



# Tibet News

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NEWSLETTER OF THE TIBET INFORMATION OFFICE FOR AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & SOUTH EAST ASIA

## HH the Dalai Lama meets with President Obama

22 February, 2014

**WASHINGTON DC:** HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA MET WITH President Obama 21 February at the White House. This was the third meeting between the Tibetan spiritual leader and the sitting American President. The earlier two

meetings, also in the White House, took place on 18 February, 2010 and on 16 July in 2011 respectively.

In an almost hour-long meeting, His Holiness shared his core commitment related to promotion of human values, fostering

interfaith dialogue and preservation of Tibetan people's unique culture and rich tradition. The two leaders also discussed issues related to morality and leadership, and how one can produce a new generation of ethical leaders in the 21st century. *continued page 2*



President Barack Obama meets with the Dalai Lama in the Map Room of the White House, Feb. 21, 2014. [Official White House Photo by Pete Souza]

### REPORT

## Tibetans in Australia 'monitored by China'

By Rowan Callik  
29 January, 2014

TIBETANS LIVING IN AUSTRALIA -- most of them now Australian citizens -- face intimidation from Chinese representatives here when they seek visas to visit relatives.

Dicki Choyang, the Foreign Minister of the Tibetan government in exile, yesterday made the allegation after holding meetings with members of the Tibetan and Chinese communities in Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne during her visit.

"This is a development to which the Australian government and people have to

be alerted," Ms Choyang said.

She said people of Tibetan background -- of whom there are about 1000 in Australia -- had to travel to Canberra to apply in person for visas. The Chinese authorities, she said, "monitor the Tibetan community here closely".

People from Tibet were routinely asked whether they were members of the Australian Tibetan Association, whether they had participated in any demonstrations while in Australia, and whether they had made contributions to the Central Tibetan

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# Tibet News

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*continued from page 1*

President Obama said that he was honoured to meet His Holiness again. He reiterated his support for the preservation of the unique religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions of Tibet. The President extended support for His Holiness' Middle Way Approach policy and reiterated that Chinese government should have constructive dialogue with His Holiness' representatives without any precondition. President Obama asked His Holiness the Dalai Lama about Tibet and His Holiness explained the current situation. President Obama expressed his deep concern about the

worsening human rights situation in Tibet and Tibetan areas in China.

Honorable Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay welcomed the meeting between His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and President Obama. "I welcome President Obama's strong endorsement of the Middle Way Approach policy and constructive dialogue without any precondition. This meeting sends a powerful message of hope to Tibetans in Tibet who are undergoing immense suffering. The meeting reflects the American government and people's continued commitment to freedom and democracy," said the Sikyong. ■

## Self-immolation at Tsekhog County

7 February, 2014

**DHARAMSHALA:** Phagmo Samdrup, a 27-year-old TIBETAN set himself on fire at Tsekhog (incorporated into China's Qinghai Province) in an apparent protest against the repressive policies of the Chinese government on Wednesday. It was the first Tibetan self-immolation protest of 2014, taking the total self-immolation toll to 126 since 2009.



the self-immolation reaching the media.

Prior to Phagmo Samdrup's self-immolation, there were reports of heightened security and military clampdown in various parts of Tibet and Tibetan areas ahead of the upcoming Tibetan New Year celebrations, which fall on 2 March.

Phagmo Samdrup was a Tibetan tantric practitioner. He is married with two kids. His mother's name is Drugmo.

Phagmo Samdrup burned himself at around 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday near the Panchen Day School in Dokarmo township in Tsekhog (in Chinese, Zeku) county in the Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Chinese police reportedly arrived at the immolation site and took his body away. His current whereabouts and condition remain unknown at the moment.

Chinese authorities deployed massive security forces in the wee hours of the night, tightening security and restricting the movement of Tibetans around Tsekhog and nearby Rebgong County, where several self-immolations have taken place earlier.

All communication lines in the area were reportedly disconnected after the self-immolation, in an attempt to prevent reports of

### Wave of Self-Immolation in Tibet

The wave of self-immolation in Tibet began in 2009 when Tapey, a young monk of Kirti monastery burned himself protesting against the Chinese government's violent clampdown in Ngaba county (incorporated into China's Sichuan Province) in response to the peaceful protest of 2008.

Since then, over 126 Tibetans from various parts of Tibet, set themselves on fire in protest against the repressive policies of the Chinese government in Tibetan areas. Out of them, 107 have died while the whereabouts and condition of the remaining self-immolators are unknown.

Most of the self-immolators have called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and freedom for Tibetans. ■

*continued from page 1*

Administration based at Dharamsala in northern India.

"They are free as Australian citizens to participate in any lawful, peaceful activities," Ms Choyang said. "This is a blatant infringement of Australia's sovereignty. For people involved, this is emotional blackmail."

Michael Danby, the Labor MP for

Melbourne Ports and chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet, said: "The intimidation of Australian citizens is very concerning, and should not be put up with. I'll be writing to the Minister for Foreign Affairs to investigate these reports."

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Chinese embassy declined to comment. ■



## Tibetan Student awarded Medallion for Academic Excellence

3 January, 2014

TSERING SAMKHAR, A YEAR 12 STUDENT of the Class of 2013 was awarded a Medallion for Academic Excellence at a recent graduation ceremony at the St Francis Xavier College in Canberra, Australia.

Throughout her school and college life, Tsering maintained a steady record of academic achievement and was awarded the above Medallion for both her 2012 and 2013 performance as the top student of History as well as top student of Legal Studies for both 2012 and 2013 academic years. Ms Tsering received her ranking out of a total number of 198 students from her Class of 2013.

With a final Australian Tertiary Awards Rating (ATAR) of 98%, Tsering Samkhar hopes to pursue her university education at the Australian National University in Canberra with a double Law Degree with International Relations in February 2014. ■

## AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND



## Tibetans in Australia Commemorate the 55th Tibetan National Uprising Day

11 March, 2014: TIBETANS ALL OVER the world commemorated the 55th Tibetan National Uprising Day on 10 March by organizing rallies, meetings and gatherings to protest against the Chinese government's continued repression in Tibet. Tibetan communities, supporters and Chinese friends staged demonstrations before the Chinese embassy and consulates in different parts of Australia.

On 11 March, about two hundred Tibetans, supporters and friends staged a protest demonstration before the Chinese Embassy at Canberra. The protestors raised slogans against Chinese government's oppression and demanded to respect human rights in Tibet and resolve the issue of Tibet through dialogue. The demonstration was addressed



by Nigan Gotsang, President, Australian Tibetan Communities Association, Dolkar Kyab, Member of Tibetan Parliament in Exile, Chin Jin, Chinese Democratic Forum and others. The demonstrators later marched to the Australian Parliament House and addressed by Sonam Norbu Dagpo, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dolkar Kyap, Mike Zhong, Chinese Alliance for Democracy and others. Members of the Tibetan Youth Congress staged a skit depicting atrocities perpetrated by Chinese security officials on the Tibetan students in Tibet who were demanding the right to learn Tibetan language in the schools. ■

*The protest demonstrations in Canberra were organised by the Australian Tibetan Communities Association. Tibetans and friends came from across Australia.*

## A Successful Visit of Kalon Dicki Chhoyang to Australia

31 January, 2014

AUSTRALIA: KALON DICKI CHHOYANG OF THE Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala visited Australia from 19 to 30 January 2014. She was invited by the organizers of the Festival of Tibet in Brisbane as the chief guest and keynote speaker of the festival.

She visited Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne and spoke to the Tibetan Communities on the Middle Way Approach to resolve the issue of Tibet and policies of the 14th Kashag (Cabinet). In Sydney, she gave a briefing about the work of the Central Tibetan Administration to Tibet Support Groups and spoke at ATC's Tibet Talks titled "Australia and the West can become a true friend of both China and Tibet".

At the Festival of Tibet in Brisbane she spoke on the Women of Wisdom and participated in the panel discussion: *Why Dalai Lama Matters*. She also gave a public talk at the Crystal Castle in Byron Bay.

During the visit she met Australian politicians and public and Chinese scholars and friends and reiterated Central Tibetan Administration's policy of not seeking separation or independence but genuine autonomy within China to preserve Tibet's culture, religion, language and environment.

She appealed to the Australian public to support the rights of the Tibetan people.

She was interviewed by various TVs, radios and newspapers on the issue of Tibet. This first successful visit of Kalon Dicki Chhoyang to Australia was organised by Tibet Information Office at Canberra. ■



## AUSTRALIA



# Tibet's Culture Showcased at Annual Festival

10 February, 2014

**CANBERRA:** TIBETAN CULTURAL CENTRE AND THE Tibetan Community of ACT, Australia showcased Tibet's rich cultural heritage at the National Multicultural Festival held in Canberra from 7-9 February. The Tibetans won the top spot for best cultural exhibit during the festival in 2011.

The annual event, which attracted over quarter of a million visitors this year, served as an important platform for different communities in Australia to showcase their culture, art and cuisines.

Tibet's unique religious artefacts and scroll paintings were put on display for the

visitors. Ven. Thupten Khedup was invited from Melbourne to prepare a sand mandala during this year's festival. Presentation of the intricate sand mandala became one of the attractions of the Tibetan exhibit and was well appreciated by a stream of visitors. The Tibetan Cultural Centre displayed information kits on Tibet, including the list of books authored by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, websites and newsletters, on the issue of Tibet.

The Tibetan community in Canberra presented folk songs, dances and throat prayers by Ven Thupten Khedup and cuisines of Tibet. Tibetan Communities'

Momo stall was a hit of the event and reported in the Canberra Times. "Through these exhibits, we were able to introduce to the public about Tibet's rich and unique culture and religion," Ms. Dadon, an official at the Tibet Information Office, told Tibet.Net. ■

### Photos

*Left: Tibetan artists present folk songs and dances at the Festival*

*Middle: Visitors at the Tibetan stall during the Festival*

*Right: Sand Mandala presentation by Ven. Thupten Khedup*

## INTERNATIONAL

# Tibet's Environmental and Political Situation Showcased at Festival of Tibet



5 February, 2014

**DHARAMSHALA:** THE RAPID DEGRADATION OF Tibet's fragile environment and the critical political situation prevailing inside Tibet were showcased on the second day of the Festival of Tibet being held in Guwahati, Assam.

Mr Tempa Gyaltzen, staff of the Environment and Development Desk of the Department of Information and International Relations, CTA gave an in depth presentation on "Tibet's Environment & Its Impact on the Asian Sub-continent".

He blamed the rampant mining of Tibet's rich natural resources by unscrupulous

Chinese companies backed by the Chinese government for causing long-term ecological imbalance in the region.

The Tibet Museum of the Central Tibetan Administration held a photo exhibition at the AC Art Gallery. The exhibitions titled "Long Look Homeward" and "The Burning Question: Why are Tibetans turning to Self-immolation" depicted the critical political situation prevailing inside Tibet.

The Art gallery also featured an exhibition on Tibetan Butter Sculpture and Sand Mandala by Nechung Monastery and Thangka Art by the Institute of Tibetan Thangka Art.

Documentary films on Tibet "Red Flag over Tibet" and "Tibet's Stolen Child" were screened during the day. Stalls showcasing Tibetan medicine, Tibetan food, Tibetan literature and traditional Tibetan handicrafts were also on display and for sale to the public.

Local populace from Assam and neighbouring states thronged the venue in large numbers to savour the unique taste of Tibetan culture and tradition at the festival. ■

*Photo: Visitors at Tibet Museum's photo exhibition at the festival. Photo/Tempa Gyaltzen*

# Scottish Parliament Discuss Self-immolations in Tibet

February 7, 2014

**Maureen Watt is a Scottish politician who has served as a Scottish National Party Member of the Scottish Parliament for North East Scotland since 2006.**

**DHARAMSHALA:** THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ON 4 February held a lengthy debate on the wave of self-immolations in Tibet. The debate was held as part of a motion proposed by Maureen Watt, a Scottish politician and Member of Parliament, to highlight the extraordinary and distressing situation prevailing inside Tibet.

The Scottish Parliament noted with grave concern that at least 127 (sic) Tibetans have self-immolated, often fatally, since February 2009. It said it understands that these actions are largely acts of protest against restrictions on religion, the Tibetan language, access to employment and the degradation of water resources and grazing lands.

It expressed concern at China's attempts to prevent accurate reports of self-immolations reaching the media and condemns the criminalisation of family members and sometimes witnesses to the incidents.

The parliament stated that 11 countries urged China to improve the human rights of Tibetans at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 22 October 2013, and commends the work of the Scottish Centre for Himalayan studies at the University of Aberdeen, the Grampian Tibet Support Group and other groups across Scotland in highlighting human rights and supporting cultural and educational links with Tibet and beyond.

MP Maureen Watt, in her statement, have criticised the repressive policies of the Chinese government leading to Tibetan self-immolation and the subsequent military crackdown by Chinese authorities on the Tibetan people. She said that friends and relatives of self-immolators are being threatened or bribed by officials to cover up the genuine aspirations of the Tibetan self-immolators.

She raised the issue of, massive surveillance and restrictions on movement, imposed on the Tibetan people by the Chinese authorities in an attempt to create a communication blackout and curb the flow of information outside Tibet.



She spoke about the Tibetan people's right to preserve their language, culture and the rampant mining of Tibet's natural resources without any regard to the Tibetan people's religious sentiments. She also raised the issue of mass relocation of ethnic Chinese into Tibet which is drastically changing the demographic outlook of the region.

She urged the Scottish parliament to persuade China to end the repression in Tibet explicitly saying, repression of culture is not a sustainable way forward to any culture or any country. She also urged the cabinet secretary to write to UNESCO encouraging them to do more to protect Tibetan heritage and culture. ■

## Chinese Microbloggers Reveal China's Systemic Militarization of Tibet

REPORT

9 March, 2014

**INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET:**

CHINESE TRAVELLERS TO TIBET are revealing the extent of the militarisation and repression inside Tibet that the Chinese government is attempting to cover up through propaganda and censorship, according to a groundbreaking report released today by the International Campaign for Tibet on the 55th anniversary of the 1959 uprising and the 2008 protests in Tibet.

"Chinese tourists are exposing the harsh truth of life in Tibet and undermining the peaceful narrative portrayed by Party propaganda," said Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. "The Internet postings of Chinese travellers provide an undistorted window into the smothering security apparatus imposed on Tibetan communities. Social media in China, which is facing increasing restrictions, is providing a useful tool to document the tense reality in Tibet and get around the government's censorship regulations."

ICT collected hundreds of images and messages from the Chinese microblogging

site Sina Weibo, which enabled use of the crowd-sourced perspective of Chinese tourists to document conditions inside Tibet. ICT's analysis of these messages finds that:

1. Chinese tourists have evidenced through social media the reality of the militarization and repressive measures that the government is implementing in Tibet and seeking to cover up through propaganda.

These Weibo observations are possible because Chinese travellers get access to Tibetan areas that are denied to foreign diplomats and journalists

2. Use of social media demonstrates a double standard in Tibet: Chinese travelers posting Weibo messages on Tibet appear to be afforded greater leeway by the government, while Tibetans who pass on information about Tibet are considered suspect by the state

3. Chinese tourists find a reality in Tibet that differs sharply from expectations formed through official propaganda about Tibet.

Chinese tourists express confusion and at times fear over checkpoints and ID searches in Tibet.

Chinese tourists find their cell phone and

internet service are turned off in Tibetan areas, revealing government efforts to block Tibetans' communication.

Chinese state-run media has sought to portray Tibet as idyllic and Tibetans as tranquil and grateful. To aid this narrative, Chinese authorities severely restrict access by foreigners to Tibetan areas. Foreign travellers have been forbidden to enter the Tibetan Autonomous Region since February, in an annual blackout to coincide with the 'sensitive' anniversaries in March, including March 10, the day Tibetans designate as their National Day to commemorate the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile following the People's Liberation Army's attack on the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

As noted in the report, domestic tourists from Chinese areas of the PRC are not subject to the same travel restrictions. Thus, their postings on Weibo provide documentation of the reality on Tibet that diverges from the official narrative on Tibet. ■

To read the full report, *Has Life Here Always Been Like This?* visit: <http://www.savetibet.org/newsroom/has-life-here-always-been-like-this/>

## Two Tibetans Sentenced to varying prison terms in Driru

10 February, 2014

**DHARAMSHALA:** CHINESE AUTHORITIES IN TIBET'S Driru County have sentenced two Tibetans up to 11 years in prison in January for "illegally gathering crowd" and "leading a demonstration against mining activities".

According to Dharamshala based right group Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Kelsang Choklang, a monk from

Tarmoe Monastery, was sentenced to ten years in prison on charges of "illegally gathering a crowd". Local Tibetans say he was likely charged of "illegally gathering a crowd" although they believe the charges are false, according to the TCHRD. "Kelsang Choklang is known for his great love and respect for traditional Tibetan culture. He has always called for protection of Tibetan culture and harmony among different nationalities," TCHRD quoted its source.

Dorje Dragtsel, a layman, was sentenced to 11 years in prison for leading an anti-mining protest at the sacred Naglha Dzamba Mountain in Driru last year. Dorje Dragtsel was allegedly involved in many anti-China protests including protests against government's forced expression of loyalty

whereby Tibetans were forced to raise the Chinese national flag atop their houses.

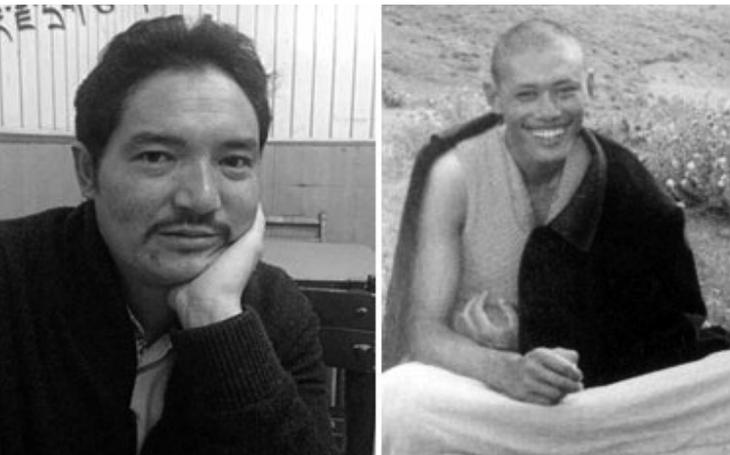
Since his arrest on October 3, 2013, Dorje Dragtsel went missing. Hundreds of Tibetans sat on a hunger strike outside the Chinese police station on Oct. 6 demanding his release. However, police fired upon the protestors injuring several Tibetans.

The right group also noted that hundreds of Tibetans have been targeted, arrested or disappeared since crackdown began last year in Driru County in the name of Chinese President Xi Jinping's "mass line" campaign last year. "Many are targeted and arrested on false pretext and the fate of many more remain unknown due to restriction on communication lines." The right group cited its sources saying that communication lines have been blocked in at least three counties in the eastern part of Nagchu Prefecture including Driru. ■

Source: Phayul, February 10, 2014

Left: Dorje Dragtsel/file/TCHRD

Right: Kelsang Choklang/file/TCHRD



## TWO MORE TIBETAN MONKS SELF-IMMOLATE

16 March, 2014

**DHARAMSHALA:** A TIBETAN MONK FROM KIRTI Monastery in Ngaba County has set himself on fire to protest against the repressive policies of Chinese government in north-eastern Tibet, according to sources in exile. Meanwhile, China's official Xinhua news agency said a Tibetan monk from Shaderi monastery in Zekog county (Tib: Tsekhog) in Huangnan prefecture (Tib: Malho) has self-immolated.

Lobsang Palden of Kirti Monastery in his 20s set fire to his gasoline soaked body on the Martyrs Street in Ngaba County (incorporated into China's Sichuan Province) around 11:30 am Sunday. He then walked few steps raising slogans and was immediately bundled away by police in a vehicle. His whereabouts and well-being remain unknown since then.

Local Tibetans shut down their shops and restaurants to mourn and express solidarity with the monk's family members. The situation in the area remains tense with heavy deployment of police and security forces.

Today's protest marks the sixth anniversary of the massacre of monks of Kirti monastery by Chinese forces on 16 March 2008, a few days after the unprecedented protest against the Chinese broke out in Tibet's capital Lhasa on 10 March. Hundreds of Tibetans were killed by

Chinese security forces in the subsequent crackdown across Tibet.

Similar self-immolation protests by monks of Kirti monastery the same day took place in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Meanwhile, China's official Xinhua news agency today said a Tibetan monk has self-immolated. "The monk was from the Shaderi Monastery in Huangnan Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Qinghai province. The report said police were rushing to the site and gave no further details," the Associated Press said quoting Xinhua's report. "A man at the Zekog county public security bureau confirmed the immolation and said it took place outside the monastery. He said he had no other information and refused to be identified," AP reported.

The total number of self-immolation protests by Tibetans in protest against the Chinese government's repressive policies has risen to 128. The self-immolators have called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and freedom for Tibetans.

Despite repeated appeals by the Tibetan leadership in exile not to engage in such drastic actions, the self-immolations have continued.

A white paper released by the Tibetan leadership in Dharamshala last year explains the fundamental reasons behind the ongoing wave of self-immolations inside



Tibet and the alarming escalation in the protests witnessed in the last few years.

The principle reasons listed in the 91-page report for Tibet's fiery protests are political repression, Chinese communist leader's views and policies on Tibet, and cultural assimilation, destruction of Tibetan Buddhism. Besides, social discrimination, strangling the Tibetan language, environment destruction, Tibetan Nomads and ending their way of life and economic marginalisation, population transfer and western China Development Programme are the other reasons given in the report. (Read and download the White Paper) ■



# His Holiness the Dalai Lama spends the day on Capitol Hill

6 March, 2014

**WASHINGTON DC, USA:** HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA'S DAY on Capitol Hill began with his being invited to offer prayers at the opening of proceedings in the Senate. He was first welcomed and introduced by Majority Leader Sen. Harry Reid who described him as an inspiration to others across the world. After reciting a short salutation to the Buddha in Tibetan, His Holiness read the following prepared verses, first in Tibetan and then in English:

*With our thoughts we make our world. Our mind is central and precedes our deeds. Speak or act with a pure mind and happiness will follow you, like a shadow that never leaves. From the 'Dhammapada'*

*May there be joy in the world, with bountiful harvest and spiritual wealth.*

*May every good fortune come to be; and may all our wishes be fulfilled.*

*As long as space remains, and as long as sentient beings remain,*

*Until then, may I too remain and help dispel the misery of the world.*

He pointed out that the last verse, from Shantideva's 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life', is his favourite prayer, expressing a thought he tries to put into practice every day of his life.

Sen. Reid, in his appreciation mentioned His Holiness's efforts to spread the message of peace in the world and quoted him as saying: "Be kind whenever possible; it's always possible" and "The best way to solve problems everywhere is to sit down and talk". Sen. Patrick Leahy, another old friend, took up the theme, praising the way His Holiness has worked long and hard for the Tibetan people. He recounted an incident several years ago in the streets of Lhasa, Tibet, as he was

preparing to take a photograph and a local Tibetan insisted on posing for him holding a photograph of His Holiness at his heart.

"In doing this he risked imprisonment, so why did he do it? Because people elsewhere have to know the faith Tibetans have in His Holiness."

Shortly afterwards His Holiness met with House Speaker John Boehner and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, telling them what an honour it was to be with them and reiterating his three commitments to human values, religious harmony and the preservation of the peaceful Buddhist culture of Tibet. He explained how Tibet had gained Buddhist knowledge from India in the 8th and 9th centuries, knowledge that at the time derived from the renowned Nalanda University.

"We have kept the Nalanda tradition alive and along with it knowledge of the mind and emotions that scientists are eager to learn from today. This is timely, since across the materially developed world, people experience too much stress. Fuller understanding of the mind and emotions can be very useful. An additional aspect of my concern for Tibet relates to the environment."

Minority Leader Pelosi noted that support for Tibet is bipartisan and that His Holiness has been received by Republican as well as Democratic Presidents who regard him as a champion of democracy and freedom. In his reply, he said:

"Despite the challenges of the last 60 years the Tibetan spirit remains strong. Tibet is no longer a fresh issue, yet awareness of it remains alive thanks to people like you. Friends tell me that Xi Jinping is more realistic. He's courageously tackling corruption and talking about the legal system and the needs of the rural masses. Some suggest there is a sense that existing policy on Tibet isn't working so he is looking for a more realistic approach, but there may be resistance within the Chinese

establishment. At such a time the support of the free world and particularly the US is significant. In the past, when China's Most Favoured Nation status was being debated, I said they should have it. The free world has a responsibility to guide China into the mainstream of democracy. There is a Tibetan saying about one medicine for 100 illnesses; democracy in China will be the solution to 100 problems around the world."

His Holiness stated that the Chinese people want reform. Wen Jiabao even said that China need American style democracy; activist Liu Xiaobo has said that there is both a need and a desire for reform. Therefore, His Holiness repeated, there is a need for more freedom and a relaxation of censorship. Mrs Pelosi noted that in addition to meeting with His Holiness, President Obama had expressed support for the Middle Way Approach. His Holiness concurred, noting that whatever happened in the past is past. Today, Tibet is materially backward and will receive help to develop within the People's Republic of China, provided Tibetans are granted genuine autonomy, as guaranteed by the Chinese constitution.

At a meeting with several hundred Congressional Staffers in the Congressional Visitor Center Auditorium, His Holiness was asked if he ever feels sad and frustrated and if he does what he does about it.

"Firstly, as a simple Buddhist monk and a long-term friend of this country, a great admirer of this great nation, it's an honour for me to be here. Sadness and frustration are experienced by all 7 billion human beings alive today, although maybe less among children. People ask me if human nature is destructive and humanity doomed. I tell them that when something sad happens, it is linked to many other factors. And whenever you feel frustration it always seems less significant if you look at the situation from a wider perspective."

Sen. John McCain took the platform and spoke of Human Rights not being American, but universal. They distinguish us as human beings; they cannot be rescinded or granted because they belong to us. He said His

Holiness has given his life to the struggle to fulfil the just cause of Tibet. In his determination he is an inspiration to all people. Saying that His Holiness inhabits Tibetan hearts and they inhabit his, he quoted John Donne's Meditation XVII:

"Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Questioned about whether he would see change in China and Tibet in his lifetime, His Holiness mentioned the changes that have already taken place. He described China in a series of eras: Mao Xedong's era characterised by ideology gave way to Deng Xiaoping's era of economic development. Jiang Zemin's era then extended the scope of the Party to include the better off and Hu Jintao, faced with growing inequality, sought harmony. Xi Jinping's era will be the fifth. Over the last 40 years China has changed a great deal, but because of entrenched views within the established collective leadership further change may take time. He said:

"I am hopeful. We have had relations with China since 7th century. China is a Buddhist country and these days many Chinese Buddhists are showing an interest in Tibetan Buddhism. We Tibetans have our own language and script, which is the best language in which to explain Buddhism."

When Nancy Pelosi, who had been delayed by business in the House, arrived and took the platform, she recalled visiting Dharamsala and meeting with Tibetans who had just come out of Tibet, with harrowing tales of what they'd been through. She reiterated the bipartisan nature of support for Tibet, noting Sen. McCain's presence and the His Holiness's meetings with both President Bush and President Obama. She said America's relationship with His Holiness is long-standing, recalling that President Roosevelt sent a gift of a watch to the young Dalai Lama. Saying, "I thought you might bring that up, here it is!" His Holiness held up the watch for all to see.

Asked what his favourite lesson from his childhood was, His Holiness replied without hesitation:

"My mother's affection. That's the seed of any compassion I've been able to develop today."

After lunch with seven Senators, His Holiness met with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee over coffee and tea, followed by a meeting with Senators Reid and McConnell. His Holiness remarked that he had always known that United States was a great nation, recalling its action to defend democracy and the rule of law in World War II and the Korean War. The U.S. Capitol is filled with statues and busts of men who have contributed to that greatness. Their words, inscribed on the walls, include the following in Cox Corridor II from Franklin D Roosevelt, the President who long ago sent a watch to His Holiness:

"We must remember that any oppression, any injustice, any hatred is a wedge designed to attack our civilisation." ■

*Photo: His Holiness the Dalai Lama greeting Senate Chaplain Barry Black, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) on his arrival at Capitol Hill in Washington DC on March 6, 2014. Photo/Sonam Zoksang*

**IN BRIEF**

**Left) 3 March, 2014:** Joining the Tibetans residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota on March 1, HH the Dalai Lama celebrated *Losar*, His first Tibetan New Year outside India in 55 years. During the *Losar* ceremony, Mayor of Minneapolis, Besty Hodges read the Proclamation of declaring March 2 as the

'Peace and Compassion Day of the Dalai Lama' in Minneapolis.

**Middle) 6 March, 2014:** Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Senator John McCain (R-AZ), His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His interpreter, Thubten Jinpa during a talk to Congressional

staff at the Congressional Visitors' Center Auditorium at Capitol Hill in Washington DC.

**Right) 26 March, 2014:** First Lady Michelle Obama greeted by Tibetan students at the Zangxiang Village Tea House in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, following a week long trip to China, 19-26 March.



Photo/ Jeremy Russell/OHDL

Photo/Sonam Zoksang

Official White House Photo: Amanda Lucidon



# Tibet News

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