

Dead end

Hope turns to despair on aid run to Myanmar

International A10



Under pressure

Mainland inflation and consumer prices surge ahead

Business B1



South China Morning Post

PUBLISHED SINCE 1903 | VOLUME LXIV | NO. 132

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

南華早報

see live updates at www.scmp.com

HK \$7.00

Sichuan hit by China's worst earthquake in over 30 years; 8,500 confirmed dead

Thousands perish in quake



Quake survivors look through the rubble of their collapsed homes in Dujiangyan, Sichuan, following yesterday's earthquake. Aftershocks continued to be felt into the night. Photo: Xinhua

Crushing blow

7.8

magnitude earthquake, biggest in China for 32 years

10km

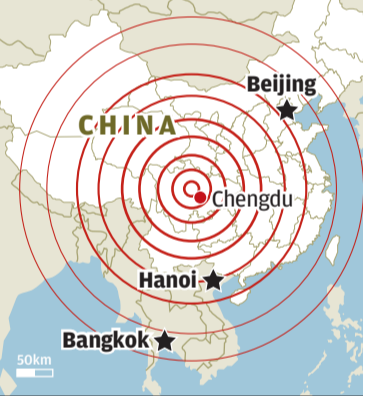
depth at which quake struck

5,000

soldiers and police sent to quake-affected areas

313

aftershocks measuring up to 6.0 in Sichuan by 5.28pm



SCMP GRAPHIC

Jane Cai

About 8,500 people were confirmed killed – with the death toll expected to keep climbing – after an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale rocked Sichuan (四川) and affected more than a dozen other provinces yesterday.

The quake struck at 2.28pm in Wenchuan county, less than 100km from the Sichuan capital of Chengdu (成都), in what was the strongest to strike the mainland in more than three decades.

The tremor was felt in 16 provinces and municipalities including Beijing and Shanghai, according to the China Earthquake Administration. It was also felt in Hong Kong, and as far away as Vietnam, Thailand and Taiwan.

Last time the mainland was hit by an earthquake measuring 7.8 was in July 1976 when more than 270,000 people died in the northern city of Tangshan (唐山), Hebei province (河北).

In Sichuan, 8,533 people have been confirmed dead. In Beichuan county alone, 3,000 to 5,000 people were believed to have been killed and more than 10,000 injured, Xinhua reported.

Nearly 900 students in Juyuan township in the city of Dujiangyan, about 100km south from Wenchuan, were buried and feared dead after their school building collapsed in the quake. At least 50 of them were confirmed dead last night.

In nearby Shifang city, hundreds of people were buried when buildings at two chemical plants fell down, triggering the leakage of over 80 tonnes of liquid ammonia which forced around 6,000 residents to abandon their homes, the State Administration of Work Safety, without providing casualty figures.

In Wenchuan county, at least 15 people were killed and 160 were injured, the local government said. Accurate casualty figures are hard to collect due to severed communications and transport links.

Inside

Region gripped by panic; eyewitness accounts A2-3 Editorial A14

Outside Sichuan, preliminary official estimates put the death toll at 57 in Shaanxi (陝西), 48 in Gansu (甘肅), 50 in Chongqing (重慶) and one in Yunnan (雲南). Stampedes were reported in some primary and middle schools in Gansu.

Xiong Xuesong, a 35-year-old engineer, said he felt the first real panic in his life when quake struck while he was shopping in a four-storey Chengdu supermarket yesterday amid 400 or so shoppers.

"Suddenly the building swayed. The floor became soft. Tiles fell off from walls and goods from shelves. Seconds later, some people started to scream. All this happened in one or two minutes. But it seemed to be

much longer," Mr Xiong said. "We found our way out with the help of shop staff. Hundreds of people were already standing in the street, talking about earthquake. It was not until then I realised it was a quake."

Mr Xiong said there were no warnings and people were not told when the aftershocks would stop.

A total of 313 aftershocks shook Sichuan in the three hours after the quake, provincial authorities said.

The disaster will test Beijing's emergency response system and relief efforts for the third time this year, following the blizzards in January and February which caused overwhelming transport chaos and a train crash in Shandong last month that killed 72.

President Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) ordered "all-out efforts" to save quake victims while Premier Wen Jiabao (溫家寶) arrived at Chengdu to direct the rescue work.

CCTV footage showed Mr Wen on a plane to Sichuan, calling officials to go to the front to serve the people.

"It is an especially severe earthquake disaster. The most important things are calm, confidence, courage and strong leadership," he said.

The Chengdu Military Area Command mobilised 5,000 troops and armed police to help disaster efforts in Wenchuan.

Tian Yixiang, an officer with the emergency office of the PLA, told Xinhua the troops would help local authorities assess the situation and carry out relief work.

The China Meteorological Administration warned that heavy rain and thunderstorms could interfere with disaster relief work.

China Mobile and China Unicom's mobile phone services in Sichuan and Shaanxi were affected by the earthquake. Fixed phone services stopped in four counties in Sichuan's Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, as well as five counties in Gansu, according to China Telecom.

The Three Gorges Dam was not affected by the quake, an official said.

News Digest

HK & Delta

Privacy watchdog lacking funds

Privacy Commissioner Roderick Woo Bun says he will have to carefully consider whether to launch probes into leaks of personal data because of a lack of resources. The commissioner is empowered to launch inspections, but he says no funding has ever been provided by the government to enable him to exercise that power. **Full report A4**

Business

Quake shakes Shanghai bourse

Mainland stocks finished higher yesterday after giving up some of their gains when the earthquake in the southwest of the country rocked buildings in Shanghai about 30 minutes before the market closed. The 7.8 magnitude quake led to the evacuation of several buildings in the city's financial district. **Full report Business back page**



City

Island a hive of bun and games

Portrayals of politicians and athletes rule the roost at the Cheung Chau Bun Festival parade, while dragon dancers, bun stalls and tens of thousands of spectators pack the island village's alleys. Organisers expected 50,000 visitors for the climax of the day's festivities, the annual midnight bun scramble up a 14-metre tower. **Full report C1**

Contact us

News Hotline

2565 2252

Classified Ads

2565 8822

Subscriptions & Deliveries

2680 8822

For more contacts, see C2



Inside

| NEWS | SECTION A | BUSINESS | SECTION B | CITY-LIFE-SPORT | SECTION C |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|
| Weather | A2 | Companies & Finance | B2-3 | City News | C1-3 |
| Sichuan earthquake | A2-3 | Business Digest | B1 | CitySeen, Talkback | C2 |
| Hong Kong & Delta | A4, 6, 8 | International | B4 | Life | C5-7 |
| National | A9 | Markets | B6 | Arts & Beauty | C6-7 |
| International | A10-13 | Mutual Funds | B7 | Diversions, TV & Radio | C8-9 |
| Editorial & Letters | A14 | Currencies | B8 | Racing | C10-11 |
| Insight | A15 | Hong Kong Stocks | B10 | Soccer | C12 |
| Behind the News | A16 | Monitor & Lai See | B12 | Golf & Basketball | C13 |

scmp.com today

Go to the Games with the SCMP: log on to our free Olympics website packed with the latest news and features, photos, athlete profiles, competitions and prizes. **www.scmp.com/olympics**



Our advice puts our clients centre stage.

A Passion to Perform.

Deutsche Bank

This advertisement has been approved and is controlled by Deutsche Bank AG and appears as a matter of record with Copyright © Deutsche Bank AG 2008.