



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### China cancels major Tibetan cultural festival

Read online: <https://savetibet.org/china-cancels-major-tibetan-cultural-festival>

August 6, 2021

Chinese authorities in the Tibetan capital have announced the cancellation of all activities connected to the annual “Shoton” festival, citing the risk posed by the surge in COVID-19 cases in China.

Shoton, or the “Yogurt festival,” which was to begin on Aug. 8, 2021, is among the major religious-cultural festivals in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. It includes monastic ceremony with a “thangka” (Tibetan religious painting) display, as well as Tibetan opera performances.

In a circular dated Aug. 5, 2021, the Lhasa city task force to combat the pandemic said on account of the surge in COVID cases in 17 Chinese provinces and cities, all public-gathering events of the Shoton festival are being halted.

The circular said that this was being done “to ensure security and protect the activities connected to the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the peaceful liberation of Tibet as well as the wellbeing of all people in the city.”

Last year, too, the authorities curtailed the programs connected to the Shoton festival on account of the COVID situation.

Shoton in Tibetan means “yogurt banquet.” The festival includes the display of a giant thangka by Drepung Monastery and a Tibetan traditional opera performance in the garden of the Norbulingka, the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas. The festival is also connected to the Dalai Lamas, as during the 19th century, the opera performances were moved to the Norbulingka during the time of the 11th Dalai Lama

The Chinese authorities have been showcasing this festival as part of their claim of promoting Tibetan culture. However, the festival has also been used to promote their political agenda.

This year, it was promoted as part of the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of what China calls the peaceful liberation of Tibet, but what was actually a violent annexation.

In 2011, the theme of the festival was, “Happiness-endowed Lhasa, all-encompassing Shoton.” In 2014, the festival’s theme was “Beautiful home, happy Lhasa.”



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