

The Sannomiya district, Kobe's center and one of the most popular destinations for domestic travelers, is in chaos.

Sirens roaring, ambulances and fire engines rush through the district's main Flower Road, a boulevard strewn with the debris of fallen walls and broken glass.

Buildings that once housed banks, insurance and securities firms and other businesses along the boulevard are now lifeless hulks.

Although the city has been devastated, some shops, though extremely limited, have started providing what they have.

Near the Motomachi district neighboring Sannomiya, a fish store is serving seafood and rice cooked on a propane-gas stove.

"We served about 650 meals today," said Sumiaki Yokoyama, 47, co-owner of the Sendo fish store. He said he offered the food at cost.

"I don't know how long our business will last. But we are all suffering from the same disaster," he said.

Hardships mount as Kobe's homeless spend their fourth night at shelters

By SACHIKO HIRAO

Hardships for surviving families and evacuees stretched into the fourth day after the earthquake cut off lifelines here, leaving thousands without water, heat and food.

About 20 bodies awaited identification by surviving families at a temporary morgue set up at Shimoyamate Elementary School in Chuo Ward, Kobe.

Many families have spent days with the bodies of their loved ones, sitting on the floor a hall where the coffins are laid out.

"Even if surviving families identify the deceased here, many have no home where they can conduct a funeral," a municipal official at the morgue said. "And some people from outside the city are having great difficulty getting here at all."

About 35 bodies, including those of Korean and Chinese residents, were left wrapped in blankets until Day 3 due to a shortage of coffins.

On the first floor of the same elementary school, about 500 evacuees prepared to spend yet another night in shelter.

"I want to go home though my house is a

mess. I can't sleep because of the fear of aftershocks," said Chie Kimura, 12, who spent two nights in the Shimoyamate school shelter with her parents.

Chikako Kida, 12, said that she met some of her classmates after the quake but that her schoolteacher was still missing in Higashi-Nada Ward, one of the most heavily damaged areas.

"Bodies of some of my neighbors are still under the debris," said Tsutomu Ina, 36, who evacuated to Nishi-Nada Elementary School in Nada Ward after his condominium collapsed.

"After I got myself out, I kept calling their names with other neighbors," Ina said. "We pulled out those who responded, but we don't know what happened to others who didn't."

Ina described his escape from the collapsed condo as a "circus" because he got himself out on a fallen ceiling, climbed up on to what used to be a rooftop and jumped to the next building in pitch darkness.

"I was lucky. If you are lucky, a door of your house opens. If you aren't lucky, the door doesn't open. Luck draws a line between life and death," Ina said.

Later in the day, Ina rushed to an evacuation shelter and found his parents and siblings who live in other parts of Nada Ward and Higashi-Nada Ward.

At both shelters set up in Nishinari and Shimoyamate Elementary Schools, food and drinking water have been supplied, while a shortage of those items is reported

in some areas.

Although food and other emergency items are coming into the city, shortage of labor to unload and distribute them to quake victims keeps the shipments from reaching those who need it, Kobe Mayor Kazutoshi Sasayama said.

DAY 5 (Jan. 21)

3:45 p.m. — A 75-year-old woman is rescued 106 hours after being trapped in a collapsed house in Higashi-Nada Ward. She was to be the last person to be rescued alive.

9:12 p.m. — An aftershock measures 4 on the Japanese scale in Hokudan, Awaji Island, and 3 in Kobe.

Tens of thousands arrive with relief supplies for friends, family

By SACHIKO HIRAO
and AKEMI NAKAMURA

Tens of thousands of people from around the country carried cardboard boxes, large bags and backpacks full of food, water and other relief goods into the devastated port city of Kobe as it entered the first weekend after the Jan. 17 quake.

Backpackers concerned about their families and friends started crowding Osaka's



Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama visits a temporary shelter in Kobe