

# **Democratic Reform in Tibet**

## **– Sixty Years On**

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## Preamble

The year 2019 marks the 60th anniversary of the campaign of democratic reform in Tibet. In traditional Chinese culture, the 60th year is always memorable as it completes a cycle called the *Jiazi*, a concept unique to the Chinese calendar.

Tibet's democratic reform that took place six decades ago gave a new life to Tibet and the ethnic peoples living there.

These 60 years have changed Tibet completely. Tibet's democratic reform is the greatest and most profound social transformation in the history of Tibet. By abolishing serfdom, a grim and backward feudal system, Tibet was able to establish a new social system that liberated the people and made them the masters of the nation and society, thus ensuring their rights in all matters.

These 60 years have turned Tibet into a beautiful home to the people of Tibet. Tibet's democratic reform opened up bright prospects. With the strong support of the central government and the rest of the country, the ethnic peoples of Tibet have spared no effort in forging ahead and transforming their poor and backward old land into a beautiful new home that is economically prosperous and socially advanced, with a sound ecological environment where people live in happiness and contentment.

These 60 years have seen solidarity and enterprising spirit of the people in Tibet. Thanks to democratic reform, the ethnic peoples of Tibet and the rest of the country have worked together with one heart to develop ethnic relationships characterized by equality, unity, mutual support and harmony. In the fight to guard national unity and oppose separatism, the people of Tibet have closely followed the leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the face of all forms of hardship, challenge, and test, reinforcing the communal strength of the Chinese nation.

These 60 years have seen a great leap of social progress. Under the strong leadership of the CPC, Tibet has been able to transform from a society under feudal serfdom to socialism, from poverty and backwardness to civility and progress. As Chinese socialism has entered a new era, the ethnic peoples of Tibet, led by the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core, are working together with the people of the rest of the country to realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

# I. Feudal Serfdom: A Dark History

For centuries Tibet was ruled by feudal serfdom under theocracy. Millions of serfs were subjected to cruel exploitation and oppression until democratic reform in 1959.

## – Serfs deprived of all rights by the three major estate-holders

The laws of old Tibet divided people into three classes and nine ranks, legalizing the unequal status of different groups and allowing the estate-holders to deny all human rights of their serfs. In the government, controlled by the three major estate-holders (government officials, nobles, and upper-ranking lamas in monasteries), all levels of official came from the families of high-ranking lamas and nobles. Children of major noble families, upon birth, would automatically obtain the fourth-highest official rank, and they could take key positions in government when they were 17 or 18 years of age. Children from middle-ranking and lesser noble families could also take up official positions in government after spending some time studying at official training schools. Most monk officials were lamas from noble families, while serfs, who constituted the vast majority of the Tibetan society, struggled hopelessly on the very bottom rung of society.

## – The serfs' life and death in the hands of the three major estate-holders

The three major estate-holders applied every means to maintain feudal serfdom, with cruel and barbarous laws and punishments imposed by judicial organs and courts set up within their scopes of influence. Apart from jails set up by the government, there were penitentiaries and private jails run by large monasteries and aristocrats where instruments of torture were kept and private tribunals were held. They cast verdicts, flogged and tortured serfs, had them chained and shackled. Volumes of documents written in Tibetan testify to the savage punishments meted out to serfs, such as cutting off the tongue, nose, hands and feet, wearing stone hat, gouging out the eyes, pulling out tendons, skinning, drowning, and even feeding them to scorpions. The Snang Rtse Shag, located to the north of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, used to be the judiciary of old Tibet. Infamously known as a “living hell”, this was where serfs were tortured and slaughtered at will to supply the upper class of the Kashag (cabinet) regime and high-ranking monks with such horrible offerings as

human head, skin, flesh, heart, and intestines, which were considered “necessary” when chanting certain scriptures.

**– Land, pastures and other means of production monopolized by the three major estate-holders**

According to statistics gathered prior to democratic reform, a staggering 99.7 percent of all the 220,000 ha of cultivated land in Tibet was owned by the government (85,580 ha), the monasteries and high-ranking monks (80,960 ha), and aristocrats (52,800 ha), while the remaining 0.3 percent of cultivated land was owned by a handful of land-tilling peasants in remote areas. Most pastures were controlled by herd owners. A ballad among serfs of the time goes:

*Even if the snow mountain melts into butter,  
It is the property of the masters.  
Even if the river water turns into milk,  
There is not a single drop for us.*

**– Serfs owned and enslaved by the three major estate-holders**

The bondage of serfs to the land owners was protected by the powerful theocratic rule. The Kashag regime prescribed that all serfs must stay on the land within the manor of their owners. They were not allowed to step out of the manor without permission; fleeing the manor was forbidden. Any serf who attempted to flee might receive a lashing as punishment or have their feet chopped off. The Kashag and the Dalai Lama also issued decrees prohibiting the furnishing of refuge to fleeing serfs.

With their absolute control of land, the three major estate-holders held the power of life, death and marriage over their serfs. Since serfs were their private property, they could trade and transfer them, present them as gifts, use them as gambling stakes or as mortgages for debt, or exchange them at will.

The three major estate-holders also imposed heavy corvée labor on serfs. For example, before liberation of Tibet in 1951, the Darongqang Manor owned by Gyaltsap Tajtra held a total of 96 ha of land, and 81 able-bodied and semi-able-bodied serfs. They were assigned a total of 21,266 corvée days per year, including 11,826 days working for their owners and 9,440 days for the government. The average corvée labor of each serf amounted to 262.5 days a year, or 72 percent of their entire year of labor.

**– Serfs exploited by exorbitant taxes and levies**

In old Tibet, the three major estate-holders possessed almost all means of production. They burdened their serfs with inhumane taxes and levies. The Kashag regime alone imposed some 200 different taxes. Serfs had to borrow

money to survive, and more than 90 percent of serfs were in debt. Serfs were burdened with all kinds of debts such as debts passed down from previous generations, new debts, debts resulting from joint liability, and debts apportioned among all the serfs. The debts that were passed down from previous generations and could never be repaid even by succeeding generations accounted for one third of the total debts. There was a widespread ballad that described the debts that bound serfs:

*The debts owed by the grandpa of my grandpa  
Could not be paid off by the father of my father,  
And the son of my son  
Will not be able to repay even the interest.*

According to statistics collated in 1959-60, during Tibet's democratic reform usurious loans of 236,600 tons of grain and 700 million *liang* of Tibetan silver were written off. The loans written off during democratic reform surpassed the entire 175,000-ton grain output of the whole of Tibet in 1958.

#### **– Strict mind control in the name of religion**

The three major estate-holders exercised mind control over serfs so that they accepted their fate in the hope of entering the "Elysium" after they died and obtaining "happiness in the next life". In *Tibetan Travel Notes (Chibetto Taizaiki)*, a Japanese monk named Tokan Tada, who entered Tibet in 1913, wrote: "The Tibetans are very religious. They are convinced of their sins, and believe that the Dalai Lama's heavy taxes are a means of redemption. They also believe in happiness in the next life if their sins are cleansed in this life."

In "Abolishing the Feudal Privileges and Exploitation in Tibetan Lamaist Monasteries", well-known Tibetologists Wang Sen and Wang Furen wrote: "From 1958 to the spring of 1959, one chapel in the western suburbs of Lhasa, for the purpose of prayer, asked for 27 human heads, six skulls, four leg bones, one full human skin, one corpse, 14 bundles of intestines, eight chunks of human flesh, and nine bottles of human blood."

After presiding over the enthronement ceremony of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1940, Wu Zhongxin, chief of the Commission for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs of the National Government, described the situation in old Tibet in his "Report on Tibetan Affairs on a Mission": "People of all classes and ranks believe they are destined to belong to a certain class or rank from the previous life, and they are accustomed to it. Even those in the lowest rank are content with the status quo." Monopolizing the spiritual and cultural life of the Tibetan people, the three major estate-holders attacked as heresy any idea or culture that ran contrary to their interests. The Tibetan scholar Gedun Chopel, who

exposed the corruption and degeneracy of monks and advocated reform in Tibetan Buddhism, was imprisoned and persecuted by the Kashag government.

## **II. Irresistible Historical Trend**

Serfdom is the most brutal form of slavery in feudal society. It is a barbaric and backward social system in terms of economic development, political democracy or human rights protection. By the 1950s, the very existence of feudal serfdom had violated the development trend of human history. Such a system was a stain on civilization and was destined to be eradicated by history.

Throughout human history, slavery and serfdom have existed in most parts of the world. The two systems were renounced as backward and outdated as new ideas and enlightenment emerged in modern times, and abolitionism or abolitionist movements began to appear in many countries, ringing the death knell of slavery and serfdom. With the rise of the bourgeois revolution in Europe and the United States, the two were successively abolished in France, Britain, Russia, and the United States. In 1794, during the French Revolution, France put an end to slavery. Britain enacted the Slave Trade Act in 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. In 1861, Russia abolished serfdom with a top-down peaceful reform. In 1865, by virtue of victory in the Civil War, the US federal government abolished slavery and forced labor by means of a constitutional amendment.

The end of the Second World War ushered in a new era of development, when peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom became the goals of human society. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations clearly stated: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.” In 1956, the United Nations adopted the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. Article 1 of the Convention states that “Each of the States Parties to this Convention shall take all practicable and necessary legislative and other measures to bring about progressively and as soon as possible the complete abolition or abandonment of the following institutions and practices...”

On October 1, 1949 the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was founded, opening a new era in Chinese history. Under the leadership of the CPC, a new socialist system was established, making the people the masters of the country. On May 23, 1951, the Agreement of the Central People’s Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet

(hereinafter the “17-Article Agreement”) was signed, officially proclaiming the peaceful liberation of Tibet.

In view of unbalanced social development and special circumstances in some places, Liu Shaoqi, then chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC), said at the First Session of the First NPC in 1954: “Ethnic minority areas that have not completed democratic reform can complete it in some gentle manner in the future and then gradually move forward to socialism.”

In 1953, Xinjiang completely abolished all remaining feudal serfdom. Beginning in 1956, democratic reform was also carried out in Tibetan areas of Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai provinces. In Yunnan Province, parental slavery among the Lisu, Jingpo, and Va ethnic groups and the slavery of the Mosuo people in Yongning were abolished in 1956 through peaceful negotiation; slavery among the Xiaoliangshan Yi people in Ninglang and feudal slavery in Deqen Tibetan area were abolished in 1958. From early 1956 to late 1957, democratic reform was carried out in the Liangshan Yi ethnic area in Sichuan Province which completely abolished slavery. The abolition of serfdom was a major trend of social progress in China in the 1950s. However, Tibet at that time was still ruled by feudal serfdom under theocracy, which seriously obstructed social development and the process of civilization.

**– Agricultural production was stagnated by theocratic feudal serfdom in Tibet for a long time.**

Before the 1950s, agriculture in Tibet remained bound to extensive farming methods or even primitive slash-and-burn farming. Wooden tools were widely used, and the average yield was only four or five times that of seeds sown – not much different from hundreds of years ago. Most of the food, clothing, and supplies were made by hand by individuals or manors. There was no vitality in society.

**– Feudal serfdom under theocracy caused sharp conflicts and opposition between serf owners and their labor.**

By exploiting serfs, serf owners hoarded social wealth and spent it on extravagant and dissipated lives, in addition to supplying ecclesiastical and secular officials and their servants. Serfs, who were brutally deprived of the fruits of their hard work by serf owners, lived a miserable life. As they could barely survive, they had no choice but to rebel or flee.

**– Feudal serfdom under theocracy seriously impeded the spread and development of modern science, technology and culture.**

To consolidate its rule, the government of Tibet controlled by three major estate-holders practiced theocracy, promoted superstition, and opposed science by every possible means, which seriously hindered the spread and application of modern science and technology. Although the ruling clique sent youth from aristocratic families to study modern science and technology abroad, the purpose was mainly for the rulers' own satisfaction, rather than to learn and apply advanced science and technology.

Thanks to the efforts of the central government, the peaceful liberation in 1951 ended Tibet's long-lasting chaos, conflict, occlusion and stagnation. It experienced new economic and social development. Based on the 17-Article Agreement, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered Tibet in October 1951, and the Tibet Military Region was established in 1952 to take up the task of defending this frontier region. The central authorities established the CPC Tibet Working Committee and its branches in Lhasa and other places to perform its functions.

Before democratic reform in 1959, Tibet had political powers with different nature: the Kashag regime and Panchen Kampus Assembly; and the Qamdo People's Liberation Committee and the Tibet Autonomous Region Preparatory Committee. As the 17-Article Agreement stipulated, "The central government will not alter the current political system of Tibet.... In matters related to reform in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central government. The local government of Tibet shall take initiative to carry out reform, and when the people raise demands for reform, the central government shall consult with the leading personnel to settle the issue."

The Central People's Government adopted a circumspect attitude and a rather lenient policy, actively persuading and winning over patriotic people from the upper class while patiently waiting for Tibet's ruling class to carry out reform.

In the meantime, in response to the long-term influence of theocracy in Tibet, CPC-led organizations and staff at different levels carried out meticulous work among the people and conscientiously implemented the policy that no reform should be carried out in Tibet within six years, thus winning the support of the ordinary people and of patriots from the upper class.

Even as they were aware that feudal serfdom under theocracy was coming to an end, the 14th Dalai Lama and the reactionaries in Tibet's upper class had no wish to conduct reform. Instead, they tried to maintain the system for fear that reform would deprive them of their political and religious privileges, together with their huge economic benefits.

It was through feudal serfdom under theocracy that the three major estate-holders gathered enormous wealth. Before democratic reform, the family of the 14th Dalai Lama possessed 27 manors, 30 pastures and over 6,000 serfs,

and annually wrung out of them more than 462,000 kg of highland barley, 35,000 kg of butter, 2 million *liang* of Tibetan silver, 300 head of cattle and sheep, and 175 rolls of *pulu* (woolen fabric made in Tibet).

### **III. Abolishing Feudal Serfdom**

According to the 17-Article Agreement, in the early days of the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the CPC focused on winning over the people of the upper class and endeavored to get support from the ordinary people, rather than mobilizing them immediately to launch reform. The PLA and CPC organizations in Tibet worked hard to benefit the local people, giving free medical treatment, working to eliminate infectious diseases, building water conservancy projects, roads and bridges, providing disaster rescue and relief, distributing interest-free loans, offering certified seeds and farm tools, showing films, and providing jobs instead of handouts.

During the construction of the Sichuan (Xikang)-Tibet Highway in 1950, the people in Tibet realized that they were neither providing corvée labor to the PLA, nor being enslaved by serf owners, but working for themselves and their own future generations. The construction workers in Jomo Dzong (present-day Bayi District of Nyingchi City, Dzong is roughly equivalent to today's county) and Tsela Dzong (present-day Mainling County of Nyingchi City) said, "The PLA soldiers are living gods. Those who spoke ill of the PLA are wolves in sheep's clothing and demons hidden among our Tibetan people."

In July 1954, ice collapse caused disastrous floods in the upper reaches of the Nyangchu River. The floods drowned 91 people in Gyantse Dzong and Panam Dzong, destroyed 170 villages, affected more than 16,000 people, swallowed over 4,000 ha of land, and drowned about 8,000 head of cattle and sheep. In response, the central government allocated 800,000 silver dollars for disaster relief. The CPC Gyantse Working Committee and the local PLA garrison fought the floods and provided succor to the victims. Despite limited supplies, they provided 730,000 kg of food, loaned 560,000 kg of seeds, distributed farm tools to a value of 15,000 silver dollars, donated 28,000 meters of tent cloth, and contributed cash and clothes to a total value of more than 100,000 silver dollars.

As a contrast, in March 1956, Nagchu Dzong (present-day Seni District of Nagqu City) was stricken by a catastrophic blizzard. The government of Tibet did not send relief to victims, but urged them to pay their rents without offering any reduction or exemption. The headman of Damshung Dzong even prevented the CPC Nagchu Working Committee from distributing highland barley and tea among the victims. Through these incidents, the people in Tibet acquired a

better understanding of the CPC and the PLA, and realized that only by abolishing feudal serfdom could they start a new life.

The contrast awakened the people in Tibet. Some serfs stood up to oppose oppression and exploitation; some cast off the control of their serf owners and fled. According to Pasang, formerly a slave and now a senior official, she had been forced into hard labor for her master when she was a teenager. Unable to tolerate any more beatings from her master, she fled at the age of 15. In 1956, more than 100 peasants in Lang Dzong and Palbar Dzong gathered for a meeting to demand democratic reform. On July 25, 1956, some 65 peasants in Lhunzhub County of Lhasa submitted a letter carrying their finger prints to the 14th Dalai Lama, saying, “We are all peasants. We are more anxious for democratic reform than anyone else.”

Seeing the contrast, some members of the upper class in Tibet began to support democratic reform. From 1952, the CPC Tibet Working Committee organized several dozen delegations from Tibet to visit other parts of China, including delegations to visit the central government, delegations to celebrate the anniversaries of the founding of the PRC in Beijing, visiting groups, and delegations of Buddhists. As the delegates witnessed the rapid development elsewhere, some patriotic individuals from the upper class changed their minds and began to support the idea of democratic reform in Tibet.

A peasant from Pangcun Village of Doilungdeqen District in Lhasa recalled two incidents. In 1956, the central government invited the manor owners in Tibet to visit other parts of China, and after the visit, one of them named Chadrak Kelzang Sherab decided to free his serfs and distribute his land to them. In 1956, a Tibetan women’s delegation led by Thangme Konchog Palmo, an aristocrat, completed a trip outside of Tibet. On their return, they publicized the policies and benefits of democratic reform among the peasants in the suburbs of Lhasa, and persuaded many members of the Tibetan Patriotic Youth Association and the Tibetan Patriotic Women’s Association to stand up for democratic reform in Tibet.

In September 1957, Palgon Chogdrup, a headman in Gyantse, savagely tortured a serf called Wangchen Pungstog. Hearing of this, Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme, then a Kalon (cabinet minister) of the government of Tibet, was furious, saying, “The people in Tibet are sure to choose socialism and anxious to start democratic reform. This is what they need. They want to boost political, economic and cultural development and pursue happiness. It is also an inexorable law of human development and an unstoppable trend of progress.”

In 1952, Samling Tsering Paldron, daughter of aristocrat Yuthok, began to teach the Tibetan language to the PLA men in Tibet, heedless of opposition of the reactionaries from the local upper class. She said, “I firmly believe that one day the people in Tibet will finally shake off oppression and exploitation

imposed by feudal serfdom. One day we will finally build a political power of our own under the leadership of the CPC.”

The people in Tibet began to develop a proper understanding of reform, and some people of the upper class began to see it in a more positive light. However, in an attempt to maintain their vested interests and to perpetuate feudal serfdom under theocracy, a group of Tibetans launched a rebellion in a bid to halt social progress.

In March 1959, reactionaries from the upper class working in the government of Tibet tore up the 17-Article Agreement and staged an all-out armed rebellion in Lhasa. The rebellion ran counter to the will of the people of Tibet and the current of history. In response, the central government decided to dissolve the government of Tibet and quell the rebellion, and at the same time, mobilized the people of Tibet to begin democratic reform.

Democratic reform in Tibet was a continuation of China’s New Democratic Revolution led by the CPC, and an inevitable result of the social transformation from degeneration to progress. Democratic reform was implemented progressively in the rural areas, pastoral areas, monasteries, and urban areas.

In the rural areas, which had a population of 800,000, the central government mobilized the people to take part in a campaign against rebellion, corvée labor, and slavery, and in favor of lower rents for land and a reduction of interest on loans. Subsequently, the central government distributed land to peasants so as to completely eradicate feudal serfdom.

As a result, the serfs, who had been exploited and enslaved for generations, finally won freedom. They took ownership of more than 186,666 ha of land and other means of production. When their slave indentures and so-called IOU were burned in fire, they sang and danced to celebrate their liberation. In early 1960, about 200,000 farm households in Tibet acquired land certificates. Benefiting from policies such as the harvest of a farmland belonging to the one who sowed, lower rents for land, reduction in interest on loans, and the cancellation of old debts, the peasants gained more than 500 million kg of grain in total, over 750 kg per person.

Tsering Drolkar, a 68-year-old peasant from Khesum Shika of Nedong County said, “We had been providing corvée labor our whole lives. We never owned a single piece of land, what we worried about was how to find food for survival. Now with the land given to us by the people’s government, we will no longer go hungry.” The freed serfs cheered, “The sunshine of the Dalai Lama touches only the nobles, while the sunshine of Chairman Mao showers on us poor people. The noble’s sun is setting and our sun is rising.”

In the pastoral areas with a population of 280,000, the central government launched a campaign against the rebellion, corvée labor and slavery, and

adopted policies that were beneficial to both hired herdsmen and herd owners, but the latter were deprived of their feudal privileges. The central government confiscated the cattle and sheep of the estate-holders and herd owners who had participated in the rebellion, and distributed the livestock to their hired hands and other poor herdsmen. The central government did not discriminate against or punish herd owners who had not been involved in the rebellion, and allowed them to continue to own their cattle and sheep.

These protective measures changed feudal enslavement to an employment relationship. This motivated the hired hands to protect and grow their herds, and the herd owners to operate and develop animal husbandry. Both people and cattle were able to live in peace. Although a large number of cattle and sheep had been slaughtered by the rebels, animal husbandry in Tibet soon recovered and began to prosper. The herdsmen on the Damxung Prairie sang a ballad:

*In the past, the Damxung Prairie belonged to our herdsmen,  
But it was later taken by Sera Monastery.  
Ever since then, we have been living in hell.  
Now the people's government has issued a new decree,  
And we have elected our own leaders.  
The beautiful Damxung Prairie has been returned to our herdsmen.*

In the monasteries, by means of prudent and steady measures, the CPC launched a campaign against the rebellion, feudal privileges and exploitation, and dealt with matters of political persecution, class oppression, and economic exploitation. These measures abolished feudal privileges, exploitation and the system of oppression.

The CPC promoted political unity and separation of government from religion, and punished the rebels and reactionaries acting under the guise of religious beliefs. It maintained the principle of freedom of religious belief, respected and protected citizens' civil rights in this regard, protected patriotic and law-abiding monasteries, and established a democratic management system in monasteries. The CPC adopted a buying-out policy with respect to the means of production owned by those monasteries uninvolved in the rebellion. During the campaign of democratic reform, a large number of monks and nuns voluntarily resumed secular life. After the campaign, 553 monasteries were retained in Tibet, housing over 7,000 monks and nuns, which fulfilled the religious needs of local believers.

In the urban areas, the central government launched a campaign against the rebellion, the feudal system, exploitation and privileges, and in favor of lower rents for land and a reduction of interest on loans. The central government adopted a buying-out policy with respect to land and means of

production owned by those serf owners and their agents uninvolved in the rebellion. It protected industry and commerce, adopted different policies towards rebels and non-rebels among industrialists and businessmen, and protected rights and interests of those engaged in industry and commerce. It organized aid for poor citizens and vagrants, resumed commerce and free exchange of goods, secured urban supplies, and restored social and economic order. At the same time, the CPC strengthened the united front work and strove to unite all available forces. Those serf owners and their agents who were patriotic, opposed imperialism, and accepted democratic reform, were provided with appropriate employment.

## IV. The People Have Become Masters of Their Own Affairs

Through democratic reform, feudal serfdom under theocracy in Tibet was abolished completely, bringing fundamental changes to the Tibetan social system. It was a historic leap. Due to democratic reform, about one million serfs were liberated. They gained personal freedom and became masters of the new society. The completion of the reform laid a solid foundation for the establishment of socialism in Tibet.

### – One million serfs were liberated and gained personal freedom.

When feudal land ownership was abolished in democratic reform, serfs were no longer treated arbitrarily by serf owners as their private property, and the personal ownership of serfs by serf owners came to an end.

Tibet's democratic reform destroyed the institutional shackles which infringed serfs' rights to subsistence, marriage, migration, residence, work, personal freedom, human dignity, and education. Thanks to this reform, one million serfs gained true personal freedom. Anna Louise Strong, a renowned American journalist and activist, included the remarks by a serf interviewee in her book *When Serfs Stood up in Tibet*: "Always I wanted to send my son to school to learn to read and to have some trade like a tailor. This was impossible, but now my son has gone to study in the interior and when he comes back he will be a skilled worker for a factory. He will not be weighed down by all those things that weighed down my head."<sup>1</sup>

Through democratic reform, all feudal privileges of monasteries were annulled. Monks and nuns gained equal rights and the right to be the masters of their own destiny. Many of those who were at the bottom of the hierarchy broke free of their religious bondage and resumed secular life. In Ganden Monastery alone, more than 300 monks demanded to return home or resume secular life in the surrounding areas of the monastery. The local government granted them the fare for their journey home and a settlement allowance. It also found jobs for 13 young monks who asked for employment at the Lhasa Department Store Company, and sent some child monks to school. As to the 312 monks who wanted to stay at the monastery, the local government made

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/strong-anna-louise/1959/tibet/ch07.htm>

arrangements to ensure their daily life. In democratic reform, the system by which monasteries assigned monk and nun quotas to counties, manors and tribes was abolished. Monasteries were prohibited from coercing people to become monks or nuns.

**– People’s governments were established at various levels for the people to exercise their rights.**

On March 28, 1959, the State Council announced that the government of Tibet was dissolved. The Qamdo People’s Liberation Committee and the Panchen Kampus Assembly were also abolished, thus ending the coexistence of political powers of different nature. Under the leadership of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region, people’s governments were gradually set up at various levels. In mid-July, 1959, the first township-level peasants’ association, known as the Peasants’ Association of Khesum Village, and the first county-level peasants’ association, known as the Peasants’ Association of Nedong County, were established. Former serfs were elected as chairs or members of the associations, leading the people to conduct democratic reform. By the end of 1960, Tibet had established 1,009 organs of state power at township level, 283 at district level, 78 at county level and eight at prefecture (city) level. The number of officials from Tibetan and other minority ethnic groups totaled over 10,000. More than 4,400 liberated serfs became officials at community level. In the second half of 1961, a general election was held all over Tibet. For the first time, the former serfs were no longer regarded as “speaking tools”, and emerged on the political stage as the masters of the new Tibet.

Now enjoying the broadest possible democratic rights endowed by the Constitution and other laws that they had never had in the pre-liberation society, former serfs engaged in elections with great enthusiasm, and elected organs and governments at various levels. For the first time in the history of Tibet, local governments at various levels were elected in a democratic way through people’s exercise of their right to vote and to stand for election. By July 1965, general elections had been basically completed. Among the 2,600-plus deputies elected to the people’s congresses, 2,200 were former impoverished serfs. In Gyantse County, voters called their electoral certificates “masters’ certificates”. They saw elections as joyous events and actively participated in the elections of deputies to the people’s congresses.

On August 25, 1965, the bill to establish the Tibet Autonomous Region, tabled by the State Council, was approved at the 15th Session of the Standing Committee of the Third National People’s Congress. From September 1 to 9, 1965, the First Session of the First People’s Congress of Tibet was held. At this session, the Tibet Autonomous Region was established, and the People’s

Committee of the autonomous region came into being by election. Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme was elected chairman of the Committee. A large number of liberated serfs held leading posts in organs of political power at various levels of the Region. The establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region and the organs of self-government of the Region realized the historic leap from theocratic feudal serfdom to people's democratic socialism, and signified that Tibet had set up a people's democratic government and begun to exercise thorough-going regional ethnic autonomy. In 1979, the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region was elected at the Second Session of the Third People's Congress of the Region.

According to the Constitution and the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy of the People's Republic of China, people of all ethnic groups in Tibet fully enjoy the right to vote and to stand for election. Since 1978, Tibet has held 11 elections of deputies to the people's congresses at township level, 10 at county level, and eight at the level of municipalities having subordinate districts. The people in Tibet can directly elect, in accordance with the law, deputies to the people's congresses at county (district) and township (town) levels, and these elected deputies will then elect deputies to the people's congresses at the autonomous regional and national levels. Through the people's congresses at various levels, the people of Tibet exercise their right to participation in the administration of state and local affairs.

Currently, there are 35,963 deputies to the people's congresses at all levels in Tibet. Among them, deputies from the Tibetan and other minority ethnic groups account for 92.18 percent. Upholding the organic unity of Party leadership, the running of the country by the people, and law-based governance, the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region and its Standing Committee guarantee and develop the rights of the people of all ethnic groups to be their own masters through legislative and institutional channels, ensure that the people of all ethnic groups enjoy broad rights and freedom, and expand citizens' orderly political participation. They provide support for the deputies to the people's congresses to perform their duties in accordance with the law. Maintaining close ties with the deputies and the people, they take responsibility for the people and accept their oversight. They work to safeguard the fundamental interests of the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet and promote well-rounded human development.

Since the establishment of the autonomous region in 1965, the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region and its Standing Committee have enacted or approved more than 300 local regulations, resolutions, and decisions of a regulatory nature. In so doing, they have fulfilled the rights of autonomy of the localities enjoying regional ethnic autonomy. Now, work in various respects in Tibet has been law-based, and great progress has been made in

promoting rule of law in the Region. On January 19, 2009, the Second Session of the Ninth Regional People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region voted and adopted the Decision of the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region to Establish the Commemoration Day for the Liberation of One Million Serfs in Tibet. According to the decision, March 28 was designated as the day to commemorate the event.

**– The rights of the people of all ethnic groups to participate in the deliberation and administration of state affairs have been fully guaranteed.**

To fully ensure that people from all walks of life have the right to participate in the deliberation and administration of state affairs, the Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was established in December 1959. According to the Charter of the CPPCC, the CPPCC Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee performs the duties of political consultation, democratic supervision, and participation in the deliberation and administration of state affairs, and plays an important role in democratic reform, socialist construction, and reform and opening up in Tibet. Focusing on formulating the 13th Five-year Plan of the Region, accelerating the construction of key projects, developing industries with local characteristics and strengths, and developing non-public economic sectors, the 10th CPPCC Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee alone made 2,401 proposals, among which 2,347 were accepted for deliberation. At the sessions of the CPPCC committees at all levels in Tibet, people of all social strata have broad participation and play their role to the full extent. For instance, among the 518 members of the 11th CPPCC Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee, 80 – the highest number – are representatives of religious groups (Buddhist associations), and 64 are from ethnic minority groups, the second-highest number.

Community-level democracy is developing and improving. After democratic reform, people's governments at all levels were established in Tibet. In 1980, direct elections were held at township level all over Tibet, and they were expanded to county level starting from 1984. In 1987, the Tibet Autonomous Region issued the Decision on Strengthening the Development of Community-level Power Organs and the Decision on Strengthening Community-level Party Organizations in Farming and Pastoral Areas. Through years of experimentation, Tibet has gradually developed and formed community-level democratic systems in farming and pastoral areas. In rural areas, the system of villagers' representative meetings has been established. In urban communities, community residents' congresses and community committees have been set up, providing a solid organizational guarantee for the

self-governance of urban residents. In enterprises and public institutions, the system of employees' congresses is widely practiced. As of the end of 2018, there were 5,756 community-level workers' unions, having 497,082 members.

Through democratic reform, people from all walks of life in Tibet have gained the right to participate in the administration of state affairs. In July 1959, there were 565 members of the upper class working in the executive organs of the government at district and prefectural levels. Among them, 415 were aristocrats, officials of former government, or religious figures. In the People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region, a former serf owner and a former serf were successively elected to the post of vice chair. They were Kyibuk Phuntsog-Tseten and Lhagpa Phuntshogs. Both of them were born at the Kyibuk Manor prior to the liberation, and they became colleagues participating in decision making in the people's government of the autonomous region. Through democratic reform, women were empowered with political rights. They took an active part in political affairs by participating in elections of the people's congresses of various levels, serving as leading officials at various levels, and establishing women's organizations. Pasang, a former vice president of the All-China Women's Federation, and Tseten Dolma, a former vice president of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, are outstanding representatives of women participating in the management of public affairs. Thangme Konchog-Palmo, a former vice chairwoman of the CPPCC Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee, was born into an aristocratic family in Lhasa. She made the following comments: "Under the feudal serfdom of the old society, even the wives of the kalons of the local government had no political rights, which were enjoyed exclusively by men. After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, men and women became equal. Women are empowered with rights. This was a huge change."

## **V. Liberating and Developing the Productive Forces**

Democratic reform in Tibet abolished the feudal bondage of individual serfs to serf owners, and enabled the people to be masters of their own affairs. It replaced serf owners' land ownership with peasants' land ownership, which allowed serfs to own means of production and significantly liberated and developed productive forces. Since China adopted reform and opening up in 1978, the productive forces in Tibet have developed rapidly and have now caught up with the national level; the people in Tibet are sharing more and more achievements of modern civilization.

### **– Improving productive forces**

Democratic reform in Tibet enabled the former serfs to own their own land, farm tools, cattle and other means of production. They showed ever growing passion for working hard to create wealth. Agriculture and animal husbandry progressed significantly.

From 1959 to 1960, calculated at comparable prices, Tibet's GDP grew by 45.8 percent and its per capita GDP rose by 42.9 percent, both of which represented a historical high. From the winter of 1959 to the spring of 1960, 1,500 km of new water channels were built and 300 reservoirs were repaired in the agricultural areas, adding more than 24,666 ha of irrigated land. In 1960 as a whole, 5,000 km of new water channels were built along with 1,500 new reservoirs and ponds, which further expanded the area of irrigated land. From the winter of 1959 to the first half of 1960, Tibet collected 1.1 million tons of fertilizer. By the spring of 1960, arable land had expanded to an area of 182,000 ha, an increase of 20,000 ha over 1959.

Agricultural development led to significant improvements in the lives of peasants and herdsmen. Take the example of Khesum Township of Nedong County (present-day Nedong District). In the early days of democratic reform, 90 of its total of 119 rural households suffered food shortages; by 1964, all of its rural households had sufficient grain, seed stock, and fodder, and 95 percent of them had surplus grain. By the end of 1961, Tibet's total livestock inventory reached 12.06 million heads, surpassing the highest recorded figure before the 1959 rebellion.

The central government provided farm tools to peasants in Tibet who had acquired land. For example, some 367,000 metal farm tools were given free to the peasants and herdsmen. In the following years, the central government distributed several hundred thousand farm tools, and built small farm tool manufacturing factories in Lhasa, Qamdo, Shigatse, Gyantse, Tsethang, Nyingchi and other cities.

After democratic reform, the central government adopted a policy of steady development based on the real conditions in Tibet. In 1961, the CPC Tibet Working Committee issued Specific Policies Towards the Rural Areas and Regulations on the Current Policies Towards the Pastoral Areas, which received heartfelt support from officials and the public. By 1965, Tibet's total grain yield had reached 290,000 tons, up by 66.1 percent over 1958; its total livestock inventory was more than 17.01 million head, up by 54.1 percent over 1958.

From 1958 to 1965, Tibet made major progress in transport, education, culture, healthcare and other social undertakings. By 1965:

- Tibet had a total of 14,721 km of highway, up by a factor of 2.6 compared with 1958, connecting 90 percent of all its counties;
- There were eight new asphalt roads in downtown Lhasa;
- More than 95 percent of Lhasa residents had access to electric lighting;
- There were:
  - 1,822 primary schools with 66,781 students,
  - four middle schools with 1,359 students,
  - one secondary vocational school, and
  - one institution of higher learning.
- Tibet had 133 professional art troupes and cinemas;
- The number of medical institutions had increased to 193, more than three times the number in 1958;
- The number of hospital beds had risen to 1,631, 3.4 times the number in 1958;
- There were 2,947 healthcare workers, 3.7 times the number in 1958.

In 1966, Nyingchi Woolen Mill was established and put into operation – the first modern wool textile mill in Tibet's history. In 1965, the China-Nepal Highway, connecting Tibet and Nepal, was completed and opened to traffic. In 1973, the Yunnan-Tibet Highway opened to traffic.

#### **– Accomplishing a fundamental change in economic structure**

Through 60 years of hard work, agriculture and animal husbandry in Tibet is no longer subject to nature and the environment; it is steadily modernizing. The added value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fisheries and related service industries rose from 128 million yuan in 1959 to 13.41 billion

yuan in 2018. Grain yield increased from 182,900 tons in 1959 to more than 1 million tons in 2018; grain yield per unit area increased from 1,370 kg/ha in 1959 to 5,688 kg/ha in 2018. Specialty industries related to agriculture and animal husbandry have grown in size and productivity. Tibetan plateau brands have been established in agriculture and animal husbandry. A large group of specialty industrial bases have been created, such as high-quality grain and oil production, pollution-free vegetables, large-scale standardized dairy cattle farming, Tibetan pig farming, Tibetan chicken farming, and cashmere goat farming.

Modern industry started from scratch and has grown steadily. Through 60 years of development, Tibet has now established a modern industrial system covering over 20 sectors, including energy, construction materials, machinery, mining, light industry, food processing, ethnic handicrafts, and Tibetan medicine. Tibet has abandoned its traditional industrial model and is approaching modernized levels of production. Tibet's industrial added value increased from 15 million yuan in 1959 to 11.45 billion yuan in 2018.

Economic aggregate has achieved significant growth. In 2018, Tibet's GDP was 147.76 billion yuan, about 192 times the 1959 figure of 174 million yuan, calculated at comparable prices. Tibet's economic structure is improving. The share of added value from primary industry in GDP dropped from 73.6 percent in 1959 to 8.8 percent in 2018, while the share of secondary industry rose to 42.5 percent and the share of tertiary industry increased to 48.7 percent.

Tertiary industry is thriving, and tourism is developing rapidly. In 2018, Tibet received 33,687,300 tourist visits, with a total tourism revenue of 49.01 billion yuan. More than 100,000 farmers and herdsmen have added income through tourism, and Tibet has become an international tourist destination. Trade logistics, banking, insurance, e-commerce, logistics, and other new forms of industry have grown fast and have become new sources of growth.

### **– Improving infrastructure**

Tibet had no proper highways before its liberation in 1951, when highway construction in the modern sense began. Despite economic difficulties, China built the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, Sichuan-Tibet Highway and other low-grade highways connecting Tibet with other regions. After democratic reform, trunk highways such as the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway, Yunnan-Tibet Highway, and China-Nepal Highway were built. The Qinghai-Tibet Highway and Sichuan-Tibet Highway were asphalted, and a high-grade highway connecting downtown Lhasa and Gongkar Airport was completed. Now Tibet has formed a comprehensive transport network composed of highways, railways and air routes. By the end of 2018, Tibet had 97,800 km of highway, 660 km of which were high-grade highways. All counties in Tibet had access to highways, and

of the 697 townships and towns, 579 had direct access to highway transport and 696 could be reached by highways. Of the 5,467 villages in Tibet, 2,624 had direct access to highway transport and 5,457 could be reached by highway. In 2006, the Golmud-Lhasa section of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway was completed and opened to traffic, which was the first railway in Tibet. In 2014, the construction of Lhasa-Shigatse Railway was completed and tracklaying started on the Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway.

The construction of air stations and airports is progressing. In 1956, the first airstrip in Tibet was completed. Tibet now has five airports and 92 domestic and international air routes in operation. There is an airline network with Gongkar Airport in Lhasa as the main hub, and with Bamda Airport in Qamdo, Mainling Airport in Nyingchi, Gunsa Airport in Ngari, and Peace Airport in Shigatse as branches.

Before liberation in 1951, Tibet had only one 125-kw hydropower station, which supplied electricity only to a handful of aristocrats. In 1960, Ngachen Hydropower Station was completed and entered service, bringing electric lighting for the first time to the citizens of Lhasa. Subsequently, many more hydropower stations were completed, including Yamdrog Hydropower Station, Wiga Hydropower Station, Tralong Hydropower Station, Jinhe Hydropower Station, Drigung Hydropower Station, Shiquanhe Hydropower Station, Shoka Hydropower Station, Laohuzui Hydropower Station, Dzam Hydropower Station, Tobe Hydropower Station, Godok Hydropower Station, and Joba Hydropower Station. Yangbajain Geothermal Power Station has also been completed, as have a series of large grid-connected PV power plants. A comprehensive energy network is in place, with hydro power as the mainstay, and supplemented by oil, natural gas and renewables. The power supply in Tibet has been grid-connected with those in Qinghai and Sichuan provinces. Tibet's urban heating system has been greatly improved. In the winter of 2014, natural gas heating became available in downtown Lhasa, meeting the everyday needs of Lhasa residents. By the end of 2018, Tibet's power grid had extended to 62 counties (districts), supplying electricity to a population of 2.72 million; the other areas in Tibet had full power supply through small hydropower stations, local PV networks, and household PV systems.

## **VI. Promoting a Range of Undertakings**

Tibet's democratic reform enabled it to make a historic leap from feudal serfdom to socialism. The establishment of socialism served to liberate and develop its productive forces and lift its economic growth from one level to another, and promote significant social progress.

### **– Marked improvement in living standards**

Over the last six decades, the living standards of all ethnic peoples in Tibet have been improved and their happiness quotient has risen significantly. Before democratic reform the serfs had little food and scanty clothing; immediately after democratic reform began, their living conditions started to improve. In 2018, the average per capita disposal income of urban residents was 33,797 yuan, and that of rural residents was 11,450 yuan. Great efforts have been made to complete housing projects for low-income farmers and herdsmen, renovation and reinforcement of dilapidated houses, improvement of rural living conditions, resettlement of impoverished people from places of harsh natural conditions, affordable housing projects, and the transformation of shanty towns, to ensure that all rural and urban people in Tibet have safe and comfortable homes. Energy supply infrastructure has been improved. Central heating networks have been completed and put into operation in nine counties in Lhasa, Naqu, Ngari and Nyingchi, enabling more and more people to have access to heating system in winter. Optical cables and broadband networks have been connected to every township. The broadband access rate of administrative villages has reached 85 percent, with full mobile phone signal coverage.

Modern consumer durables are growing in popularity. Refrigerators, TVs, washing machines, computers, mobile phones and cars have become commonplace. Local radio, television, telecommunications and internet as modern communication tools are developing at the same pace as the rest of China and the wider world, and becoming an important part of daily life. Urbanization is also progressing. By 2018, the urbanization rate of the permanent resident population had reached 31 percent. An urban system has taken shape centered on Lhasa, with prefectures as pivots and a network of counties, border towns and tourist towns.

Before democratic reform, due to a combination of factors such as a backward economy, high infant mortality, poor medical conditions, and a high

proportion of Buddhist monks and nuns, the growth of Tibetan population had stagnated for a long time. Over the past 60 years, the population has grown from 1.23 million in 1959 to 3.44 million in 2018, with Tibetans making up over 90 percent of the total. The life expectancy of the people in Tibet increased from 35.5 before 1959 to 68.2 now. According to the “CCTV-China economic life survey” program jointly presented by the National Bureau of Statistics and China Central Television, Lhasa has ranked as the city with the highest happiness quotient for the last five years.

#### – Flourishing cultural undertakings

There was little access to cultural life for serfs in old Tibet. Over the past 60 years, the central government and the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region have given full support to the protection and promotion of Tibet’s fine traditional culture, to the development of advanced socialist culture, to achieve progress and prosperity in Tibet’s cultural undertakings, and to bring a richer cultural life to the people in Tibet. Cultural centers and cinemas have been set up in Lhasa and other cities. There are song and dance ensembles, Tibetan opera troupes, and drama troupes at the autonomous region level; folk art troupes at the prefecture level, 75 art troupes at the county level, and 2,400 amateur art groups at the township level. They perform in rural and pastoral areas and bring to remote villages the best of socialist culture. Cultural products are flourishing. Fine new works include the *Laundry Song*, the duet *A Walk in New Lhasa*, the musical *Daughter of the Sun*, the drama *Common Home*, the opera *Reconciled Love*, and the song *The Road to Heaven*. Some performing art works such as the outdoor live stage show *Princess Wencheng*, and the musicals *Happiness on the Way*, and *Searching for Shambala* have generated both social benefit and profits, and become well-known calling cards of Tibetan tourism.

By the end of 2018, the radio and television network coverage rates in Tibet had reached 97.1 percent and 98.2 percent. Currently, almost all cities (prefectures) have public libraries. Counties have comprehensive cultural centers, towns have cultural service centers, and administrative villages have cultural centers, libraries and projector rooms. The annual output of the cultural industry in Tibet totals 4.6 billion yuan. There are 234 cultural industry demonstration centers (parks) at national, regional, municipal (prefectural) and county levels.

The Tibetan language is protected by the law and develops smoothly. It is used extensively in political life. All resolutions and regulations adopted by people’s congresses of Tibet at all levels, and all official documents and public notices released by people’s governments at all levels and their subordinate departments are published in both Tibetan and Chinese. In the judicial process,

Tibetan is applied in hearing cases involving Tibetan litigants and in releasing legal instruments. Information technology has been applied to the Tibetan language, with a computer coding system using Tibetan characters that has reached national and international standards.

While protecting and developing the Tibetan language, the state is promoting the standard Chinese across the country, including Tibet, in accordance with the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language which stipulates that "the state popularizes Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters," and "All citizens shall have the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language."

The excellent traditional ethnic culture has been carried forward and promoted through a number of laws, regulations and official documents such as Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Protection of Cultural Relics, Regulations on the Protection of Old Town of Lhasa, Measures of the Tibet Autonomous Region for Implementing the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China, Measures of the Tibet Autonomous Region for the Protection and Management of the Potala Palace, and Plan of Rejuvenation of Traditional Craftsmanship in Tibet Autonomous Region. They have provided a legal basis for the protection of ethnic culture in Tibet.

Significant progress has been made in protecting cultural relics. The state and Tibet Autonomous Region have invested over 5 billion yuan in the renovation of 55 sites under state protection and 616 sites under regional protection. Taking the old town of Lhasa as an example, in transforming Barkhor Street, which dates back more than 1,300 years, the government of Lhasa gave full consideration to the protection and inheritance of ethnic culture by highlighting and displaying fine Tibetan cultural elements, listening to the suggestions and advice of local residents, monks and craftsmen, and organizing tours of the street for representatives of the public to offer opinions. All these efforts helped to protect the culture of the old town of Lhasa. The Potala Palace Complex has been registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Tibetan opera, *Gesar*, Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa have been included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. There are 89 items on the state level intangible heritage list and 96 state level Trustees. There are 460 items on the regional level intangible heritage list, and 350 regional level Trustees. Four sites including the Potala Palace are designated as state key units for the protection of ancient books and 291 ancient books are listed as national rare ancient books.

As Tibet becomes more open, its culture is going global. Tibetan Culture Week, and the China Tibet Tourism and Culture Expo are becoming platforms to present traditional Tibetan culture to the world. Tibet has also sent a variety

of art troupes to over 100 countries and regions to give performances, put on exhibitions, and carry out academic exchanges.

#### **– Solid progress in education**

In old Tibet, education was largely the preserve of the privileged aristocracy. The serfs who made up 95 percent of the population were not entitled to education, resulting in an illiteracy rate surpassing 95 percent among young people. After democratic reform, Qamdo Primary School, Lhasa Primary School, Lhasa Middle School, and Xizang Minzu University expanded quickly. Primary schools and middle schools were set up in all prefectures and counties. Primary schools were established in most townships and some villages.

In 1961, Lhasa Normal School opened officially. In the following years, Tibet University, Tibet Agriculture and Animal Husbandry University, Tibet Traditional Medical College and Tibet Vocational Technical College were set up. A modern and comprehensive education system is now in place in Tibet, including pre-school education, basic education, vocational technical education, higher education, continual education, and special education. All people in Tibet have a right to education that is fully protected.

After democratic reform, the Constitution, Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy and Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language and local regulations made specific requirements on the teaching, use and development of ethnic languages to establish a proper bilingual teaching system. At present, bilingual teaching has been introduced in some urban primary schools and all those in agricultural and pastoral areas, with main courses taught in Tibetan. Middle school courses are taught in both Tibetan and standard Chinese.

By 2017, Tibet had 1,239 kindergartens, 806 primary schools, 132 middle schools and seven institutions of higher learning. The number of graduates from these schools has increased from 18,000 in 1959 to over 530,000 today. Remarkable success has been achieved in running Tibetan classes in the rest of the country. Twenty-one provinces and cities are running such classes (schools). Over 36,000 Tibetan students of such classes have won credentials above the level of secondary technical school and got back to work in Tibet. In 1985, the state began to adopt the Three Guarantees policy – providing food, accommodation and school expenses – for children of farmers and herdsmen, as well as children from impoverished urban families. The standard has been raised 18 times. The policy coverage has expanded and the benefits increased. From 2012, Tibet has implemented the policy across the board for 15-year compulsory education. In 2018, the net enrollment rate in primary school was 99.5 percent, and gross enrollment rates in junior high, senior high and higher

education were 99.5, 82.3 and 39.2 percent respectively, with the per capita length of education reaching 9.55 years.

**– Constant development of medical services**

Over the past 60 years, Tibet has made steady progress in medical and health services, sharing synchronous development with the rest of the country and protecting the health rights of all people in Tibet. The system of medical services, maternity and child care, Tibetan medicine and therapies, and prevention and control of diseases has improved. By the late 1970s, regional epidemics presenting significant health hazards had been brought under control, and the morbidity and mortality rates of infectious and endemic diseases were in sharp decline. Solid efforts have been made to improve the medical and health infrastructure. Hospitals at all levels, including 71 county-level hospitals, have been renovated and expanded. A medical service system covering regional, municipal (prefectural), county and town levels is in place. In rural and pastoral areas farmers and herdsmen enjoy special preferential policies concerning medical services. This is a full-fledged policy which relies mostly on government input, supplemented by personal payment, social pooling for severe diseases and provision of medical aid. The central government attaches special importance to medical services in Tibet and send to Tibet medical workers selected from renowned hospitals across the nation. They are assigned to work in Tibet Autonomous Region People's Hospital and the hospitals in seven cities (prefectures), thereby helping to accelerate the development of medical and health services in Tibet.

Tibetan medicine and therapies are being effectively conserved, and passed down from generation to generation. Hospitals providing Tibetan medicine have been set up in all cities (prefectures) and counties, and therapeutic standards are consistently regulated and improved. Since the beginning of the 12th Five-year Plan (2011-2015), the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine has organized experts to collate and compile 150 volumes of medical literature from 29 ethnic groups. Tibet is responsible for the compilation of 20 of these on Tibetan medicine and therapies. It is also responsible for examining 10 practical medical techniques. In 2018, Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa was registered on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. By the end of 2018, Tibet had 50 hospitals providing Tibetan medicine, offering in total 2,412 beds.

A medical and health service system featuring traditional Chinese medicine, Western medicine, and Tibetan medicine, with Lhasa at the center and radiating throughout the whole autonomous region, is now in place. In Tibet today there are 1,547 medical institutions of various types, offering 16,787 beds, and employing 19,035 medical staff, increasing by 24 times, 35

times and 23 times respectively, compared with those before democratic reform. The childbirth mortality rate of the Region fell from 50 per thousand at the beginning of liberation to 1.02 per thousand in 2017, and the infant mortality rate from 430 per thousand to 10.38 per thousand.

**– Significant increase in social security provision**

In old Tibet, even in its capital Lhasa, homeless beggars proliferated. After liberation, the Working Committee of Tibet began to distribute relief food to those living in poverty. After democratic reform, a social security system was set up. The social security system known as “five major types of insurance” (endowment insurance, unemployment insurance, work-related injury insurance, medical insurance, and maternity insurance) is now in place and covers both urban and rural residents, benefiting 3.71 million participants. In 2017, a total of 375,331 people in Tibet benefited from endowment insurance, 532,326 from basic medical insurance, 842 from work-related injury insurance, 14,342 from maternity insurance and 30,577 from unemployment insurance.

Policies relating to insurance provision are improving. Benefits from endowment insurance for employees, and medical insurance for urban workers and urban residents were among the best in China. Basic living allowances for disadvantaged people have been improved. In 2017, people over 60 were entitled to receive basic pension in 74 counties (districts), and the number of eligible recipients stood at 283,647. The maximum payment limits of medical insurance for urban workers and residents were 300,000 and 200,000 yuan respectively. As of January 1, 2019, the government of Tibet has raised the minimum standard of subsistence allowance to 9,600 yuan for urban residents and 4,450 yuan for rural residents per person per year, and the standard for households (the aged, the infirm, old widows and orphans) eligible for the “five guarantees” (food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses) to 4,940 yuan per person per year.

## VII. Enhancing Ecological Progress

Situated at the heart of the Earth's "Third Pole", Tibet plays a strategic role in maintaining the global ecological balance by protecting its plateau ecology. Over the years the central and regional governments have always given top priority to protecting the eco-environment on the plateau, promoting a series of plans and programs.

### – Strengthening effort in ecological protection

In old Tibet, with an extremely underdeveloped economy, people could only adapt to the natural environment – they used whatever they could exploit from nature. As society and the economy develop, and especially with global warming on the rise, it has become a matter of urgency to protect the eco-environment in Tibet. In response to such a situation, the central and regional governments have taken a number of measures to address the problem. In 1975 the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region established a leading group on environmental protection, and then in 1983, set up a regional-level environmental protection department. Afterwards, with improvements in organization, management, laws and regulations, Tibet embarked on a path of sound development that supported ecological and environmental progress. The regional government has issued a series of local regulations, including the Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region for Environmental Protection, Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Prevention and Control of Atmospheric Pollution, and Measures of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Supervision and Administration of Ecological and Environmental Protection; released measures for implementing state laws and regulations, such as the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Nature Reserves, Water Law of the People's Republic of China, Law of the People's Republic of China on Water and Soil Conservation, and Grassland Law of the People's Republic of China; and guiding opinions such as the Opinions on Building a Beautiful Tibet and the Opinions on Building a National Eco-Barrier and Accelerating Ecological Progress.

All of these have provided a legal basis for developing nature and wetland reserves, protecting wild fauna and flora, conserving and managing water resources, conserving water and soil, preventing and controlling desertification, returning farmland and pastureland to woods and grassland, and protecting grassland ecology. In 2017, the regional government issued the Decision to

Promote Greening by Tree-Planting and Afforestation, which proposed that every person should plant an average of five trees, and that all households and villages should take part in tree-planting.

**– Enlarging nature reserves and ecological reserves**

Since the Qomolangma Nature Reserve was established in 1988, Tibet has set up 47 nature reserves of all kinds, including 11 at state level. The total area of nature reserves is 412,200 sq km – more than 34.35 percent of the total area of the autonomous region. There are 22 eco-protection areas, including one at state level, 36 counties in receipt of transfer payments from central finance for their key ecological roles, four national scenic areas, nine national forest parks, 22 national wetland parks, and three national geoparks. The central government has continued to increase eco-compensation for Tibet in return for its cost for protecting the eco-environment and the consequent losses in development opportunities. Since 2001, the central government has paid 31.6 billion yuan in eco-compensation to the autonomous region for protecting forests, grassland, wetland, and key ecological reserves.

**– Restoring biodiversity**

Significant progress has been made in Tibet's eco-safety barrier project and the afforestation project in the watersheds of the Yarlung Zangbo River, Nujiang River, Lhasa River, Nianchu River, Yalong River, and Shiquan River. Currently the autonomous region has 16.02 million ha of forests (including woodland, shrubland and other types of forestland), with a forest coverage rate of 12.14 percent and a growing forest stock of 2.28 billion cu m. The comprehensive vegetation coverage of natural grassland has reached 45.9 percent, the area of natural grassland is 88.93 million ha, and the area of wetland is 6.53 million ha. Tibet has 141 wild animals under state and regional protection, 38 wild plants under state protection, and 196 animals, 855 plant, and 22 avian species unique to the region. Key ecological system is under effective protection. The population of Tibetan antelopes has grown from 60,000 in the 1990s to more than 200,000. Tibetan wild donkeys have increased in numbers from 50,000 to 80,000, black-necked cranes from 3,000 to 8,000, and wild yaks from 7,000 to 10,000.

**– Improving living environment for residents**

Tibet has initiated a series of environmental protection projects, including the comprehensive control of drainage basins, improvement of the living environment of rural and urban residents, the prevention and control of pollution caused by industry and mining, the comprehensive control of construction linking rivers, lakes and reservoirs, and a piloted water ecology

project in Nagqu City, effectively protecting the clear waters and blue skies of Tibet. Officials of relevant governments are designated to be responsible for governance of each river and each lake. The autonomous region has created pioneering ecological reserves in the headwater areas of rivers, and initiated environmental governance and eco-restoration projects in Lake Namtso, Yamdrok Lake and other key lake basins. With state support, Tibet has made concerted efforts to create more livable cities and towns, and moved faster in building infrastructure such as household waste treatment and sewage plants. By the end of 2018, there were 106 solid waste landfills to treat household waste from cities and towns with a daily capacity of more than 2,240 tons, and 89 household waste transfer facilities with a daily capacity in excess of 470 tons. There were 16 urban sewage treatment plants with a daily capacity of 374,000 tons and 903 km of pipe network. The rates of clean disposal of household waste and wastewater at and above the county seat level have now surpassed 90 percent and 60 percent. Moreover, efforts have been made to improve the overall environment in rural areas, promote the greening of urban and rural communities, and address such problems as inefficient waste sorting, noise pollution, sewage drainage, and crop-stalk burning.

Since 2010, the autonomous region has spent more than 6 billion yuan to improve the living environment and the overall environment in 6,223 villages, with positive results. Currently all the major rivers and lakes in Tibet remain in their natural state, 95.7 percent of key waters have reached the national water standards, 97.5 percent of days are rated as “excellent” or “good” in terms of air quality, and ratings of air quality in the Qomolangma region are being maintained at either “excellent” or “good”, with Grade I air quality.

## VIII. Protecting the Freedom of Religious Belief

It is stipulated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China that "No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion." In Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, Bon, Islam, and Catholicism coexist with a number of other religions, and within Tibetan Buddhism there are different sects such as Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug. After democratic reform, Tibet put an end to theocracy, separating government from religion and so restoring the latter's true significance. The freedom of religious belief of all ethnic groups is protected by the Constitution and the laws, with all religions and religious sects being equally respected and protected. This equates to true religious harmony.

### – Religious activities are held regularly.

Currently, Tibet has 1,787 sites for the practice of Tibetan Buddhism, over 46,000 resident monks and nuns, and 358 Living Buddhas. There are four mosques and over 12,000 native Muslims, and one Catholic church and 700 believers. Tibetan and other minority ethnic groups carry out their religious activities in accordance with native traditions. In monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism, traditional religious activities such as learning scriptures and debate, promotion through degrees, initiation as a monk or nun, *abhisheka* (empowerment ceremony), sutra chanting, and self-cultivation are held on a regular basis, while ceremonial activities are also held at important religious festivals in accordance with local customs. The Tibet Autonomous Region celebrated the 20th anniversary of the enthronement of Chökyi Gyalpo, the 11th Panchen Lama, in 2015, the empowerment ceremony of *Kalachakala*, and other major Buddhist events. Ordinary believers usually have a scripture room or a Buddhist shrine at home, and such religious activities as circumambulation while reciting scriptures, Buddha worship, and inviting lamas or nuns from monasteries to hold religious rites at home are regularly practiced. The collation and publishing of Buddhist canons in Tibetan and the supply of copies of *Kangyur* to monasteries have met the study demands of Buddhist monks and nuns and lay believers.

**– The Living Buddha reincarnation is proceeding well.**

The Living Buddha reincarnation is a succession system unique to Tibetan Buddhism, and is respected by the state and governments at different levels of the autonomous region. The state issued the Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism in 2007 to further institutionalize the reincarnation process of Living Buddhas. In 1992 the State Administration for Religious Affairs approved the succession of the 17th Living Buddha Karmapa. Through traditional religious rituals and historical conventions like drawing lots from a golden urn, the search for and identification of the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama was carried out. With the approval of the State Council, the title of 11th Panchen Lama was conferred and he was enthroned in 1995. In 2000 the Seventh Regent Reting Rinpoche was enthroned in accordance with traditional religious rituals and historical conventions; in 2010 the Sixth Living Buddha Dezhub was nominated and enthroned through the drawing of lots from a golden urn and with the approval of the government of Tibet Autonomous Region. By 2018, 91 incarnated Living Buddhas had been confirmed through traditional religious rituals and historical conventions.

**– The cultivation and training of religious personnel are being strengthened.**

The system whereby Tibetan Buddhist monks learn sutras has been improved. The government of the Tibet Autonomous Region issued the Opinions on Building a Branch of the Tibetan Buddhist Institute and Methods of Awarding Academic Ranks in the Tibetan Buddhist Institute (trial). The China Tibetan Language High-level Institute of Buddhism has been set up in Beijing, and the Tibetan Buddhist Institute in Lhasa. Both recruit and train senior Buddhist teaching personnel. In November 2011 the Tibetan Buddhist Institute was completed and began operation, following an investment of over 100 million yuan. Since 2005, examinations for senior academic ranks and degree-conferring ceremonies have been held every year at the China Tibetan Language High-level Institute of Buddhism in Beijing, and degree examinations unique to Gelug have been held in Jokhang Temple and the three major monasteries in Lhasa. By 2018, a total of 117 monks had received senior academic titles in Lhasa and 68 in Beijing.

**– The rights of monasteries and monks are guaranteed.**

Temples are maintained and protected. Since the 1980s more than 1.4 billion yuan has been spent on restoring Tibetan cultural relics and refurbishing key monasteries. Medium-sized and smaller monasteries, which are not key sites under the state-level protection, are maintained with annual financial

support from the regional government. Monastery-run scripture printing houses have been conserved and developed; there are 60 such printing houses at the Potala Palace and other monasteries, producing 63,000 scriptural items every year. Sites for religious activities have been significantly improved and upgraded.

All the monks and nuns registered in the autonomous region have been included in the social security net, with full coverage of medical insurance, old-age insurance, subsistence allowance, and personal accident insurance. Monks and nuns are entitled to a free annual health check, with their health records filed and maintained in hospitals. The maintenance of dormitories for monks and nuns in monasteries is included in the government-subsidized housing plans.

**– The management of religious affairs is law-based.**

The state and the Tibet Autonomous Region manage religious affairs in accordance with laws and regulations. Freedom of religious belief, normal religious activities, and the legitimate rights and interests of religious groups are protected in accordance with the law. Since the introduction of reform and opening up in 1978, the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region has, based on local conditions, issued a series of policy measures and regulatory documents, to strengthen the management of religious affairs in accordance with laws and regulations. These include: Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Democratic Management of Buddhist Monasteries (trial), Measures of the Tibet Autonomous Region on Implementing the Regulations on Religious Affairs (trial), Measures of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Management of Major Religious Activities, and Detailed Rules of the Tibet Autonomous Region for the Implementation of the Measures on the Management of Living Buddha Reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhism. In 2017 the state released the revised Regulations on Religious Affairs. The regional government has also issued regulatory documents on strengthening education, cultivation and management of Living Buddhas and representative figures of Tibetan Buddhism, on the management of religious activities, on the examination and approval of the construction and repair of religious activity sites, and on the administration of the branches of the Tibetan Buddhist Institute. All of this has shown that the top-level design for religious affairs and relevant rules concerning religious activities in Tibet have been much improved.

## **IX. Strengthening Ethnic Equality and Unity**

The Chinese people of all ethnic groups are united in diversity. In the long course of history, the ethnic peoples of Tibet have worked together to develop the plateau and create the history of Tibet, which is an important part of the history of the Chinese nation. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the CPC and Chinese government have taken a pragmatic approach towards ethnic problems, formulated and implemented ethnic policies in the principles of ethnic equality and unity, regional ethnic autonomy, and the common prosperity of all ethnic groups.

Over the past 60 years, Tibet has fully implemented the ethnic policy of the CPC to enhance the awareness of ethnic solidarity and the sense of community of the Chinese nation, strengthen ethnic communication and integration, and build a new type of socialist ethnic relationship featuring equality, solidarity, mutual assistance and harmony. In the effort to maintain national unity and oppose separation, the ethnic groups of Tibet have withstood all tests and resisted all risks by rallying around the CPC Central Committee.

Over the past 60 years, the central government and all ethnic groups have been committed to the coordinated development of Tibet and the nation. From 1959 to 1965, financial subsidies from the central government continued to increase in spite of economic difficulties across the country, adding up to 590 million yuan. From 1963 to 1964, the state earmarked 1.4 million yuan to help farmers and herdsman, purchasing cattle and sheep for over 3,000 households. The central government has also allocated special funds for some major projects. It is estimated that from 1959 to 1964, the central government issued a total of 8.47 million yuan in interest-free and low-interest loans for agriculture and animal husbandry. The loans were used for purchasing over 20 million kilos of seeds and grain, 18,000 head of cattle, 13,000 sheep, 3,500 other domestic animals, 100,000 farm tools and 95 tons of steel for making tools.

At major historical points in Tibet's socialist construction, reform and development, the central government has mobilized and organized as many resources as possible from across the country to help Tibet to realize common prosperity. In the 1960s, goods for work and daily life such as grain from Xinjiang, tea from Fujian, fine breeds of livestock from Sichuan and blankets from Shanghai were provided to meet the needs of the people in Tibet.

The bond is close between all ethnic groups, particularly when disasters strike. In 1966, when Xingtai in Hebei Province was hit by an earthquake, a

group of around 60 herdsmen from Tibet walked for a total of 26 days, covering more than 5,500 km to bring 240 horses to Xingtai to help with the relief work. Thirty years later, a contingent of 28 people from Xingtai drove 60 locally made tractors to Lhasa to return the old favor. In 1985, 1990 and 1997 when blizzards struck Nagqu, people all over China reached out to help, sending food, quilts and coats to Tibet. In 2008 when Wenchuan in Sichuan Province was hit by an unprecedented earthquake, all the ethnic peoples of Tibet offered donations to the affected area. The list of such stories of mutual aid goes on.

After reform and opening up, the central government has been stepping up its assistance to Tibet. The National Symposium on Work in Tibet was held in 1980, 1984, 1994, 2001, 2010 and 2015 to improve the preferential policies applying to Tibet. After the first symposium, a series of policies to improve the economy, alleviate poverty, and work for a better life were implemented. After the second symposium, policies were introduced giving priority to household-based business operation and market regulation. Long-term government policies towards Tibet allow private ownership of livestock on a household basis, independent feeding management and business operation in pastoral areas; in agricultural areas, household-based ownership of farmland is allowed, and farmers independently make decisions regarding the use and operation of their land. After the third symposium, the central government issued a range of preferential policies covering taxation, investment and financing, financial service, price subsidies, foreign trade, social security, agriculture and rural areas, and enterprise reform. In 2005, another long-term policy of public ownership of grassland, the household contract system, and independent management was adopted by Tibet.

After the turn of the new century, the central government strengthened support for preferential policies in Tibet in line with changes in overall national and local development. There are 40 preferential policies in the Notice of Preferential Policies on Accelerating the Development and Maintaining Stability in Tibet released by the General Office of the State Council in 2006. These became more comprehensive in the Opinions on Major Policies and Projects Concerning Giving Support to Social and Economic Development in Tibet in 2016. It is estimated that financial aid from the central budget totaled 1.24 trillion yuan from 1980 to 2018, making up 91 percent of Tibet's financial expenditure.

Assistance from other provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the central government, and large and medium-sized enterprises began in the 1960s. Since the start of reform and opening up in 1978, assistance from developed provinces and cities has increased. In 1994, the Third National Symposium on Work in Tibet set down the principle of rallying national

support for Tibet and specified the assistance pattern of allocating responsibilities to certain provinces and rotating them on regular intervals, giving more impetus to Tibet's development. To date, a total of 18,000 officials and professionals from supporting provinces have been involved in the assistance campaign. Since 2015, assistance by educational and medical personnel from across the country has contributed tremendously to social development in Tibet. More than 10,000 projects are receiving support, representing a total investment of over 40 billion yuan.

With deeper reform and opening up, the economic and cultural ties between people in Tibet and those in the rest of China have become closer, with an increasing number of mixed communities and a closer emotional bond. More high-caliber people from across the country are coming to Tibet with advanced concepts and technologies, and their contribution is warmly welcomed and appreciated by local people. More Tibetans are also opening businesses in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai. There is easy mobility among ethnic groups and intermarriages have become a common sight. In Tibet today, families consisting members with different ethnic background are to be seen everywhere. There is a courtyard near Barkhor Street in Lhasa which is home to more than 20 households composed of Han, Tibetan and Hui people who live harmoniously like one big family.

## **X. Development of Tibet in the New Era**

Since the 18th CPC National Congress was held in 2012, the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core has attached great importance to Tibet and its ethnic groups. The CPC Central Committee has formulated major policies for development and stability in Tibet to meet the requirements for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, achieving the Two Centenary Goals, and realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

Xi, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, put forward an important strategic idea: “To govern the country well we must first govern the frontiers well, and to govern the frontiers well we must first ensure stability in Tibet.” He issued instructions to “strengthen ethnic unity and build a beautiful Tibet.” He presided over the Sixth National Symposium on Work in Tibet in August 2015, defining guiding principles, objectives, and tasks in Tibet in the new era. It was decided at the symposium that the central government would support a large number of key construction projects that were to be included in the 12th and 13th Five-year plans (covering ten years from 2011 to 2020), and a series of special preferential policies benefiting all ethnic groups in Tibet were enacted. General Secretary Xi wrote a series of letters to celebrate the launch of the second comprehensive scientific investigation and research of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the 60th anniversary of Xizang Minzu University, and to reply to a letter from the people of Yumai Township in Lhunze County. He wrote instructions for tree planting in Nagqu, and directed research into the Sichuan-Tibet Railway construction plan. He issued many important instructions on the development and stability of Tibet.

The general plan for governing Tibet in the new era defined by the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core is consistent with the principles and policies applied to Tibet since the beginning of democratic reform, while responding to Tibet’s development needs in the new era. It thus promotes the development and long-term stability of Tibet.

To develop Tibet in a new era, the Central Authority is committed to the philosophy of people-centered development and the concept of innovative, coordinated, green, open, and inclusive development. It strives to promote economic and social development, safeguard and improve people’s wellbeing, promote exchanges and integration among ethnic groups, and strengthen environmental protection. These efforts will give vitality and vigor to Tibet.

**– Committed to innovative development and greater economic vitality**

Considering innovation as the primary driving force, the government of Tibet has worked hard to implement the strategy of innovation-driven development.

It strives to promote institutional innovation. Driving development with supply-side structural reform, it is advancing reforms in key areas such as state-owned enterprises, the non-public economy, the factor market, the fiscal and taxation system, financial system, old-age insurance system, and medical and health system to tap the potential for development.

It drives development with scientific and technological innovation, while enhancing government guidance. To achieve this, it is working to establish a market-oriented scientific and technological innovation system with enterprises as the mainstay and collaboration between government, enterprises, universities, and research institutes; and building platforms for scientific and technological innovation. It is also working hard to enhance commercialization of scientific and technological advances, and improve contribution of science and technology to economic development.

By 2018, Tibet had established 74 entrepreneurship and innovation entities, including makerspaces, sci-tech enterprise incubators, innovation and entrepreneurship bases for college students, and bases for small and micro businesses, and these entities have attracted 1,338 entrepreneurship teams and startups. A number of scientific and technological innovation enterprises have grown stronger. In 2018, the number of high-tech enterprises in Tibet exceeded 50, 53 percent more than in 2017. The number of small and medium-sized enterprises featuring scientific innovation reached 75, up by 142 percent on a year-on-year basis.

Tibet has cultivated a series of industries with local characteristics, such as highland barley, yak, and Tibetan medicine, which are profitable in themselves while constituting a strong support for other industries in the Region. This rapidly rising “local characteristic” economy has become one of the most dynamic and promising highlights of the Tibetan economy.

The four national agricultural science and technology parks in Lhasa, Xigaze, Nagqu and Nyingchi and the Nyingchi National Sustainable Development Experimental Zone have a significant radial impact. Twelve state-level innovation-driven agricultural centers have played an active role in commercializing scientific and technological achievements in agricultural and pastoral areas and in boosting the people’s income.

**– Committed to coordinated and sustainable development**

In view of the current economic and social climate, the government of Tibet, while properly addressing economic and social problems and imbalanced

and insufficient development, has been working hard to handle the following relationships:

- between state investment and social investment;
- between major projects and projects to improve people's wellbeing;
- between taking advantage of strengths and strengthening areas of weaknesses;
- between urban employment and convenient employment, such as providing nearby job opportunities and improving people's employability;
- between relocating impoverished people to urban areas and relocating them to areas with surplus productive resources and relatively complete infrastructure;
- between protecting ecology and benefiting the people;
- between developing urban areas and improving basic public services in agricultural and pastoral areas;
- between streamlining administration, delegating power to lower level and localization;
- between increasing the output and efficiency of enterprises and improving the welfare of employees and the incomes of farmers and herdsmen.

Tibet has created a rural revitalization plan to cultivate new driving forces for rural development. In 2018, there were 8,364 specialized farmers cooperatives, and the total output value of the agricultural products processing industry was 4.2 billion yuan. Rural infrastructure has been improved. Systems are in place for agricultural disaster prevention and response, inspection and testing of the quality and safety of agricultural products, and animal epidemic control. Work has been done to improve the rural living environment and refuse and sewage treatment. And 98 percent of administrative villages in Tibet have access to optic fiber networks.

Tibet promotes balanced regional development. It is accelerating the development of backward areas, and encouraging different locations to use their strengths to the full and exploit industries with local characteristics, thus enhancing the economic strength of the whole Region. As a result, there is competition between different areas, and an increase of engines for economic growth.

Tibet has worked actively to develop Lhasa and Xigaze, two important nodes on the Belt and Road, and to open central and frontier cities to South Asia. The economic integration of Lhasa and Shannan is progressing, and a "three-hour" economic and transport circle in central Tibet is taking shape. New progress has been made in improving transport and energy supply infrastructure in eastern Tibet, and ecological protection in northwestern Tibet

has been strengthened. All-season and all-area tourism in southeastern Tibet is developing fast. The urbanization rate of permanent residents is 31 percent.

**– Committed to green development and a beautiful Tibet**

The government of Tibet firmly believes that clear waters and green mountains are invaluable assets, and that ecological protection is also a means of protecting productive forces. Bearing these ideas in mind, it prioritizes green development with ecological protection.

It defines primary responsibilities for ecological protection, follows strict principles of ecological safety, and prohibits high-pollution, high-emission, high-energy projects from entering Tibet. It strictly implements the systems under which only one leading official is granted the right to approve projects for the exploration and development of mineral resources, while at the same time a single veto will block any project detrimental to the environment.

Tibet operates a mechanism of incentives or subsidies for ecological protection. It has assigned 700,000 people to ecological protection posts, enabling the majority of farmers and herdsmen to find employment and earn a good living through ecological protection. Several key ecological projects have been implemented. Tibet promotes land greening in all areas, and a comprehensive regional ecological protection network is in place.

Tibet is working hard to develop green industries and promote clean energy. In 2018, green industries such as natural drinking water recorded an added value of 5.3 billion yuan, an increase of 14.3 percent over 2017. Another dividend of green development is a 30 percent growth in Tibet's tourism revenue and a 31.5 percent increase in the number of tourists in 2018.

Tibet continues to protect ecological barriers and build new ones, while making steady progress with afforestation of the basins of the Yarlung Zangbo, Nujiang, Lhasa, Nianchu, Yarlung (a tributary of Yarlung Zangbo), and Shiquan rivers. The mechanism for assessing and rewarding or punishing activities with an ecological impact has been improved. As a result of these efforts, nature reserves now occupy one third of the Region. The living wood growing stock, per capita forest area, per capita forest stock, per capita natural forest stock, and forest stock per unit area all rank first in China. River source areas, grasslands, lakes, wetlands, natural forests, water ecology, geological relics, and biodiversity are under effective protection, ensuring azure sky, green mountains, and clear waters in Tibet.

According to monitoring and evaluation conducted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and relevant government departments, the ecosystems of the Tibetan Plateau are generally stable, and the quality of its air, water, soil, and general ecological environment remain good. Noise and radiation levels

are positive. Most parts of Tibet are still in their pristine state. Tibet is still one of the regions with the best ecological environment in the world.

**– Committed to open development and mutually beneficial results**

Following the Belt and Road Initiative, the government of Tibet is building a policy structure that is inclusive, open, and cooperative in nature, while accelerating opening up.

Tibet sees the Belt and Road Initiative as an important channel for opening to South Asia, and has joined the initiative by participating in the construction of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor and promoting the Trans-Himalaya Economic Cooperation Zone. To strengthen infrastructure interconnection with Nepal, Tibet is building railways and highways; in 2014, China's Tibet Airlines and Nepal's Yeti Airlines founded a joint venture – Himalaya Airlines – to create air corridors. In the meantime, Tibet is moving faster in expanding trading posts such as Gyirong and Burang, and re-opening Zham.

Tibet works hard to develop an open economy. It successfully hosted the 16th China Tibet-Nepal Economic and Trade Fair in 2018. It is building the Gyirong Cross-border Economic Cooperation Zone and the Lhasa Comprehensive Bonded Zone. The output value of economic and industrial parks at all levels has exceeded 25 billion yuan. In 2018, the Region's imports and exports reached 4.8 billion yuan, and the volume of trade between the inhabitants of border areas increased by a factor of 1.8 over the previous year.

Tibet has intensified its effort to attract outside investment. In 2018, it unveiled 1,450 projects designed to invite external investment, which brought in funds of 63.08 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 38.8 percent.

Tibet carries out extensive external exchanges and cooperation by promoting the strategy of “inviting in and going out”. It has advanced exchanges and cooperation in tourism, culture, agriculture, animal husbandry, among others. It has successfully hosted four sessions of the China Tibet Tourism and Culture Expo and has made this a high-end Tibetan brand with nationwide and international influence, while serving as a driving force for regional development. Tibet has twice held the Forum on the Development of Tibet in Lhasa, along with the First Belt and Road Forum on Trans-Himalaya Cooperation, and the China-South Asia Standardization Forum. Through active communication with world-renowned experts and academics on advanced development concepts, Tibet is searching for new pathways and models for development in the new era.

**– Committed to shared development to enhance the happiness of the people**

The government of Tibet works hard to enhance the sense of participation and gain for people of all ethnic groups, ensuring that the fruits of development are shared by all the people.

Tibet is constantly improving the level of social security while steadily building a moderately prosperous society. It is creating a social security framework that guarantees all the people the rights to care for pre-school children, education, remunerable employment, health care and old-age care, housing, and assistance for the weak.

Since 2013, more than 273,000 new urban jobs have been created. In 2018, the registered urban unemployment rate was 2.83 percent, and per capita disposable income increased by 10.2 percent and 10.8 percent respectively for urban and rural residents. A social security system covering both urban and rural residents is in place. Orphanages have been set up at the city (prefecture) level, and nursing homes for the elderly have been founded at the regional, city (prefecture), and county (district) levels. Tibet has become one of the first parts of China to realize centralized care of orphans and those who are eligible for the “five guarantees”. Since 2013, about 710,000 people have been raised from poverty. The poverty headcount ratio fell from 35.2 percent in 2012 to below 6 percent in 2018.

Urbanization is advancing steadily. Xigaze, Shannan, Nyingchi, Qamdo, and Nagqu were converted from prefectures to cities. Since 2013, 314,600 government-subsidized homes have been built.

Partnership assistance from other parts of the country to Tibet is increasing. From 2013 to 2017, 1,736 assistance projects were launched, with a total of 14.35 billion yuan in funds.

According to a special survey of the National Bureau of Statistics, more than 97 percent of Tibet people are satisfied with their situation, and 97.3 percent are confident of achieving moderate prosperity.

## Conclusion

The leap of Tibet's development over the past 60 years fully demonstrates that its democratic reform conformed to the historical trend of the times and the fundamental aspirations of all ethnic groups in Tibet, and met the people's real demand for social progress. This reform has led to a historic transformation in Tibet's social system. It has brought rapid development to the Region and a happier life to the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet, and ensured the people's rights are fully guaranteed.

Since democratic reform, the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have become the masters of the country. It is deeply rooted in the people's minds that we must remain committed to the leadership of the CPC, the socialist road, and the system of regional ethnic autonomy. For many years, however, the old Tibetan forces represented by the Dalai Lama have attempted to deny the achievements of democratic reform and development in Tibet, for the sake of their political interests and out of a hankering for the dark and backward days of feudal serfdom. They disregard facts, and attempt to reverse the tide of history in opposition to the interests of human civilization.

Under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet are working together with the whole country to create a better life and achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. With steady progress being made towards socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, Tibet is bound to have an even brighter future.