

Modi Mentions Dalai Lama: Anticipation Builds for Possible Meeting

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On 1st June 2024, a total of eight states, including the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, will go to the polls as part of the final phase (phase 7) in India's General Elections. Amidst this, on 24th May, the incumbent Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, joined the BJP's campaign in Himachal Pradesh, taking part in a mega rally at Mandi.

In this rally, Narendra Modi stated, "I frequently talk with the Dalai Lama; the Dalai Lama is the being who guides our entire universe," which, according to some, is an indication that Narendra Modi, may have some positive plans to Tibet with a meeting with His Holiness Dalai Lama seemingly in line. With several exit polls indicating that the BJP and its NDA alliance will once again form the government, some even go as far as mentioning that the incumbent Prime Minister would invite the Dalai Lama for his oath to office ceremony. Tibetans in the past have been invited, with the then Sikyong (President) and Kalon (Minister) of the Tibetan Government in Exile Lobsang Sangay la and Gyari Dolma la both attending the oath to office ceremony of 2014.

Narendra Modi has already met the Dalai Lama when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat; however, he has yet to meet him since assuming the role of Prime Minister.

Since the BJP's formation as a separate political party in the 1980s, it has had two Prime Ministers: Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi. The former frequently met with the Dalai Lama even during his tenure as Prime Minister of India. The Dalai Lama stated, "His eloquent support of the Tibetan people began in the late 1950s. Since then, he regularly took Indian governments to task in parliament, prompting them to take a stronger stand on Tibet," highlighting the firm support that Atal Bihari Vajpayee had towards Tibet and the Tibetan people.

There are various movements and instances indicating that a possible meeting between Narendra Modi and the Dalai Lama is on the cards:

1. Narendra Modi and the Dalai Lama attended the same event last year; the Global Buddhist Summit organised by the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), with the former being the Chief Guest on the 1st Day and the latter being the Chief Guest on the 2nd Day. They were so close yet did not meet, most likely due to pressure from Beijing in my opinion. However, with India advancing and taking great strides forward, including positioning itself towards achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047, there will come a time when Beijing will not be able to pressure New Delhi anymore.
2. Furthermore, Narendra Modi has frequently been publicly wishing the Dalai Lama on his birthday through his social media handles in the last few years.



3. In December 2021, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), with its Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat and National Executive Indresh Kumar (founder of Bharat Tibbat Sahyog Manch), met the Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamshala. Considering the strong and firm linkages between RSS and BJP, there is a high possibility of the BJP leadership including Narendra Modi also meeting the Dalai Lama.

The Indian National Congress (INC) the other national political party of India that has formed the government of India on several occasions, has had its leaders including its Prime Ministers, meeting with the Dalai Lama. One can refer to FNVA's recent policy brief '[2024 Election: Tibet in INC's Election Manifesto](#)' for more detail on this.

With the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh going to the polls, several notable Indian political leaders have arrived to Dharamshala and met the Dalai Lama recently. Many of them also had events with the Tibetan publics, where both the BJP and INC (from the NDA and India Alliance respectively) engaged with the Tibetans in Dharamshala in the lead up to the election.



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