

# **Buddhism Updates: April 2010**

## **5 Updates**

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### **Monks offer crucial help to Yushu**

**By Hu Yongqi and Chen Jia (China Daily)**

**Updated: 2010-04-24 06:47**

**China Daily 04/24/2010 page4**

Religious leaders make donations of money, time and relief supplies

YUSHU, Qinghai - A Sichuan-based Tibetan temple donated 11.27 million yuan to quake-hit Yushu county on Friday, including 10 million yuan from the temple's Tibetan living Buddha, Tripa Rinpoch.

"We had planned to use the money to repair our temple, but now, it is our responsibility to donate it," Tripa Rinpoch told China Daily.

"I see so many Han people and Tibetans carrying out the rescue and relief effort together, and I am deeply touched by them," he said.

The Sershul Temple, located in Ganzi of neighboring Sichuan province and 110 kilometers far away from Yushu, had also provided relief supplies worth about 1.2 million yuan, including 200 tents, food and water.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of Tibetan Buddhist monks in crimson cloaks and jackets have joined the soldiers and rescue workers since the afternoon of April 14.

"A total of 900 monks from our temple alone have joined in the rescue and relief work. The first group arrived at epicenter at 4 pm, a few hours after the earthquake happened," he said.

Monks offer crucial help to Yushu

"We rescued more than 700 survivors, and helped find more than 1,000 bodies under the ruins."

Tripa Rinpoch said the monks have been chanting sutras every day since the quake, and will continue to do so for 49 days, which is considered a life circle in Tibetan religion.

The death toll rose to 2,187 as of Friday, nine days after the devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake.

The number of missing fell to 80, and the total number of injured stood at 12,135, according to the figures released by rescuers.

"I prayed for the dead on the way to Yushu. We didn't bring any food as we tried to carry more tents for survivors that night," 20-year-old Tibetan Genpo Gya, who was among the first group of monks to reach Yushu, told China Daily on Friday.

"I slept with another 17 monks in one tent that night, as we wanted to share more tents with people who lost their house in the quake," he said.

Ngawang Kunkyap, a 19-year-old monk of Sershul Temple, didn't realize his fingers were bleeding after hours of searching for survivors under ruins.

"I used my hands to dig into ruins, and I continued my work even though those underneath clearly had to be dead. Finding their bodies still would be a comfort for their family members," he said.

The government showed high efficiency in the rescue and relief work after the quake, senior monk Dampa Rinchen told Xinhua.

"Tibetan monks have been active in helping whenever needed," he said.

The monks have also been praying and chanting for the residents and giving them religious and psychological support, he said.

The earthquake severely damaged the local Tibetan Buddhist temple in Gyegu, killing eight monks and injuring 22 others.

After being rebuilt, the temple will house quake orphans and be a center for old people without family, he added.

Yushu has 200 Buddhist temples. Three of its largest ones, including Gyegu Temple, have more than 500 monks.

Yushu is one of China's 10 Tibetan autonomous prefectures.

More than 90 percent of its 350,000 population are Tibetan and most believe in Tibetan Buddhism.

\* Qi Xiao contributed to the story.

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## **China mum on Dalai Lama's request to visit quake-hit areas**

**PTI News**

**STAFF WRITER 15:40 HRS IST**

**K J M Varma**

Beijing, Apr 20 (PTI) China today evaded a direct response to the Dalai Lama's request to visit the quake-hit Qinghai province in Tibetan plateau, but brought the 11th Panchen Lama to conduct Buddhist prayer rituals for those killed in the quake.

Evading a direct answer whether China would allow the India-based Dalai Lama to visit quake-hit areas, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu merely said that China fully respects the religious beliefs and customs of locals and all religious ceremonies including prayer and expiation activities were being conducted without any hindrance.

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama last week asked China to allow him to visit the victims in quake-hit Qinghai province, where he was born.

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The New York Times

April 18, 2010

Monks Bolster China's Quake Relief Effort

By ANDREW JACOBS

JIEGU, China — Long after the bulldozers have gone silent and the rescue workers have retired to their tents, the only sound in this earthquake-battered city is the plaintive barking of dogs that have lost their homes, and in many cases, their owners.

As the smoke from a thousand campfires filled the air early Sunday morning, solitary figures shuffled through the darkness, heading to no place in particular. Some, like Tsai Ba Mao, 63, were drawn to a tent off the city's main square, where Buddhist monks had created a makeshift temple filled with rows of yak-butter lamps. A cardboard sign above the entrance read "Pray for the dead," written in Chinese and Tibetan.

Like nearly everyone else in Jiegu, a high-altitude city in western Qinghai Province, Ms. Tsai was grappling with loss, in her case, the death of her 34-year-old son in the collapse of the family's home.

"I can't sleep," she said. "The pain is too great."

The earthquake, which struck early Wednesday, killed at least 1,900 people in Jiegu, famed for its horse-racing festival and purebred Tibetan mastiffs. With hundreds of people still buried under rubble, the toll is expected to rise. Everyone, it seems, lost a relative.

The Chinese government has undertaken an aggressive relief effort. In recent days the city has been flooded with soldiers, medics and supplies. The response has been so great, and traffic downtown so bad, that the government has urged volunteers to stay away.

President Hu Jintao, who cut short a state visit to South America after the quake struck, flew to Jiegu on Sunday, consoling victims and promising to rebuild. "There will be new schools!" he wrote on a blackboard in a tent filled with orphaned children, according to Xinhua, the official news agency. "There will be new homes!"

But perhaps just as striking as Beijing's rescue-and-relief juggernaut is the highly visible operation mounted by Buddhist monks, thousands of whom have traveled long distances from Tibetan areas of the country. They distribute packaged biscuits, tend huge vats of barley and dig for bodies.

Like their makeshift prayer tent in central Jiegu, much of that help has been uncoordinated, and for the moment, tolerated by a government suspicious of grassroots organizing and especially organized religion.

The Communist Party has long had a tempestuous relationship with the country's ethnic Tibetans. Ties have been particularly strained since March 2008, when violence broke out across the Tibetan plateau. The worst, in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, left 18 dead and scores wounded, many of them Han Chinese migrants from the east.

Although officials canceled the annual horse-race festival that year, Jiegu has largely remained quiet. "We have not had troubles like other places," said Aji Suo Nade Ji, 36, a secretary in the local environmental bureau. "Maybe it's because we have always been given more freedom to practice our culture."

On Saturday, local monks organized a mass cremation of 1,400 bodies in Jiegu that took place without any government involvement. Since the quake, several Tibetan-run organizations have been allowed to provide aid and medical services. By contrast, many nongovernmental groups were barred from participating in relief efforts during the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan Province.

Robbie Barnett, the director of the modern Tibetan studies program at Columbia, said he hoped Beijing might see the disaster as an opportunity to sow goodwill. "What's happening is remarkable and impressive," he said of the government's relief effort and its laissez-faire approach to the work of the monks. "The party is certainly good at generosity. They know how to be very generous, and they know how to be ruthless. This is one of those generous times."

There have been a few uncomfortable moments. Some monks say soldiers blocked them from digging in the rubble during the first days after the quake, and it is widely believed that the government has undercounted the deaths.

But for the most part, the monks have been given wide latitude to carry out their religious duties, which include saying prayers for the dead, a central element of Tibetan Buddhism that aims to calm the soul and help it attain a good rebirth..

As soon as it went up on Saturday, the prayer tent on Gesar Square became a hub of activity. Not long after a local businessman brought by two generators he had dug from the ruins of his shop, someone delivered power strips, forming a vast cellphone recharging station. A soldier from the People's Liberation Army donated some gasoline.

Within hours, monks had fired up stoves fueled by donkey dung they had brought from their lamasery in Sichuan Province. Back in the tent, above the blazing row of butter lamps, someone — no one would say who — mounted a photo of the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader who is considered a subversive by the Chinese government. When they saw the photo, people held their chests and uttered words of devotion. A few sobbed uncontrollably.

The police, at least on Sunday, did not seem to mind.

Ms. Tsai, the woman who lost her son, wandered into the tent around 3 a.m. and quickly found her calling. Someone had left a box of brass butter lamps, and they had to be cleaned and filled.

By daybreak, as the refugees sleeping on the square began to stir, a monk switched on an amplifier, and chanting began to float out over the city. Ms. Tsai said she was exhausted but at peace, at least for the moment. "The government can help us rebuild," she said. "But what they can't do is heal our heartache and pray for our dead."

\* Zhang Jing contributed research.

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## **Dalai Lama asks China to let him visit quake-hit area**

**Posted : Sat, 17 Apr 2010 10:23:42 GMT**

**By : dpa**

New Delhi - Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama Saturday appealed to Beijing to let him visit the site of the earthquake in a Tibetan area of western China that claimed more than 1,100 lives.

The exiled leader has not visited China since fleeing Tibet after a failed uprising against China's rule in the region 51 years ago. Beijing accuses him of advocating the secession of Tibet.

"To fulfill the wishes of many of the people there, I am eager to go there myself to offer them comfort," the Dalai Lama said in a statement issued from the northern Indian hill town of Dharamsala, where his Tibetan government-in-exile is based.

The monk was born in the Qinghai province that was hit by the magnitude-7.1 quake. The worst-affected area, Yushu County, is primarily Tibetan area.

"When Sichuan was rocked by an earthquake two years ago, I wished to visit the affected areas to pray and comfort the people there, but I was unable to do so," he said.

The Dalai Lama praised Chinese officials for rescue and relief efforts following Wednesday's earthquake.

"I also applaud the Chinese authorities for visiting the affected areas, especially Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, who has not only personally offered comfort to the affected communities but has also overseen the relief work," he said.

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