

7.5 magnitude earthquake strikes North-West Pakistan - Quake-affected areas jolted by multiple aftershocks

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A powerful earthquake struck Badakshan Province in Afghanistan on 26 October, and has affected thousands of people across a large area of North-West Pakistan. According to the US Geological Service the magnitude 7.5 quake struck at 09:09 (UTC), was 196 kilometers (121 miles) deep, and the epicenter was 82 kilometers southeast of Feyzabad, Afghanistan in the Hindu Kush mountain range. Considerable shaking was felt in Khyber Paktunkhwa (KP), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan Administered Kashmir, Punjab, and Balochistan as well as in the capital Islamabad.

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The Pakistan Meteorological Department has recorded over 120 aftershocks to date, which have resulted in further damage to already weakened structures in some areas. Aftershocks and recent rainfall in the earthquake affected areas have resulted in land slides, restricting the access of large relief vehicles to some areas.

Rain and snowfall aggravate situation in earthquake-hit areas

The areas of Kalam, Malam Jabba, Mian- dam, Osho, Gabral and Marghuzar in the Swat district have received the rst snowfall of the winter season, exacerbating the living conditions of those in the earthquake-affected areas. Snowfall is a generally welcome event in these tourist destinations - attracting thousands of vacationers and winter-sport enthusiasts every year. This year, however, locals are praying for the snowfall to stop. Many have been forced to take shelter in partially destroyed houses to escape from the snow and the accompanying rainfall, erecting plastic sheets around the structures to off-set freezing winds and below-zero temperatures.

As temperatures in the quake-affected areas plummet, children are especially vulnerable to exposure and cold- related illnesses such as pneumonia.

Rainfall in some of the affected areas is making the removal of debris from houses difficult, and is resulting in restricted access to remote areas due to landslides blocking the roads. The affected population require tarps and plastic sheets to store the food rations they are receiving and keep

them safe from the rain.

Heavy rains and snowfall have made access of relief goods to high-altitude areas particularly difficult, especially in District Shangla, including Olandar, Spin Ghar, Shangla Top and Ka r Banda, and parts of Gilgit and Baltistan. Bad weather conditions have effectively grounded helicopters taking part in relief operations.

Locals in these areas are facing a shortage of winterized tents and medicines. If the heavy snowfall continues, health workers fear an epidemic of cold-related diseases including pneumonia and throat and chest infections. Children and the elderly in the affected-areas are especially vulnerable to illness triggered by the severe cold. In the case of such an outbreak, the lack of access and unavailability of medicines could potentially claim more lives than the earthquake.

Infant quake survivor dies of pneumonia in Shangla

The death toll from Shangla currently stands at 49, and it is feared that the number could rise in the near future if more children contract pneumonia and infections.

5-month old Arshad Ali, son of Niaz Ahmed, died hours after he contracted pneumonia on November 10. The rst child in Shangla to succumb to the cold, his family was living in a makeshift tent following the destruction of their house. The areas of Damorai, Gumrish, Martung, Kozkana and Sangarai in Shangla district have received more than 6 inches of snowfall since it was hit by the earthquake, leaving the residents of 11,399 houses vulner- able to freezing temperatures.

Damage to buildings leaves some districts without basic facilities

Damage to health facilities and hospitals sustained during the earthquake are raising concerns about the availability of health services. A hospital in Maayar village in Lower Dir has numerous visible cracks due to the earthquake and is unusable. As per reports from the government of cials, there are currently no plans to repair the damaged hospital building.

Preliminary assessments also found much of the civic infrastructure such as water supply schemes have been damaged. While the Government is restoring these facilities, there is a need to provide water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) related items such as jerry cans, buckets and hygiene kits to the affected population in the meantime.

Families lose winter rations and livestock in Chitral

Preliminary assessments show that families which have suffered partial or complete dam- age to their housing structures in Laspur Valley have also lost the food reserves they had stock-piled for the harsh winter months, with some losing up to 4 months' worth of lentils and wheat.

There has been damage to livestock assets in multiple areas. During the winter months, pastoralists in the affected-areas tend to keep their livestock indoors to protect them from the cold. Numerous families lost their livestock during the earthquake when their housing structures collapsed. The surviving livestock needs fodder and veterinary support.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government releases PKR 11.041 billion for rebuilding in quake-hit districts

An amount of PKR 11.041 billion (\$104,669,356) has been released by the provincial government in KP to provide relief assistance in cash to people in the quake-affected areas. The government will be disbursing cash assistance to compensate survivors for the death of a family member and permanent disability suffered in the amounts of PKR 600,000 (\$5687) and PKR 200,000 (\$1895) respectively. Damage to housing will be compensated with PKR 200,000 (\$1895) for complete damage and PKR 100,000 for partial damages (\$947). People who have received the assistance have expressed concerns the amount is not adequate to rebuild their houses. The situation is compounded by the Government's 'one-door' policy. In many cases, the houses damaged were situated together in small family compounds of 2-4 houses. While married brothers live in separate houses within one compound, they are accessible only through one entry door. Irrespective of the number of families living or houses contained inside an extended family compound, compensation is disbursed based on the number of access doors.

China sends humanitarian assistance for quake-hit population

China has provided goods worth USD \$1.6 million to the Government of Pakistan to assist in relief efforts in the earthquake-affected areas. A consignment of 300 tents, 20,000 blankets and 60 electricity generators was sent to the capital Islamabad via cargo plane on November 5 and was received by the Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). A donation of \$100,000 was also made to the Pakistan Red Crescent Society.

Concerns for education in KP as over 1,400 schools sustain damage

In an area where over a quarter of children of primary-school age already do not attend classes, there are serious concerns about the disruption of education following the complete destruction of over 200 schools in the North West of Pakistan.

While provincial authorities reopened all educational institutions a few days after the initial earthquake, as many as 1,426 school buildings have been damaged, with cracks in the walls and ceilings, and have been declared 'unsafe' by engineers and inspectors. Classes are being conducted under the open sky or in tents which are not water-proof or winterized, and have frequently been cancelled because of heavy rain and snowfall.

A Government Secondary School in the village of Sadbar, which served 480 students from 28 surrounding villages was severely damaged during the quake. District authorities have provided 4 tents to the school authorities that are being used to shelter more than 150 students as they do their school-work. However, the tents are not waterproof and are unusable whenever it rains, forcing cancellation of classes for that day. As the weather worsens and it becomes increasingly difficult for children to sit outside on the cold, hard ground, attendance is declining.

Provincial authorities are still attempting to rebuild 760 schools in the area that were destroyed in the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, a task made more difficult by the fact that most of them are located on mountainous terrain.

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* Pakistan Humanitarian Bulletin. :

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/ru/system/files/documents/files/humanitarian_bulletin_oct_nov_2015_0.pdf

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