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First Tibetan Passport Recovered From Nepal (Release Date: March 31, 2004, Release Place: Dharamshala, HP, India)

With a great sense of achievement and elation, Friends of Tibet releases the information that the passport used by former Chief of the Finance Department of the Government of Tibet, Tsepon Shakabpa Wangchuk Dedhen during independent Tibet, has been recovered after many years of its missing, and now safely presented to His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama on March 29, 2004. The passport had received recognition from about seven countries in 1948 when the Tibetan Minister travelled abroad. For the past 15 years, after the death of the Shakabpa on February 23, 1989 in Kalimpong, the historical document fell in the hands of antique dealers in Nepal.

Friends of Tibet has been working over the past one year towards a Tibet exhibition called "Story of a Nation: Independent, Occupied and Exiled Tibet". In our efforts to gather the incredible story of this nation, we have been able to bring together some amazing old photographs and objects of historical importance belonging to Independent Tibet. So far, we have been able to collect more than 60 photographs and artefacts on Tibet.

Besides, coins and paper currencies, postage stamps and a gun from independent Tibet, we came across the historic passport used by Tsepon Shakabpa Wangchuk Dedhen, the Chief of the Finance Department of the Government of Tibet and also the writer of the famous history book "Tibet: A Political History". In 1948, the Tibetan Government sent a trade delegation to China, United States of America, England and other countries. The passport issued by the then Tibetan Government to Shakabpa had received recognition, and upon that more than seven countries had granted visas and 'transit permits'.

Recently, Friends of Tibet through one of its advisors Gyeshe Pema Dorjee la (former Head, Sarah Institute of Buddhist Dialectics) discovered it lying in the hands of an antique dealer in Nepal. Understanding the absolute importance of the document in itself and also the need of it to the exhibition, through Mr. Kongpo Dhondup la, newly elected Settlement Officer of Boudha-Jorpatan Tibetan Refugee Camp, Nepal Friends of Tibet expressed its wishes to purchase it.

On March 29, 2004 (Monday), Tenzin Tsundue (General Secretary, Friends of Tibet) and Gyeshe Pema Dorjee la presented the document to Tenzin Gyeche la, the Private Secretary to His Holiness the Dalai Lama at his office and later presented it to His Holiness the Dalai Lama who was very much pleased with the new find -- thus ending the 15 years of the missing document of Tibet!

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