

Death Toll Rises to 59 from Taiwan Quake



Tainan, February 11 (RHC)-- The death toll from last Saturday's earthquake in the southern Taiwanese city of Tainan has risen to 59, while 76 more presumed buried dead under the rubble of a collapsed building.

The Ministry of Interior announced on Thursday that the Weiguan Golden Dragon complex had been the only building to cave in, which otherwise had caused limited damage. Only two deaths were reported outside the Weiguan apartment complex. The 6.4-magnitude earthquake rocked Tainan on Saturday while most people were in their sleep.

Taiwan's outgoing President Ma Ying-jeou, told reporters at a Tainan hospital on Saturday that the government should do a better job to ensure construction quality. Government prosecutors have detained three construction company executives on suspicion of professional negligence resulting in death amid accusations that the structure, built in 1989, was not properly reinforced.

A total of 327 people in the building have survived with rescuers holding little hope of finding more survivors.

Quakes frequently strike Taiwan but usually cause little or no damage as more stringent building regulations were enforced following a magnitude-7.6 quake in 1999 that left more than 2,300 dead.

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