set up shell companies in tax havens.

The leak has sent shockwaves around the world as the tax avoidance habits of the world's wealthiest people have been exposed.

But the ruling Chinese Communist Party has shifted its censorship machinery into overdrive since the leaks, banning news outlets from independent coverage of the story and ordering the deletion of related content from websites and social media platforms.

Chinese leaders' families implicated

The massive leak of 11.5 million files has revealed details of the operations and ultimate, hidden ownership of a slew of offshore shell companies, including those owned by family members of top Chinese leaders and Chinese celebrities.

Many of the networks outlined in the Panama Papers begin in Hong Kong, and are now available for public investigation at the ICIJ's website.

However, the link to the database was 100 percent blocked in China on Tuesday, while the Panama Papers homepage <https://panamapapers.icij.org/> was 90 percent blocked in China on Monday and Tuesday, according to a test on the anti-censorship site GreatFire.org.

Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper on Tuesday said it had found 33,000 Chinese names, some of which matched the English spelling of the names of high-ranking Chinese officials.

However, the ICIJ warned that independent identity checks must be carried out to ensure that nobody is mistakenly identified.

It added that setting up an offshore shell company does not in itself prove that any wrongdoing has occurred.

According to the Apple Daily, one name is spelled the same as that of Chinese finance minister Lou Jiwei, who is listed as a beneficiary of the British Virgin Islands (BVI)-registered company Crown Aquarius.

Another listing had a name spelled identically to that of former State Ethnic Affairs Commission chief and government minorities adviser Wang Zhengwei.

And another was identical to that of State Council secretary general Yang Jing, the Apple Daily said.

Censorship limits impact

However, further investigations would be needed to confirm that these individuals were the people listed on the database, it said.

Hong Kong-based independent political commentator Johnny Lau said the new revelations are unlikely to have an immediate impact in China, where they remain inaccessible, and where public debate on the topic is tightly controlled.

But he said they could lend authenticity to future cases brought by the administration of President Xi Jinping as part of his ongoing anti-corruption campaign.

"The case of [former Chongqing party chief] Bo Xilai showed us that a lot of material was gathered to use against him and his family after he became a problem," Lau said.

"But a lot of these offshore companies revealed in the Panama Papers are people avoiding tax rather than evading it, which means that it's a smear on their public image, but nothing more," he said.

At least eight current or former members of the all-powerful Politburo standing committee are among the more than 140 political figures worldwide linked to the offshore tax havens, according to a global investigation by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists

(ICIJ), the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and more than 100 other news organisations.

Included in the names uncovered by the investigation are the brother-in-law of President Xi, Deng Jiagui, and the daughter of former premier Li Peng, Li Xiaolin.

China has dismissed queries about the leaks as "groundless accusations."

China In Transition: PLA restructuring and reforms part of Xi Jinping's larger gameplan

Times of India Blog

May 9, 2016

In a significant ongoing development, China is effecting a massive shake-up and restructuring of its People's Liberation Army (PLA). The reforms which were unveiled by Chinese President Xi Jinping last year aim to enhance discipline, root out corruption and create a modern Chinese armed force. It's generally accepted that the PLA, despite acquiring modern weapons over the years, suffers from outdated command structures. This in turn is seen as breeding complacency and entrenched interests. Hence, an overhaul was needed to update systems and bring the PLA in line with China's 21st century objectives.

It's against this backdrop that the reform measures were initiated. Accordingly, the PLA's four headquarters have been split up, slimmed down and absorbed into the Central Military Commission as part of the latter's 15 new departments. The move enhances the Chinese Communist Party's oversight and reinforces party control over the PLA. Further, China's previous seven military regions have been reorganised into five theatre commands. In fact, India's defence minister Manohar Parrikar was taken to the new integrated western theatre command of the PLA in Chengdu – which has operational jurisdiction over the India-China border areas – during his recent trip to China.

Additionally, measures have been taken to make the PLA less focussed on land-based forces by creating a separate command for the army, putting it on an equal footing with the navy and air force. There's no denying that all of these restructuring efforts have been undertaken keeping in mind China's current strategic environment. Beijing wants to counter-balance the American pivot to Asia and for this it needs to shore up its blue water naval capabilities and prepare functions for informationised warfare. However, while the reforms will create a nimbler armed force, they will also firmly put it under the party-government leadership.

The latter aspect is highlighted by three key developments. First, in March the Central Military Commission ordered the PLA to end all commercial activities within three years. This was done to lessen the incentives for military-related corruption and misconduct. Second, 10 teams of central inspectors were recently sent to all parts of the Chinese military to purify the PLA. This again strengthens central oversight and enhances the inspection systems within the armed force. And lastly, Xi Jinping assuming the new title of commander-in-chief of the Chinese military in addition to his role as chairman of the Central Military Commission firmly establishes civilian control over the PLA.

Why is all of this important? It's because China is in the midst of a significant socio-economic transition. It can't continue with the old ways of doing business that centred on connections and privileges. With a burgeoning middle class asking more questions of those in power, the only solution lies in bolstering rules-based institutionalised systems. However, change is bound to upset vested interests. And the PLA represents a massive pillar of the Chinese state. Hence, reforming it and reasserting civilian oversight were imperatives that Xi simply couldn't ignore.

For those unhappy with Xi's overall reforms could have coalesced around powerful elements of the PLA. The Chinese President is slowly closing off this possibility. Over the past three years, nearly 50 senior officers of the PLA and the Armed Police Force have been convicted or investigated for corruption allegations. All of this is part of the larger transition plan. For one thing that the Communist Party is clear about is that it will not tolerate any criticism or machinations against it during this crucial period. In its view, it's the party that has held China together and brought prosperity to the Chinese people. And it's the party that will see this transition through.

China's Deng Xiaoping's Niece Named in Panama Papers

Latin American Herald Tribune

May 6, 2016

BEIJING - A niece of former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, the architect of economic modernisation that transformed the Asian giant, appears in the so-called Panama Papers, reported the Hong Kong daily South China Morning Post, or SCMP, Wednesday.

The daily - one among several that have published information relating to offshore companies in tax havens, along with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists - also lists the son-in-law of Jia Qinglin, a senior

official in the Chinese Communist hierarchy over the last decade.

Quite a few of the companies registered in tax havens, handled by the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca, from where the papers were leaked, and whose Hong Kong office was its biggest in Asia, are owned by Chinese nationals.

Li Xiaobing, Deng's niece, and her husband Wallace Yu Yiping, feature in the Panama Papers as directors of a British Virgin Islands-based company called Water Enterprises.

The daily adds the firm, linked to Chinese bottling firm Tibet Water Resources, shared its address in the tax haven with another company, Galaxia Space Management, owned by Yu.

Yu was one of the co-founders of Tibet Water Resources - previously known as Tibet 5100 Water Resources - one of the biggest companies of the sector in China, and which is listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange through a firm based in the Cayman Islands.

According to SCMP, Deng's niece's name might have surfaced in the papers as a result of Chinese law that prevents indigenous firms being listed in exchanges outside the mainland, forcing companies that wish to be quoted in exchanges such as those of Hong Kong - which does not follow Beijing's norms - to set up subsidiaries overseas.

SCMP also revealed another owner of companies abroad was Li Pak-tam, son-in-law of Jia Qinglin, who chaired the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference between 2008 and 2013.

Li Pak-tam owned a company in the British Virgin Islands named Fung Shing Development, established in 2000 and which was transferred to him four years later for one dollar.

His daughter Li Zidan or Jasmine Li, Jia Qinglin's granddaughter, was also listed as the owner of another two companies also set up in the Virgin Islands, according to the newspaper.

Thursday, following a practice already established for civilian departments as part of President Xi Jinping's war on graft.

Previously, corruption investigations in the People's Liberation Army, the world's largest armed forces, were handled in a more ad hoc fashion. But under reforms started last year the military now has a dedicated graft-fighting division.

Xi has led a sweeping anti-corruption campaign targeting high-ranking officials in industry, government, and the military.

The military is reeling from the crackdown and has seen dozens of officers investigated, including two former vice chairmen of the powerful Central Military Commission, Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou.

Xu died of cancer last year before he could be brought to trial while Guo was accused of accepting bribes last month.

The official Xinhua news agency said the new graft inspectors completed two days of training on Wednesday and had been organised into 10 teams who would go to various units around the country. It did not say which units would get inspectors.

Xu Qiliang, a vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, which controls the military and which the president heads, told the inspectors they were fulfilling an important role in cleaning up and strengthening the armed forces, Xinhua said.

"Keep firmly in mind the expectations and great trust of Chairman Xi," the news agency paraphrased Xu as saying.

The move coincides with broader efforts to reform the military, including the modernisation of its command structure, as China becomes more assertive in its territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas.

China is also investing heavily in new technology, including aircraft carriers, stealth jets and anti-satellite missiles, though it has not fought a war in decades.

Serving and retired officers have warned that corruption in the military could threaten the ability to wage war.

China's military deploys its first corruption inspectors

www.thanhniennews.com

Reuters

May 5, 2016

China's military has for the first time sent dedicated teams of corruption inspectors into its units, state media said on

China's Communist Party Disciplines Outspoken Property Tycoon

Voice of America News

May 4, 2016

The Chinese Communist Party has put an outspoken tycoon on one year of probation after he publicly criticised

President Xi Jinping's media policies in February — a decision that, analysts say, aims to create a chilling effect on party members and the nation's opinion leaders.

Yet, they add, the move to silence the property tycoon Ren Zhiqiang, known as China's Donald Trump, is also a slap in the president's face after Xi openly urged party leaders to heed online comments late last month.

The long-awaited punishment was announced on Monday after the party concluded that Ren's comments on his microblogging accounts were a "vile influence" and "have run counter to the party's basic principles on multiple occasions," according to state media.

Party's government?

Before his Weibo account was shut down by authorities, the sharp-tongued mogul posted comments to his nearly 38 million online followers, which read "When did the people's government change into the party's government?" in response to Xi's call for state media to adhere to the party line.

Calls to expel Ren have since been heard, although the tycoon, with an estimated net worth of 145 million yuan (\$22 million) ended up being treated lightly this week, given his political standing, said Willy Lam, an expert on elite Chinese politics.

Lenient punishment

"His voice has been effectively silenced. Even though when you compare the treatment given to dissidents, you would say that he's got a relatively lenient treatment," Lam said.

Ren, nicknamed "Big Gun Ren," is a "red second-generation," whose father, Ren Quansheng, served as the country's vice minister of commerce.

As a successful businessman himself, the 65-year-old tycoon is well-connected both politically and in business circles, notably, his private friendship with Wang Qishan, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee.

Even so, the party now seems determined to keep Ren out of the eyes of the public.

Use of ad to protest

On Tuesday, online comments about an air purifier ad, put up by Broad Group in Changsha, Hunan province, in front of the city's train station became the top-trending censored topic on Freeweibo.com.

The ad features Ren with a mask next to a sensitive punch line, which read "You can be silenced, but you can't stop breathing."

In response to the ad, one Weibo user said "the party can now expel Ren since he apparently has shown no

remorse" while another user wrote "the power of capital has shown a contempt for everything," according to the Freeweibo.com.

China's control over social media

Many of those censored online comments disagreed with the message of Ren's ad — a sign that the authorities' control over social media has tightened but hardly follow any patterns, said Zhang Ming, a professor of political science at Renmin University of China.

"China's censorship and media control measures hardly make any sense," he said.

Overall, the disciplinary action has set a chilling example to quell public opinions critical of the party and Xi, said Zhang Lifan, a prominent scholar of modern Chinese history.

But, Zhang added, in the long run, such measures will eventually backfire and bring the party's ruling legitimacy into question because many disapprove of such disciplinary action, even if they say nothing.

Signs of tightening grip by President Xi Jinping

The timing for the punishment, in particular, is ironic the scholar added, given Xi recently tried to portray himself as an open-minded leader by ordering party officials to take the opinions of the country's 700 million netizens seriously during a cyber security workshop two weeks ago.

Lam said for now, the move will force Ren to stay low-key in the upcoming year, or risk his party membership, since Xi has ambitions to become Mao Zedong of the 21st century and shown less tolerance of critics.

"We have the party congress coming up in one-and-a-half year's time, in which, Xi Jinping hopes to further consolidate his position as the unchallenged tyrant leader," Lam said.

"So we expect more censorship and more intimidation against party members or intellectuals, who dare to speak out," he added.

Xi Jinping's Politics in Command

The Wall Street Journal

May 4, 2016

China's leader wants absolute control over information.

The Journal reported Wednesday that Chinese government officials are warning economists, analysts and business reporters who point out problems such as capital outflows and rising bad loans that they should be more upbeat. That could mean the economy is in worse shape

than previously thought. And it shows that the government's obsession with restoring authoritarian control over all aspects of life is spiralling, well, out of control.

The penalty for negativism is not spelled out, but after what happened to Wang Xiaolu there is no need. A reporter for the financial magazine *Caijing*, he accurately reported last year that the authorities would soon scale back measures to prop up the stock market. Mr. Wang was detained and forced to confess his "crime" on state television.

Without the free flow of information China can't build a functioning market economy. The regime's Western apologists, among them many business leaders, long claimed that things would get better because there were no communists left in the Communist Party.

Yet since he came to power in 2012, General Secretary Xi Jinping has put politics in command, as Mao Zedong put it 50 years ago. Mr. Xi urged Party members to "embrace the spirit of Mao" and make ideology the priority.

To that end Mr. Xi strengthened the Party apparatus within state-owned and private companies. And he attacked all forms of foreign influence, including business. Officials harass foreign companies by holding up licensing and certification, antitrust actions, attacks in the state-run media, and a range of disciplinary actions including fines and detention of executives.

Information-technology companies are the top targets. A new counterterrorism law and forthcoming cybersecurity law require technology companies to store data locally and to provide encryption keys. That effectively means surrendering their intellectual property as well as the privacy of customers. A Jan. 27 joint letter from the U.S., Canadian, German and Japanese ambassadors complained that the laws "have the potential to impede commerce, stifle innovation, and infringe on China's obligation to protect human rights in accordance with international law."

Apple Computer closed down its iTunes and iBooks services in China last month apparently as a result of government blocking. That prompted billionaire investor Carl Icahn to sell his entire stake in the company, citing political risks. Beijing will "make it very difficult for Apple to sell there," he explained.

Optimists hoped that Mr. Xi would prove a reformer in the mode of Deng Xiaoping. But Deng had a "go for growth" mentality and was willing to tolerate some liberalisation of information flows to make China prosperous. Mr. Xi seems determined to restore levels of control last seen under Mao, with predictable economic consequences.

China's Xi Jinping denies House of Cards power struggle but attacks 'conspirators'

The Guardian

May 4, 2016

Chinese president warns of 'cabals and cliques' within Communist party and promises 'resolute response to eliminate the problem'

Xi Jinping has rejected claims that a "House of Cards power struggle" is raging at the pinnacle of Chinese politics, but claimed "conspirators" were attempting to undermine the Communist party from within.

In a speech published in Beijing's official newspaper this week, the Chinese president warned that the presence of "cabals and cliques" inside the party risked "compromising the political security of the party and the country".

"There are careerists and conspirators existing in our party and undermining the party's governance," Xi said, according to the People's Daily transcript of his comments.

"We should not bury our heads in the sand and spare these members but must make a resolute response to eliminate the problem and deter further violations."

The speech comes at a time of growing speculation over possible factional struggles within the 88 million-member Communist party that Xi has led since late 2012.

As evidence of those rifts, experts point to recent moves by Xi to rein in the influential Communist Youth League, which is the power base of former president Hu Jintao and current prime minister Li Keqiang.

This week it emerged that the Youth League's budget had been slashed by more than 50% following a damning investigation into its activities by Xi's anti-corruption agents.

Experts also see Xi's decision last month to take on the title of commander-in-chief of China's joint battle command centre as a potential indicator of trouble at the top.

Since coming to power Xi has amassed an unusual plethora of official titles including general secretary of the Communist party, president of the People's Republic of China, chairman of the central military commission, leader of the national security commission and head of the leading group for overall reform.

One academic has dubbed him the "chairman of everything".

Roderick MacFarquhar, a Harvard University expert in elite Communist party politics, said: "Xi Jinping's donning of

uniform and giving him his new military title is a warning to his colleagues that he has the army behind him. Whether he actually has or not, one doesn't know. But that is his bulwark, as it was Mao's."

However, MacFarquhar said the new title could be a sign of weakness rather than strength, noting that not even Mao Zedong had accumulated such a glut of titles. "Chairman Mao never needed titles. Everyone knew who was in charge," he said.

Xi has made a high-profile anti-corruption campaign one of his administration's key missions, disciplining hundreds of thousands of officials, including top party and military figures.

But experts say the war on corruption has generated discontent among officials, caused political paralysis and fuelled suspicions Xi is using the campaign as a pretext to purge his political enemies.

In his recent speech, Xi denied those charges and vowed to "step up" the anti-corruption drive, according to Xinhua, China's official news and propaganda agency.

"We must make it clear that our party's fight against corruption is not a snobbish affair that discriminates between different people, and it is not a House of Cards power struggle," Xi said.

Andrew Wedeman, a political scientist who is writing a book called *Swatting Flies and Hunting Tigers: Xi Jinping's War on Corruption*, said continuing to pursue the campaign carried severe risks for China's leader.

"There is a certain point where the elite would want to wind this down because at the end of the day – as perhaps suggested by the revelations in the Panama Papers– there is enough guilt to go around among the leadership that if you really push this thing too far then an awful lot of people would be in trouble.

"Given the extent of corruption, you can only push this thing so far without doing serious damage to the integrity and the unity of the party," Wedeman added.

China's Xi says not stifling debate but wants everyone on same song sheet

thanhniennews.com

May 3, 2016

China's ruling Communist Party is not trying to curtail internal debate or even criticism with rules banning "baseless comments" but is simply trying to ensure no one is "singing out of tune", President Xi Jinping has said.

Xi has come down hard on corruption since assuming office more than three years ago and tried to return the party to its traditional values of serving the people selflessly, following a series of graft and extravagance scandals.

Along with his fight against corruption, Xi has also been reining in overt dissent by party members on key issues as he seeks to enforce party discipline, especially on tackling graft, with new party rules unveiled last year banning "baseless comments" on major policies.

In a January speech, the full transcript of which was carried by the party's official *People's Daily* on Tuesday, Xi said some party members had been feigning compliance with policy and even openly expressing opposition.

"Some party organisations think political discipline is soft or false, and when it comes to wrong words and deeds that go against party discipline they don't care, don't report it, don't resist it, don't fight it and certainly don't investigate and deal with it," Xi told the party's anti-graft watchdog.

"The reason we demand party members and cadres not to make baseless comments is not so you can't raise opinions and suggestions or even critical opinions," he said.

"It's so that on important political principles, on issues of right and wrong (you) cannot sing out of tune with the party center and engage in political liberalism."

The party periodically warns against "liberalism", especially in the military, which generally refers to those who wish to challenge the extent of party control over China.

Speaking more generally about corruption, Xi said the fight against the problem remained "severe and complex".

Without naming individuals, he said some officials cared only about forming their own cliques to advance their careers - something the party has long railed against as a root cause of corruption.

There has been persistent speculation that the graft crackdown is as much about Xi taking down his rivals as it is about dealing with the actual problem itself. The party denies this.

Xi Jinping vs. Li Keqiang

asia.nikkei.com

May 2, 2016

TOKYO -- Political tensions are rising in China in a prelude of what is expected to be an all-out battle between the

country's top two leaders -- President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang.

Relations between the two have deteriorated sharply in the past year or so. This could be seen during the past two annual meetings of the National People's Congress, China's parliament.

As they did a year earlier, Xi and Li this past March sat next to each other during the plenary sessions. But they never shook hands. They also spoke to each other only briefly. They even avoided making eye contact.

Their behaviour was highly unusual. Even last year, the two at least glad-handed and smiled for the sake of the TV cameras, not to mention all those around them.

"Relations between Xi and Li have seriously soured," one political source in Beijing said during the closing days of the Chinese parliament's annual meeting. "Their rivalry could even be divined from a speech Li gave [during the most recent congress] and will become even clearer in due course."

In a government work report that Li gave in speech form on March 5, during the opening session of the annual meeting, he said, "We will improve oversight and accountability systems, root out incompetence, inertia, and negligence, and show zero tolerance for those who are on the government payroll but do not perform their duties."

Li came down hard on paper-shuffling bureaucrats immediately after referring to President Xi's anti-corruption campaign and saying that the Chinese government will step up its fight against corruption.

Apparently, this was Li's way of highlighting the negative effects of Xi's anti-corruption drive, especially the widespread phenomenon of slacking off. It was also a veiled attack on the Chinese president.

Sitting and waiting

Since being inaugurated about three years ago, President Xi has wielded an anti-corruption campaign against his political foes and as a tool to consolidate power.

"Western capitalist values" and bad-mouthing state policies, the party's flagship magazine has revealed.

"I have heard reports that some people disseminated Western capitalism values when lecturing at party schools, some talked out of turn and made reckless comments on party and state policies," Xi told a high-level meeting aimed at improving the institutes' work.

"Some people purposely [focused on] finding faults, grumbling and making cynical remarks, and some took part in improper social events at will under the golden reputation of the party school," Xi continued.

He demanded an end to such behaviour and told party training institutes to keep their teaching consistent with the central committee.

The party's *Qiushi* magazine printed a full transcript of the meeting, which took place in December. The remarks came amid a ratcheting up of controls on ideology and free speech, particularly in regards to universities, the media, the internet and dissidents.

Xi said that "exploratory academic matters" should not be confused with "serious political issues".

"Allowing research into academic matters does not mean that [teachers] can talk out of turn or make any comment they like," he said.

"We say there are no forbidden zones for academic research ... but 'no forbidden zone' is not an absolute thing," he said.

"Wrong opinions in violation of the party's theories, strategies and policies are not allowed in party schools [whether] publicly or in private."

In February, Central Party School professor Cai Xia was criticised by party media after she penned an article voicing support for former property tycoon Ren Zhiqiang, who came under fire for criticising Xi's demand for loyalty from state media.

But in a rare move last week, Xi called for the embrace of intellectuals and tolerance of dissenting voices.

China's President Xi Jinping warns Communist Party schools against 'Western capitalist' values

scmp.com

May 1, 2016

President Xi Jinping recently warned teachers at the Communist Party's training institutes against spreading

Commentaries

Hydropower dams worldwide cause continued species extinction

May 30, 2016

University of Stirling

New research led by the University of Stirling has found a global pattern of sustained species extinctions on islands within hydroelectric reservoirs.

Scientists have discovered that reservoir islands created by large dams across the world do not maintain the same levels of animal and plant life found prior to flooding.

Despite being hailed as conservation sanctuaries that protect species from hunting and deforestation, islands undergo sustained loss of species year on year after dam construction, a pattern otherwise known as 'extinction debt'.

These findings represent a significant environmental impact that is currently missing from assessment procedures for proposed new dams.

Isabel Jones, PhD researcher at the University and Lead Author, said: "We found a devastating reduction in species over time in the majority of reservoir islands we studied. On average, islands have 35 per cent fewer species than nearby mainland sites, however one South American bird community suffered as much as 87 per cent loss of species on reservoir islands.

"We know flooding reservoirs causes immediate loss of habitat and species, but we now find there is also a significant future biological cost as the 'extinction debt' is paid.

"No matter where the dam is located, the island size, or which species are present, there is sustained loss of species, with many in existing dams still potentially facing extinction."

Conservation experts examined research covering changes in species richness of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and plants on more than 200 islands created by large dams, including Brazil's Balbina reservoir and China's Thousand Island Lake.

Loss of species was investigated over a period of less than one year to over 90 years from when islands were created by reservoir filling.

With more than 50,000 large dams operating globally, including in highly biodiverse regions such as the Amazon Basin, and many future dams planned to help meet rising energy demands, researchers believe more needs to be done to account for the long-term loss of species on reservoir islands.

Co-author of the research, Professor Carlos Peres of the University of East Anglia, added: "Current practices to minimise the detrimental impacts of major hydroelectric dams include tropical forest set-asides, but this is a mirage if the remaining terrestrial biota becomes stranded in small islands -- this needs to be taken into account in new infrastructure developments.

"Strong environmental licensing should be put in place to assess species losses versus the amount of hydropower output to even-up the biodiversity balance sheet."

Story Source:

The above post is reprinted from materials provided by University of Stirling. Note: Materials may be edited for content and length.

Journal Reference:

1 Isabel L. Jones, Nils Bunnefeld, Alistair S. Jump, Carlos A. Peres, Daisy H. Dent. Extinction debt on reservoir land-bridge islands. *Biological Conservation*, 2016; 199: 75 DOI: 10.1016/j.biocon.2016.04.036

China's Nuclear Submarine : Strategic balance in South Asia

newdelhitimes.com

May 30, 2016

For the first time, a Chinese nuclear submarine arrived in Karachi port in May 2016 coinciding with a Chinese military delegation's visit to Islamabad. An article was published on May 13 in Chinese State-run Global Times that provided an insight into the extensive military reforms underway in China as well as the operational orientation of the People's Liberation Army's recently constituted West Zone. It appeared in the Communist Youth League's Chinese-language China Youth Daily first, a day later in the English-language State-run Global Times and further publicised via Twitter to reach a wider audience. Jayadeva Ranade, former R&AW officer and additional secretary, Cabinet secretariat, Government of India, who is President of the Centre for China Analysis and Strategy, in a rediff article, provides the broad outlines of Chinese plans and activities.

Chinese publications coincide with the increased tension in the South China Sea, amidst sharp warnings by China to the US against interference in the maritime dispute, President Pranab Mukherjee's visit to China and the defence minister's upcoming visit to Vietnam. Coincidentally, four Indian Navy warships left on May 18 for port calls to Vietnam, the Philippines, Japan, Russia and Malaysia. The Chinese army's restructuring has placed Tibet Military Command under the leadership of the Chinese ground forces forewarning possibilities of some military combat mission in recent future. The suggestion in the Global Times article of 'some kind of military combat mission in the future,' is reminiscent of similar comments made earlier.

In 2010, when tension in the South China Sea attained fever-pitch, the China-owned Hong Kong-based media, echoing the old Chinese adage of 'killing a chicken to frighten the monkey,' said China would pick on a big power like India to teach the other countries a lesson. Beijing is obviously irritated with growing warmth in India-US ties and its official media has been warning India against interference in the South China Sea dispute. The Global Times article provided some interesting insights into the ongoing military reform and restructuring, especially in the areas bordering India i.e. China's 'south-western' border, as China strengthens its forces to maintain military pressure on India. Erstwhile Lanzhou and Chengdu military regions merged into the newly constituted West Zone, to underline Beijing's added importance to the Tibet Military Command.

This Command has been given 'elevated political rank.' which is 'one level higher than its counterpart provincial-level military commands' and as it 'comes under the leadership of the PLA,' or China's ground forces, acquires an operational role; automatically elevating authority level vide the expansion of their function and mission. The elevated political status helps it mobilise more military resources. The references to the 'Tibet Military Command' and the 'Xinjiang Military Command' are new and suggest that the nomenclatures of the former military region headquarters have been changed following their merger with and subordination to the West Zone. The Central Military Commission now decides the transfer and senior level appointment to the West Zone whose operational area of interest includes Pakistan, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Gwadar, Afghanistan and south-western' borders implying India.

The 'political status' of the Xinjiang Military Command is likely to be raised in the future as military commands in Tibet and Xinjiang have always enjoyed special political status in the past. The promotion in rank this time reflects a continuation of China's policy to 'underscore the

importance accorded to the West Zone' by China's CMC. The changes in military structure diminish the importance of most of the provincial military commands. The West Zone's area of interest will expand to include Djibouti and East Africa. With redrawn command structure, the West Zone's operational jurisdiction now encompasses, not only Gwadar, the CPEC and Pakistan, but also Afghanistan, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and East Africa. This disturbs the strategic balance of the region and does not bode well for India.

India, Japan Must Come Together to Take on Chinese Dragon Breathing Military Fire

The New Indian Express

Maj. Gen. (Retd) G D Bakshi

May 28, 2016

The US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for South Asia, Abraham N. Denmark, briefed reporters after submission of the Pentagon's 2016 Annual Report to the Congress on 'Military & Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China'. He stated: "We have noticed an increase in capability and force posture by the Chinese military in areas close to the border with India." Responding to a question on China upgrading its military command in Tibet, he said, "It is difficult to say how much of this is driven by considerations to maintain internal stability and how much of it is an external consideration."

The US Defence Department also warned of China's increasing military presence, including bases, in various parts of the world, particularly in Pakistan. The report pointed out that Pakistan remains China's primary customer for conventional weapons. It engages in both arms sales and defence industrial cooperation with Pakistan, including the LY-80 surface-to-air missile system, F 22P frigates with helicopters, main battle tank production, air-to-air missiles and anti-ship cruise missiles. In June 2014, Pakistan started co-producing the first two of its 50 Block-2 JF-17s (an upgraded version of the JF-17). The report says, "China most likely will seek to establish additional naval logistics hubs in countries with which it has long-standing friendly relationship and similar strategic interests, including Pakistan, and a precedent for hosting foreign militaries."

China has recently regrouped its seven military area commands into just four theatres—with an emphasis on tri-services integration. The joint commands will now function directly under the Central Military Commission,

replicating the US model, and the service chiefs will deal more with creation of military structures, their upkeep and training. The most significant development from the Indian point of view has been the integration of the Lanzhou Military Region (focused in Xinjiang opposite Ladakh) and the Chengdu Military Region (opposite the Northeast) into the Western Theatre Command, which pools all resources deployed against India under a single military commander.

General Zhao Zhongqui has been appointed the Western Theatre Commander. Both he and his deputy are old Tibet hands and have extensive operational experience in this area. It is now a military command that focuses the entire resources of the theatre against one adversary: India. The Chinese military strength in Tibet is being rapidly augmented. There are some six tank/motorised infantry divisions in the Western Theatre Command and the degree of mechanisation and informatisation is being enhanced. By the ab initio line-up of forces, the threat to Ladakh now is far higher compared to the Northeast. Let us not forget that in Ladakh, China and Pakistan can attack us jointly. Any future Chinese offensive will be presaged by extensive cyber-attacks and a barrage of conventional tipped rockets on our command and control nodes, airfields and logistics dumps. The most impressive and worrisome modernisation, however, is of the Chinese Air Force. It has 913 fourth-generation jet fighter aircraft (to include J-10, J-11, SU-27 and Su-30), while India has just 322 fighters of this class (Su-30, MiG-29, Mirage-2000), and Japan has 277. The arithmetic of this competition dictates that India and Japan establish a strong strategic partnership, which must include Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines, nations that are threatened by China's muscle-flexing in the South China Sea.

Both Indian PM Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping took charge of their countries as strong and decisive leaders with a mandate for change. Both tried to seize each other up and seek a modus vivendi. It is noteworthy that initially China under Hu Jintao was hesitant about investing heavily in a state like Pakistan, which figured so prominently in the list of fast-failing states. Somehow, Jinping in his seminal visit to Pakistan last year, promised \$46 billion to create a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The new silk road alignment from Gwadar to Gilgit and onto Xinjiang was primarily designed to overcome China's Malacca bypass dilemma. Over 60 per cent of China's energy requirements have to flow through the choke point of the Malacca Straits. In the event of a major war or crisis over Taiwan or the South China Sea, the US, Japanese and Indian navies could easily interdict this energy and trade traffic. That is why having a port on the Pakistani coast of Makran at Gwadar would

enable the Chinese oil tankers to reduce their 22 days' voyage to just five-seven days (depending upon whether the tanker is coming from Angola or the Middle East). They would bypass Malacca, Sunda and Lombok straits. China has invested heavily in Pakistan as a counterweight to India. It is turning openly hostile to India and has tried to block its entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group by pushing Pakistan's membership. It has also blocked India's attempts to have Azhar Masood of the JeM, who masterminded the Pathankot attack, blacklisted by the UN as an international terrorist. Let's not forget that the Gilgit-Gwader beltway is being built through Indian territory.

China's Chengdu-Lhasa Railway: Tibet and 'One Belt, One Road'

The Diplomat

Justin Cheung

May 27, 2016

A newly planned railway linking Tibet with central China will serve to provide stability for the Belt and Road.

It is no secret that Tibetan independence movements have long drawn the ire of Chinese authorities. Alongside heightened rhetoric in recent years over Tibetan unrest and the growing publicity of riots and self-immolations, China has sought to augment its capacity for crackdown in the restive province.

The swiftness of Chinese response to previous swells of separatist sentiment is best illustrated in the 2008 Tibetan unrest. During that time, the BBC reported that within days of the start of anti-government riots, over 400 troop carriers of the People's Armed Police were mobilized. Ultimately, the speed with which the Chinese government was able to ferry troops into sites of unrest was a crucial factor in quelling the upheaval.

In more recent times, China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) policy – Xi Jinping's plan to expand the reach of Chinese trade routes to Europe through a land route in Central Asia and a sea route through the Indian Ocean and around the horn of Africa – has taken center stage as a cornerstone of modern Chinese foreign policy. Access to Pakistan and Central Asia are crucial to ensure the success of these trade routes, which incidentally must start or pass through Tibet or Xinjiang, historically separatist provinces. This has put particularly urgent pressure on the Chinese government to bring stability to its westernmost regions.

Furthermore, the implementation of the OBOR policy comes at a critical time for China. Recent downturns in

economic growth and output have put leaders such as Xi Jinping in a bind, spending a great deal of political capital to restrict and cripple any seeds of social dissent. On a geopolitical level, ensuring robust strategic control over Tibet has never been more essential, for both propaganda and economic reasons.

With that said, China's newly planned Chengdu-Lhasa railway – over 2,000 km of tracks – would serve as a crucially efficient connection between Sichuan province in central China with the heart of Tibet. The construction of the railway was recently announced; such an infrastructural feat would facilitate rapid travel between the two locations, bringing a multi-day trip down to just fifteen hours. A recent report by *The Economist* cited a Chinese expert as saying the railroad could be feasibly completed by 2030.

The implications of this railway's construction are particularly diverse, but they all center on a particular purpose: expedited control. In an age where social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook can cause riots to explode into revolutions overnight (see: the Arab Spring), China must ensure that its ability to quickly muster a physical military presence can match the speed of modern rebellions. The Chengdu-Lhasa railway provides a means of quickly mobilising armed forces and also facilitates the movement and migration of Han Chinese from more central regions of China into Tibet, a policy that China has long pushed in order to smother ethnic dissent.

This is not the first time that China has used "railway power projection" to assert its power in Tibet or Xinjiang. However, it is the most recent and the most ambitious project thus far. Most importantly, the timing of this undertaking highlights the effort and investment that Chinese leaders are willing to make to ensure that the crossroads of its budding OBOR policy remain firmly under Chinese control. Tibet is an important starting point for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and an equally important entryway to the Central Asian states where trade through the Caspian, Caucasus, and to Europe must begin.

As such, the construction of the Chengdu-Lhasa railway is separate from previous Chinese attempts to quell separatist movements. This time, there is much more at stake. The railway plays an important duality in optimising China's foreign and domestic geo-policy today: the necessity of political stability within its borders to ensure economic success from the outside.

Indo-Pak-China strategic games

Dailyexcelsior.com

Harsha Kakar

May 25, 2016

Pakistan and China claim their relationship is that of two 'all-weather friends'. India and China did appear to be moving forward in resolving the vexed border issue and improving bilateral ties, but recent Chinese actions seem to have stonewalled any progress. The visit of the Indian President to China this week may not result in any visible change in Chinese perceptions towards India or Pakistan. They may make innocuous statements, but there is unlikely to be any positive actions on ground. Simultaneously, every attempt by India to build bridges with Pakistan seem to collapse even before the first girder is launched. This trio of nations continue to indulge in strategic games while jostling for domination of the South Asian landmass. The cooling off in relations between the US and Pakistan and increasing confrontation between the US and China only enhances the quagmire. India's growing proximity to the US, Japan and the west increases doubts in Chinese minds. To further compound the case is Russia, which since the imposition of sanctions over Ukraine, has begun looking towards Asia, notably China.

China by its recent actions at the UN and the NSG has openly demonstrated its support for Pakistan. Whether this is in quid-pro-quo for Pakistan's military support for the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which would benefit China immensely, or to indicate its preference in relations between its two neighbours, time would tell. In addition, it is China which is providing missile and weapon technology to Pakistan permitting it to enhance its nuclear delivery means.

Pakistan, being placed at a vantage point, geographically, was a nation in demand during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and also during the US led war on terror, post 9/11. Further with Iran under isolation, it remained important to the western world. However, its failure to curtail the Taliban and the Haqqani network, as also terrorist groups operating against India, moved it away from the international radar. The provision of military hardware and aid from the US now seems to be on the wane and would only reduce, post the change in US presidency. Its traditional Arab base also appears to be receding due to drop in global oil prices, rising involvement in the war against the IS and increasing Indian diplomatic influence. Therefore, China would appear to be its only benefactor in the years ahead. The Russian factor remains only a possibility for now, as the Russians, though still close to India are only testing the waters.

Economically Pakistan hopes to revive and survive on the CPEC. Internally it faces strife and turmoil. Sectarian violence, terrorist strikes and bomb blasts are a daily occurrence. Militarily it is in competition with India, whom it openly declares its sworn enemy. India's recent missile tests have created a factor of fear within the Pakistan military establishment. With military aid receding from the west, lack of finances to purchase military hardware and enhancing capabilities by India compel it to either obtain its military requirement from China or enhance the production and deployment of tactical nuclear weapons as a counter measure to India. Military supplies from Russia appear to be on the cards, though not formal yet.

The visit in the recent past of the Indian Prime Minister to China and the reciprocal visit of their President did indicate a warming in the relationship. India's growing proximity to the west, unstinted support to the 'open sea policy' and enhancing maritime ties with Japan again distanced the two nations. The forthcoming participation of four Indian naval ships in the Malabar exercise in the South China sea would only increase the distance. Though India did attempt to appease China by denying visas to Chinese dissidents, it was of no avail. China has made it abundantly clear that it would continue to prefer its growing relationship with Pakistan over India.

There is growing ambiguity over China upgrading its Tibetan Command, with US intelligence even stating that it would enhance capabilities in case of a future conflict with India. Whatever be the reason, militarily it is clear that whenever you upgrade a particular appointment, it is done to place additional resources under command. This action could involve increased deployment in Tibet. Increased deployment indicates increased logistic capabilities and a greater quantum of acclimatised troops available for operations in a shorter time frame. For India, it implies a shorter warning period, a larger acclimatised offensive force and possibly increase in border incursions.

China is effectively employing Pakistan's to counter India's military power as also to obtain a foothold of dominance in Afghanistan. It is also aiming to stall the Uyghur terrorism from expanding in Xinjiang, by utilising Pakistan's power over the Taliban. Pakistan therefore has to deliver on a number of fronts for continued Chinese support. It has to ensure security to the CPEC and Gwadar, provide China with a foothold in Afghanistan and compel the Taliban to restrict Uyghur militants from returning.

In international relations there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies. There was a time, when Pakistan was at the forefront of western aid, almost immune to any criticism from the west for its misadventures in India. Today it is off the radar. If it fails to deliver in Afghanistan

and continues with its theatrics of deployment of tactical nuclear weapons it may face more than just criticism. If it does not deliver what China expects, Chinese support may recede. Therefore, supporting the Baluch movement assumes strategic importance for India. Russia has shown intent, but yet made no promises. Diplomacy is always long term and friends today, could become distant tomorrow, as national interests always reign supreme. For India, therefore, this is a period of wait and watch. However, it needs to be cautious about military developments in Tibet and hence needs to hasten the raising and operationalisation of the mountain strike corps and improving infrastructure along its northern borders, while it continues to engage China diplomatically.

China and the Mekong: The Floodgates of Power

The Diplomat

Cal Wong

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China now has a chokehold on the Mekong River, the lifeline for the Indochina peninsula.

In March, China opened the floodgates to its southern Jinghong hydropower station for two weeks, releasing massive amounts of freshwater into the Mekong basin, which feeds continental Southeast Asia. China's stated aim was to bolster a severely diminished water flow brought on by the combination of dams and El Nino.

The El Nino Southern Oscillation is a natural phenomenon that sees the rising of sea temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. The change in water temperature affects the natural water cycle, which causes floods in southern China and has brought the most severe droughts in Southeast Asia in 60 years.

China's domestic dam building initiatives have only exacerbated the effects on drought-hit Southeast Asia. Almost all of Southeast Asia's freshwater supply has their source in China's Tibetan Plateau and Xinjiang region. In 1949, China had an estimated 22 dams; today, there are an estimated 90,000 dams. The country now has a choke hold on the flow of the Mekong River, the region's major waterway.

The Mekong River is the lifeblood of Southeast Asia. It features widely in many cultural aspects of life. It also feeds these nations, providing a rich harvest of rice each year. Le Anh Tuan, deputy director of the Research Institute for Climate Change at the University of Can Tho, Vietnam, said as much as 50 percent of the 2.2 million hectares (5.4 million acres) of arable land in the delta had

been hit by salinisation thanks to the drought, according to AFP. Vietnam, which sits at the bottom end of the Mekong, announced in March that it had put in a formal request with China to increase flows into the river to alleviate severe salinity levels in its rice plantations.

Analysts have warned that there isn't enough cross-border management of the Mekong to prevent conflicts in the future. "The current crisis points to the critical need for a regional solution and approach to this shared river, one that is currently missing," Pianporn Deetes from the U.S.-based watchdog International Rivers told the Wall Street Journal in May.

There are power games at play. The Mekong River Commission was established in 1995. Comprising the governments of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, the MRC adopted the mission to "ensure that the Mekong water is developed in the most efficient manner that mutually benefits all Member Countries and minimises harmful effects on people and the environment in the Lower Mekong Basin." Its interests lay with the lower basin countries and for this, it was shunned by China.

Instead, Beijing encourage the formation of a new mechanism. In March 2016, China's *Xinhua* reported the inaugural meeting of leaders for the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism (LMC) in Sanya, China, "to provide political guidance and a roadmap for sub-regional cooperation between China and the five Southeast Asian nations of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam." For China's part, it announced that it would offer concessional loans to countries along the Mekong to build water infrastructure, and also called for the use of the Chinese RMB in promoting sustainable development in the region.

The formation of the LMC is perhaps a new approach to garner support for China's traditional unilateralist methods. However, the drought and El Nino has only exacerbated the agricultural concerns of China's control over the water resources of Asia.

Narendra Modi continues Vajpayee's legacy of appeasement of China

Firstpost.com

Prakash Nanda

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There is something seriously wrong with the way the Modi government is appeasing China. After the avoidable ignominy over the issue of repealing visa to the Uyghur activist Dolkun Isa, the government has committed

another faux pas by first accepting the invitation and then backtracking from sending two parliamentarians to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Taiwanese president-elect Tsai Ing-wen. The first female president of the island nation was sworn in on 20 May.

In fact, the government had already announced the names of DP Tripathi (of the Nationalist Congress Party) and Meenakshi Lekhi (of the Bharatiya Janata Party) for the event. But subsequently, it changed its mind and disallowed the two MPs from visiting Taipei.

One does not need to become a Nobel laureate to understand that it is the fear of China that has done the trick. As in the case of Dolkun Isa, this time too the Modi government realised its "folly" of antagonising Beijing particularly when President Pranab Mukherjee is all set to visit China on 24 May. The question thus is: If the government is so scared of China, then why does it unnecessarily initiate an action that displeases Beijing?

Strange it may seem, but it is true that the BJP, a supposedly nationalist party, whenever in power in Delhi, has always disgraced the country while dealing with China. For instance, until 2003, India's standard position on Tibet was that it is an autonomous region of China, meaning that India's view on Tibet could change if Beijing takes away Tibet's autonomy. But Atal Behari Vajpayee, during his visit to China in 2003, agreed unconditionally that "Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China (PRC)". And what is more important, such an agreement on Tibet was signed for the first time at the prime ministerial level.

It seems that this sordid history is being repeated under the second Prime Minister from the BJP, Narendra Modi. It is true that India follows the 'One China' policy and does not recognise Taiwan as a country. In the absence of formal diplomatic relations, India and Taiwan coordinate their relations through their respective Economic and Cultural Centers in each other's capital. But within these broad parameters, it is to the credit of the previous Manmohan Singh government that New Delhi was successfully de-hyphenating its policy towards Taipei from its China-policy. In March 2011, India had announced to forge a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Taiwan, while denying the same to China. And ignoring China's protest, India approved in December 2012 the opening of a branch office of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre in Chennai.

In fact, this process of de-hyphenation was supposed to gain further momentum under Modi. But that does not seem to be happening. And that too at a time when for the first time a Taiwanese president on her inauguration day has specifically mentioned India in what will be her

priority of developing a “South-bound policy” (towards Southeast Asia and India) to restructure the island nation’s economy by “bidding farewell to the single market phenomenon (meaning China)”.

Incidentally, it was again the Vajpayee government that had belittled Taiwan when, in 2001, the then Taiwanese vice-president Annette Lu was disallowed to visit the earthquake-affected people of Gujarat with relief material worth more than \$ 1 million. And this was apparently due to the fear that the communist China would not like her visit to India. This was rather strange, considering the fact that China’s total relief-help for Gujarat was \$60, 000, whereas the \$1 million worth relief material that the Taiwanese vice-president was sending in her “personal capacity” was the gesture of a single voluntary organisation called ‘Love and Care’ whose chairperson happened to be Ms. Lu.

The small-sized island of Taiwan, with 23 million people, has emerged as a formidable economic powerhouse in the Asia-Pacific region. Taiwan is the world’s 16th largest economy and fifth largest economy in Asia (after China, Japan, India and South Korea). It has the world’s third largest foreign exchange reserves with more than \$255 billion. It is the world’s fourth largest IC maker globally, and the second after the United States in IC design. Taiwan leads the world in market share output of 23 IT items, with the result that every 8 out of 10 computers in the world use some Taiwanese system or the other. Above all, Taiwan is one of the largest investors all over the world. Its per capita income of \$15,000 is among the world’s highest.

It may be noted that Taiwan’s leading businessmen constitute the largest source of investments in China, the unofficial figure amounting to as much as \$ 300 billion. Ironically, these huge investments by the Taiwanese in China have made them Beijing’s potential hostages. Naturally, Taiwanese policy makers want to diversify their economic interests. Besides, Taiwan is aware that technological and innovative edge is key to long-term sustained growth in an age of global economic interdependence. It risks losing its edge as its businessmen deepen their ties with a communist China that is weak in innovation and strong on cheap labour. So, Taiwanese businessmen want to establish strategic R&D alliances with global innovation centers.

And here, the prospect of collaboration between Taiwan’s computer hardware industry and India’s world-class software industry is said to be extremely promising. In fact, India’s Nascom and Taiwanese counterpart, named III, have been planning to collaborate in producing cheap computers in Tamil Nadu, which, incidentally, has emerged

as the focal point of the Taiwanese business in the last few years, with many Taiwanese companies establishing their offices in the southern coastal state of India.

Of late, Taiwanese exports to India have been growing. For the first five months of May 2015, they stood at over \$2 billion. The annual trade between the two countries is about \$8 billion. This figure as well as the Taiwanese investments in India are expected to expand significantly upon the conclusion of an FTA between the two governments. In fact, Taiwan can be an important partner in strengthening the ‘Make in India’ programme. Taiwanese Foxconn has decided to manufacture Xiaomi mobile phones in Andhra Pradesh, and is also going to invest \$5 billion over a period of three years in a manufacturing unit in Maharashtra. With a focus on make in India, the demand for Taiwan’s machine tools is also likely to increase.

India and Taiwan complement each other in terms of demographics. The latter has been experiencing below replacement rate fertility levels of around 1.6 (and declining) for many years. The average life expectancy is 77 years and is increasing. The elderly will make up 20 percent of the total population of Taiwan by 2020, and this will imply an increase in median age and a reduction in working age persons to total population ratio. In contrast, India is in a demographic gift phase, with rising working age to total population ratio till 2045. Even after that, its ratio will decline quite slowly, and the ratio will remain higher than for Taiwan.

Against this background, Taiwan can extend its economic space and cope with population ageing by taking advantage of India’s relatively young manpower through outsourcing and off-shoring of many activities. These may range from routine Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) types to those involving such KPO activities as research, and design. Many MNCs, including those from China, are basing their research and design centres in India. Taiwan’s participation in selected areas of research and design could provide with win-win opportunities. It is said in this context how a portion of Taiwan’s pension assets, which are estimated to be \$150 billion, can be invested in India to obtain high returns. These in turn can assist in achieving financial security for the aged in Taiwan.

Secondly, there can be mutually beneficial exchanges of information between the intelligence agencies and militaries of India and Taiwan on a range of issues such as terrorism, cyber-hacking, navigation security and sea piracy. Similar exchanges take place between the Taiwanese agencies and their counterparts in the US, South Korea and Japan, to name a few. Even if one treats the interactions between Taiwan and the US as unique

and quite complex, the fact that Tokyo and Seoul share strategic information with Taipei is interesting in the sense that they have much more at stake than New Delhi in maintaining friendly relations with Beijing, considering their quantum of trade with and investments in the mainland China, let alone their geopolitical links.

Beijing may not like such interactions, but then the overall national interests of a country in cultivating relations with another must not be made hostage to the Beijing factor. The point is if Japan and South Korea can do it, why not India?

In sum, despite being the world's largest democracy, India has neglected Taiwan, the first Chinese society to reject authoritarianism in favour of democracy. India under the BJP is so sensitive to China's reaction that it has always compromised both principles and pragmatism in its relations with Taiwan. It does not realise that developing a healthy relationship with Taiwan will not only further India's strategic and economic interests but also checkmate China's expansionist designs in the region.

A new railway to Tibet Doubling down

economist.com

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Plans for a new railway line into Tibet pose a huge technological challenge—and a political one

“A COLOSSAL roller-coaster” is how a senior engineer described it. He was talking about the railway that China plans to build from the lowlands of the south-west, across some of the world's most forbidding terrain, into Tibet. Of all the country's railway-building feats in recent years, this will be the most remarkable: a 1,600-kilometre (1,000-mile) track that will pass through snow-capped mountains in a region racked by earthquakes, with nearly half of it running through tunnels or over bridges. It will also be dogged all the way by controversy.

Chinese officials have dreamed of such a railway line for a century. In 1912, shortly after he took over as China's first president, Sun Yat-sen called for a trans-Tibetan line, not least to help prevent Tibet from falling under the sway of Britain (which had already invaded Tibet from India a decade earlier). Mao Zedong revived the idea in the 1950s. In the years since, many exploratory surveys have been carried out.

But it is only after building the world's second-longest railway network—including, in the past few years, by far the biggest high-speed one—that China's government has

felt ready to take on the challenge. It had a warm-up with the construction of the first railway into Tibet, which opened in 2006. That line, connecting Lhasa with Golmud in Qinghai province to the north (and extended two years ago from Lhasa to Tibet's second city, Shigatse), was proclaimed to be a huge accomplishment. It included the highest-altitude stretch in the world, parts of it across permafrost. It required ingenious heat-regulating technology to keep the track from buckling.

China further honed its skills with the opening of a high-speed line across the Tibetan plateau in 2014—though in Qinghai province, rather than in Tibet proper. But neither track had anything like the natural barriers that the Sichuan-Tibet line will face. It will be just under half as long again as the existing line to Tibet, but will take three times longer to build. The second line's estimated cost of 105 billion yuan (\$16 billion) is several times more than the first one. Lhasa is about 3,200 metres (10,500 feet) higher than Chengdu, yet by the time the track goes up and down on the way there—crossing 14 mountains, two of them higher than Mont Blanc, western Europe's highest mountain—the cumulative ascent will be 14,000 metres. The existing road from Chengdu to Lhasa that follows the proposed route into Tibet is a narrow highway notable for the wreckage of lorries that have careered off it. Some Chinese drivers regard the navigation of Highway 318 as the ultimate proof of their vehicles', and their own, endurance.

Work on easier stretches of the railway line, closest to Lhasa and Chengdu respectively, began in 2014. Now the government appears to be getting ready for the tougher parts. A national three-year “plan of action”, adopted in March for major transport-infrastructure projects, mentions the most difficult stretch: a 1,000km link between Kangding in Sichuan and the Tibetan prefecture of Linzhi (Nyingchi in Tibetan). The plan says this should be “pushed forward” by 2018. It will involve 16 bridges to carry the track over the Yarlung Tsangpo river, known downstream as the Brahmaputra. Dai Bin of Southwest Jiaotong University in Chengdu says the Chengdu-Lhasa line could be finished by around 2030.



In Litang, a town high up in Sichuan on that difficult stretch, a Tibetan monk speaks approvingly of the project, which will bring more tourists to the remote community and its 16th-century monastery (rebuilt since the Chinese air force bombed it in 1956 to crush an uprising). But the impact on Tibet of the Golmud-Lhasa line still reverberates. It fuelled a tourism boom in Lhasa that attracted waves of ethnic Han Chinese from other parts of China to work in industries such as catering and transport. The resentment it created among Tibetans, who felt excluded from the new jobs, was a big cause of rioting in Lhasa in 2008 that ignited protests across the plateau. The new line will cut through some of the most restive areas. Since 2011 more than 110 Tibetans are reported to have killed themselves by setting themselves on fire in protest at China's crackdown after the unrest. Some of the self-immolations have happened in Tibetan-inhabited parts of Sichuan, including near Litang.

With spectacular views, the new line is sure to be a big draw. It is also sure to attract many migrant workers from Sichuan, a province of 80m people, to cash in on Tibet's tourism. The journey time from Chengdu to Lhasa is a gruelling three days by road, or more than 40 hours by train through Qinghai. The new line will reduce it to a mere 15 hours.

Officials see other benefits. The route will cross a region rich in natural resources, from timber to copper. It will also, to India's consternation, pass close to the contested border between the two countries. (China says India occupies "south Tibet", and launched a brief invasion of India there in 1962.) A Chinese government website, China Tibet News, said in 2014 that building the Sichuan-Tibet railway had become "extremely urgent", not just for developing Tibet but also to meet "the needs of national-defence-building".

Communist party officials in Tibet hope that the new line will be just the start of a railway-building spree in the once-isolated region. On May 16th Tibet Daily, the government mouthpiece in Tibet, said that work would start in the coming five years on around 2,000km of track. It would include a line from Shigatse to Yadong (or Dromo), near the border with India and Bhutan, and another one to Jilong (or Gyirong), near the border with Nepal. China's railway chief talks of "the extreme importance of railway-building for Tibet's development and stability". The region's recent history offers scant evidence.

65 YEARS OF PAK-CHINA FRIENDSHIP

pakobserver.net

May 21, 2016

Reema Shaukat

All weather diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan were formally established on May 21, 1951. Pakistan was the first Muslim country to accept People's Republic of China. Cordial relations between two states are not only termed as higher than Himalayas, deeper than oceans and sweeter than honey but both sides equally acknowledge this element of trust on each other. As responsible neighbours, both China and Pakistan always maintain well-coordinated, appropriately communicated and balanced approach on regional and international concerning issues. Apart from matters of mutual interest Pakistan supports China on the issues of Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang while China has always appreciated Pak role in war against terrorism other than supporting it economically. To fortify diplomatic relations between the two states, several exchange visits of leaders and high officials on both sides take place frequently.

Consolidating diplomatic relations, Pak China cooperation takes place in various fields. China has supported Pakistan a lot in defence sector. It has extended military support to all three armed forces of Pakistan. Either it's setting up of PAF Aeronautical Complex at Kamra, Heavy Industries Taxila, production of several ammunition at POF or maritime assistance for projects of Pakistan Navy, China always stood side by side with Pakistan. Joint venture of manufacturing of JF-17 Thunder aircrafts at PAC Kamra is one of shining example of defence cooperation between two countries. Apart from PAC, HIT, Pakistan Steel Mill and contribution at missile factories it intends to provide Pakistan Navy with submarines and upgradation of frigates. China is one of major supporter of Pakistan's nuclear power generation for peaceful purposes.

China is Pakistan's second largest trade partner and foreseeing as one of largest investment opportunity in South Asia, China's investment in Pakistan has reached to 18 billion US dollars. Trade volume in last fifteen years between two countries has developed from 5.7 billion US dollars to 100.11 billion US dollars. Both countries signed the contracts of worth 150.8 billion dollars from year 2000 to 2015 which started off from just 1.8 billion dollars. China has invested in Pakistan massively, than any other country and the renowned British economist, Jims O Neil, has also predicted the emerging of Pakistan as the 18th global economy with US\$ 3.3 trillion GDP by 2050.

One of the mega projects of 46 billion US dollars China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is viewed as game changer in the region is going to cover energy,

infrastructure, communication and other developmental sectors. Work on CPEC is carried out day and night to give reality to the Chinese vision of One Belt, One Road concept. CPEC is all-inclusive growth programme that requires the linking of Gwadar Port to China's north-western region of Xinjiang through highways, railways, oil and gas pipelines, and an optical fibre link.

Adversaries of Pakistan have always created problems for the projects encompassing economic progress of the state through hostile attempts. That is why CPEC remain a focus of sabotage activities. A loud and clear message was given by Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Shareef in a seminar on Gwadar on 12 April, 2016 stating that CPEC is grand manifestation of deep rooted ties between China and Pakistan and it's a corridor of peace and prosperity for region. Apart from over 120 Chinese companies and 12,000 skilled technicians working on different projects, Pakistan has established a special force army to provide security to Chinese workers. China seems to have more confidence into Pak Army and therefore construction projects of building roads, strategically important bridges and highways are handed over to Frontier Works Organisation, one of Pak Army branch.

Apart from people to people contact both countries are also focusing on cultural exchange programs and offering scholarships to students. To ensure peace in region China is also part of Quadrilateral Dialogue Process along with Pakistan. While celebrating 65 years of Pak China acquaintance, it is expected that in coming years both countries will continue to robust their strategic and political bond proving this connexion stronger than steel.

— The writer works for an Islamabad based think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies.

Nepal's Pivot to China May Be Too Late

The National Interest

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Nepal's constitutional crisis in the winter of 2015 and spring of 2016 prompted protesting parties to enforce an economic blockade in the Terai region on the Nepali-Indian border. Protesting Nepali groups included ethnic minorities that feel underrepresented in the new federalist system. Unofficial political support from India enabled the protests to last four-and-a-half months, debilitating the already weakened Nepali economy and creating a humanitarian crisis. Citing Indian government complicity in the embargo, Nepali Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli reached out to Beijing for help,

prompting cries of a Nepali pivot to China. While some shifting towards China does seem to be underway, Nepal will always require good relations with its longtime partner India. The real story in Nepal is a possible internal security disaster that would go against Nepali, Indian, and Chinese interests.

A fresh outbreak of protests this week highlights the urgency of Nepal's ongoing constitutional crisis. A resurgence of violence in the next year is possible, perhaps at a greater scale than the episodes of police and protester violence during the blockade that resulted in over 50 deaths. This would be devastating for a country still reeling from a 2015 earthquake that killed close to 9,000 people, followed by a crippling economic blockade and rising ethnic tensions.

On the subcontinent, India and China vie for influence, while lesser powers like Nepal navigate geopolitics by currying favour with their great state neighbours. A rapid uptick in China-Nepal relations threatens to shake up foreign relations in South Asia. Ultimately, though, both Indian and Chinese goals for the region are served best by promoting political stability and economic growth in Nepal. Emerging from this constitutional crisis intact will require Nepal's leaders to walk a tightrope between two giants.

Pivot to China?

Recent weeks have involved a sharp uptake in diplomatic and economic developments in China-Nepal relations. The momentum began with a joint statement during Nepali Prime Minister Oli's visit to Beijing at the end of March. When I was in Kathmandu during the first week of May, the city was ignited with news that the government was to fall and Oli to resign. Analysts believe the abrupt reversal of Nepal's Maoist leadership that prevented this change, keeping the Oli-led government in power, was due to Chinese intervention.

Building on those developments, on May 15th, Nepal and China completed laying an optical fiber to Kathmandu, creating a direct link "to Hong Kong Data Centre which is one of the two biggest global data centres in Asia." Two days later, the Chinese Minister for State Administration for Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, Cai Fuchao visited Oli's residence and the two made statements about growth in Nepal-China relations. China also just inaugurated the first transport service to Nepal, a rail-bus, 10-day journey from Lanzhou to Kathmandu. And a joint Nepal-China researcher team has begun hydrocarbon (petroleum and natural gas) exploration in Nepal. While Chinese economic expansion in the region is progressing in stages, the China correspondent for India Today suggests that, "the speed

with which relations are being transformed will likely come as a surprise to New Delhi.”

There is concern among analysts that India has seriously blundered its relationship with Nepal. Kathmandu recalling its ambassador from New Delhi is only the most recent in a series of recent downturns in relations. Nepali President Bhandari’s planned visit to New Delhi in early May was reportedly cancelled as a signal of Kathmandu’s frustration with its large, southern neighbour for what it perceives as meddling in a domestic issue. Understanding the political sensitivity of movements in Nepal’s southern Terai area is key to contextualising Oli’s negative responses to perceived Indian meddling. In an interview, retired Ambassador Hiranya Lal Shrestha explained that the Terai (specifically the Madhes) is to Nepal what Tibet is to China and Kashmir is to India. India may have overplayed its hand in Nepal. The Chinese model of economic engagement without political dictation is looking more effective than Indian Prime Minister Modi’s “neighbourhood first” policy.

Outbreak of Renewed Violence?

Between the constitutional crisis and the government’s failure to distribute earthquake relief funds and facilitate much needed reconstruction, the Nepali people are fed up. Widespread, outstanding grievances make for a tense domestic norm. Based on peace building research with communities in the Terai and far eastern Nepal, a major INGO country director for Nepal warned that things are “still incredibly sensitive here.” Identity-based tension is growing and an outbreak of fresh violence “only takes a small spark,” she said. Retired Ambassador and former Chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission Shambhu Simkhada phrased the build up of unresolved issues more bluntly. “We are sitting on a volcano,” he told me in Kathmandu at a meeting of South Asian think tanks on May 1st.

Another Nepali analyst, Professor Surendra K.C. of Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, worries that if a political solution to the constitutional crisis is not reached soon, “there could be anarchy, chaos.” Some [reports](#) suggest that the Nepal Army Chief Chhetri’s visit to New Delhi in February was instrumental in bringing the protests in the Terai to an end. Chhetri highlighted the security threat posed to Indian interests by rising violence and resulting instability. Renewed violence in the young republic would go against, Indian, Chinese, and Nepali interests.

Significant political change is imminent. According to Dr. K.B. Rokaya, a key facilitator of the peace settlement with the Maoists in 2006 after Nepal’s revolution: “The movement is now starting...a people’s movement.” Rokaya

believes that a temporary army takeover or a return of the monarchy are not out of the question if a political solution to the current constitutional crisis is not reached in the next year. Separatist elements of protesting groups are small but worrisome. In a recent interview with Nepali Times, Nepal Army Chief Chhetri said that, “the army is alert about conspiracies to disintegrate the country and is ready to foil them if needed.”

How China’s Silk Road project can benefit India

dnaindia.com

May 18, 2016

India remains unmoved, at present. Since OBOR is expected to take shape over 35 years, New Delhi cannot be said to have closed the matter for all time

It is hard to figure out why the Government of India (GoI) has steeled itself against accepting any part in China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. Sections seeking to influence policy have more than once reiterated that it is in India’s interests to work with Beijing on OBOR.

None of these policy wonks and strategic affairs experts is a China-lover or China-optimist by any definition. To the contrary, many of them are staunch supporters of the US “pivot” against China and advocates of the Washington-Delhi-Tokyo axis. Their case is that India should get on board OBOR for non-ideological, pragmatic reasons. Economic common sense, need for connectivity and access to the proposed Asia-Europe infrastructure of transport and industrial corridors and hubs for telecom, trade, travel and energy transfer dictate that India seize the promise held out by OBOR.

In fact, from a geostrategic perspective, involvement in OBOR could help India to more effectively implement its own Spice Route and Mausam projects. Far from being counter-proposals, these two can be integrated with OBOR to optimise both economic and strategic gains. On more than one occasion, Beijing has expressed its readiness to work with New Delhi — and South Asia — on Spice Route and Mausam. It has offered to reorient and adapt OBOR to make it more acceptable to New Delhi.

However, India remains unmoved, at present. Since OBOR is expected to take shape over 35 years, New Delhi cannot be said to have closed the matter for all time. And, neither China nor the other countries including Russia have given up on India being persuaded to join the initiative.

The trigger for these reflections is the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Media Dialogue on Connectivity, held in

Guangzhou on May 9-10. Over 200 delegates representing media, business, government and think tanks from ASEM member states had gathered to discuss media's role in "Promoting Public Awareness and Partnership." Pakistan, Bangladesh, Mongolia, New Zealand and Singapore had co-sponsored the Dialogue along with China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Council Information Office.

Although Gol keeps out of OBOR-linked activities, Indians especially from the media are regular invitees to these stakeholders' meetings on Connectivity. Every such event is a reminder of how much India would have been in the limelight had it opted to partner China on OBOR.

In the absence of India, the most influential element of the Anglo-American axis that tends to dominate such spaces is Pakistan. Needless to say, Islamabad, as the leading South Asian presence in such forums makes the most of these opportunities to "manage" perceptions.

Had Gol participated, even at a Track 2 level, it would have held centre stage, shown the way and stolen the thunder not only in Guangzhou, but in any such ASEM session. In the absence of Official India, if Indian media delegates led some of the sessions and held the floor with their ideas, inputs and articulation, it was because of the content of their contribution.

These media representatives are, at best, informed participants with little authority or say in policy; and, that is a fact known to the organisers and the audience. Yet, their being invited to present their thoughts and suggestions underscores the importance attached to India, its role in Asia, its engagement with Europe and emerging global initiatives.

Such participation and impact in international forums is a testimony to India's "soft power" at play, in the interests of the people and the state (not government) by non-state actors. Thus, by keeping out of an initiative like OBOR, New Delhi is losing out not only on the projected hard, tangible benefits of connectivity but also the soft, intangible gains that flow from diplomatic success in expanding spheres of influence.

China's Freight Train to Nepal Is No Threat, But Indian Border Infrastructure Needs Fast Upgrade

thewire.in

May 18, 2016

Unless India drastically improves its border infrastructure, China's heightened presence is not likely to diminish –

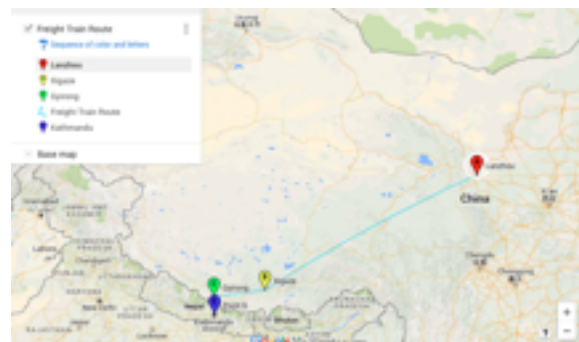
especially with Nepal's government determined to prove that China is a viable alternative to India.

New Delhi: On May 12, the Chinese state-run newspaper People's Daily carried a short article with four photographs of a freight train waiting at a station in Lanzhou, before it left with 86 cargo containers for a journey to Nepal.

The international freight train will travel within Chinese territory until the current railhead of Xigaze (Shigatse) and then travel by road through Gyirong (Geelong) border post. The goods will take 10 days to reach Kathmandu, where they will, presumably, be greeted under the glare of high-voltage publicity.

Among Indian policymakers, the news about the freight train has been greeted largely with skepticism. Even as some Indian members of parliament and media persons have been ringing alarm bells about China getting a share in the current Nepali polity under the Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli government, the power corridors in the country have been comparatively unconcerned – jaded at an apparent replay of the "China" card.

According to Indian observers, the freight train is another manifestation of China "playing ball" with the Oli government's need to show that its Chinese overture is bearing fruit. According to sources, this rail and road combination was already in use and not a new development to facilitate Nepal-China transit trade. "There have always been items coming through this route in small volumes," a senior government official said.



The route of the freight train, from Lanzhou to Xigaze through Gyirong to Kathmandu. Credit: Google Maps

The appropriate response

Former Indian foreign secretary and ambassador to Nepal Shyam Saran is also not entirely convinced about the viability of the Chinese route. He believes that India should respond not by scaremongering, but by urgently upgrading connectivity networks with its landlocked neighbour.

Nepal's border with China is much longer than its southern one with India – but the Himalayas are a much more formidable frontier than the Terai plains.

“Are the Chinese going to subsidise Nepali trade? For what?” Saran asked, wondering if any “cost-benefit analysis” has been conducted of goods that arrive through the Chinese route. He pointed out that China had clearly said that trade would be on a “commercial basis.”

Saran said that instead of repeating the alarmist “Chinese are coming” refrain, India should look at how it can “consolidate” its geographical advantage. The Indian response to Chinese expansion should be to take “our problems with the border infrastructure much more seriously.” “We are very slow,” he added.

India has 15 transit points on its border with Nepal, along with five transit routes to and from Bangladesh and Bhutan. Along the border with China, there are two trade posts.

But, with poor infrastructure on the Indian side, Nepal has not been able to harness the full potential of transit facilities to third countries through India.

Within the last decade, India commissioned a series of border roads, rail links, Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) and Terai roads – but most of them were delayed beyond their initial deadline over issues of statutory approvals by Nepal, land acquisition and political unrest.

Ten years after “in principle approval” of the ICPs, the ministry of home affairs has scheduled the first two ICPs at Birgunj and Jogbani becoming operational in the first quarter of 2016-17 – which should speed up the processing time of Nepal's bilateral and third country trade through India.

The fate of Tatopani

A key reason for India's confidence that it will not be superseded by China as Nepal's preferred transit trade destination has been the fate of the Tatopani border post. At the height of the “blockade,” China gave about 1.3 million litres of petrol as a grant through the Kerung post, with Tatopani, the only other, and more convenient, transit point remaining closed since being damaged in the April 2015 earthquake.

While the physical security of the infrastructure at Tatopani remains precarious, there is another dimension to the whole scenario. According to sources, China has already moved the settled population on its side deeper into its territory, and it wants Nepal to similarly move its settled population as a condition for opening the border post.

“The Nepali population on this side of the border post is ‘pro-Tibet’. China remains wary of large-scale people-to-

people contact, which will increase if Tatopani is upgraded. But Nepal cannot easily remove its settled population, as this will lead to a lot of resentment,” claimed a senior government official.

While the towering Himalayas may impede China, India has no such excuse, however.

Mahendra Lama, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), noted that it was only around 2005 that New Delhi changed its mindset towards developing long-neglected border regions, and even so, “the pace of development (since then) is alarmingly slow and acutely dangerous for the country”.

According to the People's Daily report, the freight train will take 10 days to reach Kathmandu, 35 days fewer compared to the ‘ocean route’. While there is skepticism about third countries using China as a transit route to Nepal because of the cost, the delivery could potentially be faster than delivery through India by rail or road.

Delhi-based think tank Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations estimated that due to current infrastructure and procedural problems, the average turnaround time from the Kolkata port to Birgunj and back by road is 19 days, whereas the “ideal” time should be just seven days. By rail, the turnaround is even longer – 26 days, of which the actual transit time is only four days and the remaining time is spent waiting at Kolkata port or at Birgunj.

The bottleneck

The main obstacle in India swiftly improving border linkages, or executing the plans to do so, has been its arcane financial rules, which control all government projects, believes Saran.

“A suggestion was made for a kind of autonomous development agency within the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which would be empowered to take its own decisions financially, with its own financial advisor,” he added. Currently, India's aid budget is administered by the development partnership administration division in the MEA, which was created about four years ago by removing aid delivery from the territorial desks.

With financial allocation for even long term projects done annually, a reduction in the budget for a single year, say for austerity purposes, throws the schedule awry, noted Saran.

Even as India struggles to whip its border infrastructure into shape, China's heightened presence is not likely to diminish – especially with the Oli government determined to prove that China is a viable alternative to India.

A dark history

India has been in the Oli government's black book ever since New Delhi asked Nepal to delay the promulgation of the new Constitution so that the Madheshi parties' demands on citizenship, and provincial boundaries and their demarcation be incorporated. The disruption of fuel supplies, through an 'unofficial blockade' for which Nepal blamed India and India blamed the Madheshi protestors, did not improve tempers.

In January, India was quick to welcome a constitutional amendment that delimited constituencies as per population, a move that improved relations. The Madheshis, though, were not satisfied.

The end of the 'blockade' and Oli's subsequent visit in February 2016 finally seemed to bring about some normalcy in ties. Letters were exchanged allowing Nepal to use Vishakapatnam for third country trade, along with a new road and rail route to Bangladesh.

A month later, Oli went to Beijing and signed a transit-trade treaty that allowed the use of Tianjin port, 3000 kilometre away from Nepal. There was also talk of extending the Chinese rail network to the Nepal border by 2020.

The freight train from Lanzhou is, therefore, a likely Chinese demonstration of Oli's 'success'. Nepali newspaper *The Republica* has argued in its editorial that "all evidence suggests that it was a one-off" rather than a "long-term project," since Nepali government officials were kept in the dark.

The latest spiral

The latest downturn in relations with India was triggered by the move of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to remove Oli with the help of the Nepali Congress. Within a day, Prachanda changed his mind, after Oli agreed to accept Maoist demands in a nine-point agreement that included three controversial provisions on the withdrawal of police cases related to violence and land distribution during the Maoist civil war. Human rights groups have already heavily criticised this agreement.

However, Oli is reportedly convinced that New Delhi was behind the move to push him out of power. On May 6, Nepal unilaterally cancelled the visit of its first woman president, Bidhya Devi Bhandari, to India, citing a lack of preparations as its reason for doing so.

The logic was unconvincing, as Indian officials maintained that all the ground work had been completed. There were no signs of crisis during the Indian ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae's "pleasant dinner" with Bhandari on the night of May 5. Earlier that day, Nepal recalled its ambassador

to India Deep Kumar Upadhyay – a political appointee of the previous Nepali Congress administration – citing his "non-cooperative" attitude. Upadhyay, who had been against the cancellation of Bhandari's trip, was accused of "hobnobbing" with Rae over a visit to the restive Madhesh districts – an accusation he strenuously denied.

Oli even tried to sever India and Nepal's connection through Buddhism. In a pointed remark, he said that the upcoming International Buddhism Conference in Kathmandu "will help remove the confusion and prove that Buddha and the Buddhist philosophy started from Nepal."

Meanwhile, the Nepali government announced that the Kathmandu-Tarai fast track road and the second international airport at Nijgadha would be built through domestic investment rather than by a foreign firm. This had been a topic of discussion during Oli's visit to India, with New Delhi offering a loan of \$750 million for the road and airport project. A consortium led by the Indian firm IL&FS had prepared the detailed project report.

However, there was a backlash from Left politicians claiming that handing over the project to a foreign firm would be against 'national interest'. A case has been filed in the Supreme Court, but the Oli government went ahead with the announcement. An Indian official made it clear that the soft loan would no longer be available, as terms and conditions for such lines of credit usually call for employing Indian firms.

Just a couple of days before the latest round of India-baiting began in Kathmandu, the parliamentary standing committee on external affairs tabled its latest report on the demand for grants for the ministry of external affairs. In the section about aid to Nepal, the committee directly questioned South Block as to why "anti-India propaganda had found currency in Nepalese political discourse," despite the rising quantum of Indian aid.

"Narrow political, vested interests sometimes grossly misrepresent India's support for an inclusive Nepal as our interference to support only one section (Madhesis) of the Nepalese population; and also deliberately use anti-Indianism to promote their extreme nationalist plank," the MEA replied in a written submission to the committee, according to the report submitted on May 2.

This submission was probably the most explicit public criticism by the Indian government. No names were specifically taken, but the implicit finger was clearly pointed at the UML leadership.

Indian official sources insist that most statements related to India issued by Oli and other Nepalese ruling alliance

leaders should be read as mere political rhetoric, with parties jostling for power and the next general elections only two years away.

“He [Oli] is convinced that India wants to get him out,” Saran said, adding that India should conspicuously “keep away from internal politics.” “Our major interest is to contribute to internal stability and economic recovery. We should not get involved in shadow play between the parties,” he said.

According to Lama, India needs to “diversify its constituency from the microscopic hegemonic elite” in Nepal to “Madheshis, Dalits, Janjatis and others.” When asked if he agreed with the Indian government’s Nepal policy that has irked many in Kathmandu, he replied, “Yes, to an extent.” He elaborated: “I support the Indian government when it says that Nepal has to be ‘inclusive.’ What I diverge from is India’s sustained interest in individuals and not in building democratic institutions.”

Chinese concerns



The China-Nepal border. Credit: John Town/Flickr CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Anti-Indian sentiment has always been a constant underlying theme in Nepal, wielded by the Kathmandu elite under both the monarchy and democratic rule. Even if statements by Nepalese politicians are discounted, there is definitely a change in the status-quo, brought about by China. Until now, the message from China to Nepali politicians, who had no shortage of complaints about India, was that geography had to be respected. Once, New Delhi and Beijing had a common purpose of limiting the footprint of the US, out of concern for its interference outside its sphere of influence, and other Western countries in Nepal, out of concern for Tibet.

As observers have noted, there seems to be a qualitatively different kind of signalling from Beijing’s side in recent months – aimed mainly at keeping the Oli government in the saddle.

Besides keeping a China-friendly Left wing government in power, Nihar Nayak, an associate fellow at the Institute for

Defense Study and Analyses, believes that one of the factors influencing China’s moves has been its big-picture perception that “India and the US are getting together internationally.”

“The Chinese believe that the BCIM [Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar] corridor is not being activated by India because of the US’ influence. So, China is concerned that India and the US could be plotting on matters concerning Tibet,” said Nayak, who is working on a project on Chinese soft power diplomacy in Nepal.

Other factors in Beijing’s decision-making, he added, are China having enough surplus cash to deflect India’s presence and the Nepal linkage helping to push the flagship “One Belt-One Road” project into the subcontinent.

On their part, Indian officials believe that a probable reaction to China’s “visible hand” on the part of the international community, mainly the West, will be to refocus their spotlight on Nepal and especially on the doorstep of China’s Tibetan autonomous region.

With the UML-led coalition acting slowly on earthquake reconstruction, the international community is also concerned that the government’s “direction has not been positive,” claim sources.

For S. D. Muni, professor emeritus at JNU, China’s current role in Nepal is “not a new story.” “The same thing is happening in the Maldives. In Sri Lanka, see how the Colombo port project has been returned to the Chinese with almost no changes. China is very interested in South Asia as a whole,” he said.

Complex ties

Muni is critical of the NDA government for buckling under its own “hindutva baggage” and “pushing for the return of monarchy,” rather than focusing on diplomatic outreach to the ruling coalition who are “now completely alienated.” “It is very naïve to assume that the monarchy will be friendly to India,” he added.

Muni noted that Nepal’s former king, Gyanendra, was in India recently, but kept out of the spotlight.

Even as relations spiral publicly, Indian officials point out that official engagements continue unimpeded, which is, they claim, a demonstration that India-Nepal ties can’t be put in a neat box.

Sources say that Nepali Foreign minister Kamal Thapa has confirmed that he will be attending the convocation at the South Asian University in Delhi in June.

In the meantime, with the Madheshi protests migrating from the Terai to the capital, the Oli government may be obliged to demonstrate progress on the demand for

changes in the Constitution, along with substantial talks with the Madheshi political parties. The silver lining of the nine-point agreement, according to Indian officials, is that Maoists are putting pressure on Oli to resolve the Madeshi agitation.

However, as cargo from the Chinese freight train makes its way to Kathmandu in the coming days, it remains to be seen if the Oli government and India will try to make amends.

Fifty-four years ago, Nepal's finance secretary, Y.P. Pant, wrote in the then Economic Weekly about the potential of trade with China. It was published just as construction of the Kathmandu-Kodiari road began, which is seen as the first infrastructural push by China into Nepal. Pant felt that the "total (trade) volume is likely to continue to be too small to deserve any great attention." The concluding paragraphs of the article are juxtaposed with an advertisement for General Electric, illustrated with an image of a long freight train.

India must stop appeasing China, it's time to follow a strong policy

Merinews.com

Brigadier Arun Bajpai (Retd)

May 15, 2016

Indian political masters whether it was Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and now Narendra Modi all have followed only one policy for China, appeasement at all cost. This has cost country very dearly, especially in the strategic field.

Now even smaller countries like Sri Lanka and Nepal are cocking a snook at us. Reason for this meek and timid policy against China is because all these politicians and their advisors (bureaucrats) are clueless so far as strategy, especially military strategy is concerned.

Still our political masters refuse to take any strategic advice from armed forces chiefs whose daily bread and butter is strategy. It is babus (bureaucrats) they prefer who feel very happy in keeping country in a status quo wrap not wanting any change. This has helped China in a very big way. China is a known bully. It is even trying to bully America. With this lame duck policy of ours every time we appease China it hardens its stand against us and this is a never ending cycle.

Delving into history in 1950 China attacked independent, Tibet which was a buffer country between India and China. Tibet requested Nehru to intervene but Nehru did not even lift a finger. Then Tibet requested Nehru to at

least raise this issue in UN Security Council, again Nehru refused. In 1954 Nehru accepted Tibet as integral part of China and now our borders were directly touching Chinese border all along 4003 km Himalayan heights.

China took full advantage of this timidity by Nehru and quietly started gobbling our territory. Nehru woke up only when China attacked India to teach it a lesson. By this time Nehru-Krishna Menon duo had reduced Indian army to a police force. Still they fought with old world war weapons heroically but could not stop China from annexing 40000 sq. km area in Ladakh known as Aksai Chin.

In Arunachal Pradesh also China captured lot of territory but Chinese had to vacate because they could not supply their troops there. Then Atal Bihari Vajpayee went to China in 2003 and gave it in writing to China that Tibet belongs to China. Credit must go to UPA government that in 2010 it refused to accept Tibet as part of China.

In 2014 Modi government came. Despite Modi's visit to China and Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to India nothing much has been achieved. It will not be achieved in future also. Our timidity continues and China is as usual bullying us at the same time investing 48 billion dollars in Pakistan for China-Pak economic corridor. Once this corridor is complete and rail and road network is laid from Karakoram pass to Gwadar port in Baluchistan, China would have encircled us on land in the North as also west. In south Chinese Navy is increasingly getting active in Indian Ocean. China is already developing Habbontola port in Sri Lanka and Chittagong port in Bangladesh.

In other words in a few years' time we will be hemmed in from all sides. China is also using Pakistan against us. Very recently it has given to Pakistan Shaheen Ballistic missiles. It is co-producing with Pakistan JF-Thunder Fighter jets and it is also giving Pakistan eight diesel-electric submarines.

It is time Modi government starts listening to the advice of the three armed forces chiefs. How will Modi Make in India succeed if China buys raw material from India and then dumps finished goods in our market? America has today warned India that China is increasing its troop strength in Tibet. In POK also Chinese army is seen along LOC.

It is time India should shed its delusion about China. Both China and Pakistan are our enemies and we must go all out to modernise and update our armed forces. Himalaya is our best defense. As long as we continue manning those 62 passes on Himalayas we are quite safe. India now must follow a strong policy towards China. Let us not be a dumping ground for Chinese goods. Our best bet is to make deep friends with Japan and Israel. We must act tough and safe guard our national interests.

35 Tons of Dead Fish Spotted In China Lake

Science World Report

May 10, 2016

Piles of dead fish were seen floating on the surface of Hongcheng Lake in southern China. The dead fish weighs about 35 tons. The residents were stunned last Wednesday after seeing the lake covered with dead yellow and white fish.

The researchers are investigating the cause of the killing of the fish. On the other hand, they believe that a change or a sudden drop of the salinity level might be the cause of it, according to Nature World News.

Salinity is the concentration of salt in seawater and about 35 parts per thousand. This indicates each kilogram (that is about one liter per volume) of seawater is estimated to be 35 grams (1.2 oz.) of dissolved salts and chloride.

The dead fish might be belonging to the herring family. It is about the size of a half palm. The residents said that they had not seen this type of fish in the lake before. USA Today reports that the fish might be possibly caught up by a tidal surge and they were pushed up into Hongcheng Lake in the city of Haikou.

Herrings, which are saltwater fish, are not adapted to fresh water. It might be that the salt water fish inadvertently end up in fresh water. This made their blood pressure became higher than the water pressure, which caused their blood vessels to burst.

On the other hand, many residents are uncertain of the cause of the massacre of the fish. They believe that the killing of the fish is more likely due to pollution.

Meanwhile, the health officials have deployed 100 sanitation workers to clean out the tons of dead fish. Then, they were sent to landfill sites and incinerating plants.

Commentary: China, India and what a new 'red telephone' would mean for the world

reuters.com

PETER MARINO

May 10, 2016

For centuries, the relationship between China and India was the diplomatic Dog that Didn't Bark. The two largest, most populous, most durable Asian countries, for most of their collective history, have lived alongside each other with an almost studied indifference to the military, economic and cultural activities of the other. This dynamic began to change in the postcolonial period, but slowly,

unevenly and with as much backtracking as forward progress.

However, the recent news that Delhi and Beijing may be establishing a military hotline - reminiscent of the admittedly apocryphal "red telephone" between the White House and the Kremlin - has shown how much the Sino-Indian relationship has expanded and matured in recent years - and also how much distance still remains.

How India and China manage their relationship will have global consequences. Their sheer size influences global markets in commodities, and China's stock market gyrations have already begun to have knock-on effects around the world. And as two nuclear-armed states with long-term unfinished territorial business between them and a good amount of mutual suspicion, diplomatic missteps between India and China risk nuclear escalation.

For most of their history, geography was the primary reason that the two countries maintained a diplomatic distance, keeping their interests separate and avoiding substantial political and economic exchanges. Then, as the modern era dawned, China descended into domestic chaos and India found itself a direct colony of Britain, precluding any deeper ties as long as those conditions persisted. Only in the early 1950s did China and India begin to interact as modern governments in a sustained way, bonding over their shared former status as the exploited and downtrodden of Western Imperialism and the newly-emancipated developing world. But their lack of deep ties allowed disputes to escalate, culminating in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, which left them with diplomatic differences until the early 1990s.

However, that relationship has been changing rapidly. The last decade has seen a flurry of Sino-Indian diplomacy, trade and exchange, even as military tensions between the two remain substantial. The occasional border skirmish and bilateral interaction are tainted by their divergent views on relations with Pakistan, still-archrival of India and an increasingly close ally of China. This closeness between Beijing and Islamabad, coupled with a deepening skepticism in Washington over the wisdom of its own relationship with Pakistan, has pushed India and the United States closer to each other, overcoming decades of mutual suspicion as the regional dynamics change underfoot.

The two are likewise engaged in an ongoing proxy struggle around the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, shoring up relationships with other partners. Indeed, both China and India recently signed deals with the Maldives, for investment and defense cooperation, and India has been expanding its diplomacy in Iran, traditionally an outpost of Chinese influence in the Middle East. And there is no

indication that either one plans to do anything but intensify this competition in the years ahead; each has already begun to draw in other powers, from Japan to Russia to the United States.

Trade has similarly intensified. Barely \$2 billion fifteen years ago, it was worth a combined \$80 billion last year, and continues to increase. Still, India runs a considerable and growing deficit in the relationship, much to the concern of economic officials in Delhi, who worry about the effects of cheap Chinese manufactured goods on India's own efforts at industrialisation, where China currently maintains a gigantic advantage. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's much-touted "Make in India" industrial policy has a substantial amount of ground to cover if it is to overcome the fact that the entire Indian GDP, roughly \$2 trillion, is still roughly equivalent to the output of the two Chinese industrial provinces of Guangdong and Jiangsu.

On military matters, India is also substantially outclassed by China at the moment. Decades of double-digit increases in military spending have made the People's Liberation Army (PLA) budget four times as big as India's, at nearly \$215 billion to India's \$51 billion, according to SIPRI. But India has been making considerable advances of late, especially in its aircraft carrier program, where it has deeper experience than China, and importantly, in its submarine program, where it has reportedly successfully tested nuclear-capable Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) from its nuclear-powered INS Arihant. This development would bring it a large step closer to what is often termed "second-strike capability" in nuclear deterrence, and into a kind of strategic parity with China that it currently lacks. At the same time, the geography that defined their relationship for centuries continues to benefit India in its efforts to exert influence over its eponymous Ocean, presenting a longer-term problem to China, as its economic security depends on its access to the Indian Ocean in a way that India does not depend on the Western Pacific.

In all of these areas, then, diplomacy, trade and defense, China and India are bumping up against each other around the world and in their own backyards as never before. They are having to fashion a deeply multidimensional bilateral relationship almost from whole cloth in the span of years rather than decades or centuries, and doing so in the midst of a rapidly-shifting global environment.

China and India are now both independent, prosperous and mostly at peace at the same time as each other, in a regional environment that is mostly secure, for the first time since the late 18th century. No one, even in Beijing or Delhi, yet knows exactly what a fully-developed

relationship between China and India will look like when complete, because they've never seen it before.

Which brings us back to the discussions currently underway to establish a military hotline between Beijing and Delhi. The fact that the Sino-Indian relationship now has enough of a foundation of cooperation that this project could be conceived is itself a measure of progress. But the fact that both countries see it as necessary underscores how much tension remains in the relationship.

They cooperate with and work against each other - remaining, for the moment, the best of frenemies.

Blow to India as Nepal strengthens ties with China

Deccan Herald

May 10, 2016

The latest round of anti-India propaganda in Nepal came with Prime Minister K P Oli's government allowing China to expand its strategic footprints in the country.

Even as Kathmandu dismissed speculation over a proposal to declare India's ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae as "persona-non-grata" and expel him, New Delhi is closely monitoring moves by the Oli government and political developments in the neighbouring country.

Nepalese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Kamal Thapa, described as "baseless" the media-reports on move to declare India's envoy to Nepal "persona non-grata" and force New Delhi to withdraw him from Kathmandu.

Kathmandu had not only called off Nepalese President Vidya Devi Bhandari's proposed visit to India, but also recalled its envoy to New Delhi, Deep Kumar Upadhyay, accusing him of working against the interests of Nepal.

The twin moves by Kathmandu came shortly after Oli's government appeared to be threatened by a crack in the ruling coalition. Though Oli survived the crisis for now, a section of political establishments in Kathmandu once again started blaming New Delhi for triggering instability in the neighbourhood. Upadhyay was also accused to be working with New Delhi for destabilising the Oli government.

Officials in New Delhi took note of the fact that the latest round of anti-India propaganda in Nepal started just a few weeks after Oli visited Beijing and struck a landmark transit treaty with China, along with 9 other agreements.

The China-Nepal transit treaty is being billed as a move to end the landlocked country's dependence on India for supply of food, fuel, medicines and essentials as well as to expand Chinese footprints in the northern neighbourhood of India. Beijing also agreed to extend the strategic Tibet rail link to Nepal to boost connectivity.

Oli, who visited New Delhi in February, apparently clinched the transit deal with Beijing, in view of the disruption of supplies of essentials from India to Nepal during Madhesi agitation against its new Constitution. Kathmandu then blamed New Delhi for launching an "economic blockade" against it.

Officials in New Delhi however pointed out that no other country could replicate the "special and privileged" relationship between Nepal and India.

How India's River Row with China Shows The Growing Importance of Water Security

blogs.wsj.com

May 9, 2016

A river that flows through India, China, Bangladesh and Bhutan is churning up the issue of water security in a fast-developing region.

The river—which is called Brahmaputra in India—is a source of tension between India and China and how those two countries are managing it affects Bangladesh downstream, a [new report](#) by Washington-based nonprofit, CNA Analysis and Solutions says.

The report, titled "Water Resource Competition in the Brahmaputra River Basin: China, India, and Bangladesh," recommends ways the countries can stop the issues from drifting out of control.

Here's a brief rundown of the report.

Where does the river flow?

The river originates in China, where it is known as the Yarlung Tsangpo. It then flows through India and Bangladesh, before entering the Bay of Bengal. Part of the river's basin is also in Bhutan. In India, it runs through six states in the country's east and northeast covering a distance of about 570 miles. In parts of India, it is also known as the Siang and in Bangladesh, as the Jamuna.

The river's basin covers 580,000 square kilometers (224,000 square miles) through the four countries. The World Bank estimates that India and China occupy 50% and 34% of that area.

Why is the river important to China?

The river is strategically important for China, mainly for its hydropower potential. The report said China has already built one hydropower dam on the river and plans to raise four more. China is worried about India's plans to build hydroelectric dams in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, whose border is disputed by both countries.

China worries that plans to build on the river could "strengthen India's 'actual control' over the disputed region and complicate border negotiations," the [report](#) said. This could amplify tensions between India and China.

And, to India?

For India the waterway is one of its seven major rivers and is of immense political significance, the report said. Upholding rights on the river isn't only key to India to consolidate its existing control over land that is contested with China, but also to cater to its need to manage flooding and soil erosion in the country's northeast.

What do the recommendations say?

The report recommends an increase in sharing of hydrological data by India and China. China does so during the flood season and it should consider offering "real-time, year-round river flow data to India," the report says. India should do the same.

India should disclose how many dams it plans to build, the report said.

It also recommends an annual three-nation dialogue with participation from university and think-tank scholars from India, China and Bangladesh to discuss not just diplomatic, but scientific aspects of water-sharing, like potential ways to mitigate the effects of climate change.

India's China appeasement itch

livemint.com

Brahma Chellaney

May 9, 2016

Modi's gamble on China has not paid off. If anything, China has taken a harder line on security issues

Winston Churchill famously said: "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last". India has been feeding the giant crocodile across the Himalayas for decades—and stoically bearing the consequences.

After China came under communist rule in 1949, India was one of the first countries to recognise the new People's Republic of China (PRC). Jawaharlal Nehru, driven by post-colonial solidarity considerations, continued to court the PRC even when the Chinese military began eliminating

India's outer line of defence by invading the then independent Tibet. As Tibet pleaded for help against the aggression, India opposed even a UN General Assembly discussion.

By 1954, through the infamous Panchsheel Agreement, Nehru surrendered India's British-inherited extra-territorial rights in Tibet and recognised the "Tibet region of China" without any quid pro quo. Such was Nehru's PRC courtship that he even rejected US and Soviet suggestions in the 1950s that India take China's place in the UN Security Council. Nehru's officially published selected works quote him as stating that he spurned those suggestions because it would be "unfair" to take China's vacant seat—as if morality governs international relations. Ironically, impiety and ruthlessness have been hallmarks of China's policies.

In sum, Nehru's sustained appeasement resulted in China gobbling up Tibet, covertly encroaching on Indian territories and, eventually, invading India itself.

Yet, just one generation later, India forgot the lessons of Nehruvian appeasement. Since the late 1980s, successive Indian governments have propitiated China. Bharatiya Janata Party-led governments, oddly, have grovelled at times.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 2003 Beijing visit will be remembered in history for his formal surrender of India's Tibet card. In a joint communiqué, Vajpayee used the legal term "recognise" to accept what China deceptively calls the Tibet Autonomous Region as "part of the territory of the PRC". Vajpayee's blunder opened the way for China to claim Arunachal Pradesh as "South Tibet", a term it coined only in 2006.

Still, unilateral concessions have become the leitmotif of Narendra Modi's China policy, now adrift, like his Pakistan policy. His concessions have ranged from removing China from India's list of "countries of concern" to granting Chinese tourists e-visas on arrival. Modi, via the back door, has also brought back in joint statements Vajpayee's errant formulation that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the PRC—a description India had dropped in 2010 to nuance its Tibet stance.

Removing China as a "country of concern", despite its inimical approach towards India, was integral to introducing a liberalised regime for Chinese investments. However, while Chinese investments have been slow to come, Indian policy has enabled Beijing to significantly ramp up its already large trade surplus with India. Racking up a whopping \$60-billion annual surplus, China has heavily skewed the trade relationship against India, treating it as a raw-material appendage of its economy and a dumping ground for manufactured goods. In

2015-16, Chinese exports to India were almost seven times greater in value than imports.

How can Modi's Make in India initiative succeed when China blithely undercuts Indian manufacturing to reap a fast-growing trade surplus?

After Modi came to power, he made closer ties with China a priority. He even postponed his Japan visit by several weeks so that his first major bilateral meeting was with Chinese President Xi Jinping, at the BRICS summit in Brazil. His overtures, including inviting China to be a major partner in India's infrastructure expansion, were intended to encourage Beijing to be more cooperative.

Modi's gamble, however, has not paid off. If anything, China has become more hardline on security issues, including the border. Moreover, it has not only shielded Pakistan-based terrorists like Masood Azhar from UN action, but also stepped up covert strategic assistance to Islamabad, including providing the launcher for Pakistan's India-specific Shaheen-3 ballistic missile.

Having its cake and eating it too, China savours a lopsided trade relationship with India while being free to contain India. Indian appeasement has also allowed China to narrow the focus of border disputes to what it claims. The spotlight thus is on China's Tibet-linked claims to Indian territories, not on Tibet's status. China will not settle the border issue (unless its economy or autocracy crashes) because an unsettled frontier allows it to keep India under intense pressure.

Yet, a short-sighted New Delhi continues to stumble. Take the latest ignominy: India lost face in China's eyes when it issued a visa to the Germany-based World Uyghur Congress chief Dolkun Isa and then cancelled it, after Beijing strongly protested against the action. The public explanation for cancelling the visa rings hollow. Isa has freely travelled in Europe and to the US despite the China-initiated Interpol "Red Notice" against him—a notice Indian authorities were aware of while issuing the visa. In any event, there were no Red Notices against the other two dissidents from China who were stopped from travelling to India for the same conference.

These actions illustrate the extent to which New Delhi is willing to go to propitiate China—even at the cost to India's self-respect and international standing. Untrammelled propitiation underscores Karl Marx's statement: "History repeats itself first as tragedy, then as farce."

Let's be clear: India's choice on China is not between persisting with a weak-kneed policy and risking a war. India can, and must, tackle an increasingly assertive and wily China without appeasement or confrontation. But

without leveraging the bilateral relationship, including levelling the playing field for trade, India cannot hope to tame Chinese intransigence and belligerence.

India watches anxiously as Chinese influence grows

Financial Times

Amy Kazmin

May 9, 2016

Talk of a new Silk Road may be intended to evoke romantic, non-threatening images of desert caravans, ancient ships and trade in exotic commodities. But China's grand plan for a network of railways, highways, pipelines and ports across central Asia, and around Southeast Asia is generating anxiety in New Delhi.

With the 3,488km border between the two Asian neighbours still a matter of formal dispute, Indian strategic policy analysts are divided on whether China's new Silk Road project is a strategic and economic threat to their country — or an opportunity. Many see the project — which the Chinese have called One Belt, One Road (OBOR) — as something that must be carefully navigated, as Beijing develops large projects in countries that India considers part of its natural sphere of influence. However, New Delhi lacks the financial power to offer a credible alternative.

"The Indian government is very careful about the way it handles the China rhetoric, and it isn't ready to come out arms swinging against OBOR, but it is sitting with its arms folded making it very clear that it will not endorse the project if it doesn't like the way it was put together as a Chinese fait accompli," says Shashank Joshi, a senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, a British defence and security think-tank.

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"They cannot be seen to be outwardly hostile to a scheme which many smaller Asian neighbours view as a good opportunity for large flows of Chinese capital that India cannot deliver," he says.

Brahma Chellaney, professor of strategic studies at New Delhi's Centre for Policy Research, sees China's new Silk Road initiative as a repackaging — in more palatable terms — of China's so-called "string of pearls" strategy, which India views as an attempt to strategically encircle it.

The "string of pearls" theory argues that Chinese investment in ports in south Asia is a precursor to developing overseas naval bases. China has, for example, already built a major port at Hambantota in Sri Lanka,

which overlooks important shipping lanes that carry much of the world's oil trade, and which India views as strategically important for its own defence.

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The visit of Chinese submarines at the Colombo port in 2014 raised fears that the facility's purpose is not economic but military. Chinese investment is also planned for ports in Bangladesh and Myanmar, raising concerns that they may serve a dual purpose.

"The new Silk Road is just a nice new name for the strategy they've been pursuing," says Mr Chellaney. "They've wrapped that strategy in more benign terms. The Chinese dream is pre-eminence in Asia, and this goes to the heart of that dream."

"It's not just a trade initiative," he says. "What China is doing has a strategic element that is increasingly obvious."

India is most exercised about plans for a \$46bn economic corridor linking China and Pakistan, India's nuclear-armed neighbour and rival. That blueprint envisions goods travelling from China's western region to Pakistan's Gwadar, a once sleepy Arabian Sea port now run by the China Overseas Port Holding Company. It is considered a staging point between central Asia and the Gulf.

Part of the corridor will pass through Pakistan-held Kashmir, a territory that is still the subject of a decades-old, unresolved dispute between India and Pakistan. Indian analysts say that acceptance of the corridor would effectively acknowledge Pakistan's rights over the territory now under its control, while India's own claims over Kashmir have yet to be resolved — something New Delhi considers unacceptable. "This is a large scale project bringing People's Liberation Army personnel [said to be guarding some project locations] right into the heart of what India considers to be occupied territory," Mr Joshi says.

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At a recent conference in Gwadar, Pakistan's Army Chief, General Raheel Sharif, accused India of deliberately attempting to undermine the project. "India, our neighbour, has openly challenged this development initiative," he said. "We will not allow anyone to create impediments or turbulence in any parts of Pakistan."

But wary as India may be of Chinese ambitions, analysts say New Delhi needs to take a measured approach to the new Silk Road, and embrace individual components.

India is already a member of the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which will finance much of the infrastructure, potentially giving it some leverage over how the plan unfolds.

“For every belt they create, and every road that we create, can we create a slip road that connects Indian opportunities to the larger global market rather than reject it outright?” asks Samir Saran, of the Observer Research Foundation. “Can we . . . use their institutions to our own advantage?”

A Chinese Spring is, of course, probable, says this dissident leader

dnaindia.com

May 8, 2016

Yang Jianli is a Harvard Fellow and the president of Initiatives for China, a Washington-based NGO, which organised a conference in India for the first time to which some of the ethnic and religious minorities of China were invited. Yang, a Chinese citizen with a permanent resident status in the US, tells WION/dna correspondent Ramesh Ramachandran in a May 4 interview in New Delhi that a repeat of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, which he participated in, is possible, if public disenchantment with the Chinese government's policies grows. He also says there is an appreciation in New Delhi that advancing human rights and democracy in China is in the national interest of India. Excerpts:

How do you view the refusal or cancellation of visas to some persons such as Dolkun Isa, chairman of the executive committee of World Uyghur Congress, who were invited to the conference?

I am disappointed, but I understand that India is trying to find a balance between Chinese pressure and hosting the conference. One can't overlook the fact that India allowed the conference to be held without any incident. The criticism that the Modi government is weak is not fair. The policy makers and the Modi government understand that advancing human rights and democracy in China is in the national interest of India.

China describes Dolkun Isa as a terrorist.

Dolkun Isa is a peaceful person. He is not a terrorist. He is a citizen of Germany, which is a strong democracy. He travels freely to many countries, including the US. Any country can send a list (of persons it designates as terrorists) to Interpol but it does not mean that every country should accept it. India reacted to pressure from China, which is understandable, but perhaps it

overreacted. However, in the end India allowed us to hold the conference, which is very positive. We don't accept violence in any form. Some Uyghurs may have engaged in some kind of violent attacks but those Uyghurs we work with are peaceful. We try to engage with some young people who have not abandoned violence. For example, some student leaders from Hong Kong were invited to the conference and spoken to about the principles of non-violence.

What is your take on the contemporary India-China relations? Does India's China policy give you satisfaction?

I can't say I am very happy with it, but I understand the concerns of the Indian government [vis-a-vis its] territorial dispute with China and threat of terrorism from Pakistan, which has a good relationship with China. India is a large democracy and a neighbour of China. I wish and hope that India will take a more proactive role in propagating the ideas of universal values such as democracy to China and also be more forthcoming in supporting us when it comes to visas.

What is your position on Tibet?

Historically and contemporarily, the situation in Tibet is very complex. Three principles guide us to work with Tibet:

One, respect for the Tibetans' right to self-determination and that the future of Tibet should be decided by the Tibetans themselves;

two, we should be united to change China; and

three, we should achieve our goal with non-violence.

In 2011 we saw what some have described as the Arab Spring. Similarly, we have seen people's movements in Hong Kong (umbrella movement) and Taiwan (sunflower student movement) in 2014. You yourself participated in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Do you think a Chinese Spring is probable?

It is of course probable. Ever since the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 and the collapse of the erstwhile USSR, it has never been far from the Chinese leaders' mind. They have learnt from the experiences of dictators, be they right-wing or left-wing, to prevent people from coming together, to control society. With such high degree of control in China, people may not be able to do much but I don't think they will continue this way for very long. Social unrest, people's resentment against the government, sickening pollution, glaring corruption, public disgust with information control, blatantly unjust detentions...all these things I think will get people to try to do something, to demand change. Eventually, I don't think the Chinese government will be able to control such a society for ever, not for a long time. So 1989 is very much possible.

Here, if I might ask, did the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 add to your disillusionment with the government of the day?

I was already disenchanted with the regime and the Communist party before the students' movement broke out in the spring of 1989.

How do you view the intersection of the foreign policies of India and the US vis-a-vis China?

The Indian government is leaning towards the US more than before. It is a good sign. The US is reflecting on its decades-old China policy. China might be the second largest economy in the world but in terms of democracy it remains at the bottom. The US thought trade with China will bring about prosperity and democracy but it didn't happen. What went wrong? Decades of economic prosperity saw the Chinese middle class join the ruling elite class, but the economic and political elites are beginning to turn their back on President Xi Jinping. I think, in five or 10 years, China must have some big opportunity to change and I really hope that India, the US and other democracies will not lose the opportunity to help the Chinese people to change China. When China becomes democratic, its government will become more responsible, more predictable. Therefore, in terms of security, a lot of countries such as India, the US, Japan and the Philippines will become better off for sure.

You mentioned President Xi. How is the contemporary domestic politics playing out or affecting the power dynamic in China?

A personality cult around President Xi has met with strong resistance within the party. His days would not be so easy. Four factors need to be present at the same time for real change in China:

- a general dissatisfaction with the government;
- a viable democratic opposition, which is not yet there;
- a power struggle or cracks within the leadership (cracks will not be meaningful until some factions have different political views from others); and
- international recognition and support for the movement for change when it happens.

We had almost achieved a revolution in 1989 but the international community did not recognise or intervene or give support to it.

How do you see the US-China relationship evolve under the next US President?

Republic or Democrat, the US can be expected to have a different foreign policy towards China. Whoever wins, the US will take a stronger position on security, trade and human rights. Compartmentalisation of policies did not

work in the interest of the US. There is a need for an integrated approach.

India's visa U-turn on Chinese dissidents a sign of its lightweight diplomacy

scmp.com

Neeta Lal

May 5, 2016

Neeta Lal says the embarrassing flip-flop calls into question New Delhi's China policy, and raises a number of uncomfortable questions over its apparent lack of courage

New Delhi's very public U-turn on first issuing – and then rescinding – visas to three prominent Chinese dissidents has not only left it with egg on its face, but also increased bilateral mistrust while raising troublesome questions about its China policy.

German-based World Uyghur Congress leader Dolkun Isa, New York-based Lu Jinghua and Hong Kong activist Ray Wong Toi-yeung were heading to a conference on democracy in Dharamsala. The region is home to Tibet's government-in-exile and its spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who China regards as an arch-enemy. However, no sooner were the visas granted than India's foreign ministry cancelled them, saying that Isa had an Interpol "red corner notice" against him (Beijing apparently had to remind Delhi of the notice), while the other two activists' documents were full of "inconsistencies".

The episode is being viewed as a major faux pas on Delhi's part. Some have dubbed it a classic case of tit-for-tat diplomacy gone awry. China had recently used its clout at the UN to block India's attempt to have Masood Azhar, the alleged mastermind of an attack on an Indian air force base in January, designated an international terrorist. India's granting of visas was apparently a response to that.

The flip-flop has also raised uncomfortable questions for the foreign ministry. Did it not realise Beijing would react unfavourably to the move? Second, why was it ignorant of Isa's Interpol alert? Third, if the visa decision was deliberate, and meant to be a riposte to China blocking the UN ban on Masood, does this mark a shift in India's China policy?

Clearly, retaliatory diplomacy can be messy. By first upping the ante, and then backtracking, Delhi has shown a lack of courage, possibly in response to some arm-twisting by Beijing. This is a personal blow for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has been keen to raise India's strategic profile. Cancelling the visas has revealed that India's strategic diplomacy lacks heft.

The visa incident has brought to the surface underlying tensions. India still finds itself scarred by its border skirmish with China – when the People's Liberation Army stormed into the eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh to vanquish an ill-prepared Indian army. China, for its part, regards India's decision to host the Dalai Lama, and its growing proximity with the US, as a provocation.

There's hope that with Indian President Pranab Mukherjee visiting China this month, both sides might focus on the bigger picture of improved ties following President Xi Jinping's (习近平) visit to India, and Modi's subsequent return trip to China.

Russia-China cooperation 'important factor' on international arena - top lawmaker

Russian Politics & Diplomacy

May 5, 2016

BEIJING, May 5. /TASS/. The cooperation of Russia and China is an important factor of the international situation, Russia's lower house speaker Sergey Naryshkin told reporters in Beijing on Thursday.

"For Russia the development of strategic partnership with China is a foreign policy priority. According to common assessment [of both sides —TASS] the cooperation of Russia and China is an important and global factor of the international situation," Naryshkin said after talks with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhang Dejiang.

The State Duma speaker said at Thursday's meeting of the inter-parliamentary commission the sides discussed such issues as bilateral cooperation on the international arena, including countering external pressure that is "sometimes aggressive and violating the rules of international law."

Russia-China cooperation at highest level in history of bilateral ties

According to Sergey Naryshkin, the Russian-Chinese relations are at the unprecedentedly high level in history of their development.

"Over the past several years the cooperation between our countries has been consistently developing and it is evident that the level of our cooperation can be assessed as the highest one in the entire history of the Russian-Chinese relations," the State Duma speaker said after talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhang Dejiang.

The delegation of Russian lawmakers led by Naryshkin flew to China on Wednesday. On Thursday and Friday, the Russian MPs are due to hold a number of official meetings in Beijing and Shenzhen.

The delegation includes head of State Duma foreign affairs committee Alexei Pushkov, head of committee for economic policy Anatoly Aksakov and head of committee for property issues Sergey Gavrilov who also coordinates the group for ties with China's parliament.

Xi praises inter-parliamentary ties with Russia

Chinese President Xi Jinping has highly assessed the development of the Russian-Chinese parliamentary ties, Chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress Zhang Dejiang said on Thursday.

"President Xi has highly assessed and approved the development of friendship between the two countries' parliaments," Zhang said at a meeting with Russia's State Duma speaker Sergey Naryshkin.

According to Zhang, the meeting between Naryshkin and Xi shows that the Chinese leader "priorities the two countries' friendship and pays special attention to the visit of the Russian delegation to China."

Naryshkin said he was glad to discuss the Russian-Chinese inter-parliamentary cooperation, which complies with the interests of the two countries and their people.

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