

5-magnitude quake hits Tibet; no casualties reported

A 5.0-magnitude earthquake jolted Zhongba County in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region at 6:07 p.m. Wednesday (Beijing Time). No casualties were reported.

The epicenter was monitored at 30.67 degrees north latitude and 83.34 degrees east longitude. The quake struck at a depth of 8 km, according to the China Earthquake Networks Center.

The epicenter, 124 kilometers from the county seat and 757 kilometers from Lhasa, is in an uninhabited zone and therefore the moderate quake caused no injuries and death of people and livestock, Wei Xince, deputy county governor, told Xinhua by phone.

Local authorities were checking damages to roads and makeshift livestock pens in the summer pasture.

Zhongba, which is in the western-most of Xigaze prefecture and borders Nepal, covers an area of 45,900 square kilometers and has a population of 24,800. It has an average altitude of over 5,000 meters.

News story: Defence Minister meets poppy producing veterans going for gold

The Poppy Factory employs 27 disabled veterans in Richmond to produce poppies and wreaths for the Royal Family and the Royal British Legion, but not content with making 12.5 million poppies last year, they are now looking to gold-plate their award-winning employment scheme.

They are also the country's leading employability organisation for disabled military veterans, providing a free service to veterans with a medical condition or impairment across England and Wales to get back into work.

Having helped almost 700 people into employment since 2010, the charity won the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Silver Award last year for demonstrating great support to the Armed Forces community, and one of Deirdre Mills' key goals in her new role is to go for gold this year.

As part of the Armed Forces Covenant, which the government enshrined in law

as a promise from the nation to ensure that the Armed Forces community are not at a disadvantage, the annual Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same – and the Poppy Factory is certainly doing that.

Defence Minister Earl Howe said:

From helping veterans across the country overcome adversity and get back into work, to empowering those who have inspired me here in Richmond today to contribute to such an honourable cause, the magnificent work of the Poppy Factory is a credit to the Armed Forces Covenant and I'm thrilled to see Deirdre is driving for even more success.



Earl Howe with Poppy Factory CEO Deirdre Mills.

Their new CEO Deirdre Mills enjoyed a successful career in the British Army herself before getting involved in charity work.

She said:

Our support is really making a difference, whether it be providing career advice or meeting the more complex needs of some of the hardest-to-help individuals in society. There is also a growing number of disabled veterans who are being referred to us by other organisations; this is both testament to the quality of our work

and indicative of the growing number of military charities that are now working together to produce the best results.

We are working hard to accommodate and champion the needs of disabled people and a Gold Award will really help us demonstrate this to our donors and the public – we need to secure over £2m in sustainable funding each year to provide our life-changing service.



Earl Howe met Gary Lock, an ex Serviceman from 4 Battalion Royal Regiment of Wales.

Amongst those who Earl Howe met today was Gary Lock, an ex Serviceman from 4 Battalion Royal Regiment of Wales, who has been working at the factory since September. Suffering from a serious hip injury, Gary got in touch with the Poppy Factory looking for employment.

He said:

I really enjoy coming to work, and it's great to have a laugh and a joke while you're doing something that's making a difference.

Press release: South West Water prosecuted for crude sewage spill in Truro River

South West Water will pay £54,000 in fines and costs for allowing untreated sewage to escape from a pumping station near Truro in Cornwall.

The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

On 16 March 2015 approximately 400,000 litres (88,000 gallons) of sewage was discharged from the Calenick Pumping Station into the Truro River via Calenick Creek.

Located south of Truro at the head of an estuary, the site receives sewage from surrounding villages and pumps it to Truro (Newham) Sewage Treatment Works for full treatment, including disinfection.

An investigation by the Environment Agency revealed two factors contributed to the illegal discharge.

In 2015 a contractor working on electrical panels at the pumping station forgot to restart the pumps. This meant sewage arriving in the wet well, a storage area within the site, wasn't pumped out.

Shortly before the spill, South West Water received three urgent alarms via telemetry warning that sewage had reached a high level in the sump, yet no pumps were running. The team responsible for sending a crew to the pumping station failed to telephone them with a 'high priority' request to attend the site. Instead, they messaged them electronically, forgetting the crew was at a meeting and wouldn't be able to get to Calenick for some time.

A short while later, further alarms were triggered warning the water company that sewage was now spilling from the pumping station outfall into Calenick Creek. The discharge continued for approximately four-and-a-half hours.

The pumping station lies within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation close to commercial mussel and oyster beds at Grimes Bar and Malpas. Fortunately, the sewage spill occurred during the closed season for shellfish, although there was a risk of possible contamination of shellfish beds.

Mark Pilcher of the Environment Agency said:

It is vitally important water companies have robust procedures in place to ensure their sewage infrastructure assets perform appropriately.

Calenick Sewage Pumping Station is situated at the head of a very sensitive estuary containing important intertidal habitats and

commercial shellfish beds. The unpermitted discharge of crude sewage to the estuary because the pump station was not switched on following a site inspection is unacceptable.

South West Water had earlier pleaded guilty to discharging crude sewage from Calenick Sewage Pumping Station contrary to Regulations 12(1)(a) and 38(2) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010.

At a sentencing hearing at Truro Crown Court on 26 January 2017, South West Water was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay £4,000 costs.

[News story: UK and Egypt continue to tackle joint threats](#)

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach today welcomed his Egyptian counterpart to London to discuss shared challenges and threats, including that posed by Daesh.

Lieutenant General Mahmoud Hegazy was received by a ceremonial guard from the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, before holding discussions with Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon.

Discussion included shared security interests in Libya, planned Defence Engagement this year, including preparations for a future joint exercise involving counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) training, and the UK's commitment to security in the region. Dates for the annual military staff talks were also confirmed, which aim to identify mutual training opportunities and areas where both nations can deepen their military relationship.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Stability abroad helps keep the streets of Britain safer and more secure.

With a strengthening relationship and as a key partner in defence and military matters, Britain is working with Egypt to combat threats, including from Daesh terrorism in Sinai and Libya.

Deepening our relationship with Egypt helps ensure stability in the Middle East and improves safety and security here in Britain.

The Defence Secretary [visited](#) Cairo in September, where he committed the UK to continue working alongside the Egyptian military, particularly through C-

IED training.



Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach today welcomed his Egyptian counterpart Lieutenant General Mahmoud Hegazy to London. Crown Copyright.

As part of joint Defence work last year, Royal Navy warships HMS Ocean and Bulwark visited Egypt and met with ENS Tahya Misr to practice manoeuvres and participate in an air defence exercise.

10 Egyptian officers from their Mistral class helicopter carriers were also hosted on board, and ahead of the exercise HMS Ocean, visited the port of Alexandria, the first Royal Navy ship to do so for eight years.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

I was pleased to welcome Lt Gen Hegazy to London, and following a positive exchange I have personally reaffirmed our important Defence ties. We will continue to develop this military bond.

While in the UK, Lt Gen Hegazy is also due to visit Northwood Headquarters, where he will meet Commander of Joint Forces Command General Sir Chris Deverell, among other senior personnel.

Green Party to stand in Stoke by-election



1 February 2017

North Staffordshire Green Party has announced local activist Adam Colclough as its candidate for the Stoke by-election.

Colclough is from Stoke and understands the problems it faces. He wants to end austerity and tackle insecure employment, low pay and inadequate housing. His priorities are the NHS, social care and education.

Colclough works in logistics operations but also has roles in a mental health forum, NHS patients' forum and young offenders' rehabilitation organisations. He is studying part time for a sociology degree at Staffordshire University.

Colclough said:

"I'm absolutely committed to fighting for a better future for my city and its people. Politicians need to be honest about the real causes of the problems that blight Stoke on Trent and offer credible solutions that will work. Simply staying silent about austerity instead of offering realistic, alternative economic and industrial policies is not good enough.

"The people of Stoke have been taken for granted for far too long and the Green Party will be honest in addressing these issues to create a fair and sustainable future. Many people in Stoke are disconnected from the three mainstream parties and seeking an alternative. We want to offer them one based on inclusion and hope, not division and prejudice."

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"Adam has lived in Stoke his whole life which means he truly understands the strengths and challenges of the local area. He would do whatever it takes to work with others of like mind to meet the needs of the local community, and defeat the forces that seek to separate us. I'm proud that Adam is offering a brighter, fairer future."

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