

Death Toll in Japan quake, tsunami exceeds 10,000

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The confirmed toll in Japan's earthquake and tsunami surpassed 10,000 on Friday as a magnitude-6.2 aftershock jolted the battered northeast.

The number of dead in the March 11 disaster stood at 10,066 while 17,443 people were listed as missing, the National Police Agency said.

Northeastern Japan has been jolted by a record number of aftershocks since the initial magnitude-9 quake, the strongest ever recorded in Japan.

In the one measured on Friday by the Meteorological Agency, there were no reports of casualties or damage, and the agency did not issue a tsunami warning. The epicentre of the 8:36 pm (1136 GMT) quake was off Miyagi prefecture, the agency said.

On Thursday, a similar aftershock with a magnitude of 6.1 also hit the region.

Meanwhile, the public broadcaster NHK found in a survey of 225 hospitals in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures, among those hardest hit in the March 11 disaster, that at least 56 hospital patients had died in the past two weeks because of inadequate care.

The deaths were blamed on a lack of electricity, which took out the hospitals' medical equipment and heating systems, as well as delays in medical supply deliveries and pneumonia.

In Miyagi prefecture, one of the hardest-hit areas, officials have posted information about 2,000 bodies on the internet in the hopes relatives could help to identify their loved ones. The information included details about clothing and build, the Kyodo News agency reported.

In Miyagi and Iwate prefectures, officials have begun to bury bodies without cremating them, as is traditional in Japanese culture, because their crematoriums have been overwhelmed.

Ports, roads and train service was reopening in the disaster zone, and in another effort to try to return some of the victims' lives to normal, schools in other areas of Japan have offered to take in pupils whose schools were destroyed in the disaster.

The board of education in Hiroshima prefecture said it would find rooms for schooling and lodging in Etajima for 150 schoolchildren and their teachers from Miyagi but they would most likely have to come without their families, Kyodo said.

Another 80 children could find schoolrooms in Akitakata, also in Hiroshima, the board said.

The Japanese government has estimated the cost of the damage from the tsunami and magnitude-9 quake, the strongest ever recorded in Japan, at 16 trillion to 25 trillion yen (\$197 billion to \$308.5 billion), the Japanese government said.

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