

Tibetans celebrate Dalai Lama's birthday

Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh) - Thousands of Tibetans here joined in joyous and spirited celebrations to mark the 71st birthday of the Dalai Lama, their spiritual leader and an icon of peace and wisdom in modern times, and prayed for his long life.

Members of the Kashag, or Tibetan parliament, and the Tibetan government-in-exile assembled at the Tsuglakhang Tibetan temple at 9 a.m. for a prayer meeting on the occasion.

'Today is a very special occasion because on this day the world witnessed the birth of a great leader, not just of the Tibetans but of the humanity as a whole,' said Samdhong Rinpoche, prime minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile that is not recognised by any government in the world.

For his followers it was undoubtedly an occasion of a spiritual tryst with their guru as he makes a public appearance at the main temple at McLeodganj, near here, on his birthday every year.

The office of the Dalai Lama was swamped with felicitation messages from his followers, religious leaders, and statesmen from across the world.

The Dalai Lama, meanwhile, was forced to cancel a visit to [Europe](#) that was slated for later this month due to minor health problems, officials said.

Tenzin Geshe, a senior official in the Dalai Lama's private office, said that though the Dalai Lama's health was not worrisome, the Tibetan community was still much concerned about it.

'I am worried about his health and it is good that they have cancelled his tour. His holiness should travel less now given his age,' said Tsultrim Dorjee, a 32-year-old follower.

Born July 6, 1935 at Taktser hamlet in northeastern Tibet, the Dalai Lama at the age of two was recognised as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso.

He fled Tibet after a failed uprising against the Chinese rule in 1959 and established the Tibetan government-in-exile here in India. He was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 1989 for his non-violent campaign for democracy and freedom in his homeland.

(© IANS / India eNews)