

Nepal quake: Thousands dead, history crumbles, Everest shaken

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The Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal — A powerful, 7.9-magnitude earthquake shook Nepal’s capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon on April 25, collapsing houses, levelling centuries-old temples, and cutting open roads in the worst temblor in the Himalayan nation in more than 80 years.

The earthquake shook several cities across northern India, and was felt as far away as Lahore in Pakistan and Lhasa in Tibet, 340 miles east of Kathmandu. The epicenter was 50 miles northwest of Kathmandu.

Pushpa Das, a laborer, ran from his house when the first quake struck, but could not escape a collapsing wall that injured his arm.

“It was very scary. The earth was moving ... I am waiting for treatment but the (hospital) staff is overwhelmed,” he said, gingerly holding his right arm with his left hand. As he spoke, dozens of people showed up with injuries, mostly from falling bricks.

Several buildings collapsed in the center of the capital, the ancient Old Kathmandu, including centuries-old temples and towers, said resident Prachanda Sual. Among them was the Dharahara Tower, one of Kathmandu’s landmarks built by Nepal’s royal rulers in the 1800s and a UNESCO-recognized historical monument. It was reduced to rubble.

Old Kathmandu city is a warren of tightly packed, narrow lanes with poorly constructed homes piled on top of each other.

Sual said he saw people running through the streets in panic. Ambulance sirens blared and government helicopters hovered overhead.

National radio warned people to stay outdoors and maintain calm because more aftershocks were feared. A 6.6-magnitude aftershock hit about an hour after the initial quake. Smaller aftershocks continued to arrive every few minutes and residents reported that the ground felt unstable.

Dozens of people gathered in the parking lot of Kathmandu’s Norvic International Hospital, where thin mattresses had been spread on the ground for patients who rushed outside, some still wearing hospital pajamas, while doctors and nurses treated them. A woman with a bandage on her head sat in a set of chairs pulled from the hospital waiting room.

Doctors and nurses had hooked up some patients to IV drips in the parking lot, or were giving people oxygen.

The Kathmandu Valley is densely populated with nearly 2.5 million people and the quality of buildings is often poor.

An Associated Press reporter in Kathmandu said a wall in his compound collapsed and there was damage to nearby buildings.

A Swedish woman, Jenny Adhikari, who lives in Nepal, told the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* that she was riding a bus in the town of Melamchi when the earth began to move.

“A huge stone crashed only about 20 yards from the bus,” she was quoted as saying. “All the houses around me have tumbled down,” she told the newspaper by telephone. Melamchi is about 30 miles northeast of Kathmandu.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the 7.8-magnitude quake hit at 11:56am local time (0611 GMT) at Lamjung at a shallow depth of seven miles. An earthquake’s magnitude increases by 10 times with each increase in the number. A 7-magnitude quake is capable of widespread and heavy damage while an 8-magnitude quake can cause tremendous damage.

Mohammad Shahab, a resident from Lahore, Pakistan, said he was sitting in his office when the earthquake rocked the city near the border with India.

The sustained quake also was felt in India’s capital of New Delhi. AP reporters in Indian cities of Lucknow in the north and Patna in the east also reported strong tremors.

Nepal suffered its worst recorded earthquake in 1934, which measured 8.0 and all but destroyed the cities of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Patan.

Naqvi reported from New Delhi. Associated Press writer Munir Ahmed in Islamabad and Jan Olsen in Stockholm contributed to this report.



DRAMATIC DEVASTATION. A person looks at debris (left photo) from one of the oldest temples in Kathmandu, Nepal after it was damaged in an earthquake on April 25. The powerful 7.8-magnitude earthquake shook Nepal’s capital and the densely populated Kathmandu valley, devastating the region and leaving tens of thousands of people shell-shocked and sleeping in the streets. In the right photo, people approach the scene after an avalanche triggered by the massive April 25 earthquake swept across Everest Base Camp in Nepal. Nineteen people lost their lives on the mountain — 14 Nepalese Sherpa guides and climbers from China, Australia, Japan, and the United States.



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