

CHINA QUAKE

World powers, Asian neighbours offer help

AFP, Hong Kong

World powers and Asian neighbours rallied around China with sympathy and pledges of help after a massive earthquake that left tens of thousands dead, missing or trapped.

The thoughts and prayers of the American people are with the Chinese people, especially those directly affected. The United States stands ready to help in any way possible," President George W. Bush said in a statement.

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Monday near Chengdu, the capital of the southwestern province of Sichuan, flattening schools, factories and leaving nearly 10,000 dead, according to the official count.

But that figure was expected to rise dramatically with at least 10,000 people buried under rubble in Sichuan's Mianzhu city alone.

"I extend my condolences to those injured and to the families of the victims of (Monday's) earth-

quake in China's Sichuan province. I am particularly saddened by the number of students and children affected by this tragedy," said Bush.

Hundreds were feared buried at Juyan Middle School in Dujiangyan city, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the epicentre, and rescuers have pulled about 60 bodies from the rubble so far.

Bush's sentiments were echoed by China's neighbours, with close ally Pakistan expressing shock at the disaster.

"I am deeply shocked and grieved at the loss of precious lives of our Chinese brethren and damage to property caused by the severe earthquake that hit China," President Pervez Musharraf said in a message to his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao.

"At this difficult time, we stand by the great Chinese people and assure them of our full support and solidarity."

Japan said its rescue teams were on standby but expected that Beijing preferred to handle the

disaster on its own.

"We want to provide whatever we can as our neighbour has suffered huge damage," Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura told reporters. "But we still have to see what the requests are."

Taiwan, which China regards as a renegade province, also offered condolences and pledged support.

"We expressed our condolences and we are willing to assist in rescue missions and provide necessary humanitarian aid," Prime Minister Chang Chun-hsiung said.

South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak told his cabinet seek ways to help, while Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd extended sympathy.

"I have written to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao this morning, expressing this and offering Australian assistance including the search and rescue capability of the states and territories of Australia," Rudd said.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy also offered support.

Rescuers hear cry for help in quake rubble

AFP, Mianzhu

Rescuers scrambling over the twisted metal and concrete of this devastated Chinese city said Tuesday they can still hear voices from the rubble more than 24 hours after it was hit by a quake.

With time running out for around 6,000 people who remain buried here, one People's Liberation Army soldier said they remained hopeful of pulling people out alive.

"Definitely we can hear voices," said the soldier, who did not want to be named. "We will see if we can get them out."

Mianzhu, a city of around 500,000 people, is just 60 kilometres (36 miles) from the epicentre of the 7.9-magnitude quake that struck Monday in southwest China's Sichuan province.

According to latest government estimates it has killed up to 12,000 people so far, and there are fears it will soar further as more details emerge.

In Mianzhu alone, just north of the provincial capital Chengdu, the death toll is at least 2,000.

Li Huaqing watched anxiously as a rescue team frantically dug

through the rubble of a collapsed Bank of China building where his brother was among some 30 people believed to be buried.

"My younger brother is in there," 42-year-old Li -- his eyes bloodshot from sleep deprivation -- told AFP, as his sister-in-law cried next to him.

"We have not slept, we've stood here all night watching."

Thousands of people remain missing in Mianzhu. Many, like Li's brother, are thought buried under the metal and roof-sized broken slabs of concrete.

"We can still hear voices," one local policeman working with a rescue team confided from beside the rubble that was once the bank. As ambulances and police cars raced past with sirens blaring, shell-shocked residents walked through their destroyed city often unsure of what to do.

Many who have been made homeless found areas of refuge in the city's parks, setting up makeshift tents with bed sheets, umbrellas and cardboard.

"Everywhere it's totally destroyed, there are rescue workers looking for people in many places," one young man said as he surveyed the devastation.

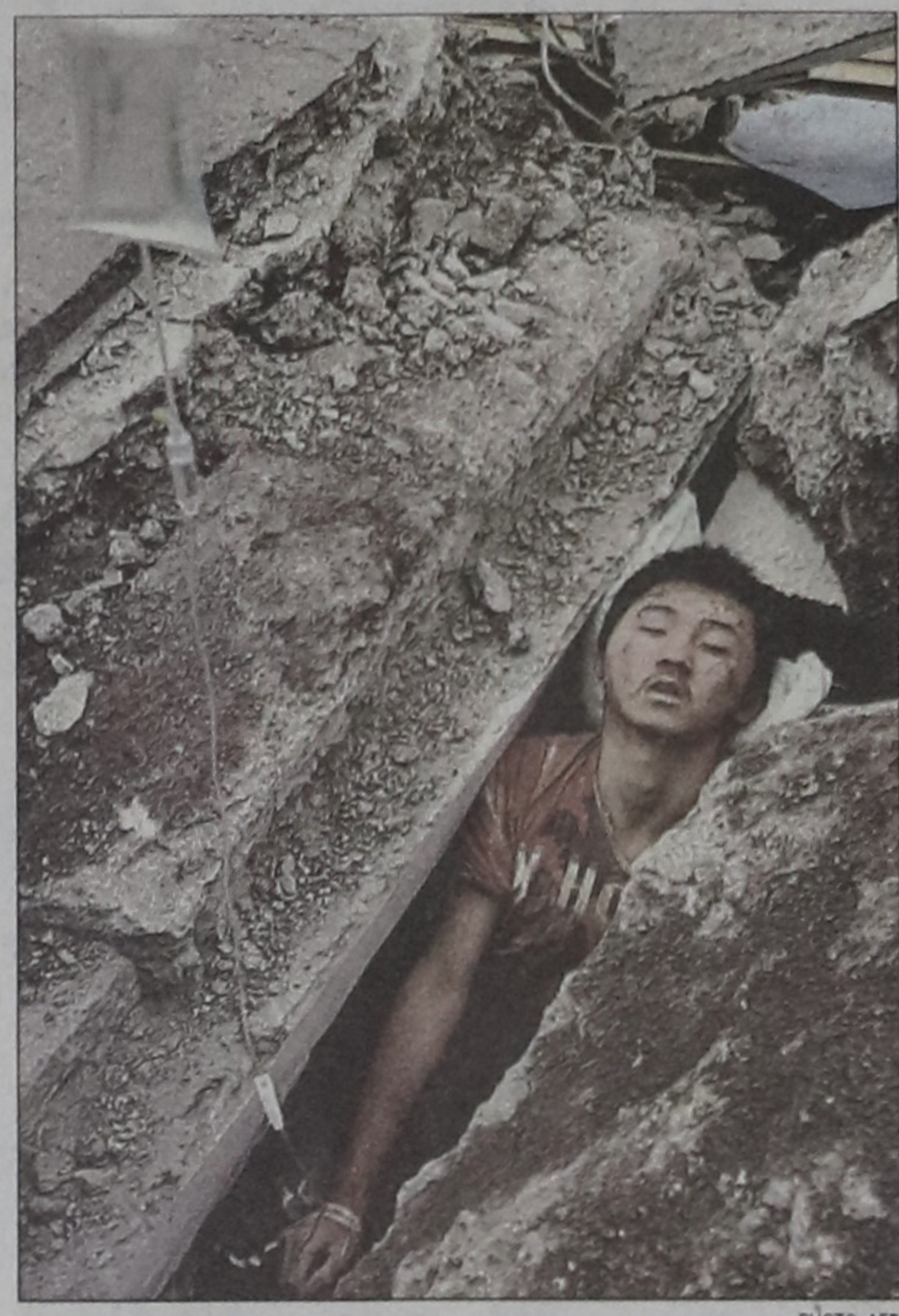


PHOTO: AFP

A Chinese boy waits to be rescued from the rubble of a collapsed building in Beichuan, southwest China's Sichuan province yesterday after an earthquake measuring 7.8 rocked the province. China's biggest earthquake for a generation left tens of thousands dead, missing or buried under the rubble of crushed communities, plunging the nation into an all-out aid effort.

'Kidnapped Israeli soldier won't be part of any truce'

AFP, Gaza City

The Islamist Hamas movement yesterday said the release of an Israeli soldier captured in 2006 would not be part of a proposed Gaza truce, despite Israeli demands for progress on the issue.

"Whoever thinks that the Shalit issue will be settled for free as part of the period of calm is completely wrong," senior Hamas leader Mahmud Zahar said in a speech in Gaza City, referring to the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

"The issue of a prisoner exchange is completely separate from the period of calm," he added, speaking at an event to remember the Naqba, the Arabic word for catastrophe used to describe the creation of Israel in 1948.

Israel has demanded that progress on the release of Shalit, who was captured by Gaza militants in June 2006, be included in an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire proposal backed by 12 major Palestinian factions including Hamas.

Shalit was captured by militants from the Gaza Strip in a deadly cross-border raid into Israel in June 2006 and is being held by Hamas, which has demanded an exchange involving hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

"If there were another way to free these prisoners we would welcome it," Zahar said, referring to the more than 11,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails.



PHOTO: AFP

Druze women mourn during the funeral of a loyalist to anti-Syrian Druze leader Walid Jumblatt in the town of Shwayfat, southeast of Beirut yesterday. At least 62 people have been killed in six days of violence across Lebanon between government and opposition supporters, the worst sectarian fighting since the 1975-1990 civil war.

Bush warns Syria, Iran over Lebanon violence

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush Monday warned Iran and Syria that the international community would not allow Lebanon to fall under foreign domination again, as he vowed to shore up the Lebanese army.

Bush reaffirmed Washington's support for Prime Minister Fuad Siniora amid deadly violence pitting mainly Sunni supporters of the government and militants loyal to the Shia Hezbollah-led opposition.

"I strongly condemn Hezbollah's recent efforts, and those of their foreign sponsors in Tehran and Damascus, to use violence and intimidation to bend the government and people of Lebanon to their will," Bush said in a statement.

"The international community will not allow the Iranian and Syrian regimes, via their proxies, to return Lebanon to foreign domination and

control," he said. Bush said Washington would help Siniora by strengthening his armed forces.

"It's probably the most practical way that we can get some help to him quickly," he told Al Arabiya television, according to a transcript of the interview.

"They're not great yet, but they're pretty good. And we want to make them better so that they can respond."

Bush said he planned to consult with regional leaders during his trip to the Middle East this week in order to coordinate efforts to support Siniora's government and implement UN resolutions supporting Lebanon's sovereignty.

"It is critical that the international community come together to assist the Lebanese people in their hour of need," said the US leader, who leaves Tuesday on a five-day trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Lebanon army ready to use force to halt battle

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon's army, backed by US pledges of support, said it was ready to use force yesterday to restore order after six days of deadly sectarian gunbattles that have shaken the nation to the core.

US President George W. Bush, on the eve of a trip to the Middle East, warned Iran and Syria that the international community would not allow Lebanon to fall under foreign domination again and vowed to shore up the Lebanese military.

The fighting, which has left at least 62 people dead and close to 200 wounded, is the worst sectarian unrest since the 1975-1990 civil war and has stoked fears the country was headed for another all-out conflict.

After being ordered not to intervene to protect its neutrality in deeply divided Lebanon, the army said its troops were prepared to resort to force to disarm gunmen and bring an end to the violence between supporters of the Western-backed government and Hezbollah-led opposition fighters.

No major incidents were reported on Tuesday although fierce battles erupted briefly overnight in northern port city of Tripoli. In Beirut the situation was calm, schools have reopened and traffic was slowly returning to normal although some stores in the west of the capital are still shut.

Several highways remain blocked by Hezbollah-led Shia protests, including the road to the Lebanon's only international airport which is still shut, and people are trying to leave by road to Syria or by boat to Cyprus.

"The civil disobedience campaign will only end when Prime Minister Fuad Siniora officially rescinds his decisions and when his camp returns to the negotiating table," an official with Hezbollah ally Amal told AFP.

The latest unrest, which dramatically raised the stakes in an 18-month standoff between the ruling majority and the Syrian- and Iranian-backed opposition, erupted after a government crackdown against Hezbollah activities which the powerful militant group said amounted to a declaration of war.

Baghdad truce under pressure as new clashes kill 11

AFP, Baghdad

Eleven people were killed in overnight battles between US troops and Shia militia in Baghdad's Sadr City, officials said on Tuesday, pressuring a truce aimed at ending seven weeks of deadly fighting.

Armed clashes have continued in the impoverished Shia district despite a weekend deal between anti-American Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's movement and the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

A medic from Imam Ali hospital in Sadr City told AFP that his facility had received the bodies of eight men killed in the firefights. Another medic at the Al-Sadr hospital confirmed receiving three more bodies.

The two medics also said 20 people had been wounded, including women and children.

The US military, however, said its forces killed only three militants.

Both sides have said that they wanted until Wednesday to fully implement the ceasefire deal and stop the bloodshed which has claimed hundreds of lives and left many more wounded since late March.

ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN. Director of Admissions, Asian University for Women. The Asian University for Women (AUW), a new international, independent and English-medium university located in Chittagong, Bangladesh, is seeking a Director of Admissions who will report directly to the Chief Academic Officer/Provost. The AUW is dedicated to the education of highly promising women from diverse cultural, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds throughout South and Southeast Asia, with a particular emphasis upon creating new educational opportunity for women from poor, rural, and refugee populations. The University's mission is based on the firm belief that women's higher education can be a critical pathway to leadership development and to achieving sustainable development, economic progress and social and political equity. In March, 2008, the Asian University for Women opened its Access Academy, a bridge program for academically talented women who lack both financial means and academic preparation for a university education. One hundred and thirty young women from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are now enrolled in the program, located in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Access Academy students who are successful in this program will be invited to matriculate in the University. The University will admit its first undergraduate class during the 2008-2009 academic year, and open its doors to its first class in September, 2009. The Asian University for Women's undergraduate program will offer a rigorous liberal arts and sciences education. The University will also offer professional Master's degrees programs in management, sustainable engineering, information technology, education, and public policy. We anticipate that most undergraduates will choose to complete both a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree over five years. The responsibilities of this position include: -Developing and implementing a selective recruitment and admissions program for both the year-long Access Academy and the University's undergraduate program; -Building a strong team-oriented admissions staff that is technologically savvy and with strong verbal and communication skills. Both the director and the admissions staff need to be able to communicate the value of a liberal arts and sciences education and the advantages of a women's university; -Managing and providing direction to the admissions staff in ways that will successfully move the recruitment and admissions process over the course of each cycle; -Communicating frequently in highly effective ways with all constituencies, including school heads and counselors, prospective students and their families, professional education organizations, and the media throughout the recruitment region; -Establishing strong relationships with schools that the University identifies as feeder schools; -Assessing the effectiveness of admissions staff, use of technology, recruitment and marketing plans, publications, web strategies, travel schedules and itineraries, and other operations, including the strategic use of need-based aid on an on-going basis. The successful candidate will possess a Bachelor's or, preferably, a Master's degree, bring at least four years of experience in higher education admissions work or as a college counselor in a strong secondary school, substantial knowledge of selective undergraduate admissions, and excellent interpersonal and communication skills. In addition, the successful candidate will need qualities of flexibility, patience, and strong enthusiasm for the mission of the University. International experience, particularly in the developing world, would be a strong asset. The successful candidate will also possess the ability to work collaboratively in a richly diverse and pluralistic academic community, and personal enthusiasm for living and working in Bangladesh, and traveling in the Asian region. The position of Director of Admissions is currently vacant. The successful candidate will need to be able to take up this position no later than September 1, 2008. This search will close May 31, 2008. Please send a cover letter stating your interest and qualifications for the position, a full curriculum vitae, and a list of four references clearly labeled with the job code of AUW0508ADM by email to: Alice.Hogan@asian-university.org Alice Hogan, Chief Administrative Officer, Asian University for Women Support Foundation, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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