

**SPEECH BY H.E. CHAMBA PHUNTSOK, GOVERNOR OF THE  
PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT OF TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION OF THE  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

H.E. Foreign Secretary of Nepal

H.E. Ambassador Sun Heping,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Dear friends

Namaste!

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of Tibet Autonomous Region of China, it is also the 50th anniversary of the founding of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Nepal. On these auspicious occasions and in a year of great importance, I am very pleased to be able to visit Nepal, a beautiful country with time-honored history, and take this opportunity to introduce to you my lovely hometown-the fascinating Tibet of China. During my visit here, wherever I go, I can sense and personally feel your ages-old brilliant traditional culture, plentiful entertainment, pure and splendid folk customs as well as the hospitality of Nepalese Government and people which has left impression and unforgettable experience to all the delegation members in the last couple of days. Here please allow me to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the government and people of Nepal for your hospitality extended to me.

Nepal is a beautiful country with a long history and splendid culture. It is known for Boudhanath Stupa, the oldest Stupa in the world, the Suyambu Nath Stupa, Kumari Temple as well as the great Old Palace at Bhaktapur build in the 18th Century. The bird-view from Mount Everest to Annapurna Himal and Pokhara valley, are striking like "the paradise on Earth."

China and Nepal are good neighbors sharing same mountains and rivers. The friendship between Chinese and Nepalese people dated back long time ago. In Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, the statue of Nepalese Princess Bhrikuti is still worshiped there, a testimony of friendship between our two peoples in the last 50 years after our two countries forged diplomatic ties, and such good neighborly relations between China and Nepal are further developed and strengthened. Our two governments and peoples cherish deeply our mutual friendship as apples of our eyes, and have maintained close cooperation on both regional and international affairs.

Tibet Autonomous Region of China and Nepal have been engaged in economic and trade ties from a long time. Since ancient times, Tibet and Nepal had had commercial and trade exchanges. With deepening good neighborly relations between China and Nepal, economic and trade between China's Tibet Autonomous Region and Nepal have seen dramatic development, and play an important part in bilateral trade relations between China and Nepal. China's Tibet Autonomous Region and Kingdom of Nepal share common similarity and strongly complement each other in the field of tourism. Nepal has become the tourist destination for Chinese citizens with the operation of the railways and up graded highways, more and more tourists from China's mainland will come to visit Nepal via Tibet, which will further push forward tourism cooperation between two sides and contribute greatly to the friendship between our two peoples. With rapid and sustainable development economically and socially, improved environment and tourist facilities, more and more tourists will come to Tibet via Nepal. Nepal will become increasingly important as overseas tourist market of TAR will come via Nepal. Our cooperation in this regard is necessary and promising. I sincerely look forward to deepening our cooperation in searching for new tourist routes, new sightseeing spots as well as manage our economic interaction and cooperation is developing with mutual benefits to both of our peoples. Up to now, ten trade fairs between Tibet Autonomous Region and Nepal have been jointly held, with great success, which have contributed significantly in promoting economic and trade development between China and Nepal and good neighborly relations between our two countries. Particularly, the official operation of Direct-Bus-Service between China and Nepal on May 1 this year marks the

beginning of direct passenger service by highways, which has further increased bilateral economic and cultural cooperation and enhanced friendly exchanges between our two peoples. As chairman of Tibet Autonomous Region of China, I am delighted to have Nepal as our neighbor and confident with our cooperation in economic and cultural areas. I am fully confident that with joint efforts, the traditional friendship between our two peoples will prevail forever as high as Mount Everest and as long as Yaluzanbujiang River.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends,

For the purpose of increasing mutual understanding and cooperation, I'd like to take this opportunity to give you, and through you to the friendly Nepalese people, a general picture of the development in China's Tibet.

Tibet Autonomous Region of China is my hometown. For years, I have been working and living there. Located in Southwest China, Tibet Autonomous Region boasts of the highest river in the world, that is the Yaluzanbujiang River, the cradle of Tibetan ethnic group, the Yaluzanbu Great Valley is the highest valley and the magnificent Mount Everest is the highest peak in the world. The well known Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Norblanka have been listed as the world cultural heritages by UNESCO. The altitude of my hometown averages over 4000 meters, which used to be described as the roof of the world or the third pole on earth. Tibet Autonomous Region covers an area of more than 1.2 million square kilometers, with a population of over 2.7 million. Among them, over 92% are Tibetan ethnics.

In the last forty years since its founding, under the generous and un-selfish support from the Central Government and people nationwide, and through the hard work of people of all ethnic backgrounds in the region, the productive forces of Tibet Autonomous Region has been greatly emancipated and seen impressive progress, with

world-noted accomplishment in its economic and social development, dramatic changes in its urban and rural areas, during its modernization drive. The total GDP of the region reached over 24 billion yuan, a 20-fold increase of that in 1965, with a per capital GDP of more than 8000 yuan.

In the past 40 years, the Central Government has earmarked huge amount of investment to improve the infrastructure of the region. The poor traffic in the region, where horses and mules used to serve as the daily transport tools, has turned into a modern communication and transport network linked by highways, civil aviation and tunnels. The mileage of highways reached 43,700 kilometers, with majority counties in the region are connected by highways. About 93% towns and 73% villages in the region have bus services. Two civil airports, namely the Gongga Airport in Lhasa and Bangda Airport in Changdu prefecture have been built, The Airport will be put in operation in March next year. with air routes from Lhasa to Beijing, Chengdu, Chongqing, Xi'an, Xining, Shanghai, Diqing in Yunnan Province, Kunming, Hong Kong as well as Kathmandu, Capital of your great country. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway, highest one in the world, started to be built in 2001. The railway tracks have reached Lhasa this October. It will be put into operation on a trial basis on July 1st next year. With hydropower as its main power generating resources, the region also boasts of new energy resources by utilizing geothermal, wind as well as solar energy. In 2004, the region has altogether 520 power stations, with an installed capacity of once 500,000 kilowatts. Telecommunications in the region have turned from postman stations in the past into today's modernized science and technological communications network with cables, satellite, digital, mobile and long-distance control switch boards being widely used. In 2004, there are 28.6 telephone sets subscribed among per hundred residents. Most counties are linked by cables and most towns being linked by telephones. There are 33 internet websites and 46,997-hiusehold internet users in the region. Tibet Autonomous Region also works hard to open itself to the region reached 224 million USD, with export markets extending over 20 world countries and regions including Thailand, Japan, Germany, Russia, etc. Tourism industry in the region is also booming. In 2004, 1.22

million tourists, both foreign and domestic, visited Tibet, with tourist revenue of 1.532 billion yuan.

Tibet Autonomous Region also witnessed rapid progress in social development such as education and public health. Up to now, the region has altogether 1010 schools, with 486,400 students. The enrollment rate of primary pupils reaches as high as 94.7%, and the illiteracy rate among the young adults dropped to 15% below. A relatively modern educational mechanism covering pre-schools, primary and middle schools, vocational and advanced education, education catering to special needs and education of higher learning has been put into place. Since 1985, the Central Government has set up middle schools and classes specially designated to students of Tibetan ethnic group in 21 inland provinces, which have trained nearly 10,000 graduates with university or college educational backgrounds for the region. Tibet Autonomous Region also works hard for the development of healthcare system, with increasing medical service improvement. By the end of 2004, the number of hospitals and clinics in the region reaches 1,326, with 3.13 health workers and 2.53 clinical beds among per thousand residents. The system of free medical care has been extended to all the framers and herdsmen in the region. As a result, the population in the region increased dramatically from about one million in the middle period of last century to 2.7 million more, the average life expectancy increased from 35 years old to 67 years old nowadays. The radio and TV broadcasting coverage rate reached 83.1% and 84.5% respectively.

With constant economic and social progress, the incomes of people in both urban and rural areas have upgraded by a big margin. The living standards of ordinary people have greatly improved accordingly. This year the per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen reached over 2000 yuan. The per capita living space of farmers and herdsmen reached 21.3 square meters and for urban resident, 20.11 square meters. With the support and assistance of the government, a gradually improved social security mechanism has been put into place, as a result, the pensions of the retired in state-owned enterprises and minimum wages of urban residents have been upgraded. The mechanism of

unemployment insurance and insurance for on-duty injuries as well as criteria for minimum wages have been set up. The special medical care and aid system to the people under extreme poverty has been put into place. Nowadays, TV sets, autonomous, etc. are becoming daily necessities of common people, and necessary tools for farmers and herdsmen to get to know the outside world. The markets in the region boast of abundant commodities at reasonable prices. Those Nepalese businessmen at Bakor Street, commercial areas of Lhasa are well aware of these facts, and they are doing quite well there.

Dear friends,

Every small step of progress in the region and every step of improvement of living standards of people in Tibet Autonomous Region attributes to the special care of Central Government and generous support of a big family of motherland. Particularly after 1980s, four working conferences on Tibet have been held by the Central Government in 1982,1984,1994 and 2001 respectively, outlining the guiding principles, major task and development target of Tibet Autonomous Region. At these meetings, the decision of both the Central and local governments nationwide increasing their input to the region has been made, and a series of special, preferential and flexible policies are worked out, which, as a result, has strongly pushed forward the modernization drive of Tibet Autonomous Region. In particular, after the Third Working Conference, the Central Government has increased its fiscal support to the region. From 1994 to 2004, the fiscal subsidies from the Central Government to the region amounted to 78.526 billion yuan. In the tenth Five-year plan period, The Central Government has increased over 50 billion yuan in the infrastructure construction in the region, involving energy, agriculture, animal husbandry, industry education, public health, radio & TV broadcasting, city construction. etc., all these have contributed greatly in upgrading the productive forces, economic and social development, as well as the momentum of sustainable development of the region.

As you know, China is a large family with 56 ethnic groups in the country. It is one of important political systems of China to apply the system of regional national

autonomy in areas populated by minority nationalities, by which minority ethnic groups in China fully enjoy the rights of running the state and local affairs. As stipulated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and Law on Regional National Autonomy of the People's Republic of China, local governments in autonomous regions of China enjoy the same jurisdiction rights as those in other regions. In addition, they also enjoy the rights of autonomy in governing local internal affairs. After its founding in 1965, under the leadership of the Central Government, Tibet Autonomous Region has seen historical transformation in social systems, and has adopted the system of regional national autonomy, which turned the former serfs and slaves into masters of the country and society. In the last four decades, people of all ethnic groups in Tibet Autonomous Region are enthusiastic in exercising their voting rights bestowed by the Constitution and laws, actively participating in the voting of deputies to the people's congresses at both local and national levels, and running local and state affairs through their elected deputies. The People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region and its Standing Committee have stipulated over 230 local laws and regulations, which as a result, fully guaranteed the legitimate rights and interests of people of all ethnic backgrounds in the region. In the last 40 years, there have been altogether seven chairmen for the People's Government of Tibet Autonomous Region. With no exception, all the seven are citizens of Tibetan ethnics. The practice in the last four decades fully demonstrates that the regional national autonomy system of China is in conformity with the reality of China including Tibet Autonomous Region, and is overwhelmingly welcomed and supported by people of all ethnic and is overwhelmingly welcomed and supported by people of all ethnic groups in the region. I myself have turned from a son of a peasant family into the incumbent chairman of the region. My own story is a vivid testimony and demonstration of the fact that people of all ethnic backgrounds have become masters of the region and country.

The Central government attaches great importance to the heritage and development of traditional culture, and has adopted the policy of freedom in religious belief and all schools of religion are equal. The religious freedom and traditional folk customs of Tibetan ethnic group are fully respected and well protected. Up to now, there

are altogether over 1,700 sites for religious activities, with 46,000 Lamas and nuns in the monasteries of the region. Freedom in religious belief among the people is fully guaranteed. Various kinds of important pilgrims in the region come to Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region each year, to pay their pilgrimage. While keeping their traditional costumes, cuisine, housing and traditional way of living, Tibetan ethnic group also absorbs in some new, modern and civilized way to living in regard to clothing, food, wedding and funeral, etc., which greatly enriches and improves the daily life of Tibetan people.

Tibetan language is widely learned, adopted and developed. The Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Autonomous Region has stipulated local laws and regulations in regard to the study, usage and development of Tibetan language. All official papers including the publication of local laws, regulations, resolutions and documents, are written in Tibetan language. All billboards of government's departments and in public places must have Tibetan language. Local courts and procurators are required to handle lawsuits involving Tibetan ethnic clients in Tibetan language, and all legal documents are required to be written in Tibetan language. Tibetan language studies are required by all schools in the region as a major.

All newspapers, radio and TV programs adopt both Tibetan and Mandarin, with over 30 broadcasting hours in Tibetan language. For the time being, there are over 20 kinds of newspapers and magazines in Tibetan language version in the region. The standardization of information technology in connection with Tibetan language has achieved breakthrough progress. The code of Tibetan language has met both national and international standards, such becoming the first language of minority in China adopting international standard.

The region also works hard in the area of historical relics protection, with a series of laws and regulations being mapped out, and over 1,400 monasteries and temples in the

region are reopen and a great number of historical relics have been maintained and protected in a timely manner. In last decade both the Central and local governments have earmarked over 700 million yuan for the maintenance of a number of Tibetan Buddhist key monasteries, mosques and catholic churches in Lhasa, including three key relics namely, the Potala Palace, Norbulingka and Saja Temple.

Under the leadership of the Central Government and in a big family of motherland, people of all ethnic groups in the region fully enjoy autonomy politically, economically and socially, and fully enjoy free choices in developing traditional culture and freedom in religious belief.

Located mainly on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Tibet is not only birthplace of most rivers in China, South and Southeast Asia, but also the "controller" of climate change in Asia, even the Northern Hemisphere. It is also called the Water Tower of Asia, and plays an important part in environmental protection in China and Asia. The central and local Governments, for years, attaches great importance to the protection of environmental and natural resources in the region, works hard to protect natural environment by preserving natural forestry resources, planting trees, preventing desertification, re-cultivating land for forestry and protecting grassland. As a result, a number of natural and ecological protection zones have been set up, which have strongly pushed forward the sustainable economic and social development in the region. By the end of 2004, there are altogether 38 natural environmental protection zones being built in the region, among which, 7 are at national level, 8 at regional level and 23 at city or country level, covering an area of 407,700 square kilometers, about 34% of the total area of the region, ranking top in the country or even in the world in terms of total areas being covered. Tibet Autonomous Region also boasts of 125 species of wild animals, 39 kinds of wild plants under the state protection. All these wild animals, plants and precious historical relics in the region are well preserved and protected. Up to now, water and air quality in the region is still in natural original state. It is one of the best areas in the world in terms of its ecological status.

Dear Friends,

Tibet autonomous Region today enjoys political stability, rapid economic development, impressive social progress harmonious national unity and peaceful border where people are content with their living and daily life. It is the best historical period of the region in terms of its development and stability after the middle period of last century. In the past 40 years since the founding of Tibet Autonomous Region, people of all ethnic backgrounds in the region have been feeling deeply the warmth of a big family of motherland, become more determined to turn their hometown into more beautiful one, safeguard national unity and seek common prosperity among all ethnic groups. We are fully confident that with the special care of Central Government and generous support of people nationwide, with the solid foundation paved in its 40-year modernization drive, along with the hard-working of 2.7 million people of all ethnic backgrounds in the region, the future of Tibet Autonomous Region will become more promising and prosperous.

At the same time, we sincerely hope that the wise Nepalese people will enjoy happy and more prosperous life.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends,

The people of China and Nepal share time-honored traditional friendship. Let's work together to make our friendship blossom as colorful as Rhododendron Arboreum. I'd like to thank Institute of Foreign Affairs and Confederation of Nepalese Industries for your organizing this program.

Thank you.

