

India is biggest counter to China, US adventurism: scholar

India has the 'biggest' moral counter force to the 'militant adventurism' advocated by China and US on the global stage, says Robert Thurman, leading scholar, writer and the first American to be ordained as a monk in Tibetan Buddhism during the 1960s.

'They (Chinese) are still caught up in militant adventurism, of which the US has been and is also been guilty,' the 66-year-old Thurman said Sunday evening while delivering a speech on 'Tibet: Zone of Peace, Crucial for Humanity'.

'The answer to that is in India, the biggest counter to that kind of adventurism,' he said.

Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist studies at Columbia University, Thurman, who is also the father of Oscar nominated actress Uma Thurman, pointed out that India and Tibet have special historical links.

'If Tibet is declared a zone of peace and given autonomy, then you (Indians) could go and visit Kailash whenever you wanted. The entire Himalayas would be open to you. Your rivers will not be diverted, as the Chinese are doing to Brahmaputra by drilling through rocks with nuclear devices.'

In another part of the speech, Thurman said he knew that the Indian government was 'under enormous pressure' but did not elaborate further.

Thurman said in his latest book 'Why the Dalai Lama Matters' he had laid out five 'modest' steps for the Chinese leadership to keep Tibet and also present a more statesman-like face to the world.

'I can guarantee that Hu Jintao and his nine-member standing committee of the Communist party politburo will get the Nobel Prize if they follow the steps,' he said jocularly.

The first step would be the reinstatement of the Tibet Autonomous Region, the second, the establishment of a 'real one country-two systems policy', the third to reassign the thousands of Chinese soldiers posted in the Tibetan heartland to the borders.

'The fourth step would be to mend relations with the Dalai Lama. And the last step would be to declare the Tibetan plateau as an environmental reserve,' he said.

Thurman was convinced if the Chinese regime did give the Tibetans what they wanted, which was real autonomy, then the Dalai Lama would be a very influential goodwill ambassador for China with the rest of the world.

He also suggested that there should be a plebiscite for Tibetans to decide if they want to be with the Chinese. 'Tibetans are incredibly pragmatic. They know it's not practical to be independent,' said Thurman.

Further, he noted that it was wrong to think that the Chinese were not concerned about their image or about world opinion over Tibet. 'Why are they bothering to hold the Olympics and spending \$60 billion if they are not worried about their image?'

Thurman said that he was 'shocked and surprised' by the riots and violence in Tibet last month.

'I know that Tibetans outside would have done something in the run-up to the elections, but nobody expected Tibetans inside Tibet to protest - as that is self-destructive,' he said.

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