

## **Tibetans Need an Assertive Japan**

Hakubun Shimomura

I visited Dharamsala in northern India along with House of Councillors lawmaker Eriko Yamatani as well as President Yoshiko Sakurai and other members of the Japan Institute for National Fundamentals to meet with the Dalai Lama and leaders of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

We arrived in Dharamsala on the hillside of the Himalayas after a flight of 85 minutes from New Delhi and a car drive of 40 minutes. We immediately met with the Dalai Lama, who talked with us for nearly two hours, far longer than scheduled. He is attractive and cheerful. The Nobel Peace laureate has a great personality. The living God for Tibetans has fascinated us as an enlightened man who can give hope to many people throughout the world.

### **Supporting the Dalai Lama's middle way policy**

After the meeting with the Dalai Lama, we sat in on a session of the parliament-in-exile and held a two-hour meeting with Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay and Information and International Relations Minister Dicki Chhoyang. The parliament's 46 lawmakers are democratically elected from relevant regions and countries and meet in Dharamsala biannually. The government-in-exile has seven ministers, including the prime, international relations and religion ministers who have moved to Dharamsala from abroad. Prime Minister Sangay is a 43-year-old smart person who had been a researcher at Harvard University. His monthly wage is some \$360, far lower than he had earned in the United States. But he seemed full of love for his fatherland Tibet. The international relations minister is a 45-year-old beautiful lady who had been in charge of public relations at a major company in Canada.

The Dalai Lama has proposed the so-called "middle-of-the-road" policy, seeking a way for Tibetans to enjoy real autonomy within the framework of the People's Republic of China. While the Chinese government seems negative about the Dalai Lama proposal, I myself would like to support the proposal.

Tibet had been an independent country for some 20 centuries before being incorporated into China in 1949. Tibet's population then had totaled 6 million. But 1.2 million Tibetans are said to have died due to China's political persecution, imprisonment, torture or famine. More than 6,000 temples have been destroyed along with various cultural facilities. The Dalai Lama, the supreme religious and political

leader of Tibet, then had no choice but to seek asylum in India. Following the Dalai Lama, some 85,000 Tibetans defected to India, Nepal or Bhutan.

**Autonomy is a human rights issue**

The Chinese government has adopted an assimilation policy under which more than 7.5 million Chinese live in the Tibetan Autonomous Region to destroy and eliminate Tibetans' identity and culture.

Tibetans may intrinsically hope to win independence, but as it is difficult to do so under the dominance of China, the Dalai Lama seeks "two systems in one country" solution. We should deal with Tibetan situation as a human rights issue.

Japan may be the only country whose government refuses to meet officially with the Dalai Lama. The Japanese government gives priority to pleasing China. Unless we respect human rights beyond international and interracial differences, we may fail to promote international understanding on the problem of North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens. Therefore, I would like to expand our parliamentary league to support Tibetans. Let's abandon an ostrich policy and create an assertive Japan.

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