



ICT'S TIBET ROUNDUP — ISSUE 3

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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. Large protests in Derge to protect cultural heritage from dam construction

Large protests erupted in eastern Tibet's Derge (Chinese: Dege) county, Sichuan, beginning on Feb. 14, sparked by recent relocation orders issued by government officials for the construction of the Kamtog (Gangtuo) dam. The orders, aimed at facilitating dam construction, have raised concerns as they could potentially submerge six monasteries and two villages once the dam is completed in the future.

The affected monasteries, which face the risk of submersion, hold centuries-old history dating to the 8th century, with Tibetan religious murals dating back around seven centuries.

In the aftermath of the protests, scores of local Tibetans were reported to be detained and beaten, and communication channels were shut off. The International Campaign for Tibet expects many of the Tibetan detainees to face long imprisonment terms in the coming months through the Chinese court system.

ICT is closely monitoring the situation in Derge, expressing concern over the detention of protesters and the potential threat to cultural heritage posed by the dam construction.

2. Tibet party secretary signals party-building work for the year

In a [recent meeting](#) held in Lhasa on Feb. 29, Wang Junzheng, the CCP secretary of the “Tibet Autonomous Region” instructed the organizational work of the region to align with the dictum of “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.”

Wang highlighted the role of organizational departments in implementing the directives from the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and various national conferences related to organizational work. He stressed the need to focus on further advancing party building for a “modern socialist Tibet.”

With 2024 marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Wang emphasized the importance of this year in implementing the goals set forth by the 10th Party Congress of the “Tibet Autonomous Region” and achieving the objectives of the “14th Five-Year Plan.”

Key points emphasized by Wang Junzheng included selecting and training cadres based on loyalty, strengthening grassroots party organizations and implementing various measures for Tibet’s “long-term stability” and “development.” Parsing the discourse, the objectives seem to be to build the grassroots party organizations for entrenching assimilation of the Tibetans under the party political lingo of “forg[ing] a sense of community of the Chinese nation”; to guard the border territories; and to clamp down on Tibetan freedom activists.

3. United Front work in Tibet to focus on efficiency

In a recent gathering held by the United Front Work Department of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee, Karma Tseten, who is a member of the Standing Committee of the Region’s Party Committee and minister of the United Front Work Department, as well as deputy secretary and vice chairman of the Party Leadership Group of the District Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, delivered a keynote speech emphasizing key priorities for the department’s operations.

According to a report by the state media outlet [Tibet Daily](#) on Feb. 11, the 2023 Annual Summary and Commendation Conference served as a platform to review the accomplishments of the past year and set forth objectives for 2024.

During the meeting, Karma Tseten underscored the importance of aligning with the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Party, the Second Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee and the plenary sessions of the 10th Party Committee of the Autonomous Region. He emphasized the necessity of deepening the theme of education of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with

Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and strengthening ideological and political construction within the department.

In his address, Karma highlighted the achievements of the United Front Work Department in 2023, including enhanced team building, improved work style focusing on implementation and the successful execution of various tasks contributing to the overall "Implementation Year" objectives.

Looking ahead to 2024, Karma designated it as the "efficiency improvement year" for the United Front system. He stressed the importance of focusing on the "four major events" and the "four creations" while maintaining the main line of building a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation.

Additionally, Karma emphasized the importance of cadre team construction.

In summary, Karma's address outlined the department's work to advance United Front work in alignment with the party's directives, fostering a sense of community and driving "high-quality development" in 2024.

4. Lhasa tightens security measures ahead of sensitive events

A [video meeting](#) held by the Lhasa City Stability Maintenance Headquarters on Feb. 26 is concerning for the preemptive security measures that might have been placed in view of two upcoming important events in March: Tibetan National Uprising Day on March 10 and China's annual "Two Sessions" in Beijing, which began March 4. The meeting, aimed at ensuring "stability" during the upcoming national political gatherings, appears to focus on suppressing dissent and tightening control rather than addressing genuine security concerns. County leaders, temple management committees and various stability maintenance units were instructed to attend the security meeting.

Some points of concern emerge after parsing the political jargon in the discourse:

- **Emphasis on political vigilance:** The meeting's focus on "enhancing political position" and aligning thoughts with party directives suggests that individuals' freedom of expression and dissent are being restricted.
- **Comprehensive disease prevention and control:** The emphasis on "national security concept" and "emergency drills" in the discourse over disease control raises questions about the potential misuse of these measures to monitor and control the population.
- **Focus on "hidden dangers" and risk identification:** This could lead to increased surveillance and potential targeting of individuals or groups deemed "risky" by the authorities.

- Emphasis on county-level responsibility and leadership accountability: This could result in increased pressure on local officials to crack down on dissent and enforce control measures, potentially leading to human rights abuses.

Overall, the meeting raises concerns over:

- The use of security measures as a tool for political control.
- The potential for increased surveillance and suppression of dissent.
- The impact on individual freedoms and human rights in Lhasa.

5. Party-appointed Panchen Lama pledges his commitments to the party

[Shi Taifeng](#), a member of the top decision-making body of the Chinese Communist Party, met with the CCP-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, in Beijing on Feb. 21.

Shi, who heads the United Front Work Department of the CCP Central Committee, acknowledged Gyaltsen Norbu's contributions over the past year and told him to deepen his understanding of President Xi Jinping's political ideology and strengthen his commitment to the party's leadership. Shi also urged Norbu to continue improving his "religious knowledge" and uphold the "Sinicization" of Tibetan Buddhism, which aims to align Tibetan Buddhism with CCP principles and ideology.

In response, the Panchen Lama reaffirmed his commitment and pledged to further his studies, and to enhance his political understanding and "religious knowledge" to be of greater utility to the party.

While the CCP disappeared the Dalai Lama-recognized Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, in 1995, the party-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, has in recent years started to make frequent appearances in Tibetan communities across Tibet. Last year, Gyaltsen Norbu stayed in Tibet for more than six months, visiting both rural and urban areas in the officially designated Tibet Autonomous Region, as well as Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, to boost his influence.

In his Tibetan New Year greetings [message, which was](#) aligned with party talking points, Norbu, besides lavishly praising the CCP, claimed that freedom of religious belief is fully guaranteed and stated that happy villagers hoist the Chinese national flag as a gesture of gratitude to China.

6. United Front work review meeting signals tightening control over religious life and identity

On Feb. 20, Wang Junzheng, party secretary of the “Tibet Autonomous Region,” led a meeting of the United Front Work Leading Group of the Party Committee. The [meeting](#) aimed to convey the instructions of the relevant central government meetings and hear reports on the United Front work in the TAR. Provincial and military leaders of the TAR attended the meeting. The meeting raises concerns about tightening control over Tibetans religious life and identity.

Several aspects of the meeting are concerning:

- Emphasis on Xi Jinping Thought: The meeting stressed adherence to Xi Jinping Thought, a political ideology that prioritizes party control.
- "Sinicization" of Tibetan Buddhism: The promotion of "Sinicization" of Tibetan Buddhism signals the government's continued interference in religious practices to ensure religious beliefs aligning with the CCP's ideology.
- Focus on stability: The emphasis on maintaining "overall social stability" can be seen as a justification for suppressing peaceful expressions of Tibetan identity or dissent.
- The meeting also called for strengthening the "patriotic united front," a program that aims to integrate non-party intellectuals and the Tibetan people with the Communist Party.

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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