

CHINA QUAKE

Death toll rises to 148

AFP, Beijing

The toll from China's deadliest earthquake in years rose to 148 today, state media reported, as authorities turned their attention to resettling thousands of people displaced by the disaster.

The quake, which struck northwest China just before midnight on Monday, has killed at least 117 people in Gansu province and 31 in neighbouring Qinghai, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The quake was China's deadliest since 2014, when more than 600 people were killed in southwestern Yunnan province.

Almost 1,000 were injured across the two provinces after the shallow tremor on Monday, measured at 5.9 by the US Geological Survey.

Dozens of smaller aftershocks followed.

Subzero temperatures have made the aid operation even more challenging.

Sudan fighting displaced over 7 million

Says UN

AFP, United Nations

More than seven million people have been displaced by fighting in Sudan, the United Nations said on Thursday as more displaced people continued to flee a former safe haven.

"According to the International Organization for Migration, up to 300,000 people have fled Wad Madani in Al-Jazira state in a new wave of large-scale displacement," UN secretary-general's spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Another 1.5 million people have fled to neighboring countries, he added.

"These latest movements will push Sudan's displacement population to 7.1 million people, the world's largest displacement crisis," Dujarric said.



A Palestinian child collects debris following Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

‘Not seen since Vietnam’
Israel dropped hundreds of 2,000-pound bombs on Gaza, analysis shows

CNN ONLINE

In the first month of its war in Gaza, Israel dropped hundreds of massive bombs, many of them capable of killing or wounding people more than 1,000 feet away, analysis by CNN and artificial intelligence company Synthetiaic suggests.

Satellite imagery from those early days of the war reveals more than 500 impact craters over 12 meters (40 feet) in diameter, consistent with those left behind by 2,000-pound bombs. Those are four times heavier than the largest bombs the United States dropped on ISIS in Mosul, Iraq, during the war against the extremist group there.

Weapons and warfare experts blame the extensive use of heavy munitions such as the 2,000-pound bomb for the soaring death toll. The population of Gaza is packed together much more tightly than almost anywhere else on earth, so the use of such heavy munitions has a profound effect.

"The use of 2,000-pound bombs in an area as densely populated as Gaza means it will take decades for communities to recover," said John Chappell, advocacy and legal fellow at CIVIC, a DC-based group focused on minimizing civilian harm in conflict.

Israel has come under pressure internationally over the scale of the

devastation in Gaza, with even staunch ally US President Joe Biden accusing Israel of "indiscriminate bombing" of the coastal strip.

Israeli officials have argued that its heavy munitions are necessary to eliminating Hamas.

Hamas reportedly relies on a sprawling tunnel network that is believed to crisscross the Gaza Strip. Proponents of Israel's campaign in Gaza argue that the heavy munitions act as bunker busters, helping to destroy Hamas' underground infrastructure.

But 2,000-pound bombs are normally used sparingly by Western militaries, experts say, because of their potential impact on densely populated areas like Gaza. International humanitarian law prohibits indiscriminate bombing.

Marc Garlasco, a former US defense intelligence analyst and former UN war crimes investigator, said the density of Israel's first month of bombardment in Gaza had "not been seen since Vietnam."

Garlasco, now a military adviser at PAX, a Dutch non-governmental organisation that advocates for peace, reviewed all the incidents analysed in this report for CNN.

"You'd have to go back to the Vietnam war to make a comparison," said Garlasco. "Even in both Iraq wars it was never that dense."

The heavy munitions, mostly manufactured

by the US, can cause high casualty events and can have a lethal fragmentation radius – an area of exposure to injury or death around the target – of up to 365 metres (about 1,198 feet), or the equivalent of 58 soccer fields in area.

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CNN partnered with US AI company Synthetiaic which used Rapid Automatic Image Categorization (RAIC) to detect craters, smoke plumes and damaged buildings in tasked satellite imagery over the Gaza Strip. The findings were manually reviewed by a member of Synthetiaic, as well as by CNN journalists.

CNN and Synthetiaic's findings "reveal and emphasize the sheer intensity of the bombardment over a very short period of time," according to Annie Shiel, US advocacy director at CIVIC.

"In two months, we've had about the level of strikes in this tiny little area in Gaza as what we saw in Mosul and Raqqa combined," said Larry Lewis, research director at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) and formerly the US State Department's senior adviser on civilian harm, referring to US-led coalition operations against two ISIS strongholds. "It is an incredible amount of strikes, period-wise."

New N Korean nuclear reactor appears operational Says IAEA

AFP, Seoul

A second reactor at North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear facility appears to be operational, according to the UN atomic agency. Yongbyon is North Korea's main nuclear complex and home to its first nuclear reactor, with a five megawatt capacity, and has been the only known source of plutonium for its weapons programme. A second one – a light-water reactor – now also appears to operational, based on observations that warm water is being discharged from it, the International Atomic Energy Agency said in a statement released late on Thursday. "The discharge of warm water is indicative the reactor has reached criticality," IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said in a statement. In the operation of a nuclear reactor, criticality is the state in which a nuclear chain reaction is self-sustaining, according to experts. Since North Korea expelled its inspectors in 2009, the IAEA has been denied access to the country. The agency has since been primarily relying on satellite imagery to monitor the North. "Without access to the facility the Agency cannot confirm its operational status," Grossi said. He emphasised that "construction and operation" of the light-water reactor (LWR) was against the UNSC resolutions and "deeply regrettable". "The LWR, like any nuclear reactor, can produce plutonium in its irradiated fuel, which can be separated during reprocessing, so this is a cause for concern," Grossi said.

4,000 Amazon turtles seized at Peru airport

AFP, Lima



Peruvian authorities have seized some 4,000 turtles that originated in the Amazon at the country's main international airport, the national wildlife service said Thursday. The National Forestry and Wildlife Service said in a statement it has intercepted "a shipment of live turtles at the Jorge Chavez airport that were going to be exported to Indonesia." Among the reptiles were baby Arrau turtles – the largest river turtle in South America – and the yellow-spotted river turtle, which were found in small transparent plastic containers inside cardboard boxes. Both turtles are listed on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Fauna and Flora Appendix II, which requires the tracking and regulation of trade. The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the yellow-spotted river turtle, the second largest freshwater turtle in the Amazon, as vulnerable to extinction. According to Interpol, the black market for illegal wildlife products are worth up to \$20 billion per year, and is pushing many species to the brink of extinction.



PHOTO: AFP

A wildfire rages on a hill crest by a residential area in Glencairn, near Simon's Town, South Africa yesterday.

22,000 local

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there were 40,199 polling centres in the 2018 polls.

About 8,900 individuals monitored the 2014 election held in 147 seats. The rest of the 153 MPs were elected unopposed. There were 18,200 polling centres then.

Around 1.6 lakh local observers monitored the 2008 election, and there were 35,263 polling centres then.

In 2001 polls, the number of local observers was about 2.18 lakh. There were 29,978 polling centres then.

Based on the Representation of the People Order, the EC developed a policy for selecting local election observers.

The registration of local observers was introduced before the 9th parliamentary election in 2008.

Two candidates, AL leader

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and motorcycles violating the electoral rules.

In Lalmonirhat, local AL leader Abu Bakkar Siddik Shyamol, also personal secretary of Lalmonirhat-1 AL candidate Motahar Hossain, was summoned before the enquiry committee for attacking independent candidate Ataur Rahman Prodhhan and vandalising his car and election office at Hatibandha on Thursday.

Shyamol is also the chairman of Gaddimari Union Parishad in Hatibandha upazila and the organising secretary of Hatibandha upazila AL.

He has to appear before the committee at noon today, said Hatibandha Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nazir Hossain.

Meanwhile in Narayanganj, Sayema Afroz, the upazila health and family planning officer of Araihaazar, campaigned for her husband Nazrul Islam Babu, AL candidate for Narayanganj-2, violating the electoral rules.

According to the rules, government officials cannot take part in polls campaign.

Alamgir Sikder Loton, Jatiya Party candidate for Narayanganj-2, said he would complain to the Election Commission in this regard.

Contacted, Afroz said she joined the campaign as a wife, not an official.

Mahmudul Haque, deputy commissioner of Narayanganj and returning officer for the upcoming polls, said they would take necessary steps after an enquiry.

CEC asks field

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The CEC said he spoke with field-level administration officials to learn how they were operating, what problems they were facing, and how they were resolving them.

When journalists raised concerns about the incidents of clashes between supporters of candidates in various parts of the country, Habibul said there is a possibility of a few isolated incidents.

"As soon as such incidents are brought to the attention of the commission, the returning officer for that particular area will be asked to investigate and report. Legal action will be taken after receiving the report," the CEC said.

He added that law enforcers will work to ensure a violence-free election.

Habibul reemphasised the need for returning officers to carry out their duties diligently, saying, "Returning officers are primarily in charge of conducting elections and that's why they must act responsibly."

Russia may cut

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Moscow was "ready for any scenario".

Some Western politicians are urging that frozen Russian assets worth some USD300 billion be handed to Ukraine to help rebuild its war-shattered economy.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday that any such move would deal a serious blow to the global financial system.

He said Russia would "never leave in peace" any country that seized its assets, and in such a scenario it would look at what Western assets it could confiscate in retaliation.

Russia has hit back in a variety of ways against Western sanctions aimed at punishing it for the Ukraine war and hindering its ability to finance it.

This week, President Vladimir Putin ordered that two European concerns, Wintershall Dea WINT. UL and OMV OMV.VI, be stripped of multi-billion-dollar stakes in gas projects in the Russian Arctic.

Another shot at history

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in the ICC Women's Championship standings where they currently sit seventh. Top six teams from the ICC Women's Championship will qualify directly for the 2025 ODI World Cup in India.

Bangladesh registered their highest-ever ODI total of 250 in the first match before a clinical bowling performance helped them set up their largest margin of win in terms of runs.

The Tigresses put on a 222-run total in the second match, courtesy of opener Fargana Hoque's second

ODI ton. In the latter stage, Fahima Khatun, with her 48-ball 46, showed impetus that got the Tigresses beyond 200.

However, Bangladesh bowlers misfired in that game as three of the top four South African batters scored fifties to take their side home with almost five overs to spare.

Anneke Bosch starred with an unbeaten 63-ball 65-run knock, while openers Laura Wolvaardt (54) and Tazmin Brits (50) got proceedings going with a 106-run stand, dominating the Tigresses from the get-go.

UNSC demands more aid

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aid inside Gaza", reiterating his call for a "humanitarian ceasefire".

Israel's Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said in a statement that "Israel will continue to inspect, for security reasons, all humanitarian assistance to Gaza."

The fighting has displaced 1.9 million Gazans according to UN figures, out of a population of 2.4 million, and put out of action most of the 36 hospitals in the territory. Nine remain partly functioning, the World Health Organization says.

With swathes of Gaza reduced to rubble, the displaced have been forced into crowded shelters or tents, and are struggling to find food, fuel, water and medical supplies.

According to the UN, the number of aid trucks entering Gaza is well below the daily pre-war average.

Last week Israel approved the temporary delivery of aid to Gaza via its Kerem Shalom crossing, and the army says on average 80 trucks enter the territory daily through it.

In north Gaza, parts of Gaza City including Shujaia have seen street-by-street combat – even building-by-building – between Israeli soldiers and Hamas fighters.

Beyond regular exchanges of fire across the Lebanon border, the war has also sparked fears of a wider conflict with missiles from Iran-backed Yemeni rebels – claiming to

act in solidarity with Gazans – which have disrupted Red Sea shipping.

The Pentagon said on Thursday that more than 20 countries have joined a US-led coalition to protect shipping in the waterway vital for world trade.

The more than two months of bombardment has destroyed or damaged more than 60 percent of Gaza's infrastructure, said UN.

BSP candidate comes under

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I were injured in the attack. We took primary treatment at a local hospital," he said.

He alleged that Afzal Mia and his son Emran led the attack. Emran and his followers are known to be Jubo League activists, he added.

Contacted, Fatullah Jubo League General Secretary Faizul Islam said he was not aware of the incident.

Nure Azam, officer-in-charge of Fatullah Model Police Station, said Salim came under attack while campaigning and distributing leaflets.

He said the attackers had escaped before police reached the scene.

"The attackers will be brought to book no matter which party they belong to," the OC added.