

Crucial meet will hear voices for Tibet's independence

Over 500 top Tibetan leaders from India, Nepal, Europe, the US and other nations will assemble here Nov 17-22 to deliberate on whether to seek complete 'independence' for Tibet instead of 'autonomy' under Chinese rule.

This is the biggest meeting ever of the exiled Tibetan leadership to be held at their headquarters in exile at Mcleodganj, near here. The six-day special meeting has been called by the Tibetan parliament-in-exile at the behest of Buddhist spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

Over 15 MPs in the 43-member exiled parliament are said to be supporters of the pro-independence stand.

'This special meeting has great significance. That is because it is being called after the failure of seven rounds of talks with China since 2002 and the massive Tibetan uprising all over Tibet in March-April this year,' Karma Yeshe, one of the young exiled Tibetan MPs, told IANS here.

Incidentally, the meeting to chalk out the course of future Tibetan struggle is taking place when the exiled community will be completing 50 years of being forced out of Tibet by China in 1959.

Through these five decades, the Dalai Lama has been propagating a peaceful resolution of the Tibetan issue through his middle-path approach - even accepting 'genuine autonomy' of Tibet under Chinese rule instead of complete independence.

But others, particularly young Tibetans born outside Tibet and mostly in India, want the Tibetan struggle to change towards a more aggressive one. It is this demand that has forced the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders to sit up and call the meeting to decide their future course.

'Our support is growing with each passing day. We may not have the majority in the meeting of 500 people but we will make sure that we are heard seriously. The only resolution of the Tibet issue is through a struggle for independence,' one MP of the exiled parliament said, requesting anonymity.

The office of the Dalai Lama, considering the situation inside Tibet and the situation in the world in general, had asked the parliament-in-exile during its September session to call a special meeting as enshrined in article 59 of the charter of the Tibetans-in-exile.

Those attending the meeting will include 43 MPs, seven ministers, 70 former MPs and ministers, envoys, representatives of the Dalai Lama and other officials (about 250), two representatives each from 10 Tibetan NGOs like the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), Tibetan Women Association (TWA), Gu-Chu-Sum (association of former Tibetan political prisoners) and others (20), independent volunteers (50) and representatives of Tibetan religious schools (24).

'His Holiness and the exiled leadership had made every effort for the resolution of the Tibet issue. But China has never been sincere towards the issue and has always been passing time. Rather, they (China) started criticising His Holiness like anything, which none of the Tibetans, both in and outside Tibet, could digest at all,' Karma Yeshe pointed out.

'During this meeting we will discuss the failures and achievements of the dialogue process since it

started in 2002. All Tibetan representatives, by considering the urgent situation inside Tibet, could raise ideas and bring any suggestions for the future of Tibet.

'It is hard to say that holding one big special meeting will change the shape of the future of Tibetan struggle. But it will certainly strengthen future course of our struggle. The issue of Tibet is very tiny for PRC. But this tiny issue, if not resolved in time, can cause big problems for China. I am fully committed to the independence of Tibet and will speak out for it and do whatever for the same,' Karma Yeshe said.

Pro-independence leader and Friends of Tibet activist Tenzin Tsundue said he had applied to participate in the meeting as one of the 50 volunteers.

'I am not sure if I will be selected. But the meeting is important because of what it will discuss and what the opinion of the majority will emerge as. It will become the basis for our future course,' he said.

'Tibetans inside Tibet started the uprising earlier this year. The message is very clear as to what the Tibetans want - independence. We don't have to lobby support for the cause of independence,' Tsundue said.

There are over 100,000 Tibetans living in exile in India.

Jaideep Sarin (© IANS / India eNews)