

Drakyung Palzang discovered after holding extensive conversations with the elders in his community that overgrazing is not the only cause of desertification of grasslands in Dzoege.

Quoting an elderly nomad, Drakyung Palzang pointed out the misguided way in which the famous wetlands of his hometown were used almost 40 years ago for grazing herds during summers. Traditionally no one grazed their herds in the wetlands during summer season simply because it was impractical to do so. Since grass grew abundantly during the winter season, it was ideal for grazing. However, suggestions from some experts to allow grazing during summers led to the artificial draining of water from the wetlands. This had harmful effects on the water and biodiversity of the wetlands and eventually caused degradation of the grassland.

Palzang's hometown of Dzoege County, located in Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, has one of China's three largest wetland ecosystems. It provides 30% of water to Machu (Yellow River) and is the world's largest high-altitude marshland.

Palzang further pointed out the poisoning and killing of Adra, a small mammal in the pika family, as another major cause. The extermination of Adra, undertaken by the Chinese government for about 20 to 30 years, wreaked havoc on the biodiversity. There were about 38 animals that feed on Adra. Among them are those that are included in the first and second category of endangered animals identified by the Chinese government. The poisoning of Adra led to the destruction of their habitat and a drop in their population.

The fencing of grassland was another reason. Fences were put up between villages and around individual households. Although fencing was introduced as a means to revive grassland and limit grazing, it had opposite effects. It harmed the local biodiversity and led to the herds grazing in a fixed place for the entirety of the four seasons thus degrading the grassland.

Introducing farming on the grassland was yet another major reason for the degraded pastures. Mining has also contributed to further degradation.

Palzang recounted that to grow grass in the degraded pastures, experts from the Sichuan Provincial Grassland Research Bureau and Dzoege Forestry Administration conducted a workshop for local nomads. The nomads were taught two ways to grow grass: by planting the seeds in the soil or scattering them on the ground. When put into practice, both didn't work. The frequent gales blew away the seeds or the strong plateau sun dried them up.

That was when Palzang learned from local nomad women on using the hoof of the herds to press the seeds further into the soil. Letting the animals on the pastures helped protect the seeds from strong winds and sunshine.

This method of growing grass devised by local nomads is now being used every year by each of local cooperatives formed in Palzang's hometown.

Knowing that introducing foreign seeds could prove harmful to local biodiversity, he and other nomads began collecting native seeds. In particular, his mother has donated seeds that she has been collecting locally for more than eight years.

According to Palzang, the grassland and forestry experts from the government offices and bureaus cannot expect to revive degraded pastures without involving the nomads. The traditional way of rotating pastures according to seasonal change helps in striking a balance between livestock and grazing, thus preventing overgrazing.

He underlines that that it is impossible to imagine the grasslands without the nomads and that it is crucial to view the Tibetan pastoral landscape as “an integral ecosystem wherein the grassland, the herds and the nomads are inseparable”.

“The grassland might be viewed as an opportunity for profit-making by the businessmen or a leisure site by the tourist. But for the nomads, it is their home. When the home is endangered, the nomads will become homeless.”

Kardze County has 17 ‘Civilization Practice Centers’ to promote Party propaganda and traditional Chinese culture

Chinese authorities have established 17 communist propaganda centres to cultivate patriotism and enforce loyalty among local school children in Kardze County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Disguised as after-school activity centres for children, they are in fact “Civilization Practice Centres in the New Era” tasked with promoting communist ideology and traditional Chinese culture.

The *China Tibet Network* reported on one such ‘Rural Youth Palace’ in Kardze County where children from Chengguan No. 2 Primary School gather to avail the various facilities provided at the centre. There are more than 30 associations in the arts, sports, science and technology, and moral education, and more than 50 tutors at this center.

Quoting an unnamed person in charge of the county's Civilization Office, the report said various departments including the finance, education, and sports were jointly involved in building these centers. At present, the county authorities have built 17 ‘rural youth palaces’ targeting more than 3,200 students. Along with activities such as sports and entertainment, skills training, and recitations of classic Chinese texts, these centres also “foster morality through reading”.

The report claimed that these centres provide children “their own paradise” where “they sing and dance, cultivate their hobbies, and live a wonderful, happy and fulfilling life after school.”

The building of the ‘civilization practice centers’ is a project designed to promote ‘Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era’ and make it the major focus of the ‘patriotic education’ campaign.



Chinese authorities vow to eliminate ‘Dalai Clique’ in fight against organised crime

Chinese authorities in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) vowed to “root out elements connected to the separatist activities of the Dalai Clique” as part of its controversial nationwide campaign against underworld forces and organised crime, reported the *Tibet Daily* on 10 November.

Speaking at a meeting held on 8 November to review the progress of the campaign in TAR, Zhu Weiqun, the head of the central government instituted inspection team on the campaign for TAR, called for the continued integration of the

“fight against separatism” with the campaign against organised crime, calling the campaign “an important political responsibility”.

He added that although the campaign had resulted in significant victories, there were still “some outstanding issues related to organised and gang crimes” that remain unresolved. He emphasized “enhancing political positions in TAR” as a major focus for the next step forward in the campaign so that the “thoughts and deeds are in line with the strategy determined by the Party”.

The meeting was also attended by TAR Party secretary Wu Yingjie who spoke on the progress of the campaign against organised crime. Wu highlighted the necessity to “continue strengthening correct political position” and “conduct in-depth investigation, and fundamental rectification” for the comprehensive implementation of the campaign. Qi Zhala, TAR governor and deputy party secretary, moderated the meeting.

This is the second major meeting convened to review the campaign since 6 July this year when a meeting to review the findings of the inspection tour to assess the effectiveness of the campaign in TAR was held. More detail on this meeting can be found in the July 2019 digest that is accessible on TCHRD’s website.

Communist Party propaganda training organised for representatives of young Tibetan Buddhist monks and personnel

The Chinese authorities organised a weeklong training session from 8 to 14 November for 50 representatives of young Tibetan Buddhist monks as well as presidents and vice presidents of prefectural level Chinese Buddhist Associations in Chengdu, Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province.

The training sessions is one of the many that are being organised to enforce loyalty among the Tibetan Buddhist populace and to control the Tibetan clergy which holds enormous influence among the general public.



The training focused on the "Party's ethnic and religious policies, the Fourth Plenary Session of the Party's 19th Central Committee, cultural self-confidence, and the management of Tibetan Buddhism according to law."

After the training in Chengdu, the participants were expected to visit Shanghai and Zhejiang to receive "red education and study and learn about advanced management of monasteries in Mainland China".

At the training session, Liu Ping, the prefectural Party secretary held a meeting with all the participants, where he pointed out that "for Tibetan Buddhism to go better and further, it is necessary to know where it is going" and to "always adhere to the direction of sinicization, carry forward the fine tradition of patriotism, love of religion, and obedience to law, and continue to interact with socialism with Chinese characteristics." Adding that following the party and religious belief is not a contradiction, Liu exhorted the representatives of Tibetan Buddhism to understand that "the prosperity of Tibetan Buddhism is inseparable from the prosperity of the motherland, unity and progress of the nation, and social harmony." He called on the monks to "listen to the party and follow the party, and always love the party and the country."

Li Weiguo, the deputy secretary of the prefecture and minister of the United Front Work Department, also attended the training session.



Sources:

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