

The Kashag (Cabinet)

The Kashag (Cabinet) is the highest executive office of the Central Tibetan Administration. The Kashag runs and fulfills all its executive and administrative responsibilities.

In accordance to the Charter of Central Tibetan Administration, the seven members of the Kashag, is headed by a Sikyong (Political Leader). Sikyong is directly elected by exile Tibetan populace. Sikyong, in turn nominates his seven Kalons and seeks the Parliament's approval. The term of the Kashag is for five years.

Kashag Secretariat

A Secretary (Cabinet Secretary) heads the Kashag Secretariat. The Secretariat provides the Kashag with secretarial and administrative services. All decision made in the Kashag are implemented through the respective departments and concerned offices. The Kashag Secretariat has a sub office: History Documentation and Interim Placement Section

Historical Background of the Kashag

In 1642, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso was conferred a supreme authority over Tibet by Gushri Khan, a descendent of Mongol Khan, who had overthrown the ruler of Tsang. Since then the Institution of Dalai Lama, which was originally based in Drepung Monastery holds the temporal leadership of Tibet. With his spiritual strength and sheer expertise on diplomacy, the Fifth Dalai Lama unified and governed the entire country through Regent. In the absence and during the minority of Dalai Lama, the Kashag invited the Regent appointed by the Tsogdu, to discuss problems of national importance.

The Kashag Lhengye (in short Kashag, House of Order) performed executive duties under the successive Dalai Lamas or the Regent. It consisted of three Kalons (Ministers), all laymen, till 1750, and of four- a monk and three laymen from 1751 to 1757. Even though the strength of the Kashag remained four, there does not seem to have a monk minister from 1757 to 1894. In 1894, the monk officials appealed for a representation in Kashag, which was later accepted. During those years, common jargons were used to call Kalons as 'Chihi kawashi' (Four Outside Pillar). In literary style, the ministers were designated as Dunnadon (Privy Councilors). The successive Dalai Lamas appointed Kalons. The Kashag submitted a list of suitable candidates, but the Dalai Lama appointed anyone he pleased whether or not the name of an appointee was on the list. Normally, he accepted the proposals sent up by the Kashag.

In earlier years, Kashag had a general controlling power over the administration of the country in all matters relating to administrative, judicial, and political. The ministers jointly conducted all the affairs of the State of Tibet: no minister held any specific portfolio. Kashag appointed, transferred, or dismissed lay and monk officials, subjected to the approval of the Dalai Lama, or the Regent in the absence and minority of the Dalai Lama. The Kashag had the power to issue decrees on landholdings without referring to the Dalai Lama.

During the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's rule (1895-1933), Kashag underwent no basic structural changes and also had no major policy shifts. All monk ministers (Kalon Lamas) were generally the senior ministers of the Kashag, Each lay minister was called Shappe (Lotus Feet), or more honorary as Sawang Chenpo (Great Power of the Land).

When the Communist China invaded Tibet in 1959, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama sought asylum in India. Senior officials of the Tibetan Government accompanied and followed him into exile, along with over 80 thousand Tibetans. On 25 April 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama called an emergency meeting of the few senior Tibetan officials to discuss about the reconstruction of Tibetans in exile. Soon after the meeting, Central Tibetan Administration was established in a reorganized form of the old centralized Tibetan Government, to meet both immediate and long-term needs of the Tibetan people. His Holiness remained as the Head of the State and executive powers were vested upon Kashag, consisting of three lay and two monk officials. Kalons were all appointed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

In 1991, The Constitution Redrafting Committee, instituted by His Holiness the Dalai Lama prepared the 'Charter for Tibetans in exile', which was later approved by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 28 June 1991. With the promulgation of the Charter, His Holiness the Dalai Lama dissolved the Eighth Kashag. Prior to 2001, His Holiness the Dalai Lama suggest three names for each post of Kalon, and the Assembly selects one each. Kalon Tripa was then elected within the selected Kalons. The most far-reaching amendments concern the election of the Kashag, consisting of a maximum of seven ministers.

In 2001, fundamental changes happened with the amendment of the Charter, which facilitate direct election of the Kalon Tripa by the people. The election was held in the autumn of 2001 and Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche was elected with 80 percent of the votes. The directly elected Kalon Tripa nominates kalons, which shall have approval of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile.

In 2011, with the devolvement of political leadership by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the amendment of the Charter, the political leadership has been transferred to the Kalon Tripa.

However, the black square seal of the Kashag, (Kadham Sishi Dickyi) blessed and presented by the Seventh Dalai Lama in 1751 was never changed or replaced and is continuously being used by the Central Tibetan Administration.

Present Sikyong and Kalons

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay – also holds portfolio of Department of Information and International Relations

Dr. Lobsang Sangay was born and grew up in a Tibetan settlement near Darjeeling, where he attended the Central School for Tibetans. He completed his B.A. (Honors) and LLB degrees from Delhi University. In 1992, he was elected as the youngest executive member of the Tibetan Youth Congress (CENTREX).

In 1996, as a Fulbright Scholar, he obtained Masters degree and in 2004, S.J.D, the first Tibetan ever to receive such a degree from Harvard Law School and his dissertation, *Democracy in Distress: Is Exile Polity a Remedy? A Case Study of Tibet's Government-in-exile* was awarded the Yong K. Kim' 95 Prize. In 2005, he was appointed as a research fellow and promoted to senior fellow till early 2011.

Dr. Sangay is an expert on International Human Rights Law, Democratic Constitutionalism, and Conflict Resolution. He has spoken in hundreds of seminars around the world. He organized seven major conferences among Chinese, Tibetan, Indian and Western scholars including two unprecedented meeting between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Chinese scholars in 2003 and 2009 at Harvard University.

In 2007, he was selected as one of the twenty-four Young Leaders of Asia by the Asia Society and a delegate to the World Justice Forum in Vienna, Austria, where top legal experts and judges from around the world congregated.

In 2011, he was elected to the post of Kalon Tripa in an unprecedented competitive democratic election in the Tibetan diaspora. On August 8, 2011, during the swearing-in ceremony of the Kalon Tripa, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, "When I was young, an elderly regent Takdrag Rinpoche handed over Sikyong (political leadership) to me, and today I am handing over Sikyong to young Lobsang Sangay... In doing this I have fulfilled my long-cherished goal."

He was re-elected as Sikyong for a second term in 2016.

Executive: 15th Kashag

- President Dr Lobsang Sangay (Sikyong)
- Kalon Ven Karma Gelek Yuthok
- Kalon Sonam Topgyal Khorlatsang
- Kalon Karma Yeshe
- Kalon Dr Pema Yangchen
- Kalon Phagpa Tsering Labrang
- Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk

(source: tibet.net)