

Early quake warning system installed

By Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD, Jan 30: A German non-governmental organisation formally handed over the control of six earthquake early warning systems to AJK government's State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) here on Wednesday.

Malteser International had installed these costly systems in Ali Akbar Awan Boys High School and Girls High School Madina Market in the municipal area of Muzaffarabad and Koomikot and Phagwan Dupatta villages in the suburbs of state capital.

In the neighbouring Bagh district, one system was installed in Boys High School in the city of Bagh and another in Kharal Abbasian village.

Both Muzaffarabad and Bagh districts had suffered huge physical and material losses in the devastating October 2005 earthquake.

The handing over ceremony was held in the ground of Ali Akbar Awan High School, Upper Chattar neighbourhood.

Around 50 volunteers conducted a mock drill to exhibit the requisite response in the event of an earthquake like calamity.

The volunteers from both genders were trained by Sanam Ali Naqvi, a trainer of the AJK Civil Defence Department, whose commentary built more awareness within the audience and onlookers.

Before that, warning sirens were sounded at 11:30am with a view to familiarising people with its distinct tone, which organisers said could be heard in a radius of 2.5 kilometres.

The audience were told by Amy Louise Keith, project director of Malteser International, about the utility of the system

but stressed that more steps were required to be taken to mitigate the losses in the event of such calamities.

The earthquake early warning, she said, could provide a few seconds to tens of seconds warning (through sirens) before ground shaking during an earthquake.

The ceremony was also addressed by SDMA's secretary Faheem Ahmed, director operations Shahid Malik and some others.
