

China wants to turn Tibet into an amusement park¹

China is a strange country. While its new leaders dream of a modern nation with a scientific outlook, some of China's present practices take us back to the darkest days of Mao's era. Where has the glasnost gone?

Take Yu Zhengsheng's visit to the Tibetan Autonomous Region. But first, you may ask, who is Yu?

Yu is one of the 7 bosses of the Middle Kingdom; he is the Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the member of the Standing Committee responsible for Tibetan Affairs. He paid an 'inspection tour' around Lhasa from August 1 to 6; the most extraordinary is not the visit itself, but the fact that nothing appeared in the Chinese (and the local Tibetan) press before Yu was back in Beijing on August 6 evening.

Outside China, it is difficult to believe that an official responsible for a region such as Tibet, can stay there for nearly one week with the world remaining unaware of his visit until he had left.

Like Xi Jinping when he addressed a Tibetan delegation in March in Beijing during the National People's Congress, Yu spoke of "achieving leapfrog economic and social development in Tibet and long-term stability".

Yu rejected the Dalai Lama's proposal for a high-degree of autonomy for all Tibetan-inhabited areas. Yu said that it "runs counter to China's Constitution, the law, and the fundamental interests of Tibetan Buddhism."

Yu asked the monks to "have a clear understanding of the secessionist nature of the Dalai Lama clique and resolutely safeguard national unification, ethnic unity and Tibet's harmony and stability."

¹ Published in ***Niti Central*** on August 11, 2013 (URL not available).

The 'secret' visit was unusually long (6 days) and seems to have focused on the way "to scientifically develop ideas to strengthen infrastructure construction and cultivate industries."

But developing Tibet for what?

Probably to flood the Tibetan plateau with more and more Han tourists!

To receive the 15 million Chinese visitors expected this year, a good infrastructure is required; airports and the railway line are the backbones of a booming tourism industry in Tibet.

Xinhua recently reported that the airport in Chamdo (known as the Bangda Airport) was to be reopened after major repairs.

Soon after, the 4,411-metre-high Kardze Daocheng Yading airport will be functional in Kardze in Sichuan province. It will become the world's highest civilian airport (It is hardly imaginable in India, it will be completed a year earlier than planned!!).

The airport will also facilitate the quick transportation of fresh troops from the Military Area Command in Chengdu to Kardze prefecture, one of the most restive areas on the Tibetan plateau.

The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) reported a serious incident which occurred in the area on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's birthday (July 6). At least nine Tibetans sustained serious gunshot wounds and are believed to be in critical condition. Many others, both monastic and lay Tibetans have been injured after paramilitary forces from People's Armed Police (PAP) lobbed teargas shells and beat them.

The new Kardze Yading airport will greatly facilitate the transportation of PAP reinforcements in case of unrest. With one stone, two birds are killed: the

Tibetan protesters are 'pacified' and the deluge of Chinese tourists can bring hefty revenues.

The website *Chinanews.com* told Han mainlanders : "Tibet with its mystery is the spiritual Garden of Eden; and is longed for by travelers home and abroad; Only by stepping on the snowy plateau, can one be baptized by its splendor, culture, folklore, life, snow mountains, saint mountains, sacred lakes, residences with local characteristics and charming landscape."

Tibet is fast becoming the largest entertainment park in the world; thousand times larger than Disneyland.

Today, the leadership in Beijing has found a sophisticated way to submerge (or drown) the Tibetan population under waves of Han Chinese.

The government in Beijing markets the Land of Snows as the ultimate 'indigenous' spot for the Chinese people to spend their holidays,

Tibet has two unique assets: first, its physical aspect. The beauty of the landscape, the imposing mountain ranges, the purity of the air and the rivers, the dry pure sky (especially when compared to the sky of China's great metropolis); Tibet is the ideal place to have a break from the fast pace of the polluted mainland.

The second advantage is the rich historical past of the Roof of the World, the Land of the Lamas. In Tibet, you can find everything, proclaims Chinese propaganda: a beautiful Chinese princess falling for the powerful emperor and converting him to Buddhism; the monasteries and nunneries, seat of a wisdom lost in the mainland; the folkloric yak or snow-lion dances; the Shoton (yoghurt) festival; the beautiful colourful handicrafts; the exotic food, you name it.

And you get entertained!

Take the 'Grand Princess Wencheng Opera'; an opera on the life of the Chinese wife of the Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo, who lived in the 7th century CE. The Opera is staged at the outskirts of Lhasa with some 600 actors on a nearly-100 meters long stage; but more funny (or tragic), in front of a newly-built replica of the Potala Palace, a few kilometers from the real one.

The Tibetan blogger and dissident Tsering Woesser, who lives in Beijing but frequently visits Tibet, posted images of the 'new' Potala on her blog. She explains: "In reality this is a project to rewrite history, to 'wipe out' the historical memory and culture of a people. This is a 'win win' project."

She says that more than \$120 million had been invested in the project.

To further entertain the Chinese visitors, the administration of the Tibetan Autonomous Region is organizing 'festivals' such as the Lhasa Shoton Festival, the Damxung Horse Racing Festival and hosts of others.

One of these festivals is dedicated to Tsangyang Gyatso, the 6th Dalai Lama, born in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chinese propaganda tells the tourists that he is born in Tibet. The announcement says: "tourists can enjoy beautiful Tibetan love songs performed by locals from the Tsona County in Lhoka Prefecture, hometown of Tsangyang Gyatso, the household name of the 6th Dalai Lama."

The fact that Tsangyang Gyatso is born on the other side of the McMahon in Tawang district of Himachal Pradesh is cleverly overlooked. The Chinese authorities probably extend 'Southern Tibet' to the plains of Assam.

With a few stones so many birds are killed.