

## Exiled Tibetans use internet as weapon against China

They might not have the guns and the numbers to match the might of the world's biggest army in China, but determined Tibetans living in exile in India and other parts of the world are turning to the internet to wage a 'virtual' war against China.

Scores of Tibetan websites and links have come up in the last couple of years to put forth demands of a 'free Tibet' and highlight the alleged rights violations in Tibet. And it is not Tibetans alone who are in the midst of this struggle.

They are being supported by hundreds of sympathisers across the globe, many of them information technology (IT) specialists, and even Indian friends.

The Tibetan government-in-exile here uses the internet as a potent weapon to draw attention to the Tibetan cause and counter the Chinese propaganda. While the exiled Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has its own website ([www.tibet.net](http://www.tibet.net)), other arms of the Tibetan establishment too rely heavily on the Internet.

The Tibetan Solidarity Committee (TSC), which came into being in March to coordinate the Tibetan issue after violent anti-China protests broke out in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics, also has its own website that is updated daily.

'The internet is a good weapon to have at times to counter Chinese propaganda. But this is a short-term thing because the Chinese manage to block Tibetan websites inside China. These websites cannot exist inside Tibet or China for more than three-four days,' points out the exiled government's Prime Minister (Kalon Tripa) Samdhong Rinpoche.

'Using the internet to highlight the Tibetan cause is a good weapon for us,' Rinpoche told IANS.

Tibetan spiritual head the Dalai Lama has his own website ([www.dalailama.com](http://www.dalailama.com)) and so also the Karmapa Lama - the third highest figure in Tibetan religious hierarchy.

In fact, a single website, [www.tibetsites.com](http://www.tibetsites.com), provides links to scores of Tibetan websites across the globe. These include websites of the exiled government and its several agencies, Tibetan NGOs like Tibetan Youth Congress, Friends of Tibet and Students for Free Tibet.

Some sites like [www.phayul.com](http://www.phayul.com) deal with news about Tibetans from around the globe.

Tibetans living in this Himalayan abode of the Dalai Lama say the world wide web (www) also helps them keep in touch with Tibetans living in Tibet.

'Using the internet helps us to highlight information about what we are doing. Many sympathisers of the Tibetan cause have got in touch with us through the websites. This also helps in getting funding and support,' Lobsang, a Tibetan activist says as he scans websites at a cyber-cafe in Mcleodganj - India's little Lhasa near here.

India is home to some 100,000 Tibetan exiles, many of whom fled their homeland along with the Dalai Lama in 1959 following a failed anti-China uprising. The Tibetan government-in-exile in

Dharamsala is not recognised by any country.

In the last three years, efforts are being made by IT professionals from abroad to set up the 'air jaldi' wi-fi network in and around Mcleodganj and Dharamsala to provide wireless access to Tibetans and others.

NGOs are also running computer and technology centres around Dharamsala to train Tibetan youth in computers, software and other related technology.

Tibetans seek help of technology professionals to make sure that their websites are not hacked by Chinese hackers. This has happened several times in recent years and the CTA's website, [www.tibet.net](http://www.tibet.net), was also hacked three months ago.

*Jaideep Sarin ( © IANS / India eNews)*