

Choekyi Dawa, the instructor from the County Judicial Bureau reportedly used “plain and easy-to-understand language” to “interpret laws and regulations such as the Constitution, the Criminal Law, the Public Security Administration Penalty Law, the Regulations on Religious Affairs, and the Party’s religious policies and policies.” The report said such a curriculum was aimed at “instilling patriotism, ethnic unity, legal consciousness so that the monks and nuns would resolutely refrain from believing and spreading rumours on mobile phones and the internet.”

After the workshop, the monks and nuns were taken to the memorial hall of the former People’s Liberation Army Commander-in-Chief Zhu De and the fifth Getak Trulku, who was not only a reincarnated lama but also one of the Tibetan Communists in 1930s. The monks and nuns had to go through the display in the memorial hall that featured old photos and articles, and exhibition boards, that narrated the encounters between the PLA army general and the Tibetan Buddhist lama.

The exposure to the Chinese government’s narrative in the memorial hall was expected to inculcate the so-called patriotism of the previous Getak Truklu in the minds of the monks and nuns. As the report claimed that the monks and nuns had expressed their wish to “carry forward the fine tradition of Tibetan Buddhism for patriotism, respect for harmony, peace, and actively promote the work of governing the monasteries according to law in Ganzi County with practical actions.”



Sinicisation of Tibetan Buddhism emphasized at First Symposium on Buddhist Thought Construction

In yet another instance of Chinese authorities promoting assimilationist cultural agenda, delegates at the third meeting of the 8th Standing Committee of the Kardze Buddhist Association and the ‘First Symposium on Buddhist Thought Construction’ called on the Buddhist practitioners and personnel to insert “the roots of Buddhist culture into the fertile soil of Chinese culture” in order to “realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.

The symposium, held on 22 October in Dege County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, was attended by 120 people including Sangye Tashi, deputy secretary of the Chinese Buddhist Association and Lobsang Jampa, vice chairman of the Sichuan Buddhist Association, reported the China Tibet Network on 22 October.



While Sangye Tashi stressed on the responsibility of Buddhist circles to “contribute to the prosperity and development of contemporary Chinese culture and mutual exchange of civilizations”, Lobsang Jampa expressed hope that “all members of the Buddhist Association would carry forward the glorious tradition of patriotism, love of the country, and the protection of the country and the people, and make new contributions to the building of a beautiful and harmonious well-off society.”

Chinese national flags blanket Tibetan landscape in Lihang



On 28 October, local Chinese cadres in Lihang (Ch: Litang) County, Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture,

installed a 60,000 square meter Chinese flag on the Yonru grassland, to “express the love of the Tibetan people for the [Chinese] motherland,” reported the Sichuan Daily on 30 October.



Local Tibetan nomads were also required to fly the Chinese national flag on their tents and homes. Local state media ensured that the red-starred flags flying on the length and breadth of the Tibetan landscape received maximum coverage.



The flag hoisting campaign gathered steam long before the 1 October founding anniversary of the People’s Republic of China in Lihang County. On 7 September, participants and onlookers were seen holding the Chinese flag and singing the propaganda song ‘My Motherland and I’ during the launch of a local marathon event at King Gesar Square in Litang County town.



Alleviating poverty in communities impoverished by large hydropower dams

As China's much touted 13th Five-Year Plan (2016 – 2020) nears expiration, there has been a marked rise in the number of reports in the state media about the alleged successes of the government's poverty alleviation programs in Tibetan areas. From building concrete housing for poor families to helping them find livelihood sources in their relocated communities, the government propaganda machinery is busy churning out success stories some of which raise valid questions not only about their authenticity but also about the government's role in producing poverty in the first place.

On the face of it, this report in Chinese state media appears to lend a philanthropic face to one of China's largest hydropower corporations, the Huanghe Hydropower Development Co., Ltd. (also referred to as "HHDC"), that was founded in 1999 and is a giant energy conglomerate with its headquarters located at Xining City, Qinghai Province.

The China News Network on 21 October reported that the 'HHDC' through its Lijiaxia (Tibetan: Ngogyai) hydropower plant has been helping some local Tibetan residents to pay school fees for their children and get jobs at the plant. This happened in May this year when Liu Jiafu, the first secretary for poverty alleviation of Kaphug (Ch: Aobu) Village in Chentsa (Ch: Jianza) County in Malho (Ch: Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture prepared a list of 12 students from poor families in the village who would get scholarships from the HHDC.

Liu had been dispatched in 2015 from the HHDC to carry out poverty alleviation programs as well as to revive and strengthen village Party building in the village.

The report said that seven residents from six households in Kaphug Village have been employed at the Lijiaxia hydropower plant as cleaners and gardeners, security guards and also to assist in mechanical and electrical maintenance.

The Party officials who also oversaw the overall running of the hydropower plant were also responsible for advising the village authorities.

The report quoted He Zhenzhong, Secretary of the Party Committee and General Manager of Lijiaxia power plant as saying that in recent years, they had “actively guided the development of the industry and built the confidence of villagers to become rich” by “pairing up 33 Party officials with 53 households to promote regular exchanges and interactions in improving livelihood”.



In the past four years, Liu Jiafu has made extensive visits to the length and breadth of Kaphug Village to “have a clear grasp the village situation” as 85 percent of the villagers who are Tibetan do not speak Chinese. At the time, the old village Party cell was in disuse and the new Party cell had not been put in operation, the report quoted him as saying.

In August 2019, the ‘HHDC’ invested 500,000 yuan to support Party construction, promote poverty alleviation, and build the Kaphug Village Cultural Square.

The Lijiaxia hydropower plant, located on the borders of Chentsa County and Bayan Khar (Ch: Hualong) Hui Autonomous County in Qinghai Province, which has an installed capacity of 2000 MW, was put into operation in 1998. The building of the plant submerged at least 430 hectares of land and displaced at least 4,012 people.

The construction of the plant involved 4.5 million cubic metres of rock and earth excavation; 3.25 million cubic metres of concrete placement; 4.8 million cubic metres of earthworks; 144,000 metres of consolidation grouting; 47,000 metres of drilling for curtain grouting; and 10,000 tons of metal works. Many of the 20,000 Chinese workers who worked at the dam site settled permanently in the area.

Lijiaxia is one of the six large hydropower stations owned by ‘HHDC’ in Qinghai. The others are Yangqu, Longyangxia, Laxiwa, Gongboxia and Jishixia hydropower stations, each with an installed capacity of more than 1000 MW. The Machu (‘Yellow River’) has the most abundant water resources in Qinghai with its theoretical hydropower potential estimated to be around 21,873.8 MW, according to a 2017 report published by the HHDC. The report noted that there were 27 power stations planned with a total capacity of 20,829.5 MW and 12 of them had been completed with a total capacity of 10,580 MW in Qinghai. HHDC is affiliated to State Power Investment Corporation, one of China’s five largest state-owned electricity producers.

Overseas Chinese media representatives taken on a guided tour in Ngaba

On 8 October, some 69 representatives of 67 overseas Chinese media from 28 countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia visited Zungchu (Ch: Songpan) County in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, reported the China News Network on 9 October.

The visit was part of the Chinese government-organised tour to promote the "Overseas Chinese Media Perception of China (Sichuan Tibetan Region)" event, which was sponsored by the Sichuan Provincial Foreign Affairs Office and the Sichuan Provincial Government Publicity Department.

The event began in Chengdu on 7 October and lasted for five days during which the group was also expected to visit Dzitsa Degu (Ch: Jiuzhaigou) Scenic Spot and Tianfu New District in Chengdu. The overseas Chinese media representatives visited Linpo Village where Yang Jing, president of the American News Agency, on learning about the development of local wild mushroom industry in the village was quoted as saying that upon her return to the United States, she would "cover all aspects of what [she had] seen and heard here, so that more Americans can understand the development of the Tibetan area in Sichuan and attract them to come and see for themselves."

The report also quoted Zhang Ye, executive director of Myanmar Golden Phoenix Chinese News Agency, as saying that the sale of Tibetan thangka painting should be expanded in the future before adding that he would pass the relevant information about Thangka art to Myanmar so that more people know."



Chinese authorities have restricted independent foreign journalists from visiting Tibetan areas in recent years. The media blackout in Tibet has been criticised by international observers and media persons particularly the Foreign Correspondents Club in China. The carefully choreographed visit by a group of overseas Chinese language media representatives to parts of Ngaba is designed to bolster the official narrative that China has managed to bring back stability in a region where the largest number of self-immolation protests against Chinese government was witnessed in recent history.

Thousands relocated in prefabricated housing in Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

As part of its poverty alleviation program, Chinese authorities have so far relocated and resettled 36,984 people from 7,853 farming and nomadic households in eight counties and cities in Kalho (Ch: Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province, reported the China News Network on 21 October.

In Machu (Ch: Maqu) County, the only purely nomadic county in Kanlho Prefecture, the authorities resettled and relocated local nomads in 221 sets of prefabricated housing in September this year. Residents in Ngulra Township in Machu had been resettled in concrete buildings in October 2018.

Those in Nyima Town had also been relocated to government built housing but the report did not mention that relocation in Nyima was necessitated by the plan to expand the town and had little to do with the government undertaking a program to improve the livelihood of the local residents. Instead the report quoted a local Tibetan as saying that the relocation would make it more convenient for their children to attend school and to avail more opportunities in the city.

Relocation is a fraught issue due to the impossibility of local Tibetans to have any say in the poverty alleviation projects and the authoritarian nature of the relocation process. Human rights groups have long documented the impoverishment and displacement that entail much of the relocation and resettlement programs in Tibetan areas. Despite such evidence, the Chinese authorities have continued to target thousands of nomads and farmers for relocation and resettlement as part of its poverty alleviation programs.



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