

7.2 quake hits Pakistan

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Powerful temblor felt as far away as India and Gulf

QUETTA: A powerful earthquake rocked southwest Pakistan, sending panicked people rushing from their homes in fear for their lives as the ground shook as far away as India and the Gulf.

The 7.2-magnitude quake struck early yesterday (4.23am Malaysian time) around 50km west of the town of Dalbandin, close to the border with Afghanistan, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said.

Terrified residents in remote parts of thinly populated Baluchistan province described the panic as people fled their homes, reciting verses from the Quran and preparing for an aftershock.

"The quake jolted our homes, we rushed out in panic but it caused no damage," Waheed Murad said from the town of Sibi.

"It was very cold. We spent about two hours outside our homes fearing that it may hit again but nothing happened," Gul Mohammad, a resident from the provincial capital Quetta, said.

Mud houses were damaged in Kharan district of the province, close to the earthquake's epicentre, but no casualties were reported, Pakistan Meteorological Department chief Arif Mahmood said.

"The magnitude of the earthquake was high, its epicentre was close to Kharan but the area is mostly desert and the population is thin," he said.

"Fortunately, there are no casualties and no serious damage to property," he added.

Strong tremors were felt as far away as the Indian capital New

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ARIF MAHMOOD

Delhi, around 1,300km away, as well as several other cities across north-western India, though there were no reports of any damage.

Data on the USGS website suggested the quake had also been felt in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

The USGS said the quake had a magnitude of 7.2 and hit at a depth of 84km, revising down its earlier report of 7.4-magnitude.

The initial bulletin from USGS said the earthquake hit just 10km below the surface.

At that depth, quakes can cause major destruction and loss of life.

Pakistan's meteorological department gave a magnitude of 7.3 and located the epicentre 55km north-west of Kharan.

"The earthquake occurred at around 1.23am and it was felt in Baluchistan, Sindh and southern Punjab provinces," chief meteorologist Mohammad Riaz said.

"There could be aftershocks during the next week - there are active fault lines in Baluchistan."

In October 2005, a 7.6-magnitude earthquake killed more than 73,000 people. — AFP



Keeping warm: Pakistanis gathering around a fire outside their homes after a quake hit the area in Quetta, Pakistan, yesterday. — AP