

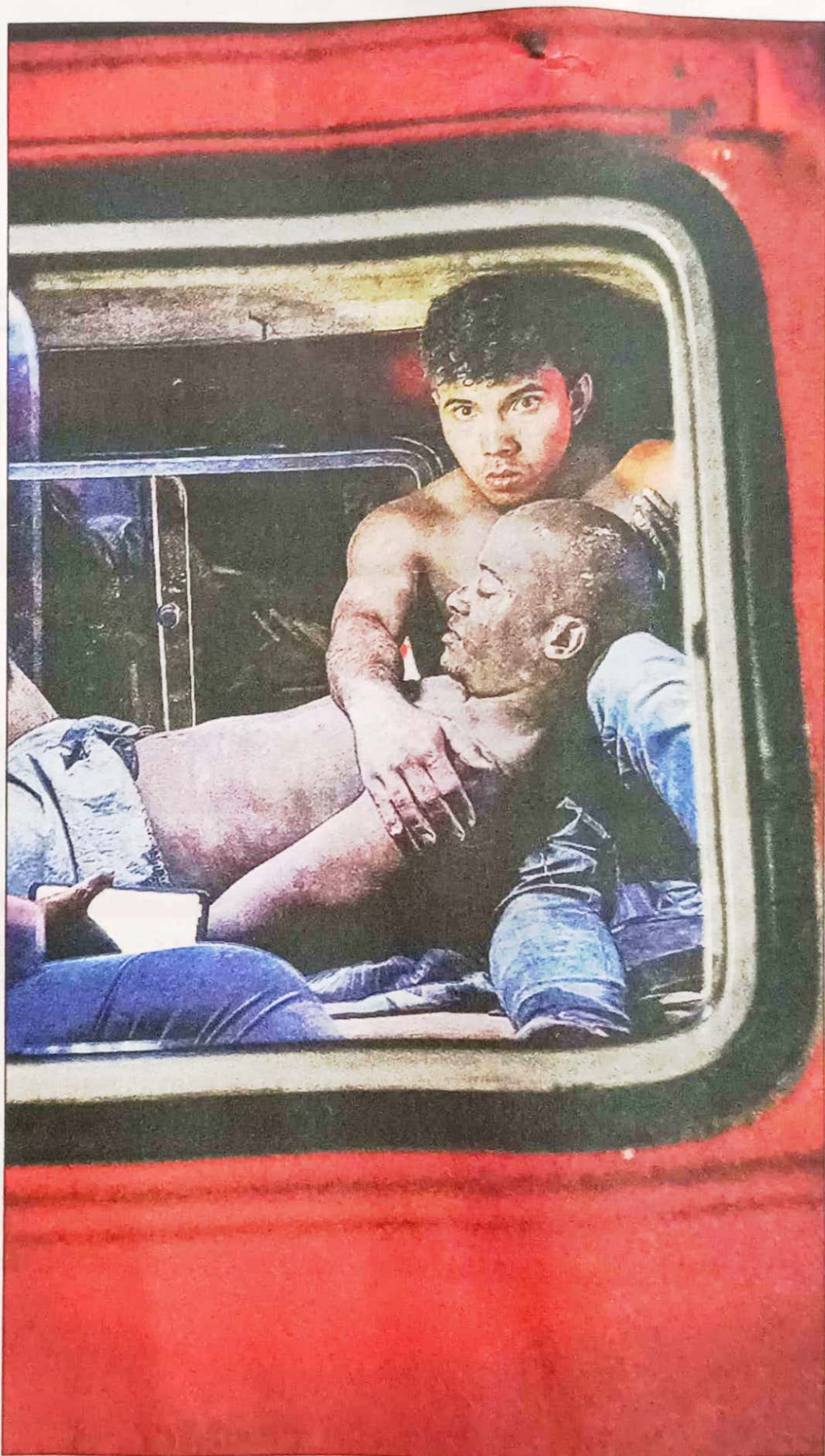
# 164 dead in Venezuela twin quakes

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**Caracas:** Rescue crews stepped up their search for survivors on Thursday as Venezuelans grappled with the scale of the devastation caused by the worst earthquakes to hit the country in nearly six decades.

At least 164 people had been killed and nearly 1,000 injured in the twin quakes on Wednesday, which struck the country's populous northern states, the Venezuelan government said. The toll was virtually certain to rise as rescuers began to reach the worst-affected areas.

Videos posted on social media show collapsed residential towers in the capital, Caracas, and in the nearby port city of La Guaira, where more than 100 buildings were destroyed, according to the UN's main humanitarian agency. There were growing fears about the toll in nearby shantytowns, where many people live in precarious homes built on hillsides.



Victims inside a vehicle after the earthquake in La Guaira, Venezuela, on Wednesday. (Reuters)

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A collapsed building in Caracas, Venezuela, after the twin earthquakes on Thursday. (Reuters)

# Trump aid for 'new friend'

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In an interview, Angie Reyes said she was desperate to find her colleague, Daniel Vivas. Vivas lived on the sixth floor of a building in La Guaira, which was one of the hardest hit places. She had not heard from him since before the earthquake, she said. "We're stuck like this until the international community arrives," Reyes said.

Venezuela is rich in oil, but is still trying to emerge from a decade-long depression that wiped out most of its economic production and prompted millions to leave the country. Its rescue services have been hollowed out, infrastructure has been left to rot and inflation has reached record highs, which will likely compound the challenges of recovery.

The disaster comes at a pivotal moment in Venezuela's modern history. The US

military raid removed the long-ruling autocrat, Nicolás Maduro in January, transforming the country from a US adversary effectively into a satellite state.

The earthquakes are likely to complicate the tussle for power that has followed Maduro's arrest. His former Vice-President, Delcy Rodríguez, took over as President with Washington's blessing but has faced growing popular discontent.

Shortly after the quakes, Rodríguez called for national unity and pointed to the promises of international aid received by her government, including from US President Donald Trump.

"We will be there for our new and great friends," Trump wrote in a social media post on Wednesday night, adding he has told governmental agencies to "get ready to move quickly".

New York Times News Service