



ICT'S TIBET ROUNDUP — ISSUE 14

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ICT's Tibet Roundup is a twice-monthly compilation of curated news from various sources, including Chinese state media, official Chinese documents, briefings, information reported by Tibetans in Tibet and international commentary on Tibet. The roundup is organized in categories, including law, politics, culture, economics, climate and commentary. The focus is on presenting news and reports with limited analysis and editorializing.

POLITICS

1. China claims dominance in Tibetology, marginalizes Tibetan voices

An [editorial](#) published in the United Front News WeChat account soon after the “7th Beijing International Tibetology Symposium” asserted China’s prominence in Tibetology, touting its achievement in quashing Tibetology in Western academia.

The editorial claimed that China’s Tibetology is now the world leader. The editorial also accused Western scholars of having ulterior motives in their scholarship.

The editorial’s claims are deeply concerning. They marginalize the contributions of Tibetan scholars and ignore the Tibetan voices within Tibetology. This perpetuates a biased representation of Tibet’s history and culture.

Furthermore, the editorial’s framing of academic progress as a competition between China and the West is unhelpful. It oversimplifies the multifaceted nature of Tibetology as a discipline and stifles scholarly discourse.

The allegation that Western scholars and media have ulterior motives is also concerning. It raises the specter of suppression of academic freedom. Accusations of malicious intent are likely to be used to dismiss critical scholarly viewpoints, undermining the healthy exchange of ideas that is essential for rigorous scholarship.

Academic research should remain free from undue influence. It should be open and constructive, allowing for a diversity of voices to be heard. The

Chinese government's attempts to control the narrative on Tibetology are a threat to academic freedom and to the pursuit of truth.

2. Pushing forward state narrative at Beijing's Tibetology Symposium

Li Decheng, Deputy Director-General of the China Tibetology Research Center, pushed forward the [state narrative](#) on Tibetan Buddhism's reincarnation practice in a staged interview with Chinese state media. Speaking to state media on Aug. 16, during the 7th Beijing International Symposium on Tibetology, Li launched a pointed attack on the 14th Dalai Lama, stating that the recognition of the Dalai Lamas is a prerogative of the Chinese government and not the 14th Dalai Lama. According to Li, religious affairs are part of state affairs, and the management of religious affairs should be in accordance with state-promulgated laws.

3. China deepens control over online discourse in Tibet

In a move spotlighting China's effort to shape its digital landscape, Wang Junzheng, the secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee, recently directed the opening of the inaugural [Tibet Autonomous Region Network Civilization Conference](#).

The conference aims to foster a "network civilization" and enhance efficiency, but its real goal is to deepen and strengthen controls over online discourse and curtail dissent.

Wang Junzheng's instructions, which emphasize the importance of network civilization as a building block of China's digital prowess, align with General Secretary Xi Jinping's directives since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012.

While the authorities frame the conference as a platform to promote positive online culture and strengthen network security, further erosion of freedom of speech and digital privacy is at stake, considering China's track record of online censorship and surveillance infringing on individuals' rights.

The conference, held in Lhasa on Aug. 20, issued certificates to the "Top Ten Tibetan Network Civilization Envoys," celebrating their contributions to China's digital landscape. The presence of Niu Yibing, deputy director of the Central Cyberspace Administration of China, highlights the event's significance within China's broader digital strategy.

While officials underscore the importance of network civilization in forging unity among diverse ethnic groups and building a modern Tibet, potential manipulation of digital narratives to align with government agendas is a serious concern.

4. Top-level Chinese leader stresses stability maintenance in Tibet

Chen Wenqing, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and secretary of the Political and Legal Committee of the Central Committee, [visited Gansu](#) province from the Aug. 22-24. During his visit, he emphasized the need to adhere to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and thoroughly implement Xi Jinping's Thought on the Rule of Law and the Overall National Security Concept.

In Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Chen Wenqing investigated the efforts to maintain stability in Tibet and participated in conferences on stability maintenance related to Tibet, which addressed stability maintenance in several provinces and regions.

Chen underscored the need for a comprehensive implementation of the party's strategy for governing Tibet in the new era. He called for a forward-looking approach in work deployment, a concentrated focus on key tasks, diligent execution of work responsibilities, proactive risk prevention and control measures, and a firm commitment to sustaining long-term peace and stability in Tibet and the neighboring provinces.

RELIGION

5. Dechen prefecture enforces cultural integration measures in Tibetan Buddhist temples

The Chinese authorities in Dechen (Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan [enforces measures](#) to blend Tibetan Buddhism with Chinese culture and societal values driven by principles outlined in Xi Jinping's religious work vision.

One notable aspect of this initiative involves the incorporation of Chinese national symbols, such as the flag and anthem, within religious spaces. While presented as an effort to foster patriotism among religious followers, the initiative is aimed at assimilating Tibetan Buddhists into the mainstream Chinese identity, diluting their unique cultural heritage.

Additionally, the promotion of legal awareness within religious circles, although ostensibly aimed at educating monks and nuns about laws and regulations, is concerning with respect to state intrusion into religious affairs leading to increased government control over religious practices, limiting the autonomy of religious institutions and practitioners.

The introduction of socialist core values into religious teachings also impacts the authenticity of Tibetan Buddhism and compromises the integrity of the spiritual teachings and the unique character of the faith.

In the pursuit of “national unity and progress,” the “educational activities” in Tibetan monasteries designed to foster Mandarin language skills and historical understanding are genuinely aimed at ideological indoctrination.

The initiative under the pretext of promoting unity risk suppressing the diversity and uniqueness of Tibetan Buddhist communities.

6. Chilchung Kagyur Nunnery Management Committee tears down prayer flags for environmental sanitation

In the name of enhancing the natural beauty of the Charula Mountain area, the [Chilchung Kagyur Nunnery Management Committee](#) recently organized the August Theme Party Day and Party Member Volunteer Service Activities.

On Aug. 20, the Party Branch of the Chilchung Kagyur Nunnery Management Committee, along with the Party Branches of the Township Organs and the Police Station, conducted volunteer service activities involving party members. This initiative focused on cleaning up the prayer flags in the vicinity of Charula Mountain.

While the stated intention behind this activity is to improve environmental sanitation, concerns arise regarding the potential impact on Tibetan cultural practices. Prayer flags have significant cultural and spiritual importance for the Tibetan community. The removal of old prayer flags raises questions about the preservation of cultural heritage and religious expression.

While the initiative is framed as contributing to the "construction of beautiful Gonggar," the management committee plans to further engage monks, nuns and local residents in promoting environmental cleanliness and advocating healthy living habits. However, the challenge lies in fostering dialogue and cooperation that respects both ecological well-being and cultural significance.

While China’s much-touted Belt and Road Initiative has fared poorly globally, China continues to focus on Nepal as its opening to South Asia with the establishment of a think tank to make deeper inroads in Nepal.

SECURITY

7. Security set up in Lhasa’s old town Barkhor pilgrimage circuit

A [state media](#) outlet promoting "Safe Lhasa" has reported that the Barkhor Police Station operates a total of 26 "convenience" police stations, along with 10 security checkpoints positioned around the sacred Jokhang temple, and police officers stationed at 23 intersections surrounding the temple. Barkhor Street, also known as the "heart of Lhasa," located within the old town of Lhasa, is the renowned pilgrimage circuit in the city. Paradoxically, the same report indicates that the jurisdiction of the Barkhor Police Station covers an

area with a permanent population of around 20,000 residents, encompassing seven neighborhood committees that correspond to seven community police units, each comprising six or seven police officers assigned for patrolling.

We welcome your feedback! Send any thoughts about ICT's Tibet Roundup and ideas for future changes to research@savetibet.org.



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