



PHOTO: AFP

Survivors sit beside rubble of collapsed houses yesterday after a 6.9-magnitude earthquake, which killed over 600 people and made thousand homeless, hit Yushu county, in northwest China on Wednesday. Rescuers with shovels and bare hands clawed through rubble to hunt for survivors of the quake. In the inset, a survivor carries his daughter in his arms beside rubble after the quake.



Rescuers struggle as China quake toll tops 600

BBC ONLINE

Emergency teams have been pouring into western China's Qinghai province, a day after a deadly earthquake devastated the mountainous region.

Thousands of homeless and injured people await relief.

Officials say 617 people died and 9,980 were injured when the tremor hit early on Wednesday - 313 remain missing.

Rescuers tore at the rubble with their bare hands and shovels, as emergency convoys battled through sandstorms and sleet to disaster-hit Yushu county.

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao has arrived in the area to see the relief operation, state media reports.

AFTERSHOCKS

"Freezing weather, high altitude and thin air have all made rescue efforts difficult," Hou Shike, deputy head of China International Search and Rescue, told official news agency Xinhua.

Snaking rescue convoys rumbled in the early hours of Thursday along the 1,000-km (620-mile) highway separating Yushu from the Qinghai provincial capital, Xining.

As well as the remote location, which sits at an altitude of around 13,000ft (4,000m), more logistical problems were posed by aftershocks.

The quake also knocked out phone and power lines and triggered landslides. Survivors shivered through

Wednesday night in the open as temperatures fell below freezing.

In the township of Jiugu, 85% of buildings have been destroyed, officials say.

Several schools collapsed and at least 66 pupils and 10 teachers were among the dead, Xinhua reported. Emergency workers were seen removing dust-covered dead infants from rubble.

State broadcaster CCTV showed anxious parents waiting overnight outside Yushu Vocational School, where 22 students, mostly girls, were reported dead.

The flattened schools echoed scenes from the quake that hit neighbouring Sichuan province two years ago, leaving nearly 90,000 people dead.

RED SHIRT MOVEMENT

Thai govt ready for talks

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's government urged "Red Shirt" protesters yesterday to return to negotiations as the army cleared abandoned armoured vehicles from Bangkok's streets after deadly weekend clashes.

The red-clad demonstrators hunkered down in Bangkok's commercial heart, preparing for a final showdown with the authorities in their effort to force immediate elections to replace Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's government.

"If the government still wants to retake this area, we can do nothing except wait. We have overcome fear. Nothing can scare us anymore," said a Red leader, Nattawut Saikuar.

The death toll from Thailand's worst political violence in almost two decades rose to at least 23 people, 18 of whom died from gunshot wounds, emergency services said as the government called for the fresh talks.

"The government is ready to talk whenever the Reds want, but the Reds said they don't want to," said government spokesman Panitan Wattanayagorn.

China must act on climate change, says Obama

AFP, Sydney

US President Barack Obama yesterday said China can't be allowed to wait until its standard of living improves before tackling climate change.

Obama, speaking in an Australian TV interview, said China knew the dangers of global warming but appeared to lack urgency about dealing with the problem.

"Right now their understandable impulse is to say, 'Well let's let the developed countries, the Australias, and the Americas deal with this problem first and we'll get to it when we've caught up a little bit in terms of our standard of living,'" he told public broadcaster ABC.

"The point we've tried to make is we can't, we can't allow China to wait.

"We have to take responsibility and do what needs to be done, but if emerging countries not just China but also India, Brazil and others are pursuing a path in which they replace us as the largest carbon emitters, that's not a sustainable practical approach.

Volcanic ash halts flights across Europe

AP, London

Ash clouds from Iceland's spewing volcano disrupted air traffic across Northern Europe yesterday as authorities closed British and Nordic air space, shut down Europe's busiest airport at Heathrow and cancelled hundreds of flights.

Britain's Civil Aviation Authority said non-emergency flights will be banned until at least 6 pm (1700 GMT, 1 pm EDT). Irish authorities also closed their air space for eight hours.

London Heathrow, Europe's business airport, handles upwards of 1,200 flights and 180,000 passengers per day. The closure also affected London's second- and third-largest airports, Gatwick and Stansted. It was not immediately clear when flights would resume.

With the major trans-Atlantic hub at Heathrow closed, dozens of flights to the United States were on hold, and cancellations spread across the continent to major hubs at Brussels,

Amsterdam, Geneva and Paris, where flights heading north were cancelled until midnight.

In Iceland, hundreds of people have fled rising floodwaters since the volcano under the Eyjafjallajokull (ay-yah-FYAH'-plah-yer-kuh-duhl) glacier erupted Wednesday for the second time in less than a month. As water gushed down the mountainside, rivers rose up to 10 feet (3 meters) by Wednesday night.

The ash cloud has not disrupted operations at Iceland's Keflavik airport or caused problems in the capital of Reykjavik, but has affected the south-eastern part of the island, said meteorologist Thorsteinn Jonsson. In one area, visibility was reduced to 150 yards (meters) this morning, he said, and farmers were advised to keep livestock indoors to protect them from eating ash particles as sharp as glass.

The volcano was sending up smoke and ash that posed "a significant safety

threat to aircraft," Britain's National Air Traffic Service said, as visibility is compromised and debris can get sucked into airplane engines.

Emirates airline cancelled 10 roundtrip flights between Dubai and Britain on Thursday because of the ash cloud.

"I think I might cry," said Ann Cochrane, 58, of Toronto, one of the passengers stranded in Glasgow. "I just wish I was on a beach in Mexico."

In northern Sweden all air traffic was suspended, affecting the cities of Skelleftea, Lulea, Kiruna and Hemavan, the national aviation authority said.

Air traffic in northern Finland was also halted.

Norway's King Harald V and Queen Sonja who had planned to fly Thursday to Copenhagen for the Danish queen's 70th birthday were looking to take a "car, boat or train." A cancelled trans-Atlantic flight left Norway's Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg grounded in New York.



PHOTO: AFP

Smoke billows from an erupting volcano which seems to be close to the top of the Eyjafjallajokull glacier on April 14, 2010 near Reykjavik. All London flights, including those from Heathrow, will be suspended from noon (1100 GMT) today due to volcanic ash from Iceland that has already caused almost 300 cancellations here, officials said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia confirms US adoptions suspended

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday confirmed it had suspended adoptions by US citizens following a scandal over a seven-year-old boy who was sent back to Russia by his US adoptive mother.

The foreign ministry said the freeze would stay until an agreement is reached on terms specifying responsibilities for US families adopting Russian children.

Deadly clashes over a Muslim tomb in Indonesia

AP, Jakarta

Hundreds of demonstrators descended yesterday on City Hall to demand that Jakarta's public security force be disbanded following bloody clashes over a Muslim tomb that left three dead and 156 wounded near a key seaport.

More than 1,000 police were deployed to the area, which is near the US Embassy in the central part of the capital, city spokesman Cucu Kurniasaid.

Israel allows first building shipment

AFP, Gaza City

Israel allowed a shipment of construction materials into the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip for the first time in three years yesterday, according to a Palestinian official.

The six truckloads of wood and aluminium entered the coastal territory via the Kerem Shalom crossing in the south, Palestinian customs official Raed Fattuh told AFP.

Major powers end 'constructive' talks on Iran sanctions

AFP, New York

Six major powers wrapped up what they said was a "very constructive" meeting on fresh UN sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, but diplomats cautioned against expecting early adoption.

"We have just had a very constructive consultation," China's UN Ambassador Li Baodong told reporters as he emerged from the closed-door meeting held at the US mission to the United Nations.

"We now have a better understanding of each other's positions. We will continue these consultations."

The meeting brought together envoys from the five veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council -- the United States, Britain,

France, Russia and China -- plus Germany.

The French, British and Russian ambassadors also described the meeting as "constructive."

Diplomats earlier said envoys of four Western powers were trying to enlist the support of their Russian and Chinese counterparts for a fourth set of UN sanctions aimed at persuading Tehran to halt its uranium enrichment program.

On the table was a US draft resolution outlining sanctions in five areas: arms embargo, energy, shipping, finance and targeted punitive measures against Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards, a diplomat familiar with the discussions said.

But others said they anticipated drawn-out discussions on the text and hinted that a vote by the full 15-member council might not take place until June.

6 RMG units damaged

FROM PAGE 1
Later, police rescued and admitted them to hospitals.

The workers also brought out a procession and put barricade on Dhaka-Tangail Highway at Nishchintapur Bus Stand around 10:00 am.

Officer-in-charge Sirajul Islam of Ashulia police station said they resorted to baton charge and sprayed water canons to disperse the workers when they pelted bricks and stones at police that led one and a half hour long clash leaving at least 25 people injured.

Police said the workers also

went berserk in the factories on Tuesday as some staff of the factories allegedly beat up sewing operator Nadim. Later on Wednesday, Nasa Basic Ltd manager (administration) Asaduzzaman filed a case against 300 workers with Ashulia police.

Following filing of the case, the workers yesterday gathered in front of the six factories and placed their 10-point demand before the authorities.

Talking to reporters, Nasa Group Director (production) Maj (ret'd) Mokbul Islam denied the allegation of beat-

ing. Nasa Group Chief Security Officer Azhar Ai alleged that the workers attacked the factories in a planned way.

Pearl Garments authorities said they shut down the factory for an indefinite period to avoid workers' unrest.

Police said when around 1,300 workers of Pearl Garments found a notice on the closure in the morning, they became agitated and tried to barricade the Nobinagar-Kaliakoire road but the law enforcers foiled the bid.

Outages back

FROM PAGE 16
Wednesday, PDB sources said.

Some parts of the capital suffered an hour-long power cut Wednesday indicating that the actual power demand is much higher than the official demand figure. Yesterday, however, the frequency of power cuts in the capital returned to the level prevailing a few days ago.

With the setting in of irrigation season and rising temperature, the level of load shedding has been the highest the country had ever experienced. Against a demand of more than 6,000MW, the PDB had been able to supply maximum 4,000MW. Many of its gas-fired plants were either idle or producing well below their capacity due to gas crisis.

The country has around 500 million cubic feet a day gas shortfall, which is one fifth of the total gas demand. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wednesday reiterated her directive to the power ministry and all departments concerned for gearing up their activities to ease public sufferings due to shortage of adequate power, UNB reports.

She reiterated her order when State Minister for Energy, Power and Mineral Resources Enamul Huq went to Ganobhaban to greet her on Pahela Baishakh. She enquired about the latest situation. "I want to see people free from sufferings due to the long-standing electricity crisis," she

was quoted as saying by her Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad.

MEGHNAGHAT-2 POWER BID

Eleven bidders yesterday filed their pre-qualification documents with the PDB for the 300 MW to 450 MW Meghnaghat-2 dual-fuel private power project.

The bidders are: YTL of Malaysia, local Summit Power along with US power company GE, Contour Global of USA, a joint venture comprised of Chinese Shenzhen Nanshan Power, Tellhow Sci Tecc and local firms Otobi and Icon Enterprise, local Confidence Steel, Indian Essar Power, Singaporean GMR, Iranian Arian Mah Taab, Indian Lanco Infatech, Malaysian Powertek and Malaysian Motiara-Powertec.

The combined power plant would be built with the capability to generate electricity either on heavy fuel oil or with natural gas, whichever is available. The cost of dual-fuel power plant is up to 20 percent higher than that of a gas-fired power project but it would ensure that the plant would operate amid gas crisis.

The PDB would evaluate the pre-qualification documents over the next 21 days and then seek financial offers from the qualified bidders. The PDB aims at awarding the contract to the successful bidder by December so that the plant can come into operation within mid-2013.



Request for Proposal For Assessment of the Maize Seed Market

Katalyst is a pro-poor, market development project implemented under the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of Bangladesh by Swisscontact and GTZ International Services and funded by a donor consortium. It partners with a wide range of private and public sector organizations in order to leverage its resources and maximize impact. Katalyst invites proposal from organizations to conduct an assessment of the maize seed market.

The bidder should have relevant experience in conducting such a study. The proposal should be based on the detailed RFP including scope of work and other terms & conditions that can be collected by e-mailing to rural.sectors@swisscontact-bd.org along with a brief profile of the organization. The bidder should submit hard copies of technical and financial proposal separately. The deadline for submission is 27th April, 2010 and addressed to Manager, Rural Sectors Group, Katalyst, House 20, Road 6, Baridhara, Dhaka 1212.



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Position Announcements

Based in Washington, D.C., ACDI/VOCA is a nonprofit international development organization that delivers technical and management assistance in agribusiness, financial services, enterprise development, community development and food security.

We are seeking specialists for long-term positions on a P.L. 480 Title II USAID multi-year assistance program (MYAP) in Bangladesh.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)/Gender Specialist:
The M&E/Gender Specialist will guide the technical direction of the M&E approach and strategy; arrange baseline, midterm and end-of-project evaluations and other studies and research activities; ensure compliance with USAID Office of Food for Peace implementation and reporting guidelines as well as ACDI/VOCA's corporate M&E systems; develop a gender integration plan with specific and practical recommendations on how to integrate gender in the organizational structure, program design and operations.

Qualifications: Minimum 10 years of professional experience in international development, implementing and managing M&E systems in similar projects. Advanced degree in sociology, statistics, international relations or other relevant field preferred. Proven experience and skills in quantitative and qualitative research methods, survey design and implementation, statistical data analysis required. Experience with USAID-funded projects preferred. Good written and spoken English required.

Finance and Administration (F&A) Director:
The F&A Director will create and recommend administrative and financial policies and procedures to the Chief of Party and implement policies as approved; provide oversight in all financial matters to the project financial team; monitor compliance with all internal and donor financial and administrative requirements; ensure, in close collaboration with partner F&A Manager, partners' effective and efficient financial management system and provide support on the same on a regular basis.

Qualifications: Business management or accounting degree and five years of experience with progressively increasing responsibility in similar posts working with international NGOs. Prior history of managing USAID-funded projects is preferred. Good written and spoken English required.

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