

'Renmin Ribao' views Tibet's economic development

Summary: Tibet was once considered the rear" of China's reform and opening up; this is "no wonder" as "the blueprint for the 1990s drawn up by Tibetans themselves does not seem to aim high"; Tibet's difficulties include "the contradiction between the gradually decreasing farmland and the drastically increasing population and the numerous restrictive factors such as communications, energy and population quality"; these problems are " no reason for Tibet to be content with the present situation and not to think of making progress ", under the influence of Deng Xiaoping 's remarks of 1992, Tibetans began to ask whether Tibet was willing "to accept the label of 'being special' and stand at the rear of reform and opening up"; "backwardness" and geographical isolation "not terrifying"; What is terrifying is rigid and conservative thinking and the psychology of idleness"; reforms since July 1992 have made the world see Tibet in a new light, local governments have introduced "economic and trade" aspects to traditional festivals.

'Renmin Ribao' (People's Daily), Beijing, in Chinese 16th May 1994, p. 1, published in translation by the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 31 May 1994

Text of report by staff reporters Liu Wei (04910251) and He Guanghua (63201639 5478):

"Looking at Tibet in a new light"

Whenever one mentions Tibet, one usually associates it with backwardness, with being closed and with barrenness. Foreigners would rephrase it by calling it the "world's last Shangri-la" which means the same thing. However, the reality is totally different: this "roof of the world" amid reform and opening up has unprecedented vigour and vitality and has in store formidable hopes and prospects..[ellipses as received] At one time, Tibet was considered the "rear" of China's reform and opening up.

No wonder. The blueprint for the 1990s drawn up by Tibetans themselves does not seem to aim high. It fixes the annual average growth rate at only approximately 5.8%. Of course, it has difficulties which outsiders have difficulty understanding. The "blood-transfusion" economy consistently pursued over the past 40 years alone is a high wall that destines Tibet to have a very, very long way to go for its economic development, not to mention the contradiction between the gradually decreasing farmland and the drastically increasing population and the numerous restrictive factors such as communications, energy and population quality. But this is no reason for Tibet to be content with the present situation and not to think of making progress.

After the spirit of Deng Xiaoping's remarks during his southern tour was relayed to the ice-capped plateau in early 1992, Tibetans could no longer remain calm. They began to ask themselves: Can Tibet remain "special" forever and continue to depend on the state's long-term "blood transfusions"? Is Tibet willing to accept the label of "being special" and stand at the rear of reform and opening up? Backwardness is not terrifying. Being geographically closed is not terrifying. What is terrifying is rigid and conservative thinking and the psychology of idleness. Since April 1992, a big discussion on "changing the way of thinking and finding out about the difference", which involved everyone on the plateau, began in this context.

By transforming the "rear" into the "forefront" facing South Asia and changing an advantage in resources into an economic advantage, Tibetans this time seized the opportunity to increase the extent of reform and strive to develop in pace with the national economy.

At the beginning of July 1992, Tibet introduced a series of policies and regulations, including those intended to "deepen reform and increase the degree of openness", "encourage investment in Tibet from abroad and at home" and quicken the development of tertiary industry and township and town enterprises. In mid July, the ports of Tibet's Burang and India's Gongci open and close at the same hours. The Yamarong Border Trade Fair, which had been suspended for 33 years, and other traditional border markets

were restored. In August, Tibet announced 19 projects to attract a total investment of over 4bn yuan. It also set up an office for attracting investment from abroad and at home. Afterward, border-trade and export-orientated economic development zones were set up in 10 counties and ports on the Tibetan border. In September, large-scale economic and trade talks between Tibet and Nepal solemnly opened in Lhasa. [ellipses as received] With its unprecedented high efficiency, quick tempo and new attitude, the "roof of the world" made the world see it in a new light.

That summer, an unprecedented market wave swept across Tibet. In Lhasa, the barriers of government organs on Linguo Road, Beijing Road and Linzhu Road were all nulled down almost overnight. Half a month later, a metals market was set up on Linguo Road, Beijing Road was changed into a street of clothes shops and deluxe restaurants and hotels were found on west Beijing road. According to the Lhasa bureau of industry and commerce, in the June-July period alone, over 500 individual industrial and commercial entrepreneurs were added, almost 10% of the city's total individual and commercial entrepreneurs. Several bustling commercial streets were also found in such central cities and towns as Xigaze [Shigatse] and Zetang.

Furthermore, local governments introduced "economic and trade" contents to the numerous ethnic year, such as Lhasa's Xuedun [Shoton] festival, Gyangze's Dama festival, Nagqu's Horse-Racing festival, Shannan's Yalong Cultural Festival and Nyingchi's Spring Festival. At the same time, they also held trade fairs of different scales so that the Tibetan peasants and herders could experience a new way of spending the festivals.

In the meantime, governments at all levels in Tibet have introduced preferential policies, set aside special funds, quickened market development and shifted their attention from the previous trade fairs to all types of multifunction, multilayer and multiform special markets. In this connection, real estate development, capital, labour service and old-clothing markets have come into being. Transactions in the timber, grain and fruit markets have become brisker. What is heartening is that peasants and herders have begun to appear in the market arena. A special market has been set up in Lhasa specifically for peasants and herders coming into the city to do business. Today, Lhasa people are beginning to speculate on stocks now that the Lhasa Securities Exchange has been put into operation.

Over the past two years, Tibet's national economy has developed at a higher growth rate each year. As far as its GNP is concerned, it was 2.535bn yuan in 1991, 3.27bn yuan in 1992 and 3.65bn yuan in 1993. Calculated at comparable prices, these figures were 3.7%, 7.1% and 8.1% higher respectively than in the previous year.

'Renmin Ribao' says Tibet enters "best development period in its history"

'Renmin Ribao' (People's Daily), Beijing, in Chinese, 1st August 1994, published in translation in the BBC *Summary of World Broadcasts*, 6th September 1994

Text of dispatch from Lhasa by staff reporters Liu Wei (0491 0251) and He Guanghua (6320 1639 5478)

"Thanks to the loving care of the CCP Central Committee and the great support of various provinces and cities, Tibet has entered its best period of development "

Lhasa, 31st July: The news of the guidelines of the Third Tibetan Work Symposium held by the party's Central Committee and the State Council has spread rapidly across the Xueyi highland for many days. The kind concern shown by the party's Central Committee and the vigorous support given by various fraternal provinces, (municipalities and autonomous regions) have profoundly inspired the Tibetan people of all nationalities. They are rejoicing over the new development opportunity for Tibet and are full of confidence in the lasting good order, prosperity, progress and bright future in Tibet. After 15 years of reform, opening up and modernization, Tibet is now witnessing political stability, national unity, and vigorous development in economic and various social undertakings. With the people's living standards being repeatedly enhanced, Tibet has entered its best development period in history.

In the big family of national unity of the motherland, the socialist new Tibet has always been accorded solicitude and profound love by the central authorities and various localities throughout the country. Particularly since the third plenary session of the 11th CCP Central Committee, the central authorities have held two symposiums on Tibetan work and have formulated a series of special policies and flexible measures such as the exemption of tax collection and requisition purchases and the revitalization of the economy, which are conducive to development in Tibet. Moreover, apart from the appropriation of ample funds to replenish Tibet's finances every year, the central authorities also injected a large amount of money into the construction of a vast number of large-sized key projects, which have a bearing on the staying power of Tibet's economic growth. For instance, the investment amount for the comprehensive agricultural development project of the "Yarlung Zangbo River, the Lhasa He and the Nyang Qu He", the Yanghu Power Station, among others, all exceeded approximately 1bn yuan. These moves have considerably promoted Tibet's reform, opening up and modernization and have expedited the pace of development of Tibet's relatively backward economy. Apart from sending a certain number of teachers, doctors, engineers, technicians and party and government cadres to work in Tibet, various fraternal provinces and cities have also offered energetic financial and material support to it. In 1985, these provinces and cities supported Tibet in 43 projects, giving the "Roof of the World" modern gymnasiums, hotels, hospitals and cultural facilities.

Tibet's economic foundation was weak, and there was a relatively large gap in the social and economic development level between Tibet and other provinces and cities across the country. However, along with the increase of intensity in Tibet's reform and openness, its economic structure has been substantially readjusted, the potential advantage of natural resources has been gradually transformed into a concrete economic advantage, its development speed has obviously quickened, and its economic strength has been rapidly augmented. In 1993, its GNP reached 3.65bn yuan, representing an increase of 116 per cent over 1980 as calculated by comparable prices. In grain production, there have been bumper harvests for six consecutive years, with a total output of 620,000 tonnes in 1993, increasing by 22 per cent over 1980. The number of industrial enterprises increased from a dozen or so in 1978 to more than 180 at present, and a number of backbone enterprises, with priority given to the development of local resources, have been established. Meanwhile, burgeoning industries including foreign trade, tourism, township and town enterprises, individual and private economies, and so on developed very rapidly. Last year, the total import and export volume across the region reached 130m dollars, increasing 5.2-fold as compared with that in 1980. The business income of tourist trade and the revenue of township and town enterprises both exceeded 100m yuan. The work to introduce investment abroad and establish lateral ties at home presents a good development momentum. In 1993 alone, there were 41 projects of combining imports of advanced technology with internal economic association in Tibet, for a contract amount of 67.1 lm yuan. Thanks to the energetic support of the state, Tibet's infrastructure facilities, including energy supply, transport and communications, have remarkably improved. Highways open to traffic throughout the region currently cover approximately 22,000 km, which has initially developed into a communication network with Lhasa as a centre, radiating to 80 per cent of the cities and towns. There are also several domestic and international air routes. The telecommunication undertaking is advancing by leaps and bounds. More than 700 satellite ground receiving centres covering the entire plateau have been built, and more than 5,000 domestic and international programme-controlled and automatic telephone lines have been put into operation. The pace of energy construction has been accelerated. The installed capacity of electric power increased from several hundred kW in the past to 170,000 kW at present, and the Yanghu Power Station, with an installed capacity of over 100,000 kW is expected to go into operation in September next year.

Other social undertakings in Tibet have also developed vigorously. It was a "year of education in Tibet" in 1993. The masses of various nationalities were extremely enthusiastic about running schools in all localities. The enrolment rate for school-age children has risen to 64 per cent, and the number of students in various kinds of schools has reached 245,000. In addition, the party's Central Committee has always shown great concern for Tibet's educational undertakings. It has not only supported Tibet in running more than 3,000 schools but has also set up Tibetan middle schools and Tibetan classes in 26 provinces, (municipalities and autonomous regions) since 1985 to meet the requirements of Tibet's modernization drive. Tibetan students studying in various localities across the country have reached 11,000. The medical and public health undertakings are booming with each passing day. There are over 1,000 public health

organs throughout the region at present, which have formed a medical and public health network covering all the cities and villages in the region. The immunization rate for children is close to 90 per cent and the average life-span has been extended to 64. Considerable headway has also been made in scientific, technological, cultural and other undertakings.

The people's standard of living has been repeatedly enhanced. In 1993, per-capita net income of peasants and herders across the region grew to 521 yuan. In the agricultural area of the "Yarlung Zangbo River, the Lhasa He and the Nyang Qu He", there is nothing strange about peasants building new houses or buying cars and television sets.