



Duterte nemesis, drug-war critic bids for Philippine president

## Afghan Hazaras live in fear under Taleban rule



HARNAI, Pakistan: Residents bury the body of a victim following an earthquake in the remote mountainous district of Harnai yesterday. —AFP

# 20 killed as quake hits Pakistan

## Despair as families sift through rubble of deadly earthquake

**HARNAI, Pakistan:** A young man with a jet-black beard crouches, grief-stricken, next to the body of his baby, swaddled in a blanket, as his other children look on in shock. “I tried to take out my children, but the jolt was so strong,” Rafiullah, a farmer in the mountainous Pakistani district of Harnai, told AFP.

The roof of his mud house collapsed and knocked Rafiullah unconscious when the 5.9-magnitude earthquake struck Pakistan’s southwestern Balochistan province in the early hours of yesterday. “When I regained consciousness, I pulled out two of my sons,” he said. But his youngest boy, only around one, had been struck by a wooden beam, and “had already died”. A one-year-old boy was among the victims, killed when a beam crashed on top of him in the darkness. At least 20 people, including six children, were killed in the quake that hit just after 3 am (2200 GMT Wednesday).

It was felt across at least six cities and towns

but the remote district of Harnai was worst-affected, with landslides triggered by the jolt blocking some roads and hampering rescue efforts in the area. Images published by the Balochistan Levies law enforcement agency showed men clearing fallen rocks from a blocked road, with only the headlights of cars parked nearby to cut through the darkness.

### ‘Screaming for help’

“It was a strong earthquake. The jolt was very powerful,” Zaman Shah told AFP in Harnai. “As we ran to save our lives, some people fell,” he said. “Our homes have suffered damage, and lives were also lost.”

Provincial officials said dozens if not hundreds of people were injured, while hundreds of mud brick houses were damaged. As day broke, Harnai residents were sifting through the yellow-brown rubble that once constituted their homes. Some desperately pulled away

bricks and rocks with their bare hands, while one man struggled to lift a door flattened on top of the debris. Children with smudged faces and bandaged heads sat in stunned silence on stretchers, as ambulances wailed by and army helicopters roared overhead. They were evacuating those worst injured from remote areas to Quetta, the nearest major city. When the shallow quake shook the ground in Gharibabad village in Harnai district, “everybody rushed to save their lives,” 27-year-old villager Rahamatullah said.

“Women and children were screaming for help.” He said no one from his family was injured, but that they had been terrified to see big cracks in the walls. When a second jolt rocked the area around two hours after the first quake, “nobody dared to go inside his home,” he says. “People stayed out of their house for the rest of the night.”

Authorities are also contending with phone

and electricity outages after pylons were damaged. “We are receiving information that 20 people have been killed due to the earthquake,” said Balochistan’s home minister Mir Zia ullah Langau, adding that 100 people were injured.

Army helicopters were helping to evacuate the injured from remote areas to Quetta, the nearest major city. Naseer Nasar, the head of Balochistan’s Provincial Disaster Management Authority, warned the death toll could rise. A second jolt rocked the area around two hours after the first quake.

“Our rescue teams have cleared 50 percent of the roads leading to Harnai while remaining roads will be cleared in the next two to three hours,” Balochistan’s home minister Langau added, highlighting the strain rescue teams were under. The quake caused electricity to fail in the area, with health staff working until dawn without lights in the district’s poorly equipped government hospital. — AFP