

- Quake in Tibetan areas, restrictions still in place
- Tibet official: Dalai Lama would consider attending Olympics if invited
- Dalai Lama calls for international media presence in Tibet
- China "unhappy" with Nepal's handling of Tibetan protests
- More Tibetan protesters arrested in Nepal
- Monks pray for quake victims
- Tibet tourism suffers setbacks after Lhasa unrest
- Tibetan Olympics launched
- Reports emerged of aftermath of demonstrations
- Dalai Lama in Germany
- Spanish court hears testimony
- Opening of Nathu-la pass
- Karmapa in US
- Tibetans asked to stop anti-China protests due to earthquake
- No time scale for talks with Dalai Lama
- Dalai Lama meets UK Prime Minister
- Dalai Lama speaks about possible future developments in Tibet

Quake in Tibetan areas, restrictions still in place

12 May 2008

(BBC; CTA; ICT; Kham Aid; NYT; TibetInfoNet; Xinhua) An earthquake that measured 7.9 on the Richter scale struck Sichuan province, killing over 60,000 people (with over 20,000 missing) according to official sources. The epicentre of the earthquake was in Lunggu county (Chin: Wenchuan), Ngaba TAP (Ch: Aba), in the area traditionally known to Tibetans as Kham. The earthquake caused enormous infrastructure damage, with collapsed buildings and blocked roads hampering the rescue effort. Damage has been reported across several provinces, including Sichuan, Gansu, Shaanxi, Yunnan, Shanxi, Guizhou and Hubei. The Tibetan areas affected were: Lungu county, Tashiling county (Chin: Lixian), Sungchu county (Chin: Song Pan), Trochu county (Chin: Heishui) and Maowun county (Ch: Maoxian). Details about deaths and damage from the quake in Tibetan areas are scant. Six deaths were reported on the first day from Dartsedo (Chin: Kanding), all due to rocks falling into a narrow valley. Initial, unconfirmed estimates put casualty numbers at 100 to 150. As a whole, due to the specific geophysical conditions and sparse population in these areas, the death toll should be far lower than in Chinese areas. The damage to buildings and roads, although yet to be assessed, could be substantial. Demonstrations against Beijing's Tibet policy had been held in some of these areas since March. In official statements made after the quake, local officials stressed the importance of maintaining a robust stance on 'anti-separatism' and keeping security check-posts in areas manned in addition to disaster relief work. The NGO Kham Aid reported: *"One reason that news from earthquake-affected Tibetan areas has been scant is that, since the unrest in March, there have been no tourists at all in these regions"*. On the day the earthquake struck, the Ngaba authorities issued a document entitled: *"Combining work on anti-separatism and safeguarding stability with disaster relief work"*. The Kardze prefectural government also issued an emergency announcement to *"conscientiously carry out the present task of keeping stability"*. The authorities in Rongtrag/Tenpa county (Chin: Danba) in Kardze issued a six-point announcement, including the requirement for security personnel and police manning checkpoints on roads out of the prefecture *"to stick to their posts, and not to slacken any aspect of the tasks. They should strictly guard against the separatist forces taking advantage of the situation to cause sabotage, strictly prevent people from spreading rumours and stirring up trouble"*. CCTV news bulletins in English warned that those who were found *"spreading rumours"* about the authorities' response to the earthquake would be *"dealt with harshly according to the law"*.

Tibet official: Dalai Lama would consider attending Olympics if invited

12 May 2008

(Reuters) A senior Chinese official has asked whether the Dalai Lama would agree to attend the Beijing Olympics to ease recent tensions, a Tibet government-in-exile legislator has claimed. Khedroob Thondup, a Taipei-based member of Tibet's parliament-in-exile, said a senior leader in Beijing had called him about two weeks ago to *"sound out"* the Olympic visit idea, but he did not identify the leader. *"If they want to invite His Holiness [the Dalai Lama] to the Olympics, that would be a big change"*, Thondup said. *"I'm sure he would consider this."*

Dalai Lama calls for international media presence in Tibet

12 May 2008

(AFP) The Dalai Lama urged China and the international community to facilitate an international media presence in Tibet, in an interview with Polish television. He said the presence of foreign journalists was essential *"to see what is happening"*. He said recent talks between China and his envoys were made possible because Chinese leaders were beginning to be *"concerned"* at world opinion about the situation in Tibet, just months away from the Beijing Olympics. But asked whether he thought China was serious or *"just buying time"* by agreeing to the talks, the Dalai Lama told TVP2: *"Too early to say; I don't know"*.

China "unhappy" with Nepal's handling of Tibetan protests

13 May 2008

(Kantipur) The Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Zheng Xianglin has expressed *"serious dissatisfaction"* over the ongoing anti-China protests being held by Tibetan exiles in Kathmandu. He urged the Nepal government to adopt strict measures to curb such *"separatist activities"*. *"I hope the Nepal*

government can honestly carry out its commitment and not allow these anti-Chinese activities to happen so rapidly in Nepal", Zheng told an audience at the Reporters' Club, Nepal. He also said that the government should adopt "severe measures" to curb the demonstrations. His comments were made despite widespread condemnation of the tactics used by the Nepali police. The United Nations and diplomatic missions, as well as NGO groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW), have complained to the Nepali government about police brutality, and HRW said in a report last month that Tibetan exiles "are entitled to peaceful expression and assembly". The American Ambassador to Nepal Nancy Powell also conveyed the US government's concern about the treatment of Tibetans by Nepali authorities, becoming the first envoy to do so since the diaspora began their protests against events in Lhasa nearly two months ago. Zheng, however, said that UN agencies and human rights organisations had provoked the situation. "UN Agency staff were present at every demonstration that occurred, I don't know what is the purpose of human rights organisations in Nepal", he said. "Are they here to supervise the human rights of Tibet?"

More Tibetan protesters arrested in Nepal

13 May 2008

(AHN) At least 250 more pro-Tibetan protesters were arrested while they staged a demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu. Police arrested the people during a rally organised by hundreds of Tibetan exiles as they marched towards the Chinese embassy office carrying placards with anti-China slogans, witnesses said. Two days earlier, police arrested at least 550 Tibetan women protesters, including elderly women and Buddhist nuns. It was the largest number of arrests of Tibetan protesters by Nepalese police in a single day. The authorities said they would not allow protests against any friendly countries, including China. Protesters are normally released on the same day or one day after their detention.

Monks pray for quake victims

13 May 2008

(ICT; Xinhua) The Dalai Lama led prayers in Dharamsala, and Tibetan monks in monasteries across all Tibetan areas within the PRC also held ceremonies, for those who died in the Sichuan earthquake. Monks have also donated money to relief efforts. Many of their monasteries are still under lockdown in the crackdown that followed the protests that began in March. Monks at Kirti monastery in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, where at least 10 Tibetans were shot dead during protests, applied for special permission to hold a ceremony for the dead and injured. They also sent a message from inside their monastery expressing compassion for those who died, and explaining that their protests had not been aimed at the Chinese people, but at the government. Kirti Monastery has been surrounded by Chinese security forces since 16 March, and the local community has not been allowed access after large public demonstrations were held there. About 500 monks attended a service at the Drepung monastery in Lhasa, which was also under tight restrictions.

Tibet tourism suffers setbacks after Lhasa unrest

14 May 2008

(Xinhua; AP) The service sector in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), especially the tourism industry, has suffered since demonstrations began in Lhasa on 10 March, a press conference held by the regional government announced. In March, the TAR received just 14,200 tourists, including foreigners, said Deng Xiaogang, Vice Chairman of TAR at the conference. By the end of March, the region's tourism revenue was 40.6 percent less than that March 2007. A shortening of the May Day break this year to three days from seven contributed to the drop in tourism, but most industry executives said the riots and tense security were the primary culprits. However, over the holiday period, (from 01 to 03 May) 89,000 domestic tourists visited the TAR, said Sun Yongping, Vice Director of the Tibet Tourism Bureau. In other Tibetan areas, tourism has been badly affected, as foreign tourists are still banned, and until 01 May, Chinese were advised to stay away. Labrang (Chin: Xiahe), in Gansu province, according to AP, home of one of the great Tibetan monasteries, was practically deserted over the holiday period

Tibetan Olympics launched

15 May 2008

(TibetInfoNet) Despite serious financial problems, the Tibetan Olympics, an alternative to the official games organised by Lobsang Wangyal Productions in Dharamsala, India, was launched. During the 10-day event, 25 young Tibetan amateur sportspeople compete in diverse sports. Prior to the event, a Tibetan Olympic torch relay travelled to 12 different places on five continents.

Reports emerged of aftermath of demonstrations

15 May 2008

(AFP; NYT; TCHRD) Reports are appearing about the current situation in Tibet and the fate of those who have been arrested following the protests that began in March. A 38-year old man named as Kusang Sonam gave a media interview from a refugee centre in India, where he told of troops killing Tibetan protestors in Kardze prefecture with "long knives" and guns and hurling the bodies like "carcasses" into police vans. The New York Times (NYT) interviewed a monk in Labrang monastery who told of systematic beatings during which Chinese troops jeered: "The Dalai Lama, Western countries and the United States aren't protecting you now. Tell them to come and save you!" One monk told the NYT: "There won't be any more protests before the Olympics; people are just too scared. The pressure is too great". The testimony of a Tibetan youth who was arrested in the aftermath of the Lhasa unrest was obtained by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). The interviewee described the use of extreme torture in prison and victims of serious violence, including those with gunshot wounds, being thrown in jail and denied access to medical treatment. He also spoke of the unwavering hope of support from the outside world.

Dalai Lama in Germany

19 May 2008

(UPI; BBC) During a trip to Germany, the Dalai Lama met with the Economic and Development Minister, Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul. Chinese diplomats ahead of the visit had warned Berlin not to give the Dalai Lama a platform, and they reacted with strong statements to his meeting with Wiecek-Zeul. He had no meetings with either Chancellor Merkel, who was out of the country, or Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The Foreign Ministry said Steinmeier was too busy. Germany's coalition government (made up of Merkel's conservatives and the Steinmeier's Social

Democratic Party) has disagreed over how to deal with the Tibet question, and the Dalai Lama's latest visit again revealed Berlin's disunity in dealing with China. 25,000 people heard the Dalai Lama speak at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, and more than 7,000 people turned up at a rally in Nuremberg, where he gave a speech calling for religious tolerance. His five-day trip also included speeches in sold-out venues in the Ruhr area and in Bavaria.

Spanish court hears testimony

19 May 2008

(AFP) A Spanish court hearing a genocide case against seven top Chinese leaders, including former president Jiang Zemin and former prime minister Li Peng, heard testimony from three Tibetan monks. Judge Ismael Moreno of the Audiencia Nacional (National Audience), Spain's highest criminal court, questioned Palden Gyatso, Jampel Monlam and Bhagdro who spent time in prison in China for their *"counter-revolutionary activities"* in Tibet. Since June 2006, the court has been hearing the case against the seven Chinese leaders for torture and crimes against humanity as well as genocide allegedly carried out in Tibet during the 1980s. The case followed a complaint from the Barcelona-based Tibet House foundation and the non-governmental organisation Tibet Support Committee. *"Our hope is to spark a dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Hu Jintao"*, said the director of the Tibet House, Thubten Wangchen, an exiled Tibetan who is now a Spanish citizen. China has condemned the accusations of genocide in Tibet as slander and it has accused Madrid of trying to interfere in its administration of the region.

Opening of Nathu-la pass

19 May 2008

(IANS) The India-TAR border trade through the Nathu-la pass in Sikkim resumed after a gap of five months, marking the end of winter in the region. The trade began in July 2006 when India and China signed a treaty opening the border that had been closed since 1962. According to Ujjwal Gurung, director of the industry and commerce department of the Sikkim government, the route was to reopen on 01 May 2008, but had to be postponed because of massive landslides in Yadong county in the TAR. The route would remain open till 30 November. The existing trade list is restricted to just 15 items that can be imported from China and 29 items that can be exported to China from India.

Karmapa in US

19 May 2008

The head of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, left Dharamsala for New Delhi and is currently on his first ever visit to the United States. His 18-day visit is taking him to New York, New Jersey, Boulder, Colorado and Seattle. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs gave permission for the visit in February 2008, following many requests to the Indian government in the past few years. This is the Karmapa's first visit outside India since he fled Tibet and arrived in India in 2000. He has said that he hoped he might be able to spend two months a year in the US, where his lineage has many followers and substantial property holdings. He said about his visit: *"On a personal level, by visiting America, I hope to broaden my own horizons and bring new depth to my experience"*, adding: *"By connecting with the powerful countries, such as the US, I aspire that my own abilities to bring peace to the world in this new century will be enhanced"*.

Tibetans asked to stop anti-China protests due to earthquake

21 May 2008

(Bloomberg) The Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala (CTA) called on protesters to halt demonstrations against Chinese rule in Tibet, in an expression of solidarity with victims of the Sichuan earthquake. The CTA said on its website that Tibetans across the world should stop protesting outside Chinese embassies at least until the end of May. It also urged them to write a letter to the concerned authorities telling them they are suspending protests *"in solidarity with the quake victims"*.

No time scale for talks with Dalai Lama

22 May 2008

(PTI) Beijing has said that no dates have yet been fixed for the next round of talks between Beijing and the envoys of the Dalai Lama. Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said: *"As for the next round of negotiations and talks, the specific time work is under discussion. You know that under the current circumstances, the entire Chinese nation is focusing on relief work"*. Mr Qin was asked about remarks the Dalai Lama made that he may attend the Beijing Olympics if the situation in the unrest-hit Tibet improved and an invitation was extended to him by China. He said: *"If the Dalai Lama side wants to make some contribution to the motherland, then he should stop separatist activities, stop plotting and provoking violent activities and stop disrupting the Beijing Olympics"*.

Dalai Lama meets UK Prime Minister

23 May 2008

Gordon Brown met the Dalai Lama at Lambeth Palace, the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Prime Minister came under criticism in Britain for not holding the meeting at 10 Downing Street, but Xinhua reported that Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said: *"This interferes in China's internal affairs, and hurts Chinese people's feelings as well"*. The 30-minute private meeting was *"warm and constructive"*, a Downing Street spokesman said, and the discussion focused on forthcoming talks on Tibet's future between Tibetan representatives and Beijing officials. They also discussed human rights and ways to help China in the aftermath of the 12 May earthquake. The Dalai Lama is currently on an 11-day visit to the UK and the previous day had given evidence at Westminster before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee hearings on human rights.

Dalai Lama speaks about possible future developments in Tibet

23 May 2008

(Guardian) The Dalai Lama claimed that Beijing was planning the mass settlement of 1 million ethnic Chinese people in Tibet after the Olympics with

the aim of diluting Tibetan culture and identity. He also claimed that some of Asia's most important rivers which flow from the Tibetan plateau are being polluted and diminished by careless industrialisation and unplanned irrigation. He made the claims in an interview with the Guardian newspaper. The Dalai Lama said he had been informed by Tibetan residents that large areas of empty land had been marked out, as if for construction, in the past two years. *"Then last year we received information - after the Olympics 1 million Chinese are going to settle in the autonomous region of Tibet"*, he said, adding the information came from a *"military source"* in Tibet. *"There is every danger Tibet becomes a truly Han Chinese land and Tibetans become an insignificant minority. Then the very basis of the idea of autonomy becomes meaningless"*.

© 2008 TibetInfoNet (Reg.Nr. BN8490, Germany). All rights reserved.

TibetInfoNet is an independent information service that provides news and analysis of the current political, economic, social, environmental and human rights situation in Tibet.

Website: www.tibetinfonet.net
Phone: +44 (0) 20 300 206 33
Fax: +49 (0) 2238 9494466
Email: tin@tibetinfonet.net