



Rescue workers search for survivors in the rubble of a collapsed building after an earthquake hit town of Elazig, eastern Turkey, yesterday. *Inset, Rescuers stand on another collapsed building in the town.*

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Turkey quake kills 22

Rescuers scramble to find survivors; 1,243 people injured

AFP, Elazig

Rescue workers raced against time yesterday to find survivors under the rubble after a powerful earthquake claimed 22 lives and left more than 1,200 injured in eastern Turkey.

The magnitude 6.8 quake struck on Friday evening, with its epicentre in the small lakeside town of Sivrice in Elazig province, and was felt across neighbouring countries. There have been 401 aftershocks including 14 that were above four in magnitude.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan cancelled a speech in Istanbul and headed to Elazig where he attended the funeral of a woman and her son.

He vowed the state would do “everything we can” to help those affected in a disaster he described as a “test”.

The Turkish government’s disaster and emergency management agency (AFAD) said 42 people had been rescued alive from collapsed buildings in Elazig.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyul said earlier that 22 people were estimated to be trapped under the rubble.

Turkish news channels showed live images of people

rescued. Among those found alive was a woman called Azize who had contacted emergency authorities and spoken to a rescue worker by telephone, state news agency Anadolu reported.

Nearly 2,000 search and rescue personnel were sent to the region while thousands of beds, blankets and tents have been provided, the presidency said.

The rescue efforts have been taking place in freezing temperatures as wood and plastic were burned to keep crowds warm.

Environment and Urbanisation Minister Murat Kurum told reporters in Elazig that five buildings collapsed while others were badly or lightly damaged.

The interior minister said 18 people were killed in Elazig while four died in Malatya.

Among the 1,243 people injured were residents in other southeast provinces including Diyarbakir and Sanliurfa.

Health minister Fahrettin Koca said no one was in a critical condition.

The tremor was felt in several parts of eastern Turkey near the Iraqi and Syrian borders as well as in Iran, Lebanon and Syria.



## IMPEACHMENT TRIAL OF US PRESIDENT

# Trump defence team begins arguments

REUTERS, Washington

Lawyers for US President Donald Trump began his defense at the Senate impeachment trial yesterday, arguing that Democrats’ efforts to remove the president from office would set a “very, very dangerous” precedent in an election year.

For the last three days, Democrats laid made case for the removal of Trump from office for pressuring Ukraine to dig up dirt on former Vice President Joe Biden, a 2020 Democratic presidential contender, and then trying to cover it up by impeding a congressional investigation. Trump has denied wrongdoing.

White House Counsel Pat Cipollone, the head of the defense team, told Senators they would be denying voters their right to give their opinion on Trump at the Nov 3 presidential election if they found him guilty and ousted him now.

In only the third US presidential impeachment trial, Democrats argued earlier this week that Trump should be removed for pressuring Ukraine to dig up dirt on former Vice President Joe Biden, a 2020 Democratic presidential contender, and then trying to cover it up by impeding a congressional investigation. “You’ll find that the president did absolutely nothing wrong,” Cipollone said.

Trump is expected to be acquitted in the Senate, where a two-thirds vote is required to convict and remove a president from office. No Republican senator has voiced any support for his ouster.

Yesterday’s session will be a relatively short one of up to three hours because Republicans want to save the bulk of their arguments for early next week when they expect television viewership to be higher.

# 4 killed as Iraq forces raid protest camps

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi security forces raided Baghdad’s main protest site yesterday and tried to eject protesters in southern cities, firing tear gas and bullets killing four people and wounding dozens more, police and medical sources said.

The new push to end the sit-ins and restore order came hours after populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who counts millions of supporters in Baghdad and the south, said he would halt his involvement in anti-government unrest.

Sadr’s supporters, who had bolstered the anti-government protesters and sometimes played a role in protecting them from attacks by security forces and unidentified gunmen, began withdrawing from sit-ins early yesterday after Sadr’s announcement.

Clashes then took place after authorities began removing concrete barriers near Tahrir Square where anti-government demonstrators have camped out for months, and across at least one main bridge over the Tigris River in the capital,

Reuters reporters said.

In the southern city of Basra, security forces raided the main anti-government sit-in overnight and deployed in force to stop protesters gathering there again, security sources said. Police arrested at least 16 protesters in the city, they said.

In Baghdad, at least one person was killed and more than 30 injured in clashes between police and protesters near Tahrir Square. Another three died and 14 were wounded in the southern city of Nassiriya when security forces took control of a bridge occupied for days by demonstrators, security sources and medics said.

Iraq’s security forces have used tear gas and live ammunition against mostly peaceful protesters since anti-government unrest broke out in Baghdad on Oct. 1. More than 450 people have died in the violence, according to a Reuters tally from police and medics.

The demonstrators demand the removal of what they see as a corrupt Iraqi ruling elite and the end of interference in politics by foreign powers.



Smoke from burning tents is seen as Iraqi security forces raid Baghdad’s main protest site at Tahrir Square during ongoing anti-government protests in Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Indian govt ends internet blackout in restive Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Indian authorities yesterday restored internet in Indian Kashmir after a five-and-a-half-month blackout but maintained a block on social media sites.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government imposed a communications blackout in early August when it stripped the portion of Kashmir it controls -- the country’s only Muslim-majority region -- of its partial autonomy.

India also imposed a curfew, sent in tens of thousands of extra troops and detained dozens of Kashmiri political leaders and others, many of whom remain in detention, drawing criticism abroad.

Internet access was restored yesterday but only to 301 government-approved websites that include international news publications and platforms such as Netflix and Amazon.

Mobile phone data access was also

restored, although it was limited to slower second-generation (2G) connections.

Meanwhile, a top American diplomat has urged New Delhi to release “political leaders detained without charge” in Kashmir.

“I was pleased to see some incremental steps, including the partial return of internet service in Kashmir,” Alice Wells, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, said at a news briefing in Washington DC.

“We also continue to urge the government to permit regular access by our diplomats, and to move swiftly to release those political leaders detained without charge,” the ambassador, who was on a visit to Asian countries and attended a conference in New Delhi, added.

Wells also spoke about the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in her briefing, saying that the US stressed on the principle of equal protection under the law.

## Rajasthan passes anti-CAA resolution

NDTV ONLINE

The Congress-led government in Indian state of Rajasthan yesterday passed a resolution against the CAA in the state assembly with the opposition BJP strongly protesting the move.

Rajasthan became the third state in the country after Kerala and Punjab to pass a resolution against the amended citizenship law.

The Congress resolution said CAA flouts the basic nature of the Constitution and that a substantial section of people believes that National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) have the same base.

The resolution further said that the amendments “divides people on religious grounds.”

# Weinstein drew up ‘red flag list’ of women, rape trial told

AFP, New York

Harvey Weinstein told a private investigator to approach women he suspected were detailing sexual misconduct allegations against him to journalists, his rape trial was told Friday.

Two months before the #MeToo movement ignited in late 2017, the then Hollywood titan emailed a “red flag list” of people he wanted investigated, prosecutors and a witness said in the high-profile proceedings which began hearing testimony this week.

The list included dozens of names, some of which were highlighted in red to indicate individuals that the now-disgraced movie producer was most concerned about.

They included the actress Rose McGowan, who Weinstein claimed was trying to extort him, and “The Sopranos” actress Annabella Sciorra, who accused him of rape in graphic testimony on Thursday.

Weinstein, 67, faces life imprisonment if convicted of predatory sexual assault

charges related to two women.

He is accused of raping actress Jessica Mann in 2013 and of forcibly performing oral sex on former production assistant Mimi Haley.

More than 80 women, including Hollywood stars Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek, have since accused him of sexual misconduct.

Early Friday, the prosecution called forensic psychiatrist Barbara Ziv to dispel several “myths” surrounding rape.

Ziv, who testified when comedian Bill Cosby was convicted of sexual assault, said victims of sexual assault commonly remain in contact with their attacker for years after the incident.

“That contact can range from text messages to emails to continuing a relationship with them,” she said.

The psychiatrist said victims often keep quiet because they possess some sort of affection for the abuser or because the perpetrator may also have the power to wreck their job and other relationships.



## 34 US troops injured in Iran strikes in Iraq base

Nearly three dozen US troops suffered traumatic brain injuries or concussion in this month’s Iranian air strike on a military base in Iraq, the Pentagon said on Friday. “Thirty-four total members have been diagnosed with concussions and TBI (traumatic brain injury),” Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman told reporters. President Donald Trump had initially said that no Americans were injured in the strike on the Ain al-Asad base in western Iraq on the night of January 7-8 although authorities later reported that 11 troops were injured. The airbase -- one of the largest in Iraq, with 1,500 US troops making up the bulk of a coalition presence directly adjacent to thousands of Iraqi forces -- was targeted in retaliation for the US killing of top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in a January 3 drone strike in Baghdad.

## Walking sharks discovered

So -- some sharks walk. Just not the scary ones. While great whites haunt the deep, walking sharks are content to scuttle in the shallows. They’ve been walking, or something close to it, for at least 9 million years. Shark scientists spent years sampling the DNA of the only known walking shark species to estimate when they evolved. They found four new species while they were at it. The youngest species might’ve evolved less than 2 million years ago, according to findings published this week in Marine and Freshwater Research. Walking sharks, also called “epaulette” sharks for their spots that resemble the military decor, “walk” on their muscular fins to forage for small fish along shallow reefs and sea grass. Walking sharks are found in eastern Indonesia and neighboring islands, New Guinea and parts of Australia.

## Locust invasion of E Africa



Billions of locusts swarming through East Africa are the result of extreme weather swings and could prove catastrophic for a region still reeling from drought and deadly floods, experts said Friday. Dense clouds of the ravenous insects have spread from Ethiopia and Somalia into Kenya, in the region’s worse infestation in decades. The UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated one swarm in Kenya at around 2,400 square kilometres -- an area almost the size of Moscow -- meaning it could contain up to 200 billion locusts, each of which consume their own weight in food every day. If unchecked, locust numbers could grow 500 times by June, spreading to Uganda and South Sudan, becoming a plague that will devastate crops and pasture in a region which is already one of the poorest and most vulnerable in the world.

SOURCE: AFP

## UK PM signs EU divorce treaty

AFP, London

Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Friday hailed “a new chapter” in Britain’s history as he signed its divorce treaty with the EU, clearing another hurdle before the country exits the bloc next Friday.

It allows Britain to end its decades-long membership of the European Union and leave its closest neighbours and trading partners after several years of domestic acrimony and delays.

“The signing of the withdrawal agreement is a fantastic moment, which finally delivers the result of the 2016 referendum and brings to an end far too many years of argument and division,” Johnson said in a statement.

“This signature heralds a new chapter in our nation’s history,” he added on Twitter, alongside a photo of the occasion.

Johnson signed the agreement in Downing Street, seated in front of two Union Jack flags, with European and British officials who had brought it from Brussels looking on.

EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel had already put their names to the treaty overnight at a ceremony held behind closed doors in the early hours of the morning.

It will now return to Brussels, where the original will be kept in EU archives along with other international treaties, while three copies will be dispatched back to London.

On Wednesday next week, the text will go to the European Parliament for ratification and on Thursday diplomats from the EU member states will approve the deal in writing.

Then, on Friday, January 31, Britain spends its last day in the EU before leaving the bloc at 2300 GMT as clocks strike midnight in Brussels.