



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT'S TIBET ROUNDUP

SEPTEMBER 1-31, 2026

ICT's Tibet Roundup is a 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 presentation of information in the Roundup should not be construed as amplifying Chinese political rhetoric but as a catalog of information from Chinese state media discourse for deeper research to uncover the truth. The Roundup is organized into categories, including law, politics, culture, economics, climate and commentary. The focus is on presenting news and reports with limited analysis and editorializing.

POLITICS

1. Tibetans Remain a Minority in Key Leadership Appointments Across Chamdo, Shigatse and Lhoka

Recent leadership appointments across three prefectural-level cities in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) show that Tibetans remain a clear minority in key Party and government positions.

In [Chamdo \(Changdu\)](#), the first meeting of the Standing Committee of the Third People's Congress announced 53 appointments. These comprised three Deputy Secretaries-General, six positions across the Legal Work Committee, Budget Working Committee and Working Committee, 11 members of the Qualification Examination Committee, and 33 directors of municipal government bureaus and departments. Only 14 of the 53 appointees were Tibetans.

In [Shigatse \(Rikaze\)](#), the first plenary session of the Third Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCP) produced approximately 22–23 appointments to core leadership roles. These included 12 members of the Municipal Party Committee Standing Committee (with Wang Fanghong as Secretary and two Deputy Secretaries) and 11 positions on the Discipline Inspection Commission. A subsequent communiqué listing 27 key leaders of the city's third term identified just 10 as Tibetans.

In [Lhoka \(Shannan\)](#), the Third Committee of the CCP appointed 12 individuals to its leadership positions, of whom only three were explicitly identified as Tibetans.

Across all three prefectural-level cities, Tibetan appointees form a consistent minority in the highest ranks of both party and government structures. Additionally, the newly appointed [Mayor of Lhasa](#), Li Xiuwu (53), native of Zigui county, Hubei province, is also a Han cadre who was dispatched to Lhoka, TAR, in 2019. Although not formally announced, Zhang Li, native of Nanyang, Henan province, has also assumed the role of [party secretary of Chamdo \(Changdu\)](#) prefectural-level city.

2. First Regional Measures Under China's Ethnic Unity Law Adopted

On September 23, 2026, the Standing Committee of the 12th People's Congress of the TAR adopted and immediately [promulgated](#) a formal decision on comprehensively implementing China's so-called Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress.

Passed by China's National People's Congress on March 12 and effective from July 1, 2026, the so-called ethnic unity law establishes a China wide legal framework for forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, promoting assimilation, and advancing common prosperity under Communist Party leadership. The TAR decision, announced the same day it was approved at the committee's 25th meeting, is the first local implementing measure issued by any of China's five officially designated provincial-level autonomous regions. It translates the national law's general provisions into Tibet-specific requirements, emphasizing political responsibility, anti-separatism efforts, religious affairs management according to Chinese law, ecological protection of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, border consolidation, and the creation of a national model zone for ethnic unity and progress.

Officials are directed to embed the law's principles into local regulations, education, media, grassroots rules, and monastery management, while strengthening coordination among Party, government, United Front, and ethnic affairs departments. The move positions the TAR as the initial "minority" region to operationalize the legislation at the provincial level. Other autonomous regions and areas with significant minority populations are widely expected to introduce similar implementing measures in the coming months as part of a China-wide rollout.

3. New Tibet Party Secretary Meets Party-appointed Panchen Lama

On September 26, 2026, the newly appointed TAR Party Secretary Hu Changsheng conducted an inspection of religious sites in Shigatse, visiting Sakya and Tashilhunpo monasteries before meeting the party-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu. While Chinese [state media reports](#) framed the visit as routine guidance on "temple management" and "Sinicization of religion", it underscored the CCP's continuing effort to subordinate Tibetan Buddhism to political control.

Hu demanded intensified "national consciousness, civic consciousness and rule-of-law education" inside monasteries, expanded oversight by government-run monastery management committees, and the systematic rewriting of Buddhist doctrine to align with socialist values and "Chinese national community consciousness."

Hu praised the party-appointed Panchen Lama's "positive role" while instructing him to rally monks and Tibetans believers behind the party, combat "separatism," and demonstrate loyalty to Xi Jinping. The Panchen Lama in response pledged full political loyalty.

RELIGION

4. Chinese Buddhist Front Organization Approves Five-Year Work Plan

On September 19, the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) [convened](#) its Tibetan Buddhism Working Committee in Lhasa to approve a 2026–2030 Five-Year Work Plan of the committee.

Officially framed as promoting harmony and the "healthy inheritance of Tibetan Buddhism," the meeting aimed in reality to tighten political control over Tibetan Buddhism by subordinating every element of it to CCP ideology.

The participants were instructed to elevate "political awareness," implement Xi Jinping Thought, and ensure Party decisions penetrate "all aspects" of religious work. The core mandate, "Sinicization", requires Tibetan doctrines, rituals, management systems, and behavioral norms to conform to socialist values and "Chinese characteristics."

The meeting was attended by CCP-appointed Panchen Gyaltzen Norbu, Vice President of the BAC and President of its Tibet Branch, and Master Changzang, Vice President of the BAC, both of whom also delivered speeches. The meeting was chaired by Long Xing, Secretary of the BAC and attended by United Front officials.

By treating Tibetan Buddhism as a governance tool for national unity and border stability, this meeting exemplifies China's long-standing policy of bringing Tibetan Buddhism under tighter state and party supervision. The BAC functions as a bridge for United Front work by providing a platform for state-recognized religious figures while ensuring that religious activity remains subordinate to political goals.

5. United Front Inspection Reinforces Political Control Over Lhasa Monasteries

In mid-September 2026, Tsering Thar, Standing Committee member of the TAR Party Committee and head of its United Front Work Department, inspected Reting, Taklung, and Yerpa monasteries in Lhasa, according to the [United Front Work report](#) on September 14. The inspection focused on “managing religious affairs according to the law,” greeting monastery management committees, and holding discussion sessions.

Thar's instructions centered on political loyalty by stressing deep study of Xi Jinping's expositions on religious work, adherence to the “correct political direction,” and full implementation of party policies and rigorous enforcement of the so-called “ethnic unity and progress” law. Key directives included fostering a strong sense of the Chinese national community, deepening the “Three Consciousnesses” education, advancing the Sinicization of religion, and guiding Tibetan Buddhism to adapt to socialist society. The inspection illustrates the United Front's systematic control over Tibetan Buddhist institutions through subordination of monastery management to state regulations and political campaigns, while cultural heritage is framed primarily as a tool for patriotism and national unity of China.

6. Chinese Analysis of Succession Struggles in Tibetan Buddhism and the Challenge of Chinese State

A September 2026 [analytical article](#) published by the Shenzhen-based China Southward Development Research Institute under the title “Observation on Religious Inheritance and Social Governance in Tibetan-Related Areas” offers a detailed assessment of the evolving challenges surrounding the reincarnation of high-ranking Tibetan Buddhist figures, particularly the Dalai Lama lineage.

The authors reject two common extremes: the assumption that the issue will fade once the current Dalai Lama departs, and the prediction of immediate large-scale unrest in Tibetan areas. Instead, they argue that the problem is undergoing structural transformation. According to the research, influence previously concentrated in a single charismatic figure is dispersing across multiple domains like reincarnation procedures, monastic identity, exile institutions, international politics, social media, youth identity, and cross-border networks.

Central to the analysis is the emergence of two competing institutional narratives. On one side stands China's 2007 *Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas*, which requires state approval and, for major figures, the Golden Urn lottery. On the other side is an exile-registered religious trust that the Dalai Lama has publicly designated to oversee his succession. The article suggests that dual recognition could produce a prolonged contest over religious authority rather than a single decisive crisis.

The research identifies several additional shifts. Exile activities are moving from a personality-centered model toward a more institutionalized network of religious, political,

and advocacy organizations. South Asia, especially India, is expected to grow in strategic importance. Digital platforms are likely to transmit contested narratives faster than traditional organizational channels. Impacts will vary significantly across the five Tibetan regions of China—Tibet Autonomous Region, Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan—due to differences in geography, monastic density, and cross-border links, the report emphasized.

Notably, the report cautions against “over-securitization.” It stresses that ordinary religious practice, cultural exchange, and family ties should not automatically be treated as security threats. Effective governance, they argue, requires finer distinctions between legitimate belief, administrative regulation of religious affairs, and actual illegal activity.

While analytically more nuanced than typical official rhetoric, the report remains firmly within Beijing’s policy framework. It treats Chinese legal authority over reincarnation as settled and frames the entire issue primarily as a long-term governance and stability challenge. It largely sidelines Tibetan perspectives that reject state control over religious succession.

7. State-Backed Tibetology Center Promotes Official Narrative of Tibetan Buddhism Abroad

Projecting an image of religious vitality, state benevolence, and international legitimacy for China’s management of Tibetan Buddhism, a Chinese delegation led by the [China Tibetology Research Center](#), state-affiliated research body under the United Front Work Department system, conducted a cultural tour of Sri Lanka and Thailand from September 19 to 23, 2026.

The group, headed by Director-General Zheng Dui and two Tibetan monks from Sera Monastery in Lhasa and Tsedong Chodhe monastery in Shigatse, held a comparative seminar on Theravada and Tibetan Buddhism in Sri Lanka, visited heritage sites, and met Thai temple and university leaders. Chinese participants spoke on manuscript preservation, the official monastic degree system, and textual comparisons, while promoting a series of Sanskrit texts co-published with the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Chinese state media reporting framed the trip as evidence of religious freedom and the “orderly, healthy development” of Tibetan Buddhism in the “new era.” Yet the exercise fits a broader pattern of United Front soft-power outreach. The China Tibetology Research Center operates within the state’s ideological apparatus. No independent Tibetan voices or discussion of political controls—patriotic re-education in monasteries, restrictions on reincarnation recognition, or the prioritization of national unity over religious autonomy—appeared in the proceedings. By showcasing cooperative scholarship while omitting the regulatory environment that shapes religious life in Tibet, the visit sought to counter international criticism and project Beijing as a legitimate steward of Tibetan Buddhist culture. The exchanges, though presented as mutual academic dialogue, primarily served to advance a controlled narrative rather than open inquiry into the actual conditions of Tibetan Buddhism under Chinese rule..

8. Forum on Grassroots Religious Governance in Tibet

Held on September 1-2, in Yushu Prefecture, Qinghai, the [“Fifth New Era Forum on Grassroots Religious Governance in Tibet”](#) reinforced Beijing’s prioritization of Party-led control over Tibetan Buddhism across Tibetan-inhabited areas. Hosted by the China Tibetology Research Center and Qinghai’s United Front and ethnic-religious authorities, the event centered on strengthening CCP leadership, advancing the “Sinicization” of religion, embedding rule-of-law mechanisms in monastery management, and cultivating a politically compliant religious environment.

The forum’s cross-provincial participation—from Qinghai, the TAR, Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan, and national research institutions—underscored treatment of religious governance as a multi-

regional security and ideological issue rather than a purely TAR issue. Official speeches, particularly by Qinghai United Front Minister, framed effective grassroots religious control as essential to long-term stability, ethnic unity, and the “healthy inheritance” of Tibetan Buddhism under socialist conditions.

By combining academic discussion, work exchanges, doctrinal interpretation, and on-site visits (including the Princess Wencheng Memorial Hall and local monasteries), the forum illustrated the integrated United Front approach: political re-education, administrative standardization, and selective cultural symbolism.

Overall, the event reflects continuity in post-2010 policy: tighter Party oversight of monasteries and reincarnate lamas, legal regularization of religious affairs, and the subordination of Tibetan Buddhist practice to national unity narratives.



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | info@savetibet.org

ICT Europe
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
icteurope@savetibet.nl

ICT Deutschland e.V.
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435
Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087
info@savetibet.de

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière | 1060
Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
info@save-tibet.eu