

Nepal film festival gives China culture shock

Assured of Nepal's new government's support for its 'One China' policy and refusal to acknowledge Tibet or Taiwan as separate nations, China nonetheless is about to get a rude shock from an expected quarters - a film festival.

One of Kathmandu's much-acclaimed festivals, the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival hosted by Himal Association, that kicked off in the capital Friday includes four films related to Tibet, of which three are certainly going to be anathema to Beijing.

On Sunday, the City Hall will screen 'Dalai Lama Renaissance', the new documentary on the exiled Tibetan leader's meetings with western thinkers like quantum physicist FredAlan Wolf and social scientist Jean Houston.

Directed by Khashyar Darivch, narrated by Bollywood icon Harrison Ford and released only this summer, the documentary will draw fresh attention to the Nobel peace laureate who recently ruffled the Chinese government's feathers saying he would announce the name of his successor, which would outmanoeuvre Beijing's bid to control his heir, like they have with another Tibetan leader, the Panchen Lama.

For a succession of Nepal governments, who have wanted good relations with their giant northern neighbour China, the Dalai Lama virtually doesn't exist. Under King Gyanendra's influence, the government closed the office of the Dalai Lama's representative in Kathmandu and has refused to let it re-open.

Three years ago, when Nepal hosted a Buddhist conference at Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha in south Nepal, the Dalai Lama was not invited though the heads of other Buddhist states were.

To rub salt into Beijing's wound, the mountain film festival will screen 'Dreaming Lhasa' Monday.

Made by the husband-wife team of Tibetan exile Tenzing Sonam and Indian Ritu Sarin, the film depicts the plight of the exiled Tibetan community in India and has been hailed as the first major feature film by a Tibetan to deal with contemporary Tibet.

In 2005, China tried to pressure the organisers of the Toronto International Film Festival to remove 'Dreaming Lhasa'. Though the organisers refused, Beijing had more success at the Pusan International Film Festival in South Korea the same year when though initially chosen for screening, 'Dreaming Lhasa' was dropped at the last moment with no explanation.

When the film premiered in the US in April, to combat it, the Chinese government promoted 'The Silent Holy Stones' - that though made by a well-regarded Tibetan filmmaker within Tibet, can be used as Chinese propaganda.

On Tuesday, 'Miss Tibet' directed by Dutch Siebout Leseur van Leeuwen will draw attention to the defiant beauty pageant that is held at Dharamsala, the seat of the Dalai Lama, in India every year.

Beijing has been trying to prevent the winner of the title from taking part in other beauty contests,

saying Miss China is the legitimate contender.

Though this year's Miss China went on to sweep the Miss World title, Miss Tibet continues to be a thorn in Beijing's flesh.

Only this month, China put pressure on Malaysia to bar Miss Tibet 2006 Tsering Chungtak at the Miss Tourism Pageant unless she agreed to wear a sash that said Miss Tibet-China.

The Tibetan pulled out, saying she would not wear the sash.

The lack of publicity about the entries till the eve of the film festival could have lulled China into a false sense of security.

Tibet right groups in India have complained that when they tried to screen Tibet-related films, the Chinese Embassy in [New Delhi](#) tried to pressure them into withdrawing them.

India is home to some 100,000 Tibetans who fled their homeland along with the Dalai Lama in 1959 following a failed anti-China uprising. No country recognizes the Tibetan government-in-exile here.

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