

Major quake off Philippines kills at least 35, dozen still missing

National disaster authorities said 134 had sustained injuries

● A series of powerful aftershocks rocked the area from about two hours after the first quake

AFP | General Santos, Philippines

A 7.8-magnitude earthquake in the southern Philippines yesterday killed at least 35 people, according to provincial authorities, after toppling buildings and sparking tsunami warnings across the region.

National disaster authorities said at least a dozen people were still missing, while 134 had sustained injuries.

Philippine authorities urged people in affected coastal regions to move to higher ground after the offshore quake hit south of General Santos, a city of about 720,000, where the death toll was now 12, according to the tally at a local command centre.

A series of powerful aftershocks rocked the area from about two hours after the first quake, according to the United States Geological Survey, with the largest measuring magnitude 6.5.

As night descended, AFP journalists watched as rescue workers in General Santos used their hands to dig through the rubble of a popular grocery store chain in a desperate bid to reach two employees buried beneath.

Morphy Angcad, a 35-year-old security guard, told AFP he was not ready to accept that his sister, one of the two, was dead.

"We received a call this morn-



Responders conduct a rescue operation at a collapsed building after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in General Santos City

ing telling us that she was one of the trapped there," he said, adding he had refused a hotel room so he could stand watch.

"I don't want to leave this site until I see the body of my sister... (but) I'm hoping against hope that she is still alive."

Dioslinda Deluvio told AFP her son Joey, the other employee, had come to visit her just weeks earlier, asking: "Ma, what is your plan for your life? Are you OK?"

"All I can do is cry now, imagining the good things he did in the world," she said.

A few kilometres away, others were preparing to spend the night on a sidewalk.

"I'll be sleeping here outside even if it's uncomfortable, because I'm scared there will be an aftershock," 34-year-old sales clerk Johnson Alerta told AFP.

"I feel safer here."

'So many lives'

Rene Punzalan, disaster chief for hard-hit Sarangani province, told AFP 14 people had died in Glan municipality alone when a landslide buried their homes at the foot of a mountain.

"The landslide happened immediately after the earthquake, so many lives were lost," he said, adding that some areas had yet to report if they had sustained casualties.

"The greatest challenge is communication. The power was cut, so it's hard to get updates," Punzalan said.

Videos posted to social media and verified by AFP showed a shopping centre with a Jollibee fast food restaurant reduced to rubble in General Santos, while a school building that officials

said was unoccupied crumpled in another. In another video verified by AFP, young schoolchildren could be seen screaming in the arms of their teachers as the quake violently swayed them back and forth on the ground.



The Pacific "Ring of Fire" is a horseshoe-shaped belt stretching about 40,000 kilometres around the Pacific Ocean, where roughly 75 per cent of the world's active volcanoes and about 90 per cent of all earthquakes occur due to the movement and collision of tectonic plates.

Seven killed, nine injured in Dubai road crash



TDT | agencies

Seven people were killed and nine others injured after a minibus collided with a truck that had stopped on Emirates Road in Dubai, police said.

According to Dubai Police, preliminary investigations indicate that the truck came to a sudden halt in the middle of the road due to a technical fault. The minibus driver allegedly failed to maintain a safe distance and crashed into the rear of the vehicle.

Brigadier Juma Salem bin Suwaidan, Director of the General Department of Traffic at Dubai Police, said the Command and Control Centre received a report of the accident and immediately dispatched traffic patrols and rescue teams to the scene.

"The accident resulted in seven fatalities and nine injuries, including five serious and four moderate cases. All injured persons were taken to hospital for treatment," he said.

French NATO jets shoot down stray drone in Latvia

AFP | Vilnius, Lithuania

French NATO jets stationed in the Baltic states shot down a drone in Latvia, the military and the country's foreign minister confirmed on Monday morning.

The incident was the first time that the alliance's rapid reaction Baltic Air Policing mission has shot down a stray drone in Latvia.

Latvia's military confirmed that "a foreign unmanned aerial vehicle that had entered Latvian airspace as a result of Russian electronic warfare",

without disclosing the origin of the drone.

"Thank you, our French Allies, for taking down the drone that flew into Latvian airspace!" Latvia's Foreign Minister Baiba Braze posted on X.

The two jets took off from the Siauliai airbase in northern Lithuania and shot down the drone "at around 10:00" am local time (0800 GMT), Lithuanian military spokesperson Gintautas Ciunis told AFP.

In a previous incident, a Romanian jet stationed in Lithuania shot down a Ukrainian drone over Estonia on May 19.

US experienced second-warmest spring on record: NOAA

AFP | Washington, United States

The United States experienced its second-warmest spring on record, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said yesterday, adding that drought remains widespread across the country.

More than half of the 48 contiguous US states -- which excludes Alaska and Hawaii -- experienced a spring among their three warmest in the 132-year record, and the warmest since 2012. The beginning of the year has also marked the driest since

Globally, the 11 hottest individual years ever recorded all happened from 2015 onwards and the UN's weather and climate agency recently said the trend would continue, with a new hottest-ever year likely before 2031. An El Nino weather pattern is also predicted into the end of 2026, which heightens the chances that next year could spell more heat records.

1988, the US weather agency said.

The island chain Hawaii meanwhile observed the wettest spring in the 36-year record,

with more than double the average spring precipitation.

Some other regions also recorded above-average precipitation, but more than half of

the contiguous states remained in drought at the beginning of June.

That includes much of the Northwest and parts of the Southwest, northern Rockies and Plains. Forecasters said it is expected to also develop in parts of the Midwest. The agency's drought outlook expects some improvement across parts of the central and southern Plains, as well as much of the Southwest. June is expected to experience above-average temperatures across the western and northern US, NOAA said.

A final farewell



A man holds flowers during the funeral ceremony of Yaroslav Varnak, a 23-years-old serviceman who was killed in action in Kyiv

Mass school closures in Japan city as bear roams streets

AFP | Tokyo, Japan

A bear roaming the streets of a Japanese city for three days forced the closure of nearly 100 schools Monday, as dozens of hunters and officials searched for the animal.

The city government of Utsunomiya, north of Tokyo, closed all 94 public primary and junior high schools in the area after receiving more than 10 reports of bear sightings since Saturday -- including in a shopping arcade.



"We have vehicles out to areas where a bear was seen to make people aware and to urge people to stay indoors or in vehicles," a city official told AFP, adding that dozens of hunters, police and local officials have been looking for the animal.

It was not clear whether there is one bear or more, he said, speaking on the customary condition of anonymity.

In recent years, Japan has seen an increasing number of bear sightings and attacks, especially

in urban areas.

A record 13 people were killed by bears in Japan last year, and there has been a jump in encounters as the animals emerge hungry from hibernation.

In the last year to March, bear sightings nationwide topped 50,000 -- more than double the previous record set two years earlier, according to official data.

In Utsunomiya, a regional capital and home to 510,000 residents, there were just two unconfirmed bear sightings in

the previous year.

The bear now being hunted was first spotted Saturday morning, north of the city centre, and was described as being around one metre (three feet) long.

A series of sightings followed, including in a residential neighbourhood that day, at a shopping arcade on Sunday, and at a park, a high school and a junior school.

Early Monday, residents spotted a bear close to a wholesale market, the city official said.