

Braving China anger, Dalai Lama's envoy on Nepal mission

For the first time since the government of Nepal closed down the office of the Dalai Lama's representative in Kathmandu, a top envoy of the exiled Tibetan leader is on a fact-finding mission in the new Himalayan republic, a move that is bound to anger Nepal's giant neighbour China.

Chope Paljor Tsering, the 'health minister' of the Dalai Lama's 'government-in-exile', arrived on a low-key visit in Kathmandu Wednesday from Dharamsala in India to interact with foreign officials, NGOs and Tibetan refugees living in settlements spread across Nepal. He will be in Nepal till Oct 23.

The 'health minister' of a government that is not recognised by any country is meeting representatives of the Tibetan diaspora in the main settlements in Kathmandu valley, Pokhara, the Terai and even the remote northern Mustang district adjoining Nepal's border with Tibet. He will be studying the health and living conditions of the people there.

He is also scheduled to meet officials of the United Nations' Human Rights Council, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), diplomats and NGOs.

After his inspection, Tsering will fly to India's [Bangalore](#) city to discuss the findings with the authorities at the Manipal Medical College for preventive health care measures.

The visit comes at a time Nepal's new Maoist government has reiterated its commitment to the One China policy of Beijing that considers Tibet to be an inalienable part of China.

In August, within a week of taking oath of office, Nepal's Maoist Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' visited China along with Information and Communications Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara and pledged to take sterner action against the Tibetan protesters demonstrating against China in Kathmandu.

Soon after the promise, Nepal's police in an unprecedented move arrested over 100 Tibetan demonstrators and handed them over to the UNHCR, asking the UN agency to verify how many of them possessed bonafide documents entitling them to reside in Nepal.

The UNHCR has been asked to send those without papers back to the places they came from.

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu is likely to lodge stiff protests with the UN agencies and western embassies that hold meetings with Tsering.

The visit puts Nepal in an awkward position. On one hand, the new government wants good relations with China and has just been provided a military bounty worth NRS 100 million (over \$1.3 million) by Beijing.

On the other hand, if it cracks down on the visit, it would affect the Prachanda government's ties with the US at a time Nepal's Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai is in New York. He is seeking the help of the US and other countries for development in Nepal, especially for providing free education till high school that is estimated to cost nearly NRS 50 billion.

Sudeshna Sarkar (© IANS / India eNews)