

Communist Party orders all Tibetan monasteries to fly China flag

New policy sets out how temples will help maintain stability



Tibetan monks walk along a road at the Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery in Shangri-La, Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of southwest China's Yunnan Province (AFP Photo/Dale de la Rey)

The Communist Party chief in Tibet has ordered all Buddhist monasteries to fly China's national flag in a policy report setting out how Beijing aims to harness temples to fight separatism in the restive province.

Chen Quanguo said in article written for the state-run People's Daily on Wednesday that temples in the vast mountainous region would be used to promote patriotism and deliver social security services including new state pension subsidies for monks and nuns.

“The innovation temple management system ... is so that people could feel the party and the government's care and warmth,” he wrote.

In an article that used the word “law” more than 30 times, echoing President Xi Jinping's countrywide rule of law campaign, Tibet's most senior party official said temples will begin legal education and would be provided with televisions, radios and newspapers.

“Under the theme of legal publicity and education activities, the majority of monks and nuns [will be] more conscious of patriotism, compliance with the law and promotion of religious harmony,” Chen added.

The Communist Party considers Buddhist monasteries the frontline of resistance to Chinese rule in Tibet following hundreds of self-immolations and arrests in recent years.

Last month, police arrested at least 12 monks in three separate raids on Tsanden Monastery in Sog County, according to UK-based FreeTibet.org.

Their whereabouts and the reasons behind the arrests remain unknown although locals said they were accused of sharing images and information about the situation in Tibet.

Authorities have reportedly installed CCTV cameras in the monastery, a common practice at Tibetan temples and other religious institutions in China deemed a threat to state security.

In January, the Communist Party announced it was purging its own ranks in Tibet following investigations into dozens of state officials who “failed to take a firm stand on issues related to the Tibet question”.

During a speech in Japan on Tuesday, Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama again called for dialogue with Beijing in a bid to find a common solution on how Tibet is governed.

“We oppose China’s misguided policies, but without anger,” he said.

ucanews.com reporter, Beijing