

Breaking: Tibetan woman self-immolates on eve of Xi's appointment as president

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DHARAMSHALA, March 17: Exile Tibetan media are reporting on a self-immolation protest by a Tibetan woman on the eve of Xi Jinping's formal selection as the new President of China earlier this week.

According to Tibetan news reports, Kunchok Wangmo, in her 30s, set herself on fire protesting China's rule at around midnight on Wednesday, March 13 in the Dzoegge region of Ngaba, eastern Tibet. She passed away in her fiery protest.

Xi, communist party general secretary, was formally appointed to the largely ceremonial post of president by the rubber stamp parliament on Thursday, completing China's once in a decade leadership transition.

Chinese authorities took possession of Kunchok Wangmo's body and carried out the cremation without informing her family members. They later handed over the remains.

Kunchok Wangmo's husband Dolma Kyab, has been arrested after he refused to comply with local Chinese authorities' orders to declare internal family feuds as the reason for her self-immolation.

The present condition and whereabouts of Kyab are not known.

Due to intense restrictions on all communication channels in the region, information on the self-immolation protest and the later fall out of Kyab's arrest is not yet known.

Kunchok Wangmo is the 15th Tibetan woman to set herself on fire demanding freedom and the return of Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama from exile.

In the same week, a monk at the Kirti Monastery set himself on fire on Friday in Ngaba region, taking the toll to two in the week marked by China's leadership transition.

On March 16, coinciding with the fifth anniversary of the brutal killings of peaceful Tibetan protesters by Chinese armed forces in 2008, Lobsang Thokmey, 28, a monk of the Kirti Monastery in Ngaba set himself on fire.

Lobsang Thokmey carried out his fiery protest at the Kirti Monastery and later succumbed to his injuries.

109 Tibetans living under China's rule have torched their bodies since 2009 protesting China's rule.

Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay, the elected head of the Tibetan people, in his March 10 Tibetan National Uprising Day statement this year blamed China's occupation and repression in Tibet for driving Tibetans to self-immolation.

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“The prohibitions of peaceful protest and harsh punishments compel Tibetans to resort to self-immolation. They choose death rather than silence and submission to the Chinese authorities,” Sikyong Sangay said.

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