

MYANMAR QUAKE

26-year-old worker rescued after 5 days

AFP, Mandalay

Rescuers yesterday pulled a man alive from the rubble five days after Myanmar's devastating earthquake, as calls grew for the junta to allow more aid in and halt attacks on rebels.

Hopes of finding more survivors are fading, but there was a moment of joy as a man was pulled alive from the ruins of a hotel in the capital Naypyidaw.

The 26-year-old hotel worker was extracted by a joint Myanmar-Turkish team shortly after midnight, the fire service and junta said.

Dazed and dusty but conscious, the man was pulled through a hole in the rubble and put on a stretcher, video posted on Facebook by Fire Services Department showed.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported severe damage in



the city of Sagaing, citing local rescuers saying one in three houses there have collapsed.

Healthcare facilities, damaged by the quake and with limited capacity, are "overwhelmed by a large number of patients", while supplies of food, water and medicine are running low, WHO said in an update.

Sagaing has seen some of the heaviest fighting in Myanmar's civil war, and AFP journalists have not been able to reach the area.

Relief groups say the overall quake response has been hindered by continued fighting between the junta and the complex patchwork of armed groups opposed to its rule, which began in a 2021 coup.

Mohammed Riyas, Myanmar Director of the International Red Cross, said humanitarian needs were staggering with hospitals overwhelmed, medicine in short supply and risks of water-borne diseases growing.

"It may be weeks before we understand the full extent of destruction caused by this earthquake as communication network lines are down and transport is disrupted," he told Reuters.

"People require urgent medical care, clean drinking water, tents, food and other basic necessities. Providing life-saving health services is critical."

IRAN TENSIONS

US military moves warplanes to reinforce ME

REUTERS, Washington

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has reinforced US military capability in the Middle East with more warplanes, the Pentagon said on Tuesday, amid a more than two-week-old US bombing campaign in Yemen and mounting tensions with Iran.

The Pentagon's brief statement did not specify which aircraft were being deployed or where precisely they were sent.

However, as many as six B-2 bombers have relocated in the past week or so to a US-British military base on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, according to US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Experts say that puts the B-2s, which have stealth technology and are equipped to carry the heaviest US bombs and nuclear weapons, in an ideal position to operate in the Middle East.

"Should Iran or its proxies threaten American personnel and interests in the region, the United States will take decisive action to defend our people," Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said in a statement.

The US military's Strategic Command has declined to say how many B-2s have reached Diego Garcia and noted that it does not comment on exercises or operations involving the B-2.

There is already considerable firepower in the Middle East and the US military will soon have two aircraft carriers in the region.



People line up for food aid distributed in Sagaing yesterday, five days after a major earthquake struck central Myanmar. The 7.7 magnitude quake, one of the strongest to hit Myanmar in a century, jolted a region that is home to 28 million people, toppling buildings, flattening communities and leaving many without food, water and shelter.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel kills Hezbollah official in Beirut airstrike

Three more civilians killed; Hezbollah calls attack severe aggression, urges diplomatic solutions

REUTERS, Beirut

An Israeli airstrike killed four people including a Hezbollah official in Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday, a Lebanese security source said, further testing a shaky ceasefire between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah.

The Israeli military said the official - Hassan Bdeir - was a member of a Hezbollah unit and Iran's Quds Force, and he had assisted the Palestinian group Hamas in planning a "significant and imminent terror attack against Israeli civilians".

Hezbollah confirmed that Bdeir had been killed along with his son, who was also a member of the group. The Lebanese security source said Bdeir was a mid-ranking commander whose responsibilities included the Palestinian file.

The Lebanese health ministry said the strike killed four people - including a woman - and wounded seven others.

It marked Israel's second airstrike in the Hezbollah-controlled suburb of Beirut in five days, adding to strains on the US-brokered ceasefire that ended last year's devastating conflict.

The attacks on Beirut's southern suburbs have resumed at a time of broader escalation in the region, with Israel having restarted Gaza strikes after a two-month truce and the United States hitting the Iran-aligned Houthis of Yemen in

a bid to get them to stop attacking Red Sea shipping.

Hezbollah lawmaker Ibrahim Moussawi said the Israeli attack amounted to "a major and severe aggression that has escalated the situation to an entirely different level".

Hezbollah in the war, killing thousands of its fighters, destroying much of its arsenal and eliminating its top leadership, including Hassan Nasrallah.

Hezbollah has denied any role in recent rocket attacks from Lebanon towards Israel, including



Speaking in a televised statement after visiting the building that was struck, he called on the Lebanese state to "activate the highest level of diplomacy to find solutions".

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said the eliminated Hezbollah operative posed "a real and immediate threat". "We expect Lebanon to take action to uproot terrorist organizations acting within its borders against Israel," he said.

Israel dealt severe blows to one that prompted Israel to carry out an airstrike on the southern suburbs last Friday.

Tuesday's strike in the early hours appeared to have damaged the upper three floors of a building, a Reuters reporter at the scene said, with the balconies of those floors blown out.

The glass on the floors below was intact, indicating a targeted strike. Ambulances were at the scene as families fled to other parts of Beirut.

WISCONSIN STATE

Trump faces first electoral setback after SC vote

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump's second presidency was dealt a spinning blow by voters in Wisconsin Tuesday as they elected a liberal judge to the state's Supreme Court, despite his powerful advisor Elon Musk pouring millions into the race to sway the polls.

Two months into his barnstorming return to the White House, Trump celebrated victory in a pair of House races in Florida which remained in Republican hands.

But in the first real electoral test of his polarizing presidency, his all-out effort to lodge a new Republican on the Wisconsin Supreme Court fell flat, as liberal judge Susan Crawford came out ahead of Trump-backed Brad Schimel, according to US media.

Trump appeared to ignore the results on social media, highlighting a separate Wisconsin ballot initiative requiring voters to present photo identification to cast a ballot.

"Voter ID just approved in Wisconsin election...this is a big win for Republicans, maybe the biggest win of the night," he posted on TruthSocial late Tuesday.

INDIAN PARLIAMENT

New bill proposes to revamp Muslim land management

REUTERS, New Delhi

The Indian government yesterday presented a bill in parliament that plans sweeping changes in the management of vast tracts of land set aside solely for Muslim use, potentially stoking tensions between the government and minority Muslims.

The land and properties fall under the "waqf" category, which means "to stay" in Arabic, and are endowed by a Muslim for religious, educational or charitable purposes. Such land cannot be transferred or sold.

Government and Muslim organisations estimate that over 25 waqf boards hold nearly 85,153 properties and 900,000 acres of land, putting them among the top three landowners in India.

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, tabled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, proposes inclusion of non-Muslim members in the central Waqf Council and waqf boards and will enable the government to determine ownership of disputed waqf properties.

Opposition lawmakers and Islamic groups see the bill as a plan to secure assets owned by Muslims and to weaken their property rights under the Indian constitution.

Minister of Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju, who tabled the bill, said it would end corruption, mismanagement and examine ownership rules largely controlled by some Muslim families and elite groups.

TAIWAN DRILLS

China practises hitting key ports, energy sites

REUTERS, Taipei

China's military yesterday said it had completed two days of exercises that included "live-fire" drills and simulated strikes on key ports and energy sites aimed at Taiwan, the democratic island it claims as its own.

The surprise manoeuvres were condemned by Taiwan, while Washington criticised it as "intimidation tactics".

They came less than a month after Taiwan President Lai Ching-te called China a "foreign hostile force".

Named "Strait Thunder-2025A", the drills were in the middle and southern parts of the Taiwan Strait as well as the East China Sea, the military said.

By yesterday evening, a People's Liberation Army spokesman Shi Yi said "the Eastern Theater Command has completed all designated tasks of the joint exercises carried out from April 1 to 2".

Earlier, he said that yesterday's exercises were meant to "test the troops' capabilities" in areas such as "blockade and control, and precision strikes on key targets".

The military also said it had held "long-range live-fire drills" and practised hitting "simulated targets of key ports and energy facilities".

AFP journalists saw fighter jets circling over the island Pingtan, the closest point on the mainland to Taiwan and where there is a military base.

China's Shandong aircraft carrier was also carrying out drills testing the ability to "blockade" Taiwan, the Eastern Theater Command said.



Venezuelan migrants and deportees gather outside their embassy, seeking help to return to Venezuela in Mexico City, Mexico, on Tuesday. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro last week spoke to the United Nations' Secretary General Antonio Guterres and High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk to urge UN support for the release of hundreds of Venezuelan migrants deported by the United States to a notorious El Salvador prison.

PHOTO: REUTERS

UK drawing up new action plan to tackle rising TB

AFP, London

Britain yesterday urged health experts and sufferers of tuberculosis (TB) to come forward to help draw up a new five-year action plan as it deals with record rises in the disease.

In 2023, England recorded its largest annual increase (11 percent) in cases since enhanced surveillance began in 2000.

Provisional figures for 2024 indicate a further 13-percent annual rise to 5,480 cases, reflecting a similar global trend.

The government is in the preliminary stages of preparing its new National Action Plan (2026-2031), which aims to improve the prevention, detection and control of TB in England.

It called for academic, health and social care professionals, public health experts, data scientists and those with lived experience of tuberculosis to share their insights.