

Morocco earthquake kills over 1,000, rescuers dig for survivors

Rescuers dug through rubble for survivors in collapsed houses in remote mountain villages of Morocco on Saturday, in the wake of the country's deadliest earthquake for more than six decades, which killed more than 1,000 people.

The quake which struck in Morocco's High Atlas mountains late on Friday night damaged historic buildings in Marrakech – the nearest city to the epicentre – while the most of the fatalities were reported in mountainous areas to the south, Reuters reported.

The Interior Ministry said 1,037 people had been killed and another 672 injured by the quake, gauged by the US Geological Survey at a magnitude of 6.8 with an epicentre some 72 km (45 miles) southwest of Marrakech.

In the village of Amizmiz near the epicentre rescue workers picked through rubble with their bare hands. Fallen masonry filled narrow streets. Outside a hospital, around 10 bodies lay covered in blankets as grieving relatives stood nearby.

The quake, which hit at

around 11 p.m. (2200 GMT), affected a sweep of the High Atlas mountain range. Tremors were felt as far away as Huelva and Jaen in Andalusia in southern Spain.

Street camera footage in Marrakech showed the moment the earth began to shake, as men suddenly looked around and jumped up, and others ran for shelter into an alleyway and then fled as dust and debris tumbled around them. In Marrakech, where 13 people were confirmed dead, residents spent the night in the open, afraid to go home.

In the heart of its old city, a UNESCO World Heritage site, a mosque minaret had fallen in Jemaa al-Fna Square.

Injured people filtered into Marrakech from the surrounding areas seeking treatment.

State television footage from the Moulay Ibrahim area some 40 km (25 miles) south of Marrakech showed dozens of houses collapsed at the foothills of a mountain, and residents digging graves as groups of women stood in the street.

In Marrakech, where rub-



ble had tumbled into the streets, residents described desperate scenes as people fled for safety.

Moroccan state television broadcast images of troops being deployed.

The quake was recorded at a depth of 18.5 km, typically more destructive than deeper quakes of the same magnitude. It was Morocco's deadliest earthquake since 1960 when a quake was estimated to have killed at least 12,000 peo-

ple, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Governments around the world expressed solidarity and offered assistance.

Expressing empathy with the families of the victims, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani extended his condolences to the people and the government of Morocco for the death of hundreds of citizens of the country, IRNA reported. Turkey, where powerful

earthquakes in February killed more than 50,000 people, said it was ready to provide support.

Algeria, which broke off ties with Morocco in 2021 over the political status of Western Sahara, said it would open airspace for humanitarian and medical flights.

Marrakech is due to host the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in early October.



Rescuers carry a search operation following a powerful earthquake, in Amizmiz, Morocco, on September 9, 2023.

● ABDELHAK BALHAKI
REUTERS

G20 unveils Int'l rail, shipping project



AP – US President Joe Biden and his allies on Saturday announced plans to build a rail and shipping corridor linking India with the Middle East and Europe, an ambitious project aimed at fostering economic growth and political cooperation.

The corridor, outlined at the annual Group of 20 summit of the world's top economies, would help boost trade, deliver energy resources, and improve digital connectivity. It would include India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Israel, and the European Union, said Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser.

Armenia denies Azerbaijan's charge

REUTERS – Azerbaijan said on Saturday that Armenian forces had fired on its troops overnight, and that Azerbaijan Army units took "retaliatory measures", in an incident denied by Armenia. The claim and counter-claim came against the background of rising tensions between the two countries, which have fought two wars over the Armenian-populated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in the past three decades, and a flurry of calls to foreign leaders by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The Armenian government and state media said Pashinyan held phone conversations on Saturday with the leaders of France, Germany, neighboring Iran and Georgia, and with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Azerbaijan said its foreign minister discussed the situation with a senior US State Department official, Yuri Kim.

Border tensions a major challenge to Pakistani-Afghan ties



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

The Pakistani Taliban launched a coordinated attack on a non-Muslim populated area in northern Pakistan's Chitral, resulting in casualties on both sides. Security agencies in Pakistan have since gained control of the area, forcing the Pakistani Taliban to retreat toward the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Following a military operation against the Taliban in

the mountainous Kailash region along the border, officials claim that the situation is now under control and no longer poses a threat.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani described the terrorist attacks in the Chitral district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as an isolated event, stating that they do not believe the Afghan government approved of it. However, in the aftermath of the Chitral incident, an exchange of fire between the border forces of Pakistan and Afghanistan at

Torkham in the Khyber district resulted in injuries and the closure of the busiest trade route between the two countries. Pakistani authorities assert that Afghanistan initiated the firing.

The Torkham border, a vital passage for Afghan trade, has remained closed for the past three days as officials from both nations engage in negotiations to ease border tensions.

This is not the first time that the Pakistani Taliban have targeted the non-Muslim Kalashis population, as a similar attack

occurred in 2018, raising concerns for the Muslim Ismaili sect within Chitral. Deputy Commissioner for Lower Chitral, Muhammad Ali, has deployed additional personnel in the area to ensure the security of the people and the protection of tourists.

The presence of the Pakistani Taliban along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border is seen as a security threat to Pakistan, with allegations that they receive support from the Afghan Taliban, who currently control Kabul. It is claimed that the Afghan Taliban are supply-

ing weapons left behind by the US in Afghanistan to the Pakistani Taliban.

In light of strained relations between the two countries, Pakistani Foreign Minister Jilani's statement that the Afghan Taliban were not involved in planning the attack on Chitral indicates that Pakistan continues its diplomatic efforts to curb Afghan Taliban support for the Pakistani Taliban. This comes despite Pakistan's previous accusations of the Kabul government supporting the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

Shia leader condemns opening of Israeli Embassy in Bahrain



Sheikh Isa Qassem, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Bahrain
● IRAN PRESS

Sheikh Isa Qassem, the Shia leader of the Islamic Movement of Bahrain, said that the opening of the Israeli Embassy in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, is in line with the destructive role of the Zionists.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen opened the embassy during his first visit to Bahrain last Monday, Iran Press reported.

According to the Bahrain Mirror, Sheikh Qassem emphasized in a statement on Saturday that the opening of the Israeli Embassy in

Bahrain is an obvious battle against God, the Prophet of Islam, and all the Muslims of the world.

Cohen's trip to Bahrain was met with a wave of condemnations from Bahraini people, civil institutions, and religious and political communities.

Previously, the people of Bahrain had expressed their opposition to the compromise between the Al Khalifa (the ruling family of Bahrain) and Tel Aviv by holding demonstrations and burning the flag of Israel.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Japan FM discusses reconstruction, security with Zelenskiy

REUTERS – Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy in a Saturday meeting agreed to begin discussions on security guarantees and cooperate on reconstructing Ukraine's economy, the Japanese foreign ministry said. The security guarantee discussions come after the G7 group of countries, of which Japan is a member, said in July that its members would begin bilateral security guarantee talks with Ukraine.