

WORLD

Global aid pours in for disaster relief

Intl communities mobilize resources as toll from Myanmar quake rises to 1,700

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok and YANG HAN in Hong Kong

Countries and international communities including China, the United Nations and ASEAN are delivering aid to Myanmar while foreign rescue teams are racing to save more lives from among the ruins in Myanmar following Friday's powerful earthquakes.

As of Sunday, rescue and medical teams from countries such as Belarus, Singapore, India, Malaysia and Thailand have been at work in Myanmar searching for survivors.

About 1,700 people died, 3,400 were injured, and 300 remained missing in the earthquake in Myanmar, according to the country's State Administration Council on Sunday. The numbers could rise further.

Fourteen Chinese nationals were injured in the quake in Myanmar, the Chinese embassy in Myanmar confirmed on Sunday afternoon.

At least three rescue teams from the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region have managed to locate some of the injured at collapsed buildings in Myanmar. A 79-member military task force from Vietnam also departed for Myanmar on Sunday afternoon to assist with earthquake search and rescue operations, and post-disaster recovery efforts, the Vietnam News Agency reported.

Myanmar's State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visited Ottara Thiri Private Hospital in Nay Pyi Daw, the Myanmar capital, on Sunday and thanked a Chinese rescue team from Yunnan province which was the first to arrive among international teams for rescue efforts. The council has called for international assistance for disaster relief.

The World Health Organization is looking to move Emergency Medical Teams into Myanmar amid reports of insufficient medical supplies, including trauma kits to treat injured people, blood bags for transfusion, anesthetics, assisted devices, other essential medicines, and tents for health workers.

In a statement on Saturday, Marcoluigi



Monks walk past a collapsed building after a powerful earthquake, in Nay Pyi Daw, Myanmar, on Saturday. AUNG SHINE OO / AP

Corsi, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Myanmar, said the UN and its partners are urgently mobilizing to support emergency response efforts and stand ready to assist all affected communities.

He estimated that around 20 million people have been impacted by the quake.

The United Nations allocated \$5 million in aid to Myanmar, said Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN secretary-general.

The Secretary-General of ASEAN, Kao Kim Hourn, joined ASEAN foreign ministers and the foreign minister of Timor-Leste in a special emergency meeting on Sunday to discuss ASEAN's humanitarian aid to Myanmar in the wake of the devastating earthquake.

Emergency assistance

Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said on Sunday that the kingdom would provide \$100,000 in initial emergency assistance to Myanmar.

With its epicenter about 392 kilometers from Pang Mapha district in Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province, the earthquake — measured 7.9-magnitude by the China Earthquake Network Center and 7.7-magnitude by US counterparts — also affected

Thailand and other neighboring countries. The last earthquake of a similar scale in the region was recorded in the 1830s.

Bangkok and 10 other provinces suffered severe damage. In Thailand, at least 17 people were killed with 77 missing.

Thai Department of Fine Arts said on Sunday that its Archaeological Division conducted inspections at historical sites in Bangkok and found no significant damage caused by the earthquake. But some historical sites in northern Thailand suffered cracks in the walls or bases of halls and stupas.

After the earthquake, the King of Thailand extended royal medical care to all the injured. Thai state banks have rolled out urgent financial relief measures to help citizens and affected businesses.

Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra held an urgent meeting on Saturday to address the earthquake's impact and coordinate solutions, urging immediate improvement of public alerts via SMS and the development of a cell broadcast system within three months.

Paetongtarn urged enhanced coordination between the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department and the National

Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission to provide timely updates on road closures and alternative routes.

To ensure public safety after the earthquake, a complete list of emergency hotlines has been compiled by the Thai government. These fully operational services cover rescue, medical, structural damage, mental health, and travel needs, and are coordinated across government agencies.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said the earthquake was triggered by horizontal slipping of land, known as "strike-slip" faults. The agency noted that this fault type is the same as the one responsible for the powerful earthquake in the Kumamoto prefecture of southwestern Japan in 2016, the public broadcaster NHK reported.

New Zealand said it will donate 2 million New Zealand dollars (\$1.14 million) through the International Red Cross to support emergency response in Myanmar.

Jiang Xueqing in Tokyo contributed to this story.

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Fears, shocks recounted after strong tremors

MANDALAY, Myanmar — At night in quake-hit Mandalay, Myanmar, U Aye Maung, a 70-year-old man, sat outside his house that was damaged by a powerful earthquake that struck on Friday.

He was too scared to sleep. Aftershocks continued to shake the ground, keeping him and many others on edge.

"This is the first time I've ever experienced anything like this," he said with a shaky voice. "I was taking a nap when the earthquake hit. Suddenly, the ground started shaking violently. I tried to crawl, but the freezer and cupboards were falling around me. I couldn't do anything. Then, our front wall collapsed."

U Aye Maung had been alone when the tremor struck. That night, he and his neighbors stayed outside.

Daw Aye Aye Han, 49, was in a car on her way back to Mandalay from Shwebo of Sagaing region when the earthquake hit. "The car I rode is like rocking a cradle," she said. "Right in front of me, three pagodas collapsed. Then, a three-story building began to tilt dangerously toward us. The driver had sped away just in time," she said.

She had never seen such destruction before. "A building next to my house was completely flattened. The first floor was crushed under the weight of the two floors above it. Everyone inside the beauty salon on the ground floor lost their lives," she said, her voice trembling.

"We have no electricity, nor water. The most urgent need right now is to restore power and water supply," she added.

Recalling the fearful moment, Shwe Yi Win Latt, a 21-year-old betel shop owner, said, "At first, I didn't realize what was happening. Then I felt the tremors and knew it was an earthquake. I quickly ran and sat down on the road, trying to stay safe."

A building near her shop collapsed. The streets turned chaotic, with ambulances rushing to rescue people. "It wasn't easy to go home immediately, so I stayed in my shop until the evening," she said.

"When I finally reached home, I saw that my house was on the verge of collapse. So, like many others, I stayed outside," she said.

XINHUA

By HU YUYAN huuyuyan@chinadaily.com.cn

Digitizing religious scriptures serves a purpose beyond preservation — it is a way to spread ancient wisdom across borders, languages and generations, top Buddhist monks and religious representatives from six countries said on Friday.

Speaking at the Subforum on Religious Harmony and Mutual Learning among Civilizations during the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025 in South China's Hainan province, participants delved into the theme "All the Myriad Methods Converge in the Square-Inch Mind", discussing the significance and techniques of digitizing ancient Buddhist texts.

Now in its 10th year, the subforum is part of the South China Sea Buddhist Cultural Circle framework, a concept proposed in 2015 by Master Yinshun, deputy head of the Buddhist Association of China, to foster mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence through religious wisdom.

Faith in the digital age

In his opening remarks, Yinshun said the subforum's participants have been exploring innovations in digitizing Buddhist scriptures in recent years.

"We have compiled a digital encyclopedia of Chinese Buddhism, promoted the digital translation of Buddhist classics across the South China Sea region, and traced Buddhism's localization in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. Furthermore, we have submitted a proposal on the digitization of traditional Chinese classics to China's top political advisory body."

Master Yanjue, head of the Buddhist Association of China, noted: "Over two millennia, Buddhist texts have evolved from oral transmission to written forms, from monolingual manuscripts to multilingual printed editions. Since the 21st century, rapid advancements in information technology have ushered in a digital transformation."

"This digital shift not only enables the permanent preservation of precious palm-leaf manuscripts and paper-based scriptures but also facilitates devotional practices, Buddhist education and academic research. Recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence further empower the translation of Buddhist texts, overcoming geographical and language barriers to the global propagation of Buddhist classics."

Master Hongxiang, a research assistant from the Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong, highlighted the challenges in preserving the Dunhuang manuscripts, including fragmented scrolls, aging paper and fading ink, calling the collation of *The Liturgical Manual for Five-Session Pure*



Representatives from six countries, including China, Thailand and Japan, attend a subforum on religion during the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025 in Boao, Hainan province, on Friday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Modern technology helping spread wisdom of ancient religious texts



Master Yinshun, deputy head of the Buddhist Association of China, delivers a speech during a religious dialogue in Boao, Hainan province, on Friday.

Land Recitation, a treasure among the manuscripts, a race against time.

"Digital technology has brought transformative changes," he said. "Through high-resolution scanning and multispectral imaging, we can decipher blurred characters beneath ink traces from a millennium ago. AI-assisted collation enables rapid comparison of textual variants across different manu-

scripts, restoring the original text."

He emphasized that digitization is not just a preservation method but a key to revitalizing ancient texts. "Transforming the chanting rhythms in *The Liturgical Manual for Five-Session Pure Land Recitation* into visualized audio allows modern audiences to intuitively experience the cadence of Tang Dynasty (618-907) Sanskrit hymns."

Kirinde Assaji, chief incumbent of Humupitiya Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo, Sri Lanka, pointed out that digitization is not just a technical process — it is a way to make ancient wisdom accessible globally and for future generations.

"AI can help translate ancient texts into different languages. Cloud-based digital libraries will provide easy access for scholars and practitioners. Blockchain technology can protect the authenticity of these sacred texts, while virtual and augmented reality can offer new and engaging ways to experience Buddhist teachings," he said.

Addressing challenges

Master Guangquan, deputy secretary-general of the Buddhist Association of China and abbot of Lingyin Temple in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province, said the temple has developed an AI-powered optical character recognition engine for ancient texts, a digital tool repository and other platforms to provide robust technical support for the digitization workflow.

Reflecting on the challenges, Guangquan said that hiring interdisciplinary professionals and employing innovative approaches have been crucial.

To manage voluminous scriptures and

multiple versions, they created a clustered collation method to ensure quality and efficiency. For rare characters missing from digital databases, they developed lightweight font solutions. Guidelines for orthographic standardization were also formulated to guide proofreaders in handling variant glyphs.

Through these efforts, the temple has systematically digitized major canons such as *Jingshan Canon* and *Sixi Canon*, achieving in-depth collation and intelligent utilization of Buddhist texts.

Despite progress, challenges remain, particularly in obtaining high-quality scans and copyright permissions, Guangquan noted. "With Buddhist resources scattered across monasteries, libraries and institutions globally, consolidating these assets requires collective commitment."

Envisioning the future

Echoing Guangquan, Master Jong-Rim, honorary chairman of the Research Institute of Tripitaka Koreana, Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, called for interdisciplinary and international cooperation to advance digitization.

He highlighted two "visionary projects" that demand global participation: a comprehensive Tripitaka system that integrates multilingual Buddhist texts into a unified digital ecosystem and a conceptual lexicon development project that traces doctrinal evolution across languages and cultures.

"These undertakings require synergy between computer scientists and Buddhist scholars and, most critically, the collective commitment of global Buddhist communities," he noted.

Hongxiang from Hong Kong said: "The preservation of the Dunhuang manuscripts requires interdisciplinary collaboration; the construction of digital Buddhist canons depends on the sharing of global resources; and the continuity of human civilization relies on each generation's sense of mission."

Guangquan outlined plans to enhance the quantity and quality of Buddhist scripture digitization at Lingyin Temple.

He revealed that Lingyin Temple will establish a comprehensive digital repository of Buddhist scriptures, focusing on endangered woodblock canons, Dunhuang fragments, texts lost to foreign countries, stone inscriptions and folk manuscripts. Technologies such as 3D scanning and multispectral imaging will be utilized to preserve both physical and informational integrity.

To improve quality, the temple will develop cross-disciplinary knowledge graphs and upgrade databases with AI-powered Q&A tools capable of semantic retrieval and doctrinal analysis, according to Guangquan.