

Dalai Lama accuses China of "cultural genocide".By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

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NEW DELHI, March 9 (Reuters) - Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama on Sunday accused China of pursuing a policy of "cultural genocide" and warned that isolated violence in his Himalayan homeland could spread.

In a strongly-worded statement issued to mark the 38th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising that triggered his own flight to exile in India, the Dalai Lama also said he hoped post-Deng China would "find the courage, wisdom and vision" to solve the Tibetan issue.

The Dalai Lama said a new Beijing policy launched last year aims to "systematically undermine and destroy the distinct and cultural and national identity of the Tibetan people".

Experimental Tibetan language middle schools established in the 1980s were being closed down, and the Tibet University in Lhasa was compelled to teach Tibetan history in the Chinese language, the 61-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner said.

"These new measures...coupled with the unabated influx of Chinese immigrants to Tibet...amounts to a policy of cultural genocide," the statement said.

"If this population transfer is allowed to continue, in a few decades the Tibetan civilisation will cease to exist."

The Dalai Lama said under the "Strike Hard" anti-crime campaign which China launched in April 1996, Tibetans were subjected to increased torture and imprisonment.

"Political re-education conducted by the authorities in monasteries and nunneries throughout Tibet have resulted in mass expulsion, imprisonment and death," the statement said.

He said he continued to be concerned about the fate of Gedhun Choeki Nyima, the boy he had identified as the successor to the Panchen Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's second highest figure.

China anointed seven-year-old Gyaincain Norbu, as a rival to Nyima, a step many Tibetans interpret as Beijing's attempt to whittle down the Dalai Lama's status as their rightful leader.

"For us Tibetans the path of non-violence is a matter of principle," the Dalai Lama said, but added that he was concerned by recent reports of isolated bomb explosions in Tibet.

"I will continue to counsel non-violence, but unless the Chinese authorities forsake the brutal methods it employs, it will be difficult to prevent the situation in Tibet from deteriorating further," he said.

Raidi, chairman of the Tibetan People's Congress, on Friday accused Western nations of colluding with pro-independence activists who launched a wave of bombings and acts of sabotage in the restive Himalayan region last year.

Fears of unrest among China's ethnic minorities have risen in recent months, fuelled by reports of ethnic violence both in Tibet and the neighbouring far western region of Xinjiang.

Exiled Uighur nationalists have claimed responsibility for bomb attacks in mainly-Moslem Xinjiang two weeks ago that killed at least nine people and wounded 74.

Exiled Uighur separatists have also claimed responsibility for a bomb planted on a Beijing bus on Friday in which at least two people died and about 30 were injured.

The Dalai Lama's statement was issued less than two weeks before he starts a controversial six-day visit to Taiwan that has been condemned by China's foreign minister Qian Qichen.

"The Dalai Lama is a political figure in a lengthy exile and is engaged in activities aimed at splitting the motherland," Qian said on Friday. "His visit to Taiwan will inevitably have political purposes."



Beijing insists that both the exiled Dalai Lama and Taiwan's leaders have a pro-independence agenda.

The Dalai Lama, worshipped as a god-king in Tibet, has said his visit will be purely religious. Taiwan has said Foreign Minister John Chang will not meet with the Dalai Lama during his visit and no meeting has been set with President Lee Teng-hui.

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India's Kashmir region said on Thursday he did not think a nuclear war would erupt on the rocky front over the disputed territory.

"I think India has never thought of using a nuclear option, and Pakistan would never make that mistake," Farooq Abdullah, chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir state, told Reuters.

U.S. intelligence officials told the Senate Intelligence Committee on Wednesday that India and Pakistan could stumble into an unwanted war that could escalate into a nuclear exchange.

Lt Gen Patrick Hughes, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, called the India-Pakistan rivalry America's most important security concern in the subcontinent.

He said neither side wanted war but both had short-range ballistic missiles, could quickly assemble nuclear weapons and maintained large forces across a broad line of control.

"With frequent low-level clashes, the potential for an escalation and rapid escalation is constant," Hughes said.



The report says India's leaders have fought for a long time to achieve independence from Britain in 1947, but of them

most of Kashmir, obtained a partial victory in 1973 but says it has not won a

India said on Wednesday that it favoured settling high-level talks with Pakistan but would not be the Prime Minister's first choice to settle the final status of Kashmir, saying differences between the two sides had

Abdullah, in a telephone interview from the state's winter capital of Srinagar, said he hoped Pakistan's new government would take a "realistic view" of Kashmir and that India would soon start talks with Islamabad. He said H.D. Deve Gowda

"I am hopeful there will be an amicable settlement," he said. "We want a settlement whether by force or not but our priority will end."

The charismatic Abdullah, whose father Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah founded the state and fought for its independence, rose to power last October on a pledge to start greater autonomy for India's only Muslim-majority state after the first local elections since a blood-ridden decade of conflict in 1990.

Abdullah noted that Kashmir had not been used as an issue in either house of the state's legislature, Jammu and Kashmir, in Monday's Pakistan elections.

He said that while Kashmir was not an issue in a Pakistan election, "there is something about it which shows that Pakistan are also sick of it (the Kashmir issue)."

Abdullah, who narrowly escaped a bomb planted by a Kashmiri separatist group, said he had been in a "very difficult" situation since he took office. "We no longer receive any direct communication from the state government," he said, "specific information about where they (the guerrillas) are," he said.

More than 20,000 people have been killed since 1990 when separatist groups began a violent campaign to end Indian rule in the state. India accuses Pakistan of training and arming Kashmiri rebels, a charge denied by Islamabad.

Abdullah said prime minister Deve Gowda was scheduled to visit Srinagar with Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif on February 12. "We will discuss major economic issues," he said, adding that Kashmir was the only Indian state to announce a major security plan that would give unemployed youth monthly stipends for up to a year.