

## Politics should not enter religious matters

says Shamar Rinpoche

Gangtok, Sep 29:

Referring to the ongoing court case of Rumtek Monastery and his detractors supporting Rinpoche Ugyen Trinley as the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, 14th Shamarpa, reincarnation, Mipham Chokyi Lodro today said politics should not interfere in religious matters.

In an exclusive interview to UNI, [Shamar Rinpoche said:] "Frankly, then Sikkim Chief Minister N. B. Bhandari made a mistake by interfering in religious matters of the Rumtek Monastery, this was the turning point in the history of the selection and reinstatement of the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, the controversies have since then kept on."

"Bhandari had his vested interest in the forcible take over of the Monastery in August 1993 from me and the other monks of the Karmapa Charitable Trust, who were ousted by sheer force, he was paid a staggering 2.5 million dollars in bribe money through *Chen Lu An*, a devotee of *Tai Situ Rinpoche*," the 14th Shamarpa said.

"Eventually, it caught the eye of the Indian government inciting them to issue a ban on Situ Rinpoche's re-entry into the country a year later in the interest of national security", he added.

When asked whether the controversial highly confidential report on the Rumtek affairs, prepared by then Chief Secretary K. S. Rao and submitted to the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, had a role to play in terms of the ban of entry to Rumtek, the Shamarpa said: "The Centre [ie. the Union Government of India] had taken a stand on the issue, considering the threat of increasing Chinese influence on the Monastery, irrespective of the K. S. Rao report."

Reacting to the massive congregation by supporters of Rinpoche Ugyen Trinley in the garb of the Karmapa Reception Committee and the Joint Action Committee, held in Gangtok on September 26, the Shamarpa said: "The seat of the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa does not need public endorsement or support, traditionally it has been governed by Kagyu tradition of prediction letters left by Karmapas as to who would be their reincarnations."

"Unfortunately, the late 16th Gyalwang Karmapa Rangjung Rigpei Dorje, did not leave such a letter, only to allow Rinpoche Tai Situ to forge a prediction letter proclaiming Rinpoche Ugyen Trinley as the 17th Gyalwang

Karmapa, which I had objected to and asked to undergo a forensic examination for authentication", he revealed.

"However, this was disallowed and subsequently H. H. Dalai Lama too endorsed Rinpoche Ugyen Trinley. I personally feel that since the ongoing case regarding transfer of the petition to the Supreme Court, is awaiting a verdict at the Sikkim Court, this rally was ploy to influence the judgement," he added.

When asked if he has fallen apart with H. H. Dalai Lama, the Shamarpa said, "My respect for Dalai Lama remains the same. However, I feel he has unduly used his religious influence, since he foresees a political mileage of his Tibetan government in exile, I can not sacrifice the principles of our Kagyupa lineage." "In our last meeting in Northampton, USA, H. H. had requested me for the sake of universal peace and the dharma, to abstain from commenting on the Karmapa issue", Shamar Rinpoche recalled.

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