



HUMAN RIGHTS *update*  
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# HUMAN RIGHTS

*update*

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## 11 years on! The 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, still remain disappeared

25 April 2006 marks the eleventh successive years of the disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who suddenly disappeared on 17 May 1995 after the Dalai Lama recognized him as the child reincarnation of the tenth Panchen Lama, Erdeni Choekyi Gyaltzen. Since then there has been no information about his whereabouts. It is largely believed that he is currently kept in Chinese custody at an undisclosed location along with his parents.

On 13 April 2006, Asma Jehangir, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, was informed by the Chinese Government that Gedun Choekyi Nyima is at present studying in a "secondary school" and that he "is leading a normal, happy life and receiving a good cultural education." However,

there was no elaboration from the Chinese Government side about what they meant by the statement "receiving a good cultural education". So far private bodies and government officials were not permitted to meet Gedun Choekyi Nyima. But concerns of his well being still remain.

Incidentally the Chinese Government also told the UN expert Ms. Jahangir that Gedun Choekyi Nyima is not the Panchen Lama but an ordinary Tibetan boy. On the same day the Chinese Government organized the first-ever religious forum since the founding of People's Republic of China (PRC). The Chinese appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu, made a surprise appearance as a key speaker during the religious forum in an attempt by the Chinese government to garner support and

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## Displacements caused by "western development program" projects

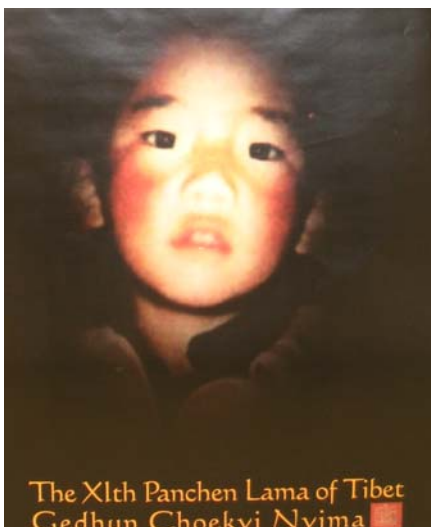
The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) met with newly arrived Tibetans who have arrived into exile because of "ill-fate" caused by the Beijing sponsored development projects in Tibet under the much publicized "western development program".

### Nomads being forced to live in townships in Golok

Nomadic camps in Golok have been directed to leave for a "better living" as part of the authorities' so-

called "modernization drive". The authorities told the nomads that they were living a backward lifestyle and advised them to sell of their livestock and move into the towns. At the moment quite a number of nomadic families have been incorporated into the towns. According to a Tibetan (name withheld) who arrived in exile on 23 March 2006, "I am from Tawu County, Golog Tibet Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai. Since 2000, the authorities in our area have been

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The 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet  
Gedun Choekyi Nyima

Gedun Choekyi Nyima ,  
the eleventh Panchen Lama of Tibet

establish legitimacy. However, the fact remains that in the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people, and according to the Tibetan Buddhism tradition, the Dalai Lama recognized Gendun Choekyi Nyima is accepted as the 11th Panchen Lama.

On 14 May 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized the then six-years old Gendun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnation of the tenth Panchen Lama. The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) declared the announcement invalid and illegal. Three days later, Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his parents disappeared and have never been seen again. China has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on 29 August 1990 and ratified it on 2 March 1992. China's detention of boy Panchen Lama is a clear violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as domestic and international Laws.

In October 2000 a British delegation was told by the Chinese authorities that the boy was well and attending school. The delegation was also told that his parents did not want international figures and the media intruding into his life. Two photographs claimed to be of the Panchen Lama were shown to the British delegation showing a boy of approximately the same age. However it was impossible to determine the boy's identity or location, and the British officials were not given the photos to ascertain.

In August 2001, a Polish Parliamentary delegation visiting Lhasa was told in response to repeated questions that Gendun Choekyi Nyima was healthy; the delegation was promised photos of the boy within six weeks but never received them. Later, the Polish Government received a letter from the Chinese embassy in Warsaw stating that Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his parents did not want their peaceful life disturbed by strangers,

and that the Chinese government "respects freedom of choice for its citizens and hopes that the Polish people would understand that too."

In March 2002, a government delegation from the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) met with a European Parliament delegation and the authorities once again reiterated that Gendun Choekyi Nyima did not wish to be disturbed. The "TAR" delegation refused to answer questions about photographs promised to the Polish delegation. In the light of a refusal to provide photographs that positively identify Gendun Choekyi Nyima, or to allow independent access to the boy and his family, the Tibetan people can only fear the worst.

The continued disappearance of the Panchen Lama completely contradicts China's claim to respect religious freedom in Tibet. It is a matter of great concern that such prominent religious figure is denied and bereft of any traditional religious studies and training even if he is alive.

For the past ten years since his abduction along with his parents, no information on their whereabouts and well being were known to international bodies and human rights watchdogs. Chadrel Rinpoche, a former abbot of Tashi Lhunpo monastery seat of Panchen Lama, and Chairman of the Search Committee for the reincarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama and his assistant Champa Chungla disappeared from Chengdu Airport in Sichuan Province on 14 May 1995. On 21 April 1997, the Shigatse Intermediate People's court sentenced Chadrel Rinpoche to six years of imprisonment. He was charged with "plotting to split the country" and "leaking state secrets". He was accused of working for and assisting the Dalai Lama in the search for the 11th Panchen Lama. Although his sentence ended on 13 May 2001 following the completion of a six-year prison term, it is believed that he is now kept under house arrest. There is no additional information on his exact whereabouts in Shigatse, or on his state of health.

Jampa Chungla, 56-year-old former assistant of Chadrel Rinpoche, was arrested in 1995 for his participation in the search committee of the 11th Panchen Lama. He was sentenced to a four-year prison term and to a two-year deprivation of political rights. He continues to be held in custody even after the completion of his original four-year prison term.

In June 2005, at Bangkok the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of the Commission on Human Rights forwarded the issue of Panchen Lama to the Chinese authority stating that it "would appreciate being provided by the Government of China with documents supporting its statement that he and his parents had appealed to the Government for protection and at present are "leading normal lives and enjoying perfect health." Unfortunately no tangible and fruitful response came from the Chinese officials.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is deeply concerned at the Chinese government's continued detention of Gendun Choekyi Nyima who turns 17 years old on 25 April 2006. In the wake of subsequent failures of past independent bodies to meet him, TCHRD urges the United Nations and its various thematic bodies to continue its pressure on the Chinese Government to allow UN Committee on Rights of the Child to meet Gendun Choekyi Nyima to verify his health and living conditions. ♦

## Biography of former political prisoner Lhakpa Tsering

Lhakpa Tsering was born in 1970 in Toelung Dechen County, Lhasa Municipality, "Tibet Autonomous Region" ("TAR"). At seven years of age his parents admitted him to the local public elementary school and later to the government school, he thereafter passed onto the middle school in 1986. On 7 March 1989 a pro-independence protest broke out in Lhasa, Lhakpa and some of his schoolmates actively participated in it. The People's Armed Police (PAP) brutally crushed the protest and arrested some of the protesters including Lhakpa and his schoolmates.

At the site of the protest, the PAP officers hit the arrestees with butt of their service gun and also by bricks all over their body. They were then led away to the local detention center for interrogations. The arrestees were met with severe beatings during the interrogations. Later two of the schoolmates were released whereas Lhakpa and the others were transferred to the "TAR" Public Security Bureau (PSB) Detention Centre. After a week in detention, they were again transferred to Outridu Prison (now known as Lhasa Prison). The conditions were extremely difficult as the prisoners were not fed properly and no mattress, blankets were provided to sleep on during the night. The prisoners protested the dismal facilities by throwing out their bowls out of the cell and shouted, "If the Communist Party cannot feed us, we should be released from here". For this act, the prisoners were given severe beatings by the prison guards and transferred Lhakpa to Sangyip Prison.

While in Sangyip, he was again beaten

and asked for reasons to join the protest. Lhakpa pointed that as a student, he wanted promotion and respect for Tibetan as a language. However, the interrogators invalidated his reasoning and alleged that he held "separatist" opinions and that there was someone else prompting him in the back. Though his schoolmates were released after a month's detention, Lhakpa was sentenced to two years "re-education through labour" and was retained in Sangyip.

Lhakpa was very dear to all the prison inmates, which he continues to maintain in exile, for his unwavering nationalism and outspoken attitude against the Chinese rule in Tibet. Through out his term, he maintained his stand that he has done nothing wrong to be imprisoned and once submitted a petition stating it during a winter re-education class. Being a young educated Tibetan, the aged political prisoners love and confide in him while the prison guards were always on the watch for some minor mistakes by him.

Being educated, Lhakpa was given responsibility in teaching a handbook about law to the prisoners and was promised two months reduction on his term. On the contrary he continued to maintain his stand and repeatedly voiced that he has done no wrong by participating in the protest. The prison guards severely beat him and alleged that the other Tibetan political prisoners were misleading him. He was separated from the political prisoners unit and imprisoned in the criminal prisoners cell. After repeated appeals by the political prisoners, he was brought back into their unit. The prison guards opined that he does not

deserve the two months sentence reduction; nevertheless few of the guards suggested that he has spoken out his inner feelings and there is nothing wrong with it by law. Accordingly, he was released on 7 March 1991.

After release, he and an elderly Tibetan political prisoner, Jampa Phuntsok, continued to carry out political activities by pasting pro-independence posters secretly for a few months. In August 1991, he and Jampa Phuntsok fled Tibet and reached the Tibetan Refugee Reception Centre in Dharamsala on 9 October 1991. A week after arriving in Dharamsala, he got admission at a Tibetan school in Bir, an area nearby Dharamsala. After a year, he had to leave the school to treat a chronic ailment on his leg. After recovering from the ailment, he received a short-term training in computer applications in 1994. Upon completion of the training, Lhakpa Tsering was inducted into the services of the Tibetan-Government-in-Exile (TGIE) based in Dharamsala and currently works in the Security Department of the TGIE



## Sinicization, affordability and malpractices drive Tibetan children across the Himalaya

Children below the age of eighteen constitute almost half the population of exodus from Tibet each year. Various reasons ranging from affordability of education to political nature of curriculum drive the parents to send their wards into exile for a better and secure future. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) met with two such teenage girls who recently arrived into exile. Though the girls cited their own reasons to come into exile, the common factor was affordability of education on the Tibetan plateau.

Tenzin Choezom, a 17-year-old girl from Chakri Village, Drachi Township, Drenang County, Lhoka Prefecture, "Tibet Autonomous Region" ("TAR") had studied for few years in Tibet. But due to family financial constraints, she had to drop from school and worked for few years as maid for a family in Lhasa City.

She told TCHRD, "We are farmers and there are ten members in the family yet we have a land holding for four members only as the land distribution was done long before we were born. We lived hand to mouth and there was no saving at all. Out of the children only my elder brother and I got the opportunity to attend school. I attended the village elementary school for six years and though I wanted to continue my studies, my mother developed a serious ailment in her leg and we spent a lot of money for the treatment. My father had to deposit 1200 Yuan in order to admit my mother to the Lhoka People's Hospital. She was treated for a month and half in the hospital and I served by helping her during her treatment in the hospital. By the time she was discharged from the hospital, we had paid an exorbitant amount for the treatment. However, my parents urged my brother to continue his studies and keeping his promises he excelled in studies."

"My brother did very well in his middle school and stood third in the entrance test for a prestigious high school in

Lhoka. We were all happy for him yet our happiness did not last for long. Although my brother secured a seat in the high school, a son of a government official was admitted instead of him. We came to know that the official had bribed the school administrator to take in his son. The whole family got dejected at that turn of event, and yet we could do nothing but to watch a less deserving student take the seat meant for my brother. Brother stayed melancholic for a few months after that incident. Although my brother wanted to continue his studies but since another student had usurped his seat, he took up carpentry in Lhasa. Currently he is in Lhasa learning carpentry skills from a Tibetan carpenter."

"I too went to Lhasa when I became 13 years old and worked in a Tibetan house as a maid till 2004. My duties included cleaning the house, washing clothes, baby sitting and helping in the kitchen."

"Without education, I realized that one cannot live a decent life and in the absence of any education opportunity in Tibet, I fled to exile in the hope of receiving free and good education in a school built by the Tibetan-government-in-exile."

Tenzin Choezom is currently 17 years old and eagerly waits for her school admission.

Tenzin Tsezin, 19, a native of Lhasa arrived in exile in search of education. She told TCHRD, "I studied in the Gyabumgang elementary school and passed onto the Middle School no 2 in Lhasa. Upon finishing ninth grade, I joined High School no 3 in Lhasa and finished twelfth grade in July 2005. After that I couldn't carry on with my studies mainly because of financial constraints and also because there weren't many opportunities for Tibetans even after finishing higher education. When we were in the school, all the

subjects were taught in Chinese except for Tibetan language. They really focus on imparting communist ideologies to raise loyal communist Tibetans. The history taught in school is devoid of Tibetan perspectives and thrust upon the students to learn only the Chinese version of Tibetan history. Since there is not much of an opportunity for speaking and writing in fluent Tibetan, most of the students including me preferred to give more emphasis on Chinese and naturally so because all the subjects are taught in Chinese only."

"The school administrators also discourage the students from observing Tibetan religious days. Once the school principal assembled all the students and announced that we are not supposed to go for prayers during religious days and particularly on the birthday of the Dalai Lama if the administrators happen to see, we were warned with expulsion from the school immediately. Later the school administration distributed handbooks among the students and instructed to memorize the content. The handbook was critical of the Dalai Lama and the "separatist" movement and called for the opposition to it by the students. When the students had memorized the text, the administration handed the students questionnaire to test their knowledge and loyalty. There were also various other means by which the authorities try to brainwash the students. Each morning we had to sing the Chinese national anthem and celebrate with great pomp the Chinese national day on 1 October. The Tibetan children in Tibet are becoming Chinese with each passing day." ♦

## “Wear fur”: Authorities tell broadcasters

In a stark challenge to the authority of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people's obeisance to him, Qinghai television broadcasters were told to wear apparels made from animal skin. In recent months, in consideration of the Dalai Lama's call to shun the use of clothes made from animal skin, Tibetans in large numbers and from all over Tibet made bon-fires of clothes made from animal skin. Groups of Tibetans enthusiastically threw their expensive apparels made from pelt most noticeably in Ambo Ngaba where the authorities banned further burning of clothes made from pelt and put some key Tibetans under interrogations for their motive in organizing the bon-fire.

In the latest move to exert their authority, on 20 April 2006 the broadcasters in the Qinghai Television were directed to wear clothes made from animal skin reported Radio Free Asia (RFA). Apparently the heads of the Propaganda Department, Che Xizhen, and United Work Front, Rinchen Gyal, personally visited the Qinghai Television headquarters and issued order to the authorities. When some of the broadcasters showed

unavailability of such apparels in their wardrobe, the authorities related the order to be of political significance and a sum of ten thousand Chinese Yuan each was sanctioned to buy the apparel.

Confirming the reports, Qinghai Television chief Bai Jubi told RFA albeit giving aesthetic reasons for the fund, “Yes, it is true that television staff were given money to buy clothing... The main reason is the dress that our staff wears is old and isn't bright and colorful...we are the mouthpiece for the government. That is the reason why they support us with money for the clothing.”

The latest move by the Chinese authorities in Tibet has dismayed many environmentalists who have been tirelessly working for the preservation of the endangered wild life. Upon identification of Tibet as the market for animal pelts, the Dalai Lama threw his support to save the endangered animals. Inspired by the Dalai Lama, the anti-fur campaign received widespread acceptance in Tibet prompting Tibetans to make bon-fire of their prized apparels.

implementing the so-called modernization drive. They tell the nomads that their lifestyle of living with animals is outdated and should instead follow the guidelines formulated by the government in elevating their situation. The nomads were instructed to sell off their livestock and move into the towns. Beginning from 2000, houses were built in the towns to accommodate the nomads and when the constructions were completed, the nomads were told to sell their livestock irrespective of whether they got the right prize and moved into the newly constructed three room houses. Under Tawu County, Nelung and Domchung nomadic camps were ordered to sell off their livestock to the local Chinese muslims settlers. In total about 60 nomadic families, 45 and 16 families in Nelung and Domchung respectively, were moved into the town. Since the nomadic families were joint families with many members in the family, the government allotted houses could not accommodate them all under a roof. When the families lodged their complaint to the authorities, they were told that the government couldn't afford more than what has been already provided. In order to keep the nomads to shut their mouth the authorities provided few kilos rice and barley to them.

“In another instance, in 2004 new houses were constructed in Gepo Township in Tawu County. About 90 nomadic families from Chuwa and Nechen were moved into the new houses. There were about 200 families in the two camps and the authorities plan to absorb the remaining into the township in the near future.”

The Chinese government's so-called “modernization drive” depicts a different picture in reality on the Tibetan plateau. The traditional nomadic families who are integrated

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Selling pelts freely

Photo: AFP/Frederic J. Brown

into the mainstream society and into urban centers face complex situation with no means to earn their livelihood. In absence of modern education or trainings, they are unable to find jobs or engage in businesses, which are already dominated by Chinese settlers. The government's provisions to them cannot last forever and they will be driven into begging since they cannot go back to their traditional lifestyle. In the case of the interviewee, his family owned about 150 livestock and they made a living out of that and sent him to a school. According to him the total schooling expenditure was around 8000 Yuan but after the authorities implementation of the policies in phasing out the nomads, his family also had to sell off their livestock and are currently left with 27 livestock and face enormous difficulty in sustenance. He could not continue his middle school in order to meet the family budget. The nomads in his area have already begun to sell off their livestock as sooner or later they will also be moved into the towns and are anxious about their live in the town.

### **Farmers in Dingri County to be relocated**

In another case in the far-flung western region, farmers also face similar predicament. A huge number of families are to be relocated in a new township under the so called "western development program". A recently arrived Tibetan from Dingri (Ch: Tingri) County told TCHRD, "About two years back, the authorities from the township and county administration have directed that two villages under the Shekar Township, Dingri County, would be relocated to a new area approximately three kilometers from their original location. Although there are about ten villages under the Shekar Township, the two villages that were to be relocated were among the more populated ones. In Chushar Village there are about 40 families and in

Lishin Village there are about 60 families. Both the villages are well formed and there are plenty of farming fields around the villages but in their new location the families cannot do much farming, as the new area is located against a hill. Since last two years, the government has been building houses in the new location, the cost of which the farmers will have to pay half and the remaining half payment will be on loan from the government. The government promised that for each *Mu* (a measure of land equal to 67 square meters) of land the farmers lose, the government will pay 1000 Chinese Yuan as compensation and also compensate for the lose of fixed assets in their homes. Although none of the families are happy with the relocation and compensation plan, yet no one dares to speak against the authorities."

The interviewee continued to tell TCHRD, "Elsewhere the authorities have started to built new houses in Dzongdul area in Dingri County. It is said that some of the houses would be sold to individuals while the remaining would be used for other commercial purposes. In the villages the Tibetans fear that when the train gets fully operational many Chinese settlers would come in and occupy the houses and gradually overtake the whole area from the Tibetans."

### **Destruction of crops due to authorities negligence**

Another refugee, Sonam Topden, 30, from Ngari County told TCHRD, "There is a river (Nugmagyalri) running near the Parab Village, Chusum Township, Ngari County. For quite a long time because of land erosion, the river got blocked and the local villagers brought the matter to the notice of the authorities. Yet there was no action taken to clear the blockage except for few rounds of visit to the site by the officials. In around May 2005, due to excessive water logging, the soil blockage busted and the river flowed down fiercely.

Although there was no major damage to houses in the village, the crops in about 1000 *Mu* of field were all destroyed. The families who were already living from hand to mouth were struck with another shock because of the sudden flood."

### **Displacement due to hydroelectric power plant**

Work for a new hydroelectric power plant called Drikung Power Plant in Meldrogungkar County has been going on since 2004. According to Chinese sources 128 farming families have been issued with directives to relocate with some monetary compensation. The compensation cannot last more than a few years after which the families are bound to be in immense trouble since they do not have any other source of income and cannot take up farming again for a long time.

The government's so called "western development program" to bring in economic prosperity in Tibet has done more harm than good to the Tibetans in rural areas. Displacement, sustenance and no participation from the Tibetans have been some of the core issues surrounding the program. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) urges the Chinese government to stop making worse the lives of the people in the rural areas who are already marginalized. Any development project should be in consultation and participation by the local populace since development thrust upon the people brings about anxiety and hunger in the long term. ♦



# TCHRD ACTIVITIES

*Bulletin*

## Second list for recipients of "Jampa Project" announced

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) in collaboration with the Global Peace Foundation (GPF) based in the United States of America is happy to continue with the second round of "Jampa Project" humanitarian aid to former political prisoners.

On 3 April 2006, the Executive Director of TCHRD, Mr. Urgen Tenzin, briefed the beneficiaries about the aims and objectives underlying the project which began in June 2004

Under the project, the Global Peace Foundation would provide a monthly allowance of USD 20 to the Tibetan ex-prisoners. The project also enables the beneficiaries to seek medical funding in case of serious health crisis. Initially, the project started sponsoring ten former Tibetan political prisoners with the hope to extend the help to as many as possible in the coming years. This aid has been found very useful in ensuring the well being of former political prisoners and survivors of torture in a modest attempt to re-establish their lives in exile. ♦

## South African delegation visits Dharamsala

A South African delegation led by Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Mr. Tony Leon visited Dharamsala for a week beginning from 28 March 2006.

On 2 April 2006, the delegation met with Tibetan NGOs based in Dharamsala at the Surya Hotel in McLeod Ganj. Mr. Urgen Tenzin, Executive Director, and Mr. Tenzin Norgay, UN

## Assistant Director resigns

Ms. Norzin Dolma, Assistant Director, resigned from TCHRD on 7 April 2006. She will pursue further studies in the United States under the Tibetan Full bright Scholarship Program.

Ms. Norzin joined the Centre in January 2000 as an English Researcher at TCHRD. In July 2003 she was appointed as the Assistant Director of the Centre. During her six years tenure, she served the Centre with utmost dedication and sincerity.

The staff and volunteers of TCHRD extend best wishes to all her future endeavors.

As decided by the Executive Committee of the TCHRD Board of Directors, Mr. Jampa Monlam will be the new Assistant Director. Mr. Jampa joined the Centre in 1998 and has earlier served in the capacities of Field Officer and Tibetan Researcher. While in Tibet, he was imprisoned for five years in Drapchi Prison for political dissidence. ♦

## Commemorating the 11th year of the Panchen Lama's disappearance

Mr. Urgen Tenzin, Executive Director, participated in a ceremony organized by the Panchen Erdeni Service Committee, an exile based group committed to the Panchen Lama, on 25 April 2006. The group organized a panel discussion titled "speaking about the Panchen Lama" at the Club House in McLeod Ganj to commemorate birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama.

On the same day, Mr. Tashi Chomphel, Researcher, was invited to talk about "Child Rights" to a group of Tibetan school children at the main temple. National Democratic Party of Tibet, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, Regional Tibetan Women's Association and Gu-Chu-Sum movement of Tibet organized the talk jointly. ♦



Mr. Tashi explaining "Rights of the Child"

Affairs Personnel, briefed the delegation about the human rights situation in Tibet and the functioning of TCHRD as an independent Tibetan NGO focused on the human rights of the Tibetan people. Other Tibetan NGOs present during the meeting were Tibetan Women's Association, Gu-Chu-Sum Movement of Tibet and the Tibetan Youth Congress. ♦