

# Modi sworn in CM, Mehta deputy

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9.8. Gujarat

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GANDHINAGAR, Oct. 7. — Mr Narendra Damodardass Modi, 51, was sworn in today as the chief minister of Gujarat, bringing to an end the lacklustre reign of Mr Keshubhai Patel and hopefully the downside of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the state.

The Governor, Mr Sunder Singh Bhandari, administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mr Modi and his nine ministers, at a function attended by thousand of party workers. Sworn in immediately after Mr. Modi was Mr Suresh Mehta, the number two man in the Keshubhai ministry.

Mr Mehta, a former chief minister, had expressed his reservations on joining Mr Modi's

team because of his seniority, but was easily persuaded to give up his qualms.

The Opposition party, Congress, led by Mr Amarsinh Chaudhary, boycotted the function terming it as "unnecessary extravagance."

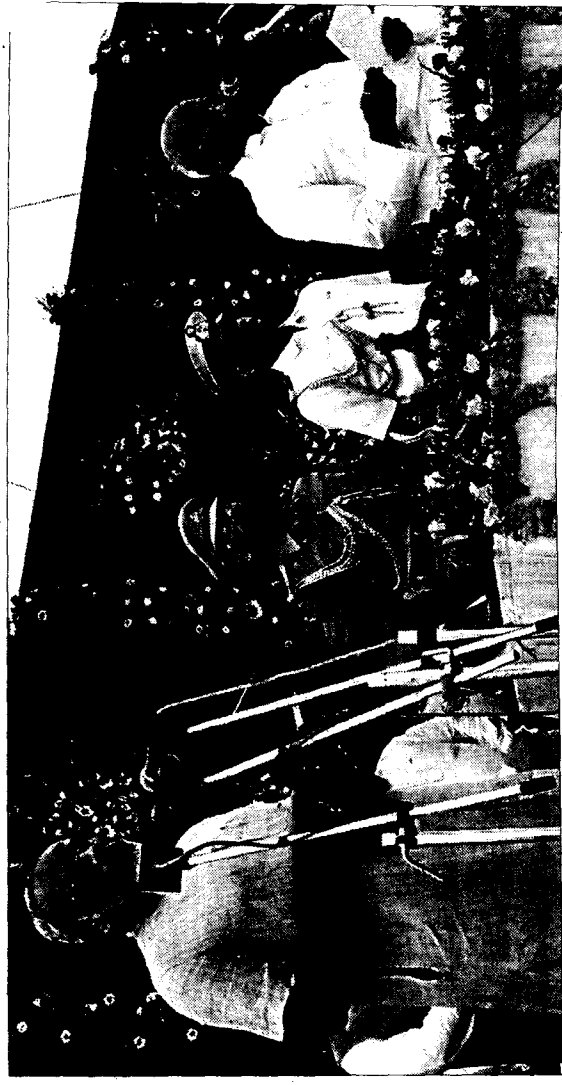
However, the function was attended by several senior Central ministers and Bharatiya Janata Party leaders. These including the Union home minister, Mr Lal Krishna Advani, Mr George Fernandes, Mr Arun Jaitely, Mr Kashiram Rana, Mr Vallabh Khaturia and the chief ministers of BJP ruled states, including Mr Prem Kumar Dhumal of Himachal Pradesh and Mr Rajnath Singh of Uttar Pradesh.

Mr IK Jadeja and Mr Purushottam Rupala, who had been

sidelined by Mr Keshubhai Patel in his second tenure as chief minister, have been inducted into the cabinet by Mr Modi. Both were ministers when the BJP first came to power in the state in 1985 in Keshubhai Patel's cabinet, but were dropped after BJP assumed power again after the Vaghela-rebellion.

Apart from Mr Suresh Mehta, the six others who have been retained from the outgoing cabinet, are Mr Nitin Patel, Mr Kaushik Patel, Mr Kanjibhai Patel, Mr Narottam Patel, Mr Fakirbhai Vaghela and Mrs Anandiben Patel.

The new chief minister met party workers, who had thronged the swearing in ceremony venue, soon after being sworn in.



Mr Harendra Modi (left) being sworn in as chief minister of Gujarat by the Governor, Mr Sunder Singh Bhandari, in Gandhinagar on Sunday. — AP/PTI

# Keshubhai accepts Narendra Modi as successor

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GANDHINAGAR, Oct. 3. — Mr Narendra Modi is set to become the Gujarat chief minister. Hours before submitting his resignation formally to the Governor, Mr Keshubhai Patel said: "I am going to propose Mr Narendra Modi's name as the leader of the party".

Mr Modi's name will be proposed at a meeting of BJP MLAs on Thursday. The proposal will be seconded by Mr Suresh Mehta, the number two in Mr Patel's Cabinet. The time for the swearing-in has not been decided.

Mr Kushabhau Thakre and Mr Madan Lal Khurana met Mr Patel at his residence this morning. Immediately after the meeting, Mr Khurana briefed journalists on the pattern of events

to follow. He said there was no room left for manoeuvres.

Mr Patel later said the Central leadership had chosen Mr Modi as his successor and informed him late yesterday night. But he could have been removed with more tact, without hurting his sentiments.

Mr Patel said he did not give any reason in his one-line resignation letter to the Governor.

Why was his successor not chosen from the 116 party MLAs? "As a true worker" he was accepting the Central leadership's verdict, he said. "I have resigned as chief minister for the party's unity".

Mr Modi said he was here on Mr Jana Krishnamurthy's instructions. He met Mr Patel and accepted his blessings. He met Mr Suresh Mehta too who yesterday had said: "It'll be difficult for me to work under Mr Modi" because

of seniority.

Mr Mehta was non-committal today. "Let Mr Modi be sworn in first," he said.

The "show of unity" of Gujarat BJP leaders continued throughout the day, as the central observers met different groups of MLAs.

The MLAs from Saurashtra had initially reacted adversely to Mr Modi being chosen

as chief minister. This feeling is subsiding, at least on the surface. Mr Patel has set the tone and the formality of choosing the new leader is expected to be a smooth affair.

The rough ride will begin with the formation of the Cabinet, which is sure to leave many MLAs disgruntled.

■ Another report on page 8



Mr Narendra Modi

# 'Hurt' Keshubhai offers to quit party

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, October 2

THE BJP high command today moved swiftly to pre-empt any rebellion by supporters of Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel by asking him to put in his papers.

A "hurt" Patel has offered to quit the primary membership of the party. He is expected to formally submit his resignation as Chief Minister to Governor S S Bhandari tomorrow, shortly before a scheduled BJP party meeting.

He has already tendered his resignation to BJP chief Jana Krishnamurthy and also sought to bring pressure on the high command to choose his nominee as his successor.

The new Chief Minister would most likely be BJP general secre-

tary Narendra Modi, who has the support of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Home Minister L K Advani.

Senior leaders Kushabhau Thakre and Madan Lal Khurana have been sent to Ahmedabad to facilitate the change of leadership tomorrow.

They will hold talks with all 117 members of the BJP Legislature Party in Gandhinagar before announcing the high command's choice — Narendra Modi.

"There is no question of any one defying the party's decision," a senior BJP leader said.

Central BJP leaders conveyed their disapproval in no uncertain terms and told Patel that his supporters "should not precipitate matters" since the Prime Minister and the Home

Minister had already decided to replace him following the bypoll results. Besides, the party would not tolerate any act of indiscipline for any quarter.

The BJP high command was irked by Patel's announcement that he would put in his papers only when the question of his successor was finalised.

His supporters, among the Ministers and MLAs, rushed to Delhi yesterday to impress upon the Centre not to remove him.

Patel said in a letter to BJP chief K Jana Krishnamurthy that he felt "humiliated" by the party's decision to replace him without giving him an opportunity to present his case.

He said he would have quit on his own soon after the election results on September 26 if the party had made this clear to him.

Instead, he was "given an impression" that he had been called only for a discussion on the reverses suffered by the BJP and responsibility was to be fixed "much later", after a thorough probe.

The BJP got a major jolt when it lost the Sabarmathi Assembly seat, which is part of Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency, represented by Advani. It was also defeated in the bypoll for the Sabarkantha Lok Sabha seat.

Advani was firm that Patel should step down and Modi (an RSS nominee) should replace him "to give better direction to the administration and the party".

Patel's reputation went into a tail-spin after the January 26 earthquake.

The State administration was put in the dock for bungling up the relief works, and invited criticism from BJP leaders themselves.

Since then, Patel seemed to survive on the "TINA" (there is no alternative) factor but the bypoll results came as the last straw.

Vajpayee underscored the gravity of the bypoll results when he said the party's defeat was a "warning bell" and "the party had to be strengthened at all costs".

Patel's source of strength has been his community. Of the total 117 BJP MLAs in the 182-member Gujarat Assembly, 42 are from Patel community and a good number of them belong to the Patel's native place — Saurashtra.

## Patel, bypoll hurdles before next CM

Rathin Das

Gandhinagar, October 2

THOUGH THE BJP high command has succeeded in persuading Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel to step down, a smooth transition of leadership seems improbable.

The BJP leadership, in a way, is lucky that there are not too many claimants to the coveted post, but some inherent compulsions are reportedly making the choice of a successor a difficult one.

Apart from a possible backlash from the powerful Patel community for dislodging its "very own" Chief Minister, the main problem the BJP faces in naming a successor is the fear of facing a by-election, in case a non-MLA is chosen as Patel's successor.

The fax message to the party high command from about 28

Patel MLAs (though some of them disowned it later on) is only an indication of the quantum of Patel opposition the new incumbent is likely to face.

Among the 116 BJP legislators in the State Assembly, about 55 are Patels from different regions.

If BJP general secretary Narendra Modi is named as the Chief Minister, he will have to be elected to the State Legislature within six months.

Shaken by defeats in all the elections since September 2000, the State BJP has reasons to feel jittery about facing the electorate once again, so soon after the by-election debacle.

Of course, it would be ridiculous to presume that Narendra Modi, with his wide control over the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Sangh Parivar network in the State, would lose an

Assembly bye-election but sabotage from the Patel lobby can never be ruled out.

The opposition Congress, which now has Modi's bete noire Sankarsingh Vaghela in its fold, can intensify the fight by instigating Keshubhai Patel's supporters.

Similarly, Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries Vallabhbai Kathiriyia and Union Textile Minister Kashiram Rana also may not find it very difficult to make it to the Assembly from a seat vacated by a staunch supporter.

But the resultant by-election to the Lok Sabha seat they vacate, Rajkot or Surat, would be too risky adventure for the ruling BJP whose popularity chart has taken a nose-dive in the State.

A defeat in the Lok Sabha by-election in Gujarat, the only

State where the BJP enjoys an absolute majority, would naturally be regarded as a referendum on the Union Government led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

If the State BJP chooses to avoid the embarrassment of a by-election, the natural choice would have to come from among the existing legislators — former Chief Minister Suresh Mehta and Assembly Speaker Dhirubhai Shah being prominent among them.

The Sangh Parivar didn't take too kindly to Mehta's earlier term as Chief Minister; besides he doesn't fit into the State's caste equilibrium.

These factors, taken together, have indeed put the BJP high command in a Catch-22 situation regarding the power transition in Gujarat, once regarded as the party's model State.



NARENDRA MODI: Will need to contest a by-election in six months.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 3 OCT 2001

# PM gifts 5-year tax break to Kutch

By Leena Misra

The Times of India News Service

BHUV: In a well-designed political move to salvage the BJP-ruled state government, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee announced a five-year excise duty holiday for Kutch after a heart-rending recollection of his first trip here, from the grounds of what was once the Bhuj Civil hospital.

He laid the foundation stone for a brand new Rs 100-crore state-of-the-art hospital to be constructed at this very spot and also flagged off the broad-gauge rejuvenated Kutch Express which will connect Bhuj and Mumbai, in the presence of Union minister for railways Nitish Kumar amid a gathering of over 7,000 people.

Chief minister Keshubhai Patel asked for it and Mr Vajpayee gave it. "Turn this earthquake into a blessing in disguise for us," pleaded health and industries minister Suresh Mehta, and Mr Vajpayee obliged. Preparing the prelude for the prime ministerial declaration for earthquake-ravaged Kutch, Mr Keshubhai said that the state would declare exemptions on sales tax for the commensurate period

that the Centre would announce its excise duty holiday.

"The duty exemption is not just on the finished products but also on the intermediate articles needed, for instance in the making of cement," Mr Vajpayee elaborated, attributing this to a demand made by certain sections of the industry. Union home minister L.K. Advani,

government had a discriminatory attitude where relief work was concerned, Mr Vajpayee said, "We don't want to discriminate. The parliamentary committee was here and has submitted a report, based on which I have drawn the attention of the state government to certain issues and I want to assure you that our politics do not work on discrimination."

Urging the people to keep faith in the government, he scoffed opposition campaigns that had predicted communal riots with the coming of the BJP government. "We are trying to improve our relationship with our neighbours. I have invited General Musharraf and I'm glad he has accepted my invitation. We are ready to discuss any issue with Pakistan since we are on strong ground, and want to take everyone together," he said.

Taking a dig at the Congress whose youth wing workers waved black flags at the VIP convoy and tried to disrupt it, Mr Vajpayee said, "I saw some black flags, I had never seen black flags before, those who were showing them, why don't they come forward and help us?," he said.

## REBUILDING KUTCH

- PM lays foundation stone for Rs 100-cr. hospital
- Congressmen wave black flags
- PM pats Gujarat government, NGOs
- Advani lets Vajpayee hog the limelight

declined to speak and preferred to sit back and listen.

Taking a strong note of the debris still lying around, he directed that a deadline be slated for the clearing of earthquake debris. Repeatedly congratulating the non-governmental organisations, Mr Vajpayee called upon industrialists and NRIs to come forward and help the Gujarat government rehabilitate Kutch.

Denying allegations that the

## RECONSTRUCTING KUTCH

149-10

THE PRIME MINISTER, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's announcement of a five-year excise duty holiday for industries based in Gujarat's earthquake-ravaged Kutch region, though high on symbolism, is to be seen as a measure with long-term implications. It aims to restructure the regional economy and spur its re-emergence. Yet, the more immediate need — of reconstructing the region through an increased activation of the State apparatus — should not be circumvented. For, it is in the discharge of this responsibility that the Gujarat Government stands charged by its critics with not taking steps that are commensurate to the magnitude of the January 26 earthquake. In asking the Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. Keshubhai Patel, to "remove the sluggishness" over the implementation of the reconstruction activities, Mr. Vajpayee has made it clear that much remains to be done. Given the magnitude of the disaster and the massive tasks ahead in terms of reconstruction and rehabilitation, the Prime Minister's announcement, as well as that by Mr. Patel of a matching sales tax holiday, should be supplemented by a stepping up of ground-level action. In addition, it is imperative that the administration is put in a state of preparedness, given the possibility of yet another natural calamity sweeping the region with the activation of the southwest monsoon.

That the country's overall financial crunch has further complicated the task of reconstructing Kutch is apparent in that the direct financial contribution from the Union Government is a fraction of the Rs. 10,600 crores needed, as estimated by the Asian Development Bank. The unspoken message in the announcements by the Prime Minister and the Gujarat Chief Minister is that there should be a greater role played by the private sector in terms of restructuring the region's economy, either through new industries or re-location, and thereby propel growth. This, however, is a process and is bound to take time.

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While exemption from taxes is undoubtedly a required form of support for the affected, it still is a dormant measure. A more active role is what is expected of the Government to enable the region to rise from the rubble. Examples of cities and regions across the globe that have re-emerged from calamities are replete with instances of individual initiative, but all have been largely bolstered by the correct Governmental responses. No doubt, donations from firms and individuals across the country as well as from abroad have poured in to help the Gujarat Government and much more has been promised. Yet, the road to rehabilitation is long and, indeed, arduous.

Clearly, the onus now rests, in substantive measure, on the State Government. That the Government, in the aftermath of the earthquake, had not made the right approximations of the magnitude of the tasks ahead and the response-time required by it has to be accepted and corrective action should be taken. Initial estimates had it that the victims could be rehabilitated in a few months. These have now gone awry. The issue of providing temporary shelter is a case in point which reflects the magnitude of the task that still remains to be done. The problem of rooflessness remains, and what makes it more complicated to correct is the present realisation among the State's administrators that the victims would have to be provided with continued support for at least another two years. From a broader perspective, Mr. Vajpayee's visit is also to be seen as part of an image-building exercise by the State Government that has been charged with being lax in its rehabilitation and reconstruction operations. Much of the purpose of the prime ministerial visit would be served only if there is a marked improvement in the performance of the State in providing the salve for the affected millions.

THE HINDU

5-11-2007

# India's ugliness in the Kutchi mirror

By Radhika Desai

IF KUTCH'S earthquake took place on Republic Day, it was a fitting pathetic fallacy. In its wake came not just the obvious — destroyed homes, families, livelihoods and communities — but also monumental caste and communal discrimination — by the state as well as by "civil society". This violation of the liberal and egalitarian ideals to which the nation committed itself in its Constitution 52 years ago, not to mention the egalitarian spirit with which Indians have battled the legendary hierarchy of their society throughout history, was so unmistakable that young idealistic urban volunteers in Kutch, unmindful of caste and hitherto adamantly opposed to reservation, reported not only shock at their experiences of it, but also a change of complete heart on reservation!

Discrimination visibly permeates the ramshackle structures of relief and rehabilitation in Kutch. Lower castes and poor Muslims have been neglected in the distribution of relief materials and many of them live in structures made of plastic and refuse materials. No protection against the January and February cold, they are now positive furnaces as temperatures hit 40C in the desert. All this while relief materials are being sold in other cities by those who had privileged access to them. Many of these daily wage labourers have received a cash dole and rations from the PDS — in meagre quantities and often "fit only for fodder" — only once. They are being denied relief materials for not possessing ration cards in a situation where many poor people have received no new ration cards for the last five years for families which had separated upon marriage. There are "blankets" to be seen in Halvad, distributed to Dalits, which are simply too rough for human use, and also of dubious value for warmth. In Bhachau and Maliya, Muslims and Dalits have had to go on dharna and a hunger strike respectively to establish their minimum rights to relief. If Government incompetence and inaction has already harmed most those who have the fewest resources of their own, the lately announced rehabilitation packages promise more to those who can establish having lost more. Given the workings of a significantly casteist and communalised bureaucracy, this entails more than just discrimination on the basis of wealth, al-

ready illegitimate in a country constitutionally committed to equal treatment and to reduction of inequality.

Bad as all this sounds, Kutch today merely holds up a magnifying mirror to the nation. A disaster may level an entire region but its structures, practices, institutions and prejudices of domination and discrimination, old and new, not only persist, they are often strengthened in the pall of fear, suspicion and insecurity, not to mention the surprising measure of presumptuous greed, which hangs over the debris in the aftermath. That the scale of the effort required by Government and "civil society" after the earthquake is monumental only means, alas, that we

fort of actually intending anything.

Privilege is always a combination of economic with social and cultural precedence and new mixtures of these, particularly evident in advanced and industrialised Gujarat, produce new discourses justifying discrimination. Take the oft-drawn contrast between the scale of the aid response to the earthquake in Gujarat as against the cyclone in Orissa. The disaster in Kutch is different in one important respect: it is the first major tragedy to strike a section of the Indian middle class. The collapsed high-rises are symbolic of its shattered luxuriant dreams. But the contrast between Gujarat's international connections, its traditions of self help and

the trade to get their share and a lot more. The clear implication is that the former should be served better and the latter thwarted from their mendacious enterprises!

There is little evidence of plenty in all the temporary camps of the Dalits and Muslims. Instead, complaints abound of the lack of respect during the distribution of relief — having things thrown at them and having to scramble for what little they got, rather than given to them in home visits by friendly volunteers of "their own" organisations and the RSS, which the upper castes were more used to. The upper castes, when pressed admit to their access to "other resources" — family ties, bank balances and organizational connections. People who did not need to ask were, as it were, making a virtue of their own lack of necessity and, to top it all, making a vice of the necessity of others! The world may be unjust, but the ideologies which justify it are, if anything, even more so!

Casteism and communalism are usually held by us to be the result of votebanks and communal organisations. The extent to which they reside in that entity, "civil society" (unjustly clothed in an aura of cuddly progressivism) is obscured. The obscurity is part of the effectiveness of these practices and the relative impunity of both extreme and "moderate" discrimination — of structural and "normal" violence. For they contribute to our lack of capacity and inclination to resist them where they occur. It would also be too simple to say that these are merely hangovers from the past. For no "modern" capitalist society exists — no matter levels of "advancement" or growth or "liberalisation" — in which past structures of privilege have not meshed with the new ones created by modern capitalism. After all the U.K. labours under concepts of moral and social worth inherited from its feudal past and the U.S., those inherited from the days of slavery. It is at the intersection between the old and the new, and between extreme organisations and "moderate" civil society, that the dreary reality of discrimination must be located. And we must learn anew to be shocked by it.

(The writer is Reader in Political Science, University of Victoria, British Columbia.)

## *Discrimination visibly permeates the ramshackle structures of relief and rehabilitation in Kutch. Lower castes and poor Muslims have been neglected.*

shall witness discrimination there on a correspondingly great scale.

Of course, the Government of Gujarat is on record as saying that there has been no discrimination in the relief and rehabilitation efforts. And so do many of the NGOs. But this is, arguably, the homage vice pays to virtue. For there always exists, whether there is a formally democratic constitution or not, a latent principle of the equality of human beings which must be placated when discriminating. Rarely, therefore, does discrimination appear unashamedly naked. It is always clothed by a justification or a cover-up. But seeing these for what they are can be tricky.

For an act to be discriminatory, there does not have to be something amounting to indisputably intentional evil and/or conspiracy. While there is usually plenty of this, there is also a more complex reality of discrimination. It is not always like some nut where, underneath the shell of its outward appearance, the hard kernel of intentional or conspiratorial discrimination can be easily found. It is like an onion — with layer upon layer of historically sedimented prejudice and practice with a centre but no kernel. These are employed to secure and bolster privilege. Intent is often redundant, releasing the already indolent privileged from the strenuous ef-

voluntarism and its enterprising spirit and Orissa is arguably the tip of the iceberg of discrimination. Poor and backward, without the sort of international connections enjoyed by Kutchis and Gujaratis, Orissa, "naturally" elicited much less sympathy. A morally careless smugness here disconnects need and suffering from sympathy. And not surprisingly, in Kutch itself then, inequalities in the receipt of relief and rehabilitation aid between different social groups is being justified in this way — that it is "natural" that some will be helped more than others. Nor is it clear that the suffering of the poor and low caste in Gujarat is qualitatively different from that in Orissa.

In Kutch, officials and even some NGOs take it for granted that the various voluntary agencies will "help their own". "Naturally", it is the better off and better connected who are also of the same classes, castes and religious panths, not to mention the RSS, who are the recipients of the most and best aid and relief from the organisations connected to them. In the ideologies which accompany these novel inequalities, the well to do, upper caste victims of the earthquake are too self-reliant and proud and noble to ask for relief while lower castes and Muslims are looting, begging and resorting to every trick in

THE HINDU

4 MAY 2001

# Ditched Kutch clasps Clinton hand

FROM DEBASHIS BHATTACHARYYA

Anjar (Bhuj), April 4: Holding hands of two wide-eyed children, Bill Clinton came ambling down a narrow lane, slicing through mountains of rubble in the quake-ravaged town of Anjar, smiling and talking like a father out on an evening stroll.

Shadowed by Secret Service agents, their bulging jackets concealing MP5 sub-machine guns, the former US President entered a barricaded enclosure and stopped.

His expression turned sombre as he placed a handful of roses on a waist-high memorial built to mark the spot where more than 200 school children had died during a Republic Day march when the 6.9 magnitude earthquake reduced much of Gujarat's Kutch district to rubble, killing more than 20,000 people.

The boy and girl, who were among the few marching school children to survive the January 26 tragedy, followed the man who was holding their hands a little while ago. They, too, placed roses on the plaque in memory of their dead classmates.

However, Clinton's name on the memorial was hastily removed before he arrived as residents pointed out that it was written as "President Bill Clinton". The organisers tried to pass it off as a reference to Clinton's status as the head of an aid foundation. But following advice that it might embarrass the former President, police scratched out the name.

Up to now, barring the "erased name", things went as planned by the state government, which ensured that only BJP functionaries had access to Clinton during his five-hour trip to Ratnal, Anjar and Bhuj today.

At Ratnal, where Clinton stopped for about 15 minutes on the way to Anjar, local BJP MLA Basant Bhai Aher and Taluka panchayat member Trikan Bhai Aher, also from the BJP, had the task of showing Clinton around, keeping him away from the villagers and their complaints.

Though the local panchayat is held by the Congress, its president V.K. Homal was not invited.

At Anjar, a local municipal chairman and vice-chairman, both from BJP, were given the task of welcoming and accompanying Clinton during his 30-minute visit to this quake-ravaged town.

Hundreds of local people waiting for Clinton in the scorching sun were kept away from him with barricades and cordons.

Khatribazar, the venue, was declared off-limits to anyone other than the local BJP functionaries, officials and the media. As Clinton walked into the secure arena, people started calling out to him. As he responded with waves, they went hysterical and broke the flimsy cordons of packing wood and rushed towards him to air their grievances.

A security nightmare followed as about seven US agents, vastly outnumbered, fought in vain to keep the people from getting close to the former President. Clinton lent the villagers a patient ear. "You are the only person who can do something for us. The government hasn't done anything for us nearly three months after the quake," shouted former Janata Dal MLA Champak Lal Shah (70) who barged in with others.

Standing in front of Clinton, he shouted: "Please do something. Don't go away. We have lost our parents, sons and daughters in the quake." Clinton smiled and said: "I will certainly do what I can."

"Our homes are all gone. We need money to rebuild our lives," Rajnikant Sukharia shouted as police held him by his collar and led him away. A few policemen chased away villagers who mocked him. Clinton's security-men arrived in a blue four-wheeled drive jeep almost out of nowhere, shoved in the former President and zoomed away.

Later in the day, Clinton said at Bhuj Jubilee Hospital that he and other members of the American-India Foundation had raised \$7 million for Gujarat quake victims. "I have come to look, listen and learn.... We intend to raise more and are trying to find ways to get money to people. We're



Bill Clinton greets children at Ratnal village near Bhuj during his visit to quake-ravaged Gujarat on Wednesday. (Reuters)

going to help in restoring schools and in healthcare."

Clinton was amused at two banners outside the barricade at the Jubilee Hospital. Mike Patel, vice-chairman of the foundation, was standing next to him. Clinton

pointed out the banners and they both had a hearty laugh. One read, "Rehabilitation should be through international aid and not through local NGOs". Another one, held aloft by a middle-aged woman, read: "Mr Clin-

ton, can you tell us how long we will live on the road?"

Clinton said he had a phone conversation with Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee this afternoon and assured him of all help. "I will never forget the trip I had made to

India as President. I always knew I would come back here but not in a sad situation such as this. I want to come to India for the rest of my life," he said before taking off for Ahmedabad.

■ See Page 6

THE

APR 2001

# Clinton offers a helping hand to Gujarat

Our Mumbai Bureau

MUMBAI 6 APRIL

FORMER US President Bill Clinton on Friday expressed his desire to help in the rehabilitation work in earthquake affected Gujarat.

Mr Clinton who was supposed to have breakfast at the residence of the former chief minister Sharad Pawar, at Silver Oaks Estate, was late almost by an hour.

Mr Pawar and other visiting dignitaries had their buffet breakfast at the Hotel Oberoi sans Mr Clinton. Wearing a lemon yellow shirt Clinton arrived in a Range Rover at 10.05 am. He was seen happily posing for pictures with those who were waiting to greet him. For some he even signed autographs.

However, he was in time for the 45 minute-disaster management presentation. Sharad Pawar, who has recently found a job with the national disaster control management, was joined by chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, deputy chief minister Chaggan Bhujbal, finance minister Jayant Patil and other members of the state cabinet.

Several senior bureaucrats including chief secretary V. Ranganathan were also present at the meeting. Around 100 others were also present at the meeting.

After the meeting Mr Pawar briefed the media. Mr Clinton described natural disasters as a global problem arising out of climatic changes and offered India the existing expertise available in US in dealing with such calamities or emergency situations.

"We are prepared to do whatever we can to develop a national management policy depending on the wishes of the Govt of India", he said.



Bill Clinton in a tete-a-tete with Ratan Tata in Mumbai on Friday. — ET Photo

Referring to the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the former President said, during his administration it was completely professionalised and all political appointees were removed as a result FEMA became the most popular department.

"People had great faith on the ability of FEMA which was heartening because the US has multiplicity of disasters. When a building collapses in Mumbai no one is bothered about

the education policy but everyone would expect prompt and efficient relief," he is reported to have said, promising expert assistance from FEMA if needed.

"We are not restricting the management committee's work to earthquakes alone but it will provide a plan for all other disasters. We will invite experts both from India and abroad to help us prepare the plan. It will be ready within a years time", Sharad Pawar told the visiting dignitary.

*The Economic Times*

5 APR 2001



# Tinted glass ceiling between Clinton and Gujarat's agony

FROM DEBASHIS BHATTACHARYA

Bhuj, April 3: Bill Clinton is coming here tomorrow to trudge a kilometre or two through the debris of shattered homes and dreams and rub his high and broad shoulders with scores of quake victims, carrying their grief and grievances.

This is official.

What is not is another script prepared for the former US President to keep him away from most of the survivors and their complaints, only allowing him to see much of the destruction through the tinted glasses of his armoured sedan. Clinton reached Delhi late tonight.

"The former American Presi-

dent is our honoured state guest. He will walk around parts of devastated Anjar and Ratanal villages and meet people there. He will also visit a hospital in Bhuj and talk to people in the media," Kutch district magistrate Anil Mukim said, spouting the official line.

But district superintendent of police Vivek Srivastava had another story to tell. He said Clinton would meet only a handful of "pre-selected" villagers in Anjar and Ratanal. "We are not shifting villagers from their homes during this visit, but no one will be allowed to get anywhere near him," Srivastava attributed the decision to "our threat perceptions to his life".

He said Ratanal villagers an-

proached the police with a request that they be allowed to meet Clinton to air their grievances. "But they were denied permission for security reasons."

The collector said he did not see why someone should go to Clinton with complaints. "He is not an MP or a minister, and cannot solve problems. He is a foreign dignitary and should be treated as such with utmost respect."

Accompanied by his entourage of 30 Indian corporate leaders from the US who are trying to help rebuild the quake-ravaged Kutch district, Clinton is slated to arrive at Bhuj airport around noon. In a convoy of 16 cars, he will be taken straight to Ratanal village, 25 km away, where he

will meet "one or two" villagers

and spend about 10 minutes.

Ratanal, devastated in the January 26 earthquake that killed nearly 20,000 people in Kutch district and flattened some 200,000 houses, lies 20 km from Anjar — Clinton's next stop and highlight of his trip to Bhuj.

In Anjar, he will take a brief walk in the ravaged town, 100 metres or so, down an alley cleared of debris on the eve of his visit. The path was carefully chosen for him to tread: it was here that 400 students out on a march on Republic Day were buried alive under the rubble of a collapsed market.

Clinton will place a wreath at a memorial to the dead children where rescuers found 150 bod-

ies. Clinton will walk with the former President during his journey down the lane," the police officer said.

After spending an hour or so in the ravaged town, Clinton will head towards Jubilee Hospital, a venue chosen by the administration in the stricken city of Bhuj for his next and last stop. Compared to the district hospital nearby, totally flattened in the quake killing more than 200 persons, Jubilee Hospital was partially damaged.

"But it was chosen as his last stop because the hospital is still standing and will provide an excellent backdrop for a photo opportunity," said a senior official.

See Page 6



A child in front of the ruins of her house in Bhuj. (Reuters)

THE TELEGRAPH

4 APR 2001

# Rebuilding of Gujarat will cost \$2.3 b.: ADB-WB report

The Times of India News Service

**AHMEDABAD:** The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have estimated that the reconstruction of Gujarat, devastated by the January 26 earthquake, will cost about Rs 10,600 crore (\$2.3 billion).

In their joint Gujarat earthquake recover programme assessment report presented to the state government and the Centre, the two banks have put the total loss of assets, including private assets, at Rs 9,900 crore (\$2.1 billion). The bulk of these losses are in the housing sector (Rs 5,200 crore).

Among the other severely affected sectors are education, health, rural water supply, irrigation, transport and public buildings and monuments.

The impact on Gujarat's fiscal deficit is expected to be Rs. 10,100 crore (\$2.2 billion) over three years.

The report represents the best

assessment possible as of end-February 2001. It is based on field visits by a joint World Bank-ADB team to the affected areas in February. As a more detailed review of the damage is undertaken by the government of Gujarat, understanding and data will be updated and made available.

The joint assessment report outlines immediate needs, damage assessments, and a medium term recovery strategy for each sector. International experience from other disaster-hit areas suggests that the recovery programme be based on the principles of revival of the economy, empowering individuals and communities, affordability, private sector participation and equity, decentralisation and communication and transparency.

"These core principles should be integrated into the recovery strategy and are key to the success, ac-

ceptability and sustainability of the process," say Keith Oblitas and Robert Maurer, co-leaders of the World Bank's assessment team to Gujarat.

In particular, the new report suggests that an approach based on consultation with and participation by the affected communities must be at the heart of the recovery programme, including, as far as possible, rebuilding of their own houses by individuals in their original location.

"While the reconstruction of physical assets is crucial, the Bank's primary objective is to help restore normalcy to the nearly one million families who have lost their homes and, in many cases, their loved ones and livelihoods as well. This is an unprecedented challenge, but over the past years of drought and hardship, the people of Kutch have demonstrated remarkable resilience and strength," say Oblitas and Maurer.

The report identifies the following immediate needs: provision of temporary shelter before the onset of monsoon in July; restoration of public services such as hospitals, schools, water supply, power, communications, municipal and environmental infrastructure and state administration; and, securing in-

come earning opportunities for vulnerable people in the affected areas. The World Bank, ADB and other donors are coordinating their support with the government of Gujarat to ensure that all sectors are adequately addressed.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 MAR 2001

# PM blasts Opposition for 'politicising' quake relief

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 27. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today came down heavily on the Opposition charging it with politicising the issue of relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat. Reacting to allegations of discrimination in providing relief to the earthquake victims, Mr. Vajpayee told the Opposition, "We will put you in the dock," in his intervention during a special discussion in the Lok Sabha on the Gujarat quake.

Though the Prime Minister announced some measures for Gujarat, this was done at the fag-end of the speech. He hinted that the Government would set up a permanent disaster management authority, and said HUDCO had been given permission to issue Rs. 1,500-crore worth of tax-free bonds, while the Bhuj hospital would be entirely rebuilt by the Centre.

However, a major part of his speech was devoted to rebutting the Opposition charges. He accused them of "politicising the issue", insulting the people of Gujarat, and defaming the coun-

try. "Your charges have made headlines in foreign newspapers," he said.

Mr. Vajpayee charged the Opposition with repeatedly bringing up the issue of discrimination with an eye on the coming elections. "You have sought to make political mileage out of the calamity," he said, and referred to the results of the recent by-elections. "The results are there for all to see; eventually, the people will decide (*Janata faisala karegi*)."

The Prime Minister was repeatedly interrupted by Mr. Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M), Mr. Shivraj Patil (Congress) and Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party), who said: "People complained to us, and we have a duty to voice their complaints." Mr. Chatterjee accused Mr. Vajpayee of speaking as a BJP leader rather than as Prime Minister.

In a break with tradition, midway through the Prime Minister's speech, the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, defended the Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. Keshubhai Patel. "Mr. Keshubhai has promised to inquire into these charges and act against those found guilty."

THE HINDU

28 FEB 2001

# Quake relief and politics

By V. Krishna Ananth

“I FEEL no despondency in me... I am not feeling helpless... The nation has got energy of which you have no conception but I have.” This was Mahatma Gandhi's response to a group of Congressmen (the Indian National Congress) who in April 1934 went to him in one of those moments of despondency. Even Jawaharlal Nehru (in jail then) declared “with a stab of pain” that his long association with Gandhiji was about to come to an end. The context was Gandhiji “ordering” withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

There was, at least as it appeared, some basis for this sense of despondency among the rank and file of the nationalist movement. Lord Willingdon even declared (in 1933) that “the Congress is in a definitely less favourable position than in 1930 and has lost its hold on the public”. But the turn of events in a few years — the anti-war protests and the heroic deeds by the “ordinary” masses soon after August 9, 1942, the demonstrations against INA trials, the solidarity action with the RIN ratings and all those agitations — established that everyone except Mahatma Gandhi was wrong. The national movement grew in strength. The hold of the Indian National Congress (and Gandhiji) over the people was not lost; it only grew stronger.

While others in the Congress needed a movement to sustain their sense of political activism, Gandhiji alone realised the significance of “constructive work” in the political arena. Constructive work, indeed, was not just a complementary agenda in his scheme of things; instead, the programme was integral to the political agenda.

This historical truth has a lot of relevance in the context of the killer earthquake that ravaged part of Gujarat and how the political establishment behaved (and continues to behave) in the aftermath of the disaster. Members of the political establishment (barring a handful) showed how obsessed they were with their own partisan and self-preserving needs in Gujarat or when parts of Orissa

were washed away by surging waves some time ago.

There, indeed, was a difference in the sense the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, took time off from his busy schedule to visit some parts of the ravaged Gujarat; one does not remember his sparing time for Orissa. And when the Prime Minister's schedule (visiting the earthquake-affected parts) was announced, could the Leader of the Opposition resist the temptation? Ms. Sonia Gandhi too had to do a survey (from the air) to make sense of the gravity and send a three-member delegation (led by Ms. Ambika Sont) to Gujarat.

It is another matter that the victims and

The last one heard (and this in the course of a conversation this writer had with a union leader) was that they were waiting for a decision by the central committee of the federation!

The issue involved is not merely insensitivity. After all, the pace at which ordinary people moved and the fact that society found leaders among itself (due to which relief material from all parts of the country began to be clog the railheads closest to Ahmedabad and the Bhuj airstrip) must serve as a pointer that the democratic spirit and the sense of belonging to one country are not just alive but thriving.

But the inability of the leaders of these

**‘Constructive work’. This Gandhian prescription is what the outfits in the democratic political space are refusing to follow.**

their interests would have been served better had these luminaries kept out of the area. They were responsible for blocking the airspace for so long and preventing the IAF from flying relief material to the Bhuj airstrip.

This insensitivity was not restricted to the visible lot in the political establishment — all those who hover around dressed in spotless white — but was seen even among those engaged in public life such as unionists in banks, public sector undertakings and Government departments. That the organised unions or their leaders were hardly seen involved in mobilising relief, even while the rest of civil society was collecting medicines, clothes, tent material and anything it could think of, is a sad commentary on the state of the trade union movement today.

There has been no news of any of the various federations of employees in the nationalised banks organising relief work; some members of these federations (a good number indeed) were busy calculating the “benefits” that would accrue to them in the event of voluntary retirement.

political campaign. And hence they could surmount all repression (by the colonial rulers as well as the Nehruvian administration after July 1946) and build a support base.

But now, the union leaders (whether of the left or the right or free from any leanings) were hardly seen in the couple of weeks after January 26, when Gujarat was struck by the earthquake. Such insensitivity looks stark when the rest of civil society was seen mobilising relief for the victims.

Add to this the manner in which the Left-led Government in Kerala acted. Mr. E. K. Nayanar's administration dispatched a couple of days after the tragedy a five-member team (three doctors and two nursing staff), carrying Rs. 50,000 to Gujarat, with a brief that it provide relief to Malayalam-speaking quake victims. That the Government stated as much in a note to the media — the medical team along with three officials from the Secretariat would go to Gujarat to provide succour to the Malabar region — was in fact such a ridiculous proposition that it did not evoke anger within the State.

It did not occur to the apparatchiks in the CPI(M) or the elderly leaders in the Congress to send a few hundred members of the youth organisations (whom they make full use of in all “movements”) they organise at regular intervals to Gujarat and involve them in relief and other activities on a long-term basis. In other words, “constructive work”. This legacy of the Gandhian era belonged to the Congress as much as to the Left. And all those who put this prescription by Mahatma Gandhi into effect were able to create a space for themselves in the political life.

It is this experience which the Left as well as most other political platforms that must belong, going by what they profess, to the democratic political space are refusing to emulate. And the longer they remain so, the farther they will be pushed from the mainstream political space. Meanwhile, the right (in the political as well as economic sense of the term) will soon appropriate this space too. And that is the danger.

# In Kutch, Muslims prefer relief provided by VHP

MILIND GHATWAI  
BHUJ, FEB 19

THE MUSLIM clergy in Kutch have boycotted the Ahmediyas, a Pak-based Muslim group, asking its members not to accept any relief from the latter. Muslims do not recognise the Ahmediya sect and accuse it of blasphemy.

Muslims of all denominations held a meeting here a couple of days ago when they learnt that Ahmediyas — also known as Kadiyas or Mirzais — were allegedly trying to propagate their faith in Kutch by providing relief in remote areas of Khavda.

The sect is popularly known as Kadiyas after its founder Ghulam Ahmed Kadiya who hailed from Punjab province of Pakistan where the group has a large following. The group was banned in Pakistan during the time of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The ban was later endorsed by several Islamic countries. But the group still has a large presence in Pakistan as also many other parts of the world, especially in London.

The Ahmediyas do not believe in the basic tenet of the finality of Prophet Mohammed's teachings. For Muslims, Huzrat

Mohammed was the last prophet but the Ahmediyas consider Ghulam Ahmed Kadiya as the Prophet's successor.

Muslim organisations here allege that the Ahmediyas, have come with lots of money and other allurements to woo poor Muslims.

One of them said, on the condition of anonymity, that lakhs

**Muslims say VHP is not propagating any religious propaganda as against the Ahmediyas who have their own communal agenda**

were being offered to poor Muslims along with religious literature.

"We are accepting relief from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or the Bajrang Dal without any hesitation for they are not pushing in any religious propaganda," General Secretary of Kutch district Congress Adam Chaki said laud-

ing the efforts of the Hindu organisations. Chaki said a team of volunteers had been dispatched to Khavada to stop the Ahmediyas. "Muslims will prefer to die but won't accept relief from them.

There is no way we can allow Ahmediyas, who denigrate Islam, to offer relief to Muslims," Chaki said. The sect has a following in few pockets of India but had no presence in Kutch before the earthquake.

A few days ago, volunteers of Muslim organisations from Bhuj learnt that the group was distributing religious literature along with relief in Khavada, where the majority is Muslim.

Mohammed Umar Vohra, a deputy engineer with Gujarat Electricity Board and in-charge of Jamat-e-Islami, Kutch, told *The Indian Express* on Saturday that the group had found a soft target in Khavada, on Pakistan's border, because government help took time to reach there.

The area is facing a second successive drought, and given that government relief has not reached there, the sect has found an opportunity to try and spread its tentacles, said Ahmed Bundi, another Muslim leader.

INDIAN EXPRESS

20 FEB 2001

# Sonia carries quake clash from PM panel to House

FROM RASHEED KIDWAI

**New Delhi, Feb. 18:** The Congress plans to move an adjournment motion on the Gujarat earthquake in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, capping an offensive that saw Sonia Gandhi raising the issue at a meeting convened by the Prime Minister today.

Sonia referred to the alleged communal and political bias in distribution of relief in Gujarat at the meeting of the National Committee on Disaster Management, headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Vajpayee assured her that "strict vigil" would be maintained to ensure that "no discrimination will be made". (See Page 8)

Besides Gujarat, the violence in Kashmir, the Ayodhya dispute, disinvestment and the opening-up of the farm sector are key issues that will pit the Opposition against the government during the budget session.

The session is loaded with economic business, but politics will dominate in view of the Assembly polls in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Pondicherry.

The Lok Sabha will be adjourned tomorrow after President K.R. Narayanan's address to the joint session of Parliament on account of the death of Jitendra Prasada, who was the sitting MP from Shahjahanpur.

The budget will be presented on February 28, while Mamata Banerjee will unwrap her second railway budget on February 26.

The Opposition also plans to corner the government over the PMK's exit from the NDA.

However, the Opposition ranks are sharply divided. Sonia failed to convene a meeting of non-NDA parties after toying with the idea. The Samajwadi Party, the NCP, the Forward Bloc, the RSP and others will be targeting the Congress chief over her failure to take the Opposition along. Sonia's managers today said she was in "touch" with Opposition leaders but refused to name them.

The Congress will try to join hands with the Left Front on disinvestment in public sector units like Maruti Udyog Ltd. But the Congress and the Left have differ-

ent views on WTO-related legislation.

Parliamentary affairs ministry sources said the government will treat 36 Bills as top priority during the session. They include the women's reservation Bill and the Lok Pal Bill to ensure probity in public life by bringing into its ambit the Prime Minister.

Congress floor-managers said they would demand an undertaking that the Uttar Pradesh government would make a fresh notification in the Babri Masjid demolition case in the wake of the court's directive to set aside the trial of L.K. Advani and seven others.

Before the disaster council meeting, Sonia released a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, saying that during her visit to Gujarat, she received many complaints from victims that they were not getting relief because of their caste and religion.

She said the overwhelming need in the state was for shelter. "It must be provided before the onset of summer," the AICC chief added.

19 FEB 2001

# Surrender notice to quake builders

FROM BASANT RAWAT

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 17:** A day after the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act (Pasa) was invoked against two builders, police today issued notices to all builders facing charges to surrender.

All builders against whom cases of causing death and injury to residents were registered have been asked to "surrender immediately", even as the builders' lobby appealed to the commissioner of police not to succumb to "political pressure" to book them.

In a public notification issued today, police commissioner P.C. Pande warned the builders that if they do not surrender, the police will be forced to take legal action. This, he added, will include attaching properties and freezing bank accounts.

The police today alerted all airports in the country. "They will not be able to leave the country and escape the police net," a police official said.

So far only six builders have been arrested, while the police have registered cases against 60.

The high court today directed the police to "temporarily stop investigation".

While the builders' lobby has hailed the court ruling a "moral victory", the police have decided to challenge the order.

"As per law, all cases have to be investigated. So we have decided to challenge the court judgment and we will continue our investigation against the builders," the police commissioner said.

The Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India, which met in Ahmedabad today, expressed concern over the police action against builders.

The association appealed to the police not to book builders, architects, engineers under Section 304 "as there could be endless reasons why the building collapsed".

It said the police can take action against any builder provided it is established by a competent authority that the particular building collapsed because of substandard material being used or some structural fault.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 FEB 2001

## Nab the builders

ONE HOPES Gujarat Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel stands by his words. He promised on Friday that stringent action will be taken against those builders who are found to have compromised on the quality of construction material in Kutch, and especially in Ahmedabad. Several buildings collapsed after the earthquake, leaving thousands dead or buried alive. Mr Patel has quite a job on his hands. Having failed when it came to relief operations, it is possible that he will also not be conspicuously successful in getting after the builders. His task will be difficult not only because most builders seem to share a cosy camaraderie with ruling party politicians in the state, but also because the nexus involves key institutions of the administration. These factors probably explain why most of the guilty builders have still not been arrested while they openly threaten the survivors with dire consequences if they dare to lodge a police case against them.

Yet their culpability is evident considering that while several high-rise apartments collapsed like sand castles, others in the vicinity were able to withstand the quake, including ancient structures in Old Ahmedabad. Mr Patel will have to ascertain how, for instance, the Ahmedabad Municipal Council and Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority, apart from leading financial institutions, gave clean chits to the builders, including power and water connections, when the foundations flouted the prevailing norms. Some buildings even had massive illegal additions, including penthouses and swimming pools. The people who bought these flats were not only duped of their hard-earned money, but many of them lost their entire families. Clearly, this is a criminal case which the Gujarat Government cannot ignore, whatever be the magnitude of the political clout wielded by the builder-politician lobby.

Instead of bringing out glossy brochures praising his Government at such a time, Mr Patel should have concentrated on coordinating relief and rehabilitation operations and dispelled the impression of heading a slothful administration. There have also been disturbing reports about the lower castes and minority communities being discriminated against by official agencies as well as outfits of the Sangh parivar. Mr Patel cannot be unaware that his party may have to pay a heavy price for both administrative ineptitude and the politics of prejudice which have disfigured the post-quake Gujarat scene.



# Errant builders still at large

DHARMENDRASINH CHAVDA  
AHMEDABAD, FEB 14

MORE than 700 dead, over 1,000 injured, 1,500 families rendered homeless, and thousands still reeling under the aftermath of the catastrophe. But nearly three weeks after the earthquake shattered lives, and brought down 69 buildings in Ahmedabad — 450 km from the epicentre — not one builder has been arrested despite 58 criminal complaints being filed.

Union Home Minister L.K. Advani, who was here yesterday, described the tragedy of Ahmedabad as man-made. State Home Minister Haren Pandya says the guilty will not be spared. Police Commissioner P.C. Pande says they are investigating, trying to make a foolproof case. But nobody has bothered to even test samples of the rubble that these plush-looking apartment blocks were reduced to.

While investigators take their time, many builders have gone into hiding. Others are bullying and threatening unfortunate survivors, trying to coerce them into a deal, taking advantage of their helplessness.

On Sunday, goons allegedly hired by Satish N. Shah, who built the 10-storey Shikhar Apartments that turned into a grave for more than 100 people, even beat up the survivors.

Shah had promised them alternative flats, provided they did not go to the police and handed him whatever compensation the government or insurance companies paid them. The survivors agreed. They asked Shah to put down his commitment in a man-



Children share a meal at a makeshift community kitchen in Bhuj on Tuesday — Reuters photo

ner that would carry some legal weight. Shah backtracked. And when the survivors protested, Shah set his men upon them, according to sources. Yes, the eight assailants were arrested, but they have since been released on bail.

The builders who raised the illegal buildings, the Ahmedabad Municipal Council and Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority officials who allowed these buildings to come up and made them habitable by giving water, power and drainage connections, and officials of financial institutions who helped the builders sell the illegal buildings by giving

loans — are all at large.

Naturally, the survivors are losing faith. Says Rajnikant P. Shukla, who was rendered homeless when Divyalaya Apartments in Maninagar collapsed, killing 10 persons: "If you lodge a complaint against me, they will arrest me immediately. But they are not arresting the builders. They are corrupt." Shukla, who had lodged a criminal complaint against five partners of Dhara Engineers, has now written to Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel, urging him to ensure that the case is "not hushed up".

He has little hope, though.

"The builders' men are going around saying nothing will happen to them."

Bipinchandra D. Joshi of Shrinath Apartments, in which 22 persons died, goes to the police station every day to inquire about the progress of the case. "They give a stock reply: investigation is on. Nobody is listening to us, we are really tired now," says Joshi. Vimal Verghese, who lost her daughter, son-in-law and grandson in Shikhar Apartments, is convinced the government "wants to protect the builders; they aren't bothered about the people".

INDIAN EXPRESS

15 FEB 2001

# Big builders elude net

Rathin Das  
Ahmedabad, February 14

BY ARRESTING three small time 'builders' on Tuesday, after 60-odd complaints had been made by the affected residents, the Gujarat police have send the message loud and clear - they still won't touch the big fish, the ones with the political connections.

Those arrested are small fry can be gauged from the fact that the brother and partner of one of them, Bharat Trivedi, were themselves occupants of one of the apartment block, and died when the building collapsed during the quake. It is well-known here that no prominent builder ever lives in the apartment he constructs in violation of laws and with sub-standard material.

On its own, the Gujarat police had not even registered any case

15/2  
against the big builders. And when the residents of the Sundarvan and Vidyalakshmi apartments, which collapsed killing 29 people, lodged a complaint, the cops quickly made the small time builders scape-goats to "protect the big sharks of the construction trade".

Police sources admit that it would take a while before the big fish were caught. On Monday, eight henchmen of a builder were arrested for threatening and bashing up owners of flats rendered uninhabitable due to the quake. But, the builder himself is still roaming scot free.

When asked about the delay in arresting the big builders, City Police Commissioner P.C. Pandey said the arrests could be made only "after collecting fool-proof evidence which would stand the court's scrutiny".

Last week, in an attempt to

counter allegations about the government-builder nexus, a minister refused to divulge the names of the institutions outside Gujarat where samples of rubble would be sent saying "people there might be influenced by the powerful lobby." But it is common knowledge here that the samples are likely to be sent to the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee, some of the IITs and the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC).

Even otherwise, the builders, architects and structural engineers have full information of the institutions capable of undertaking the post-mortem analysis of building materials. Sources add there could be further delays because of the huge quantity of rubble that had to be analysed.

Enough for the big fish to swim their way out of the mess?

# Our cadres didn't discriminate during relief work: VHP

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 14

THE VHP today strongly denied charges of religious discrimination against its cadres engaged in earthquake relief work. It blamed the media for carrying "biased" reports in this regard.

VHP international general secretary Pravin Togadia refuted the allegation that their activists had asked Muslim victims to chant "Jai Shri Ram" before distributing food.

"Cite any such incident and I will retire from public life. It is absolutely wrong to make such charges. We have distributed food among two lakh people there. Does it mean we asked all of them all to say 'Jai Shri Ram'?", fumed the leader at a press conference in the Capital.

When reporters pointed out they had personally witnessed such an incident in a VHP relief camp, he explained it by saying that it was a general practice among Hindus to utter these words before starting a meal and this could have led to some confusion.

He also lashed out at Congress president Sonia Gandhi accusing her of introducing the element of religion in relief work during her visit to the earthquake hit areas. Referring to a demonstration there by members of the Muslim community protesting against inadequate relief, Mr Togadia charged that it had been engineered by Congress leader Ahmad Patel during Mrs Gandhi's visit.

Mr Togadia, who is based in Ahmedabad, has been directing the VHP's rescue operations in the state. According to him, about

40,000 activists of the VHP and RSS were engaged in the relief activity ever since the devastating quake struck and they were coordinating with other NGOs.

Quoting a survey carried out by the state government, the VHP leader pointed out that no Christian or Muslim social organisations were involved in the quake relief activity. He claimed that only seven prominent Hindu organisations, including the VHP and the RSS, figured among the NGOs engaged in relief work in 7,000 affected villages.

The VHP by itself had so far distributed 650 truckloads of relief material and had provided medical treatment to as many as 23,000 people. With the first phase of rescue operations getting over, the focus of the organisation had now shifted to rehabilitation.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 FEB 2001

# Centre seeks rehab plan for quake victims

Feb 1972  
FROM BASANT RAWAT

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 12:** The Centre has asked the Gujarat government to prepare a blueprint for rehabilitation of earthquake victims and assured every assistance to build a "new Gujarat".

Home minister L.K. Advani today said: "Now that the rescue and relief phase is almost over, rehabilitation has to be started. This is the most challenging test. We have asked the Gujarat government to prepare a blueprint."

The state government has asked for a tax holiday for Kutch.

Expressing satisfaction with the state government for handling the crisis well, Advani said with the response Gujarat got after the calamity, "I feel the crisis can be converted into an opportunity."

He said as Morbi town was rebuilt after it was devastated by floods in 1979 and Surat became one of the cleanest cities in the country after the 1994 plague, a new Kutch will be built after the earthquake. The people of Gujarat, known for their enterprise, will repeat the feat again.

Talking about the relocation of the villages in Kutch district, the home minister said: "It has to be done with the consent of the village committees."

On offers to "adopt" villages from the corporate sector and NGOs, the home minister, who visited quake-affected Banaskantha and Patan districts in north Gujarat, asked the state government to spell out the policy. "The government should define the liabilities if an organisation or corporate house wants to adopt a village or a cluster of villages."

Suggesting a bureaucrat-builder-politician nexus in Ahmedabad, Advani asked the state government to do away with the impression that the tragedy in Ahmedabad was "man-made" by taking stern action against the guilty persons — be it builder, government official or architect.

On the state government demand for a five-year tax holiday in Kutch and granting the status of a special economic zone to Mandvi and Mudra — two ports in Kutch district — Advani said the finance minister is examining all proposals put to him and is in the process of finalising the budget.

## Flat-owners beaten up

Eight persons were arrested by police for beating up residents of a collapsed building in the Satellite area of Ahmedabad, reports PTI. The police said that of the four blocks of the Shikar Apartment, one collapsed in the earthquake, claiming the largest number of lives in building collapse in the city.

THE TELEGRAPH

13 FEB 2001

# GUJARAT: TIME FOR STOCK-TAKING

It is easy to pick holes. And when the task is as huge as the one facing the Gujarat administration, it's even easier. But it's also unfair, and difficult, to condone the lapses that the administration is guilty of.

Apart from the fact that the Collector of Bhuj took a good 17 hours to actually inform Gandhinagar about the extent of devastation, the extent of inefficiency and administrative disorientation was not less than the magnitude of the quake itself.

In Khavda, a block headquarter less than 70 kilometres from Bhuj, not a single official or relief material reached even after ten days of the quake. Over 25,000 people in the township and over 20 tiny villages around it were left to brave the bitter Kutch cold without shelter, food or even a word of comfort. Even the devastating impact of the quake failed to shatter the rigid caste-structure in this region where the upper-castes, the Thakkars and the Jains aligned themselves with the all-powerful Swaminarayan sect that supplied food and tents to the community members, the harijans were left to fend for themselves.

"I was in Delhi, displaying handicrafts and embroidered clothes in a stall at Dill Haat when the quake happened," said Bhura Natha, an artisan in Khavda. "I rushed back and discovered that my family had not eaten for two days. Even now, the food supplies have not reached us. There are no tents. We sleep in the open." All the artisans belong to the harijan community and despite a semblance of empowerment through their craft, they continue to get discriminated against.

"What can one expect from people who could not even distribute relief material coming from outside," asked a very disgusted Heera Lal Thakkar in Khavda.

"Do you think we are hurt or even bothered that these people do not care," asked G B Thakkar, a doctor of the same village. "It's not the first time that our town has been razed or we have had to re-settle. We are worshippers of Jhule Lal. We come from Sindh. We came and developed Khavda. In 1819, we had to re-settle, once again. The quake destroyed our village. But we did it then. And we will do it now."

"Who needs the Government?"

There cannot be a more damning comment on the post-quake performance of the Keshubhai government.

THE WORST IS PROBABLY OVER. BUT COULD THE KESHUBHAI GOVERNMENT HAVE DONE BETTER? PROBABLY, WRITES POORNIMA JOSHI FROM AHMEDABAD



An earthquake victim sits in front of his collapsed house guarding his possessions in Anjar, one of the areas worst affected in the Gujarat quake

## Missing from action

Right through the the crisis, the administration was conspicuously absent, abdicating its responsibilities to the Army and the army of volunteers descending upon Gujarat from all over the country and the world. While the Army and international rescuers looked for survivors in the debris, defence doctors tenders to those injured and food and other relief materials were arranged and distributed by volunteers. Or, people managed on their own.

In fact, the administration failed to even help these agencies help it. Aircraft bringing in relief supplies and voluntary groups eager to help were turned away as the officials of many affected areas just couldn't find ways to utilise their services.

L Mansingh, the chief coordinator of relief operation in Kutch, had turned this

failure into a virtue insisting "we are perfectly capable of taking care". He went a step further criticising the volunteers saying, "Their presence is adding to the chaos." Brave, but unkind, words those.

He needs to do a reality check. A group of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) officers complained bitterly about how relief material is not getting distributed. "My men are getting frustrated. They have been unloading tents from hundreds of trucks for the last one week but there is nobody to distribute them. We are not here just to load and unload material. There can be better ways to utilise the forces. Either you do it yourself, or let us do it for you," an officer said angrily.

Baba Sukhbir Singh of Chandigarh, who organised a langar for 50,000 people in Rapar, 50 kilometres from the epicentre, couldn't agree more: "We are doing every-

thing on our own." He added, "People have to find their own ways of dealing with a crisis like this." Singh knows that feeling, his own community being no stranger to disruptions. Kutch is now widely accepted as a seismically volatile region. It's seen two major earthquakes, in 1819 and 1956, forcing each time thousands of people to move home and hearth to safer areas.

They are planning to move again. Jayantilal Johri Lal of Bhuj could not imagine building a house at the same place where it stood before the quake - his three grandsons lay buried in the debris for days before the bodies were pulled out. He said, "I will have to go somewhere else. Our ancestors did it, so can we."

## Lack of Coordination

While P. K. Lahiri, Principal Secretary to chief minister Keshubhai Patel, complained about the 'demoralising' criticism that the

Government continues to face in the wake of the quake, there is very little he can say about the survivors left shelterless as the temperature dropped to below six degrees celsius in the night when lakhs of tents were lying useless in Bhuj. Neither is any justification, or even explanation available for voluntary groups being turned away while the craftsmen in Anjaar still look for their dead.

At the same time, expert volunteers from Arena Adventure and Sports Association, Nagpur, left in disgust seven days after the quake because they were not given a chance to help search for bodies.

"We brought our own equipment. We are trained for such situations. But there is no work for us. We have travelled to Anjaar, Bhuj, Bhachau and there are thousands still buried. We are leaving today, I am only sorry that we could not help despite having reached here," said Pradeep Mahato, a volunteer from Nagpur.

## Keshubhai's defence

people for the job. Only the people present in Kutch could have given immediate relief. People of this cell were as badly affected as the others. Even when rescue operation finally started, there were complaints of lack of coordination.

We had asked people to do the needful, but there was nobody

to plan the relief there. Who could have made the plans there on the first day? On the first day, there was no one to guide them. After two days, they got the guidance and everything was channelised.

There were allegations that the RSS and Bajrang Dal had usurped the Government relief material...

When I went there (Kutch), I came to know about this. The government employees do not have any uniform, but the people there knew them. Those who distributed the relief may have put up their own boards or banners, but the relief was (actually) distributed by government employees. The collapse of so many new buildings has exposed your government's, and party's, nexus with the builders...

My Government has no nexus with the building mafia. The example is the issue of the impact fee. Then, the High Court had ordered the disconnection of water and electricity supply to illegally constructed buildings, which we did. We could not sit back silently. We even promised to install



fire safety devices and to recover the cost from the builders. The builders agitated, created much noise, but I refused to meet them. They were even lathicharged. If I had any nexus with them, I would have surrendered.

This earthquake has put a big question mark on the Narmada Dam's safety in the seismic zone.

What do you have to say?

At the tribunal stage itself, Madhya Pradesh had raised this question. The global quake experts said the fault at the site was not very deep. A hole — three feet wide and 200 feet deep — was made to determine fault's depth. It was found to be only 100 or 125 feet deep and it was filled up with cement and concrete. The design is foolproof and experts have examined it. What exactly do you want to do about rehabilitation and reconstruction? And how do you plan to raise the funds for this?

We have already received commitments worth Rs 4,500 crores. In rural areas, schemes for resettlements of villages have been prepared. We will take soft loans at low interests from the international funding agencies.

There are allegations that you ignored Dalit and minority hamlets?

That is wrong. I went to minority villages. I also issued instructions that (care must be taken to ensure) water and food reach these villages.

# Keshubhai defends Gujarat's disaster management drive

CM fires 10-page letter to central ministers

The Times of India News Service

GANDHINAGAR: Chief minister Keshubhai Patel has shot off a ten-page letter to all central ministers apprising them of the Gujarat administration's "alert response" to the "unprecedented challenge" that had arisen as a consequence of the January 26 earthquake.

The letter is a stiff reply to the criticism from "media and some people from outside the system" who had "emphasised the need for greater co-ordination". It says the state government's efforts should be "evaluated in the context of widespread damage, total loss of telecommunications, three public holidays and long distances involved in mobilising and rushing aid".

Faxed to ministers a couple of days ago, the letter says, "If emergencies are responded to with full force, there may be deviations from standard plans. If the nature and the extent of the calamity is unprecedented, the response should naturally be distinct and creative. No disaster management

plan would have envisaged requiring 8,000 units of machinery in a single district of Kutch. The cost of machinery movement works out to more than Rs 250 crore."

The letter was sent amidst speculation in the corridors of power about a possible change in leadership, with sources close to the CM also agreeing that "Keshubhai might face trouble if rehabilitation operations do not go smoothly". It further says, "The state government was naturally shocked to find such a massive requirement of heavy equipment without which it was not possible to clear high-rise and concrete structures that had fallen. In 1,016 villages and eight cities, the number of damaged houses, of which more than 50 per cent have



TEARS IN THE RAIN

mostly collapsed, has exceeded four lakhs." Suggesting that he was forced to place the "facts on record so that people in the administration who have put in their best, notwithstanding personal tragedies, do not suffer from low morale", the CM justified his decision to put the No. 2 person in the bureaucracy, G. Subba Rao, in charge of a five-member team to Bhuj "within six hours of the event".

Mr Rao is known to have been removed from Bhuj after industries minister Suresh Mehta, second in importance in the government hierarchy, threatened to withdraw from the relief operations in Kutch if the top bureaucrat was not removed.

Pointing out that the "total collapse of the telecommunications system" had made it impossible for officials

to make contact even "within the city of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar", Mr Keshubhai Patel's letter says this had resulted in a major handicap in obtaining and guiding rescue and relief operations. The CM said that he had personally to give directions through the police communications system for two days.

## 25 injured in tremors

AHMEDABAD: At least 25 persons were injured when an earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale rocked parts of Gujarat on Thursday night. According to the police, over 15 persons received injuries in Ahmedabad city alone when they tried to jump out of their houses after experiencing the tremors at 10.25 p.m. Panic-stricken residents of Ahmedabad and other cities remained out of their houses, the police said. This was the third strongest quake since the January 26 disaster. (PTI)

## Army recovers Rs 20 cr. from bank rubble

BHACHAU: In a gruelling operation running into more than eight hours, the army helped the State Bank of India's Bhachau branch recover nearly Rs 20 crore from the debris of its building. The earthquake on January 26 had reduced the two-storey building of the Bhachau branch of the SBI to rubble, causing



worry to bank officials. A senior bank official, who has been personally keeping a vigil on the rubble since then, said the bank branch had crores of rupees in its chest and the bank had sought the army's help in its recovery. The Bhatinda-based regiment of the army moved into Bhachau to help in the recovery operations. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 FEB 2001



# Politics of power hogs relief material in Bhuj

*Problem of plenty dogs some, others go hungry*

By Sourav Mukherjee  
The Times of India News Service

**BHUI:** \* *Scene 1 (inside the district Collector's office):* Yet another meeting is under way, but this one witnesses heated exchanges. "Drawing up plans and more plans is all that we have been doing since January 26. Where is the implementation? People know that we have tents with us why don't we give it to them? Where are the food grains to be given out? The people are fast losing patience we might have to face serious consequences," lashes out an IAS officer after being gheraoed on Saturday by an irate mob at the Lalan College relief centre

A senior coordinator of the relief operations tries to pacify him. "Okay, let's put up community tents. But, make sure you take the local corporators along and get their consent on deciding the sites for setting up community tents." A few eyebrows are raised on this suggestion but the relief coordinator is adamant— "No more discussion on this topic we have to do the job in this manner so let's get it done now."

\* **Scene 2:** An NGO coordination centre —Kutchh Nav Nirman Abhiyan — placed just outside the Bhuj collector's office premises is being thronged by people from Bhuj and far off corners of Kutchh asking for food and tents. Work is disrupted as a man in spotless white khaki walks in. "I want rice, wheat, milk packets and water in bulk to be distrib-

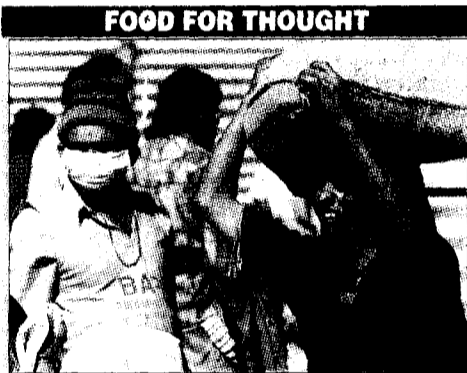
uted amongst the people rendered homeless. I have highly placed contacts at Gandhinagar so better get on the job immediately," he says authoritatively. A heated discussion ensues and the man in white goes off shooting threats at the coordinator.

Amidst decomposed bodies, rubbles and overpowering stench of rotting flesh, politicking and bureaucratic wrangles throw relief operations (even in Bhuj and fringe areas) out of gear. NGOs like Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan which was coordinating the relief material distribution in Bhuj and Kutch have withdrawn from the operation due to frequent "string pulling and political interference".

"We washed our hands off because political pressure took relief material to areas where help had already reached," said a member of the NGO Coordination Centre.

Purushottam Thakkar lay in front of the collectorate gate on Saturday, daring the hassled policemen to open fire on him and imploring the bureaucrats to provide him some food and water to drink. "Sir, thousands will die of hunger and cold. Please give us some food grains to take back home. Our children cry out with hunger, please help us," he pleaded with the senior police officials and bureaucrats whom he had prevented from going inside the district collectorate.

► **Free ration through PDS, Page 7**  
► **See Edit: Tale of Two States, Page 10**



THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Additional steps to mop up resources for Gujarat

By Our Staff Reporter

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 2.** The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today indicated that there would be additional measures to mobilise resources for meeting the expenditure on rehabilitation in Gujarat, but ruled out heavy taxes in the Budget.

Speaking to reporters Mr. Vajpayee said the two per cent surcharge levied on income tax was not enough. The task ahead was enormous and resources would have to be mobilised in other ways also including generous donations. Appealing to the people in India and abroad for help, the Prime Minister said estimates were being made of the loss caused by the quake and means identified to mobilise resources other than imposing taxes.

## India cannot but be secular

Earlier, addressing the gathering after releasing the Hindi and Urdu editions of the journal *Secular Qayadat*, Mr. Vajpayee said India could never be anything but secular. "If the Government is not secular, it will belong to a particular community, not the entire nation. Secular means that the Government has no religion while people are free to practise any religion," he said.

The secular temperament of the people needed to be strengthened, but unfortunately there were some political difficulties



The Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, receives a cheque from a young girl for the Gujarat quake victims in New Delhi on Friday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

which hampered this, and these needed to be removed because one fundamentalist activity led to another, he warned. When the Constitution was framed, "secularism" was not included because it was assumed India would be a

secular state since it was in the ethos of its people. "It is only after the Constitution was amended during the Emergency that the additional words — democratic, socialist, secular — were included. No one talks of socialism but a lot of noise is being made about secularism," Mr. Vajpayee said.

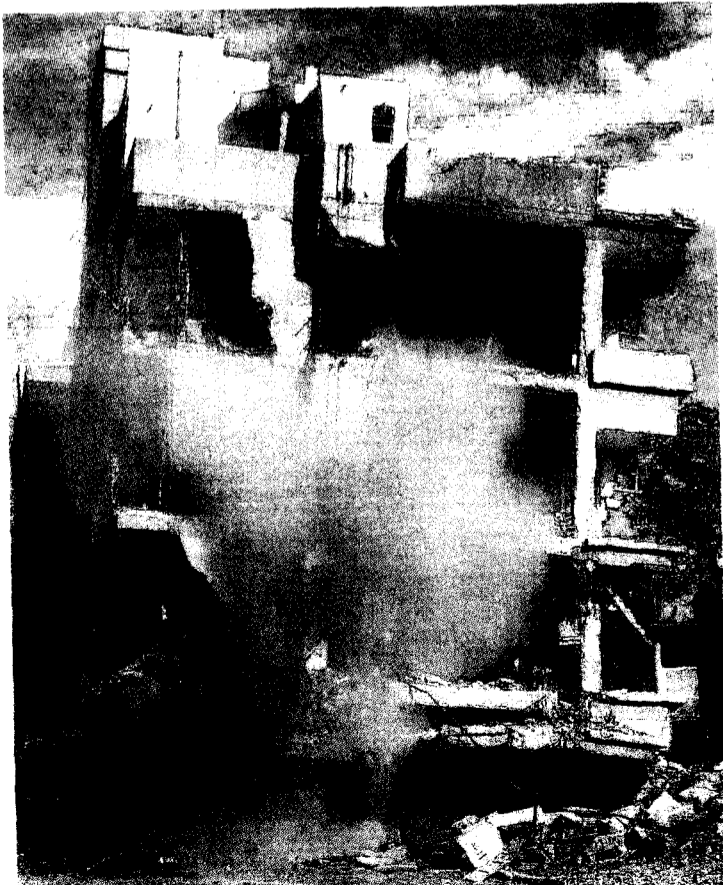
India was a secular nation even before Christianity and Islam came here. Barring Ashoka, no ruler ever tried to impose any religion on the masses. "Even if there are incidents of religious discrimination, there are institutions like the courts, media and the National Human Rights Commission to check such happenings."

The Prime Minister said his statements on Ayodhya had generated a lot of controversy and he had to issue clarifications by way of writing articles.

Mr. Qadri Mohammad Mian Mazhari, chairman of the Islamic Council of India and chief editor of *Secular Qayadat*, said Mr. Vajpayee's 50 years in politics were dedicated to promoting secularism and development.

The special edition is a compilation of articles on Mr. Vajpayee by distinguished writers and scholars. It also carries historic speeches delivered by Mr. Vajpayee on international fora. The ambassadors of several Islamic countries have also discussed the foreign policy of the Prime Minister and New Delhi's cultural relations with the Islamic world.

More quake related reports on Pages 11, 13, 14 and 15



Army jawans conduct a controlled blast in Akshar Apartment to help the quake rescue work, in Ahmedabad on Wednesday evening. — PTI

NO-12 3/2  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2001

## A TAX FOR A CAUSE *g. Sr. Minister*

AN EXTRAORDINARY SITUATION demands a sacrifice of some kind, so the additional surcharge of 2 per cent on personal income and corporate tax rates to aid the reconstruction of Kutch is a very small burden that tax assesseees are being asked to bear. What was unnecessary though was the many different languages in which the Prime Minister and members of the Union Cabinet spoke about the earthquake surcharge in the days before the final decision was taken. Since the public mood was one of wanting to contribute to the reconstruction effort, there was everything to gain by openly airing the proposal.

The final costs of reconstruction will be colossal and run into thousands of crores. With vast swathes of Kutch laid to waste, funds are needed to repair and rebuild schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and the Kandla port. Second, since few private homes would have been insured Government money will have to be provided entirely or mainly as a grant for building new houses. Third, while the bigger industrial complexes have withstood the tremors, the small and informal businesses have largely been destroyed. These too will need aid, a considerable amount in the form of grants. In addition, there is the cost of relief which will likely have to be provided over an extended period. The financial demands of reconstruction will be much, much more than what Gujarat has received from the National Calamity Contingency Fund, what the State Government is capable of mobilising on its own and all the financial aid that has poured in from abroad (about Rs. 50 crores). The idea of the surcharge has been criticised by the more "fundamentalists" among the economists, the argument being that if funds are needed they can be found by cutting down wasteful expenditure and that the imposition of the surcharge is an excuse to narrow the fiscal deficit. Both are false arguments. To take the second first, the decision to earmark the collections exclusively for the reconstruction effort will ensure that the funds are not used

to bridge the deficit. (This can be made certain by placing the funds in the Public Account, so that the collections are not used elsewhere if at all there is a mismatch between the phasing of receipts and expenditure.) The other argument has even less going for it. True, there is ample scope for reducing wasteful expenditure by the Central Government. But there was a case for doing so before the Kutch quake and it would have had to be done even if the quake had not taken place. Any such reduction would generate resources to meet normal development needs. The point is that even if the Centre's financial situation was reasonably healthy, the scale of reconstruction required would have necessitated the imposition of a surcharge.

The revenue expected from the surcharge — Rs. 1,300 crores in 2000-01 — is inadequate for reconstruction. But this is not a case for increasing the surcharge. The earlier 10 — 15 per cent surcharge on personal income taxes was justified last year by "unexpected" expenditure on defence and transfers to States. Since replenishment of the defence inventories after the Kargil conflict should have been completed by now and the statutory recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission have been implemented, the original justification no longer exists. So if all the older surcharges (other than that earmarked for the National Calamity Contingency Fund) were to be replaced by a single 10 — 15 per cent cess on both personal and corporate taxes and the receipts entirely allocated for the Gujarat effort, about Rs. 6,000 crores could be collected next year. It goes without saying that while large sums are needed there has to be transparency and accountability in expenditure so that the usual leakage does not take place. This will depend largely on how the rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes are designed. A top-down approach is likely to result in a siphoning off of funds while an active involvement of the beneficiaries in planning will ensure a more useful rehabilitation programme.

THE HINDU

3 FEB 2001



# Be prepared for a fresh dose of taxes, warns Vajpayee

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 2

XX/10

**T**HE VAJPAYEE Government appears set to impose a fresh dose of moderate taxes to mop up additional resources for the relief and rehabilitation of the Gujarat quake victims. It may also undertake a few non-tax measures to meet the situation even as the huge enormity of the calamity continues to unfold a week after the disaster.

Indications on this count were loud and clear today as the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee reiterated the resolve of his Government to carry out the massive reconstruction and rehabilitation in the quake-affected State.

"Two per cent additional sur-

## Quake surcharge: What it means to you

For individuals & HUF's the impact of extra tax liability in respect of Additional Surcharge would be as under: (All figures in Rs.)

Income	Income Tax	Surcharge	Addl. Surcharge	Total Tax	Extra Liability
50,000	1,000	-	-	1,000	-
60,000	3,000	300	60	3,360	60
70,000	9,000	900	180	10,080	180
1,00,000	19,000	1,900	380	21,280	380
1,50,000	34,000	5,100	680	39,780	680
2,00,000	64,000	9,600	1,280	74,880	1,280
3,00,000	94,000	14,100	1,880	1,09,980	1,880
4,00,000	1,24,000	18,600	2,480	1,45,080	2,480
5,00,000	1,54,000	23,100	3,080	1,80,180	3,080
6,00,000	2,14,000	32,100	4,280	2,50,380	4,280
8,00,000	2,74,000	41,100	5,480	3,20,580	5,480

Individuals	Nil
On income upto Rs 50,000	10%
On income between Rs 50,000 to 60,000	22.4%
On income between Rs 60,000 to 1,50,000	35.1%
On income over Rs 1,50,000	39.2%
<b>Partnership firms</b>	<b>39.55%</b>
On any income	

charge on income and corporate taxes is not enough keeping in view the magnitude of the devastation," Mr Vajpayee told mediapersons after releasing a weekly Urdu jour-

nal—Secular Qayadat. Replaying to a query over the extent of the proposed additional tax burden, the Prime Minister clarified that it might not be heavy. He, however, hastened to add that other ways may have to be found out to mobilise the necessary resources.

Mr Vajpayee's remarks assume significance against the backdrop of the Government's last night announcement regarding the imposition of additional 2% surcharge on income and corporate taxes. The surcharge is expected to realise additional revenue to the tune of Rs 1300 crore during the remaining two months of the ongoing financial year.

On his part, the Prime Minister asserted that the decision had been taken to share the grief of the

quake-stricken people of Gujarat. He also appealed to the people to generously contribute to mitigate the sufferings of the affected people. As regards the net money needed to undertake the necessary reconstruction of the affected areas, Mr Vajpayee refused to give an exact figure. "I am not in a position to say how much resources are required are required for this purpose," he remarked.

The Prime Minister said the Government was formulating measures to ensure safety of Delhi's buildings particularly in the context of the Gujarat earthquake. "We have to take steps to make these structures withstand major quakes," he added.

The Empowered Group of Home Ministers chaired by Home

Minister L.K Advani today directed the Gujarat Government to set up help-line and information booths manned by appropriate officials, at all the entry points of the quake-affected areas.

At its 2-hour long meeting here this morning, the Group also asked the State Government to prepare a "ready-reckoner" with necessary information on various aspects of contact, communication and location of authorities to benefit the smooth relief measures of various agencies including voluntary outfits and NGOs. I&B Minister Ms Sushma Swaraj said the Ministerial Group had also directed the State Government to appoint an information officer for each Taluka of the affected areas to provide daily media-update.

and lack of imagination in the overall handling of affairs.

## WV The quake tax

AS THE economic burden of the Gujarat earthquake is going to be enormous, few will oppose the Government's decision to impose a 2 per cent surcharge on income tax. On the contrary, it may be considered an act of duty by taxpayers earning an annual income of above Rs 60,000 to pay towards the reconstruction of the quake-hit areas and in rehabilitating the victims. The Government does need to garner resources for the reconstruction work and raising the surcharge is one of the methods. In doing so, it has no doubt also found a way out of the problem of raising additional resources in the coming Budget which is just a few weeks away.

It must be remembered that the taxpayer in the Rs 50,000 to Rs 150,000 bracket is already paying a surcharge of 10 per cent. For those above Rs 150,000, the surcharge was raised to 15 per cent in the last Budget on account of Kargil. Since the impost is calculated on the marginal rate of taxation, the effective tax rate will be 22 per cent for the Rs 60,000 to Rs 150,000 income bracket and 35 per cent for those earning Rs 150,000 and more. For corporate companies, the rate will be close to 40 per cent (a 1 per cent additional surcharge was imposed last December to create the corpus for Calamity Relief Fund), which is quite high. The corporate sector may not be amused because levying more and more taxes on the same companies while the so-called 'zero tax companies' go scot-free will be resented.

Similarly, unless the Government is able to deploy the targeted amount of Rs 1,300 crore collected through the surcharge effectively, the tax paying public will not be pleased for repeatedly having to bear the burden of additional taxes while a huge segment of the population — especially the rich farmers — are not taxed. The Government should evaluate the economic benefits emanating from the donations which are 100 per cent exempt from tax. All such exemptions have to be scrutinised properly because they are in effect implicit subsidies. Similarly, it must be ensured that the duty-free construction material arriving in the country is used for actual reconstruction and not diverted to the open market. The Centre's efficacy in governance will be tested in the coming months as it has to be on guard against defalcation of funds, diversion of material and mismanagement of the relief operations.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 3 FEB 2001

AD-1 'QUAKE TAX' TO MOP UP RS. 1,300 CRORES

# 2 p.c. additional surcharge on I-T., corporate tax to be imposed

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 1.** In an effort to mop up funds for quake-hit Gujarat, the Union Cabinet today decided to levy a two per cent additional surcharge on income tax and corporate tax for the current financial year. The 'quake tax', which had been under consideration for some days, is expected to generate an additional Rs. 1,300 crores to be entirely dedicated for relief and rehabilitation in the State.

This additional surcharge would be on top of all existing surcharges. For instance, persons

with annual incomes above Rs. 50,000 and up to Rs. 1,50,000 are already paying a 10 per cent surcharge. Now, through an Ordinance which the Government proposes to promulgate, those with incomes above Rs. 60,000 would pay an additional two per cent surcharge. Those with annual incomes above Rs. 1,50,000 currently pay a surcharge of 15 per cent and will now be paying an additional two per cent.

Since the surcharge is calculated at the marginal rate of taxation, the 10 per cent surcharge translates into a 22 per cent tax at

the 20 per cent level. At the 30 per cent slab, the surcharge works out to 34.5 per cent. Now another 0.4 and 0.6 per cent tax would be added at appropriate levels.

The surcharge has also been imposed on corporates who pay a 10 per cent surcharge plus an additional one per cent surcharge which was imposed in December last year to create the corpus for the Calamity Relief Fund. Now, the corporates would have to pay an additional two per cent surcharge over the existing surcharges.

The Cabinet, at its meeting, al-

so decided to provide 100 per cent tax deduction for donations made to charitable institutions for providing relief and rehabilitation to the Gujarat victims. So far, donations only to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund or the Chief Minister's Relief Fund were granted 100 per cent tax deduction and all other charitable institutions registered under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act were eligible for 50 per cent deduction.

Certain conditions have also been imposed. For one, the benefit would be available to those charitable institutions which are already registered under Section 80G which means new institutions set up now would not be eligible for 100 per cent deduction. Secondly, the eligible institutions would have to maintain separate accounts for the Gujarat operations and would have to submit these accounts to the Central Board of Direct Taxes by June 30, 2002. The tax exemption would be eligible on donations collected till September 30, 2001 and the institutions would have to spend the money in Gujarat by March 31, 2002.

The Cabinet also decided to extend Section 35AC reliefs available under the IT Act to persons intending to take up relief and rehabilitation work in Gujarat. On customs and excise, the Cabinet decided that all material including construction material imported for relief and reconstruction in Gujarat would be exempted from import duties and all indigenous material such as cement, steel blankets and tents for relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat would be exempt from excise duty.

## Rehabilitation, main concern: PM

By Our Special Correspondent

**CHENNAI, FEB. 1.** The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, today said the Centre's Government's primary concern now was to undertake rehabilitation work on a war-footing in Gujarat.

"We have already announced a substantial financial assistance. If necessary, we will give some more money. Money will be no problem. But, the rehabilitation work will take a long time. We have to be there solidly behind the people of Gujarat during such difficult times," the Prime Minister told presspersons at the Chennai airport before returning to Delhi.

Pointing out that the despatch of relief supplies began 24 hours after the earthquake, the Prime Minister said, "There is no dearth of relief materials. We are disbursing materials which have been received from all over the country, and all the States are cooperating. And we are grateful to the foreign countries also."

To a query on whether the Union Budget would be harsh, Mr. Vajpayee shot back, "You ask the Finance Minister. Only he can tell."

When a reporter sought his views on the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan's comments on the review of the Constitution, he said, "As Prime Minister, I have nothing to say."

Earlier, the Union Law Minister, Mr. Arun Jaitley, the State BJP general-secretary, Mr. L. Ganesan, and the MDMK general-secretary, Mr. Vaiko, called on the Prime Minister at the Raj Bhavan.



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, talking to mediapersons at the Chennai airport on Thursday. — Photo: K. Gajendran

THE HINDU

2 FEB 2001

# Bhuj victims vent fury on Collector

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BHUJ, Feb. 6. — Earthquake victims, resenting tardy and inadequate relief distribution, today reportedly gheraoed the Bhuj Collector. The Gujarat government, meanwhile, announced an authority will be set up for reconstruction and rehabilitation, and that "relief cards" would be introduced tomorrow.

The BJP today scotched speculation that it would replace the Gujarat chief minister, Mr Keshubhai Patel, for his government's alleged failure in handling relief and rehabilitation.

"The question doesn't arise," Mr Bangaru Laxman said in Ahmedabad.

According to eyewitnesses in Bhuj, slogan-shouting protesters, mostly villagers, gathered in front of the collectorate and later gheraoed the collector, Mr Anil Mukhim, who took over from Mr Kamal Dayani a few days ago. Mr Mukhim denied

that he was gheraoed.

The Collector had a tough time explaining the tardy pace of relief distribution despite having sufficient relief material. Later he told reporters that the administration was trying to streamline the distribution.

Mr Mukhim admitted he was witnessing angry protests almost daily.

Faced with bitter criticism,

## ■ More reports on page 8

the state Cabinet today decided to set up an earthquake management authority, headed by the chief minister, to monitor relief, rehabilitation and rebuilding. It said the relief card scheme aims at streamlining distribution of rations, clothes and cash relief.

The government has also deferred presentation of the 2001-02 Budget and, instead, decided to take a vote-on-account for a few months.

The state Cabinet resolved to

create a department of earthquake relief, which will be attached with the general administration department.

It will be headed by a secretary-level official, Mr Keshubhai Patel said.

He said each of the 16 affected talukas in Kutch would be considered an administrative unit, and an additional collector and an additional development officer will oversee the relief and reconstruction in each of them.

The Cabinet also cleared a proposal for an increase in the payment of cash relief and assistance for the purchase of household items.

The state home minister, Mr Haren Pandya, said the government would soon announce a housing policy for the victims.

The Bhuj administration today said law-breakers would be dealt with sternly. Besides local police, RAF, CRPF and BSF are keeping vigil, said the SP, Mr Vivek Srivastava.

THE STATESMAN

- 7 FEB 2001

# Ackerman hopes US will send \$100m for Gujarat

## To begin talks with other Congressmen to boost aid for quake-hit region

BY ASHISH KUMAR SEN

San Francisco, Feb. 1: New York Democrat Congressman Gary Ackerman said on Wednesday, that he would be initiating consultations with his colleagues for a legislative bid to boost US aid for funding reconstruction of Gujarat to \$100 million.

"I am going to explore the possibilities of assisting India with emergency financial aid to the tune of \$100 million for the reconstruction of Gujarat. I will begin consultations with my colleagues to see how this could be accomplished," said Mr Ackerman. He is a member of the House International Relations Committee and a former co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans.

The US has so far pledged \$5 million for relief efforts in quake-ravaged state.

The House of Representatives voted 406-1 on Wednesday to pass a resolution expressing sympathy for the victims of the devastating earthquake and support

for aid efforts.

Texas Republican Congressman Ron Paul voted against the legislation. Twenty-six members did not vote.

Congressmen Ed Royce, Danny Davis and Jim McDermott had introduced the resolution in the House on Tuesday.

Senators Sam Brownback and Robert Torricelli have introduced a similar resolution in the Senate. The Senate will soon take up this resolution.

"It is with a heavy heart that my colleagues and I have introduced this bill," said Mr McDermott, co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans. "The physical destruction in Gujarat will not be erased for many years, and the psychological scars may never be eliminated. It is in this time of tragedy that we must stand by our friend India, and the Indian people and offer all we can to aid their efforts."

Congressman Ed Royce, the other co-chairman of the India Caucus, said, "The

rebuilding of Gujarat is a daunting challenge. Economic damage may top \$5 billion; and while India enjoys a growing economy — US-India commerce is growing — India is still very much a developing country that can ill afford this damage, especially to Gujarat, an economic powerhouse."

Leading Democrats on the floor of the House during a discussion on the earthquake, Mr Ackerman asserted that the "destruction was on a staggering scale," adding: "Mere numbers cannot capture the extent of the devastation, nor the horror at the loss of life and loved ones."

"The full extent of the January 26 earthquake's damage is as yet unknown, but the numbers of dead are in the tens of thousands, the number of injured in the hundreds of thousands and the number of displaced is over half a million. The estimate of property damage now tops \$5 billion," he said.

Gathering foreign aid or initiating any

project using taxpayer money is a complex legislative process that involves subcommittees and committees often with competing jurisdictions. Although there is a lot of interest to do something for those affected by the quake, the complex nature of the legislation and the politics involved, added to the fact that both the House and the Senate need to approve the legislation, makes the whole process a lot more daunting.

Though the resolution was authored by Congressmen Jim McDermott and Ed Royce, the former is not a member of the international foreign relations committee and the latter a comparatively junior legislator whose jurisdiction is Africa.

It was under these circumstances that Wednesday's debate in the House fell to two stalwarts — Congressmen Gary Ackerman and Henry Hyde. Mr Hyde, representative from Illinois, chairs the powerful international relations committee.

The two co-chairmen of the Congress-

sional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, Mr Royce and Mr McDermott, had, for a change, a minor role to play.

Of the 25 speakers who participated in the debate, the Democrats were represented by Gary Ackerman (New York), Frank Pallone (New Jersey), Caroline Kilpatrick (Michigan), Sheila Jackson (Texas), Hilda Solis (California), delegate Dona Christ-ian-Christensen (Virgin Islands), Janice Schakowsky (Illinois), Lois Capps (California), Bob Menendez (New Jersey), Danny Davis (Illinois), J. Inslee (Washington State), Rush Holt (New Jersey), Joe Crowley (New York) and Mr Jim McDermott (Washington State).

Republican speakers included Henry Hyde (Illinois), Joe Knollenberg (Michigan), Connie Morella (Maryland), Ron Paul (Texas), Mark Foley (Florida), Nick Smith (Michigan), Doug Ose (California), Mike Ferguson (New Jersey), Benjamin Gilman (New York) and Ed Royce (California).

110-14  
2/2

## U.K. team to stay in Gujarat for two more months

9-87  
Gujarat

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 1.** The United Kingdom's Department for International Development has said its team will stay in the quake-hit Gujarat for at least two months to help in the reconstruction process.

Dr. Mukesh Kapila, who heads the humanitarian aid programme, today went to Bhuj to assess the relief efforts (by the U.K.). By the end of his visit, the department would have determined how to turn its financial commitment into practical help, he said. The DFID has so far committed Rs. 70 crores (£10 million) for emergency relief.

Meanwhile, donations continued to pour in for the victims. Fortythree police officers from 23 developing countries who are undergoing training at the National Crime Records Bureau under the Home Ministry have decided to donate part of their scholarship, while the officers and staff there have already contributed one-day's salary. The Container Corporation of India has also donated Rs. 1 crore and Nortel Networks \$1 lakh.

The Hindustan Zinc Limited has donated tents, and diesel generators and sent a loader-cum-excavator and a crane.

The Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gases, Mr. Santosh Kumar Gangwar, has contributed one month's salary

and decided to allocate Rs. 10 lakhs from the MP's Local Area Development Scheme.

The Union Textile Minister, Mr. Kashiram Rana, at a meeting of industry representatives, here today, appealed for generous contributions.

The Ministry has also decided to synergise the various welfare schemes to ensure that the handloom and handicraft industry in the quake-affected areas gets on its feet at the earliest.

### Prince of Wales expresses concern

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 1.** The Prince of Wales, in a message to the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, conveyed his shock and concern over the suffering caused by the Gujarat earthquake, and said: "I was horrified to learn of yet another natural disaster in India — in the form of the terrible earthquake in Gujarat, and to hear of the appalling loss of life and destruction which it has caused. My heart goes out to the people of India at this most difficult of times and, above all, to those who are suffering, to those who have lost their homes and to the families and friends of those who have died. My prayers and deepest sympathy are with you and with everyone affected by this appalling tragedy."

THE HINDU

2 FEB 2001

# Hopes of finding survivors fading fast

## Focus now on how to prevent epidemic

Rathin Das  
Ahmedabad, January 31

MOST OF earthquake-ravaged Gujarat has begun to resemble a besieged fortress, with people outside wanting to get in and people inside wanting to get out. The hordes of relief workers coming in are matched by tremulous survivors of Friday's devastation, particularly in places such as Bhuj, wanting to leave town.

The death toll today officially crossed the 25,000 mark. But cases of people miraculously rescued from life-threatening captivity under the debris are getting fewer

and farther between. Time is clearly running out for the thousands - some say lakhs - who were entombed in mountains of concrete when the nightmare began five days ago.

"We have virtually called off the rescue operations and are concentrating with utmost precautions on removing the debris and carrying out disinfection to prevent the outbreak

of epidemic due to decomposition of trapped bodies," rescue secretary S K Nanda told reporters.

Nanda said a massive operation to remove debris and disinfecting the areas affected by Friday's earthquake has begun.

Amidst all the death and destruction is the paradox of relief - in the form of manpower, material and equipment - being at hand but not trickling down to the needy. Relief supplies are piling up at distribution centres because of a woeful shortage of trucks and local drivers, many of who have fled the area altogether and are scared to return amid rumours of fresh quakes.

Nothing sums up the weak links in the relief supply chain better than the fact that material that accompanied Prime Minister Vajpayee to Ahmedabad last Monday lay unloaded for 12 hours after Gajaraj, the IAF transport aircraft that ferried it, had touched down.

A lack of coordination is threatening to hamper the entire operation, with distribution still a major problem. International and Indian NGOs have been complaining about the civil administration's painfully slow reaction to any effort.

Patrick Fuller, information delegate for the International

Federation of the Red Cross, which has launched an appeal for 15 million dollars, said five planes a day were arriving at the airport in the worst-affected district of Bhuj. "It takes a long time to clear stuff through the airport, as there is no lifting equipment and we don't have enough volunteers to simply shift everything by hand," AFP today quoted

Fuller as saying.

The Army too has been less than satisfied with the local administration's ability to come to grips with the situation. Reports of low-intensity squabbles, such as one over the right kind of equipment and backup for the rescue operations, are increasing.

Reacting to the rescue teams' complaints about the administration's lack of cooperation, a senior bureaucrat said the Army personnel are supposed to bring their own equipment. The Army could have brought the equipment from their Armoured or Engineering divisions, he added.

More reports, pics on Pages 11 & 15

### On Day 5

- Another planeload of relief lands from Pakistan.
- Gujarat gov't confirms death toll at least 25,000
- Tremors continue, the biggest 4.7 on the Richter.
- Death of 755 people in Gandhidham alone confirmed.
- 30 per cent of debris in Anjar and Rapar cleared.
- Gujarat Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Fund formed to construct of 2 crore sqm of housing in one year.
- Damage officially assessed at Rs 10,000 crores.



PROBLEM OF PLENTY? Clothes brought to Kutch for quake victims await takers near the Bhuj-Ahmedabad highway. Photo: Manish Swarup

## Yeoman service by Latur orphans

Soni Sangwan  
Bhachau, January 31

IT WAS yesterday once more for the orphans of the Latur earthquake disaster of 1993. Only this time around, they are exorcising the ghosts of their past by plunging headlong into rescue and relief work at another quake-struck township, in another time, in another place.

The nightmare of personal tragedy came cascading back to 20-year-old Vittal Partani, as he saw body after body being dragged out from rubble in Bhachau. Only this time, the numbing fear has been replaced by a steely motivation to save human life.

Vittal says that it takes one victim to understand the pain of another. "I saw 150 persons, including those closest to me, perish in my village on that horrible morning of September 30, 1993. I'll do my damnest to try and save life. It's precious," the youngster says with the spirit of a missionary.

He's one of the volunteers of the Bharatiya

Jan Sangathan (BJS), which had adopted several Latur orphans in 1993. It now runs a school for them at Pune. "At Latur, I was helpless. This is my way of remembering my parents who were crushed by tonnes of concrete. This is what I would have liked to do for them," says Vittal, battling the demons in his mind.

By his side was Atma Ram Joharti, a rescuer with similar resolve, straining his senses to detect any sign of life under the cruel pile of rubble. "I was injured at Latur. After two months in hospital, I was told that my entire family was dead. It was lonely. It shouldn't happen to anyone else," the strapping 18-year-old pleads.

Life has moved on since Latur, as Mool Neelkanth, another one from the group, would tell you. He shall be appearing for his BA Final examinations later this year. But Latur is still a vivid nightmare. And lending a helping hand now is almost therapeutic.

"When the children heard about this earthquake, all of them wanted to come here and

help," says Ashok Pawar, who's supervising these boys. "But we permitted only the senior volunteers to help out at Bhachau," he informs.

These youths, some of them still children, have their task cut out. "We're going to feed the victims in a 50-km radius for 45 days. The boys will be in charge of one sector, besides helping out in rescue efforts. While we take care of their food, the earthquake victims here can start rebuilding their homes and their lives," says Shantilal Mutha, national president of the Sangathan.

And even as feeding the panic-stricken populace is its immediate concern, the Sangathan eventually intends replicating its Latur deed by adopting a large number of children orphaned in the Gujarat calamity and rebuilding their lives.

"We want to ensure a good future for those children whose lives have been ruined by the earthquake," declares Babu Bhai of the BJP's Khapoli unit. Like his children, he too wants to lend a helping hand.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 FEB 2001

# Hopes of finding survivors recede

By Manas Dasgupta

**AHMEDABAD, JAN. 31.** The death toll in Friday's earthquake in Gujarat was today officially confirmed at over 25,000, even while uncleared debris lay in heaps in large parts of Bhuj town, district headquarters of Kutch. In Anjar, Rapar and other towns only 30 per cent debris has been cleared.

(According to PTI, with signs of life almost non-existent under the rubble, the Government virtually called off rescue operations and directed the authorities to protect the property of victims amidst reports of looting in some areas. The Rescue Secretary, Mr. S.K. Nanda, said, "We have virtually called off rescue operations and are concentrating on relief and rehabilitation and steps to prevent the outbreak of an epidemic." Caution was, however,

ings and dumped at various places. The Minister of State for Home, Mr. Haren Pandya, and the Principal Adviser to the Chief Minister, Mr. P.K. Lehri, denied a report in a section of the press that the Army had cordoned off Anjar town.

## Kandla as bad as Bhuj

For the first time after the tragedy, the State Government admitted

that the Kandla-Gandhidham parts of Kutch were as badly affected as Bhuj and other towns. The casualties based on body count are already 758 in Gandhidham, while debris was still to be cleared in at least 20 other sites.

While the toll in other parts, excluding Kutch, was placed at 1,500, half of it in Ahmedabad city alone, in the border district it was

likely to be over 24,000.

This, Mr. Lehri claimed, was based on body count and the information received on missing persons on the assumption that the total loss of lives could be about five per cent of the six-lakh population of the district.

Denying that Bhachau town had been "completely wiped out" as reported in a section of the press, Mr. Lehri said though the damage to property was heavy in many villages, the human casualty would not be very high in rural Kutch as most people were believed to have rushed out of constructed structures or were living in low-rise houses. Mr. Lehri said the total financial loss had been estimated at about Rs. 10,000 crores — private property (Rs. 6,000 crores), public property (Rs. 1,000 crores), trade and industry (Rs. 2,000 crores) and damage to utilities such as power and water (Rs. 500 crores each).

Mr. Pandya said the Ahmedabad Collector had seized the files and records of all buildings which had collapsed and of those found unsafe. Samples of the construction material were also being collected from many sites to ascertain whether the cause of collapse were faulty construction and inferior quality materials.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Keshubhai Patel, left for Bhuj by road via Radhanpur to personally supervise the rescue and relief work. Mr. Pandya said Mr. Patel would be camping in Bhuj as long as required. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, too, would be in Bhuj for a couple of days.

## Second plane from Pak.

While another relief plane from Pakistan landed at the Ahmedabad airport, second in the last two days, foreign aid had been received from 23 countries. Mr. Pandya said the Chief Minister had written to both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for an assistance of at least \$1 billion, of which 70 per cent would be loan.

grant. The Union Human Resource Development Ministry also sanctioned a Rs. 150-crore grant for repairs and reconstruction of school buildings.

## Aftershocks persist

Meanwhile, most parts of the State continued to suffer aftershocks. Almost all those living un-

## Cabinet to discuss quake today

**NEW DELHI, JAN. 31.** The Union Cabinet will meet tomorrow to discuss the situation in quake-hit Gujarat. The meeting will be held after the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, returns from Chennai, a PMO spokesman said today.

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment, which was postponed on Tuesday, is also scheduled to be held tomorrow. — PTI

der constructed structures rushed out this afternoon when they felt the tremors. Meteorological department sources confirmed that out of the 10 aftershocks since midnight, the one at 3.12 p.m. was the strongest measuring 4.7 on the Richter scale. Incidentally, six of the 10 tremors today were above four on the Richter scale, causing concern to the authorities.

More reports, pictures on Pages 11, 13, 14, 15

## Fernandes defends estimate

**BANGALORE, JAN. 31.** The Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, today defended his estimate that the toll in the killer quake in Gujarat might be more than 1,00,000. Mr. Fernandes, who was on a brief visit to the city, told a television channel that he was sure of his estimate since he had travelled widely in the quake-ravaged parts.

He, later, left for Bhuj to supervise the relief operations being handled by the defence forces. — UNI

being exercised in clearing the rubble in view of occasional reports of finding survivors.)

A "curfew-like" situation prevailed in most parts of Kutch district with Army and Border Security Force personnel told to "deal sternly with" and prevent undesirable persons from looting valuables and other household recovered from collapsed build-



Villagers who fled the quake-stricken areas, hoping to go someplace, camp at the Ahmedabad railway station on Wednesday. — Reuters

THE HINDU

1 FEB 2001



# Threat of epidemics looms large in quake-hit areas

## Diarrhoea has spread in Anjar, Bhuj; Fresh tremors keep people on their feet all day

By Radha Sharma  
The Times of India News Service

AHMEDABAD: Death could be rearing its ugly head again, this time from under the debris of collapsed structures.

Six days after tragedy struck, the stench is becoming unbearable and the threat of an epidemic is staring the state in the face. A non-existent sanitation system makes the state a virtual sitting duck for diseases. Medical teams apprehend an outbreak of diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid, gastroenteritis, hepatitis and tetanus, which could be a double-blow to the survivors of this worst-ever earthquake. Medical teams, environmentalists and journalists—all returning from the quake-ravaged sites—are talking about the destruction, the bodies that are strewn all over and the foul smell prevalent in these areas. Even as relief teams—wearing masks to combat the stench—continue to pull out the dead, there seems to be no end to the problems encountered.

"Invisible under the rubble, thousands of bodies are fast decomposing, with maggots and soil bacteria feasting on them. An outbreak of diarrhoea should not come as a surprise," warns preventive social medicine expert Dr Jitendra Adhia, who is just back from an extensive tour of Bhuj, Anjar and Bhachau.

A doctor attached to an NGO network in Anjar said that diarrhoea had already spread in Anjar and Bhuj. Some say that there is no serious threat as the bodies are being disposed immediately after being retrieved, but others disagree.

Environmental consultant Arunop Roy, who was on a damage-assessment visit to Kutch, says, "In the mess all around, who is paying attention as to whether or not the bodies are burning completely? I personally witnessed half-burnt bodies strewn all around, being feasted upon by dogs and vultures."

With virtually no sanitation network left in Kutch, most people are defecating

out in the open, aggravating fears of large-scale fecoral infestations like cholera, typhoid and dysentery.

"The breakdown of the sanitation network in Kutch is total. What is worse, people do not have water with which to wash their hands after answering nature's call. In such a situation, infections are bound to occur," says Dr Adhia. So grave is the threat that the Nav Nirman Abhiyan, a 14-member forum of NGOs carrying out relief operations in Kutch, issued

a warning in this regard on Wednesday. "Our volunteers in Kutch are urging residents to use water or tissue paper," said Gagan Sethi, an Abhiyan member.

Large-scale surgeries being performed in make-shift medical centres are also causing concern. "No one is bothered about maintaining sterile conditions during surgery. It's natural, given the sheer numbers of such operations. But it sure is an open invitation to tetanus," warns a senior government orthopaedic surgeon.

Rumours of an outbreak of plague in Kutch have already spread like wildfire, resulting in an exodus of people from the district to 'safer' areas like Radhanpur, Mehsana and Palanpur in north-Gujarat. "The rumour is absolutely false and baseless, and is unnecessarily creating a scare. There is no threat of plague," asserted Dr Vijay Bhatia, secretary of the Indian Medical Association. Meanwhile, the nightmare for quake-stricken residents of the state continued, with people rushing out onto the streets all day long after experiencing fresh tremors.

From 2 a.m. on Tuesday, the region experienced nine more tremors of sizeable intensity ranging from between 3.7 to 4.7 on the Richter Scale, forcing residents in Ahmedabad, Rajkot and even Surat to stay away from their houses and offices. The biggest tremor on Wednesday was felt at about 3.12 p.m. in Surat, bringing to a halt rescue and relief work with security personnel and other people running for cover.

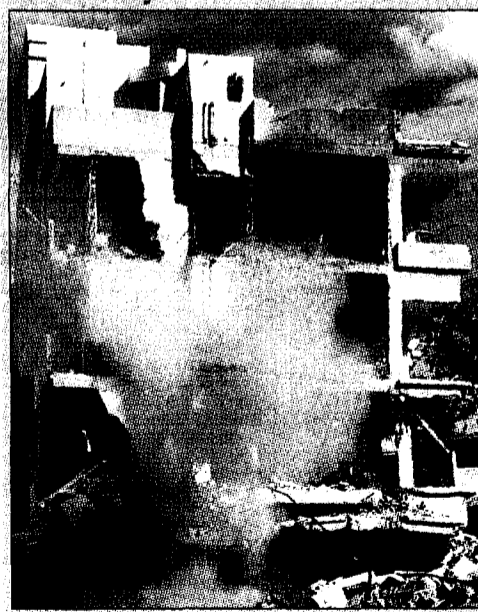
► More quake reports, photographs on Pages 7 & 11  
► See Edit: Dealing with Disaster, Page 12

### BRINGING THE HOUSE DOWN



Using a controlled explosion, the army razes an earthquake-damaged building in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

Kalpit Bhachech



THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 FEB 2001

## Minister links Gujarat...

tragedy in Kerala last year, a charge he had denied, said he also did not want to give room for anyone to draw political mileage and incite people.

John declined to say whether he quit on his own volition or was asked by Krishna to do so, but sources said that the Chief Minister and his senior ministerial colleagues convinced him that his continuance as a Minister had become untenable.

As BJP reacted angrily, demanding sacking of the Minister and threatening to hold a state-wide protest, Krishna and his se-

nior ministers watched video footage of a television channel containing John's controversial remarks made at a function organised by a Christian organisation here on Tuesday.

Earlier, after attacking John at a news conference, demanding his arrest for allegedly 'promoting ill-will between two communities', Bharatiya Janata Party leaders went in a delegation and met Krishna, who assured them that he would seek an explanation from the Minister regarding the context in which he made the remarks.

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 FEB 2001

## Minister links Gujarat quake to attack on Christians, quits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BANGALORE, JANUARY 31

KARNATAKA Minister T John resigned today in the wake of a controversy over his remarks linking the Gujarat earthquake to attacks on Christians in that state embarrassing the S M Krishna-led Congress government.

John, in charge of the Infrastructure and Civil Aviation department, quit after a long meeting with Krishna and his senior ministerial colleagues, as the issue threatened to snowball into a major political row and his continuance appeared untenable.

John, whose remarks that the earthquake was "God's way of reacting to attacks on Christians" put him in the dock, announced his decision to reporters saying "I have resigned to avoid embarrassment to Krishna and his government and to the Congress, which believes in secular principles."

The Minister, who was embroiled in a controversy when his name was linked with the hooch

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 FEB 2001

RUMOUR-MONGERS HAVE A FIELD DAY

# Quake damage put at over Rs. 25,000 cr.

9 87 (20) not  
40-1 31 |  
By Manas Dasgupta

**AHMEDABAD, JAN. 30.** Authorities in the quake-hit areas of Gujarat are hoping the worst is over but are still assessing the situation closely before giving an all-clear signal.

The State has been hit by 10 more tremors since midnight last night, one of them, which struck at 5.25 a.m., measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale.

But the Government is not prepared to take chances right now. The Minister of State for Home, Mr. Haren Pandya, said "we are closely monitoring the situation. The experts have told us the worst may be over." It would be some more time before the Government was able to persuade people to return to their homes.

The Government has also to fight rumour mills and the prophets of doom quoted by some cable television networks as predicting yet another disastrous shock in the coming days or even months. The panic among the residents of Ahmedabad and other places is so acute that five days after the tragedy most of the structures with roofs are still empty. Shamiana dealers are doing brisk business with tents put up in almost all residential colonies.

All steps were being taken to counter the rumour-mongers and instruct the cable television networks to stop sensationalising things. "They must instead help to restore normality in the affected areas, particularly Ahmedabad, where life has come to a total standstill," the Minister said.

Mr. Pandya said the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes'

statement about the toll crossing the one lakh-mark "may be his personal assessment after visiting Kutch and other affected areas." The State Government stuck to its assessment of 20,000-plus casualties, based on the actual body-count, which so far was 6,566 and the estimates of the people still feared trapped under debris.

While the State authorities are yet to reach an assessment on the likely loss of property, the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry claimed that the damages to the private and public property would be not less than Rs. 25,000 crores besides a daily production loss of about Rs. 450 crores to trade and commerce. The damage to property in Ahmedabad alone has been estimated at Rs. 10,000 crores.

While the toll in Ahmedabad was put at 739 with at least 20 more bodies feared still trapped, the fire brigade rescued a 25-year-old woman, Naliniben Kumbhar, and her two-year-old son, Keyur, five days after the tragedy, from under the rubble of the four-storeyed Mangalam apartments in the Maninagar area. Of the 171 affected buildings, 68 had almost collapsed and the authorities decided to pull down at least 23 buildings said to be unsafe.

## We must share the burden, says PM

By Our Special Correspondent

**LUCKNOW JAN. 30.** The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said the country must be

prepared to share the financial burden brought on by the quake. The aid coming from abroad was in the form of loans which had to be repaid with due interest.

Mr. Vajpayee said he had made an aerial survey of the affected areas and also undertaken a tour by road to come to grips with the magnitude of the disaster.

He refused to give an estimate of the casualties, saying several people were still trapped under the debris. On Mr. George Fernandes' remarks that over one lakh persons had perished, the Prime Minister termed it the Defence Minister's "personal assessment".

Gas-cutters and electric saws needed to cut through the concrete were being procured from abroad, he said, adding blankets were urgently needed in the affected areas. Relief material from all over the country and abroad was pouring in, he said. "We are grateful for this splendid response."

He felt that apart from ascertaining the number of bodies, a list of orphans and missing persons must be prepared, and hoped every single casualty would be accounted for.

The Prime Minister also said an all-party meeting had been convened for February 3 in New Delhi to discuss rehabilitation measures. The Crisis Management Group, headed by the Cabinet Secretary, was meeting twice daily. State-level committees needed to be formed to cope with such disasters, he said.



An aerial view of the earthquake-devastated centre of Bachau town, 70 km east of Bhuj. — AP

THE HINDU

31 JAN 2001

# Nation digs deep into its soul for Gujarat

HT Correspondent

New Delhi, January 30. HT/1 3/11

ON THE fourth day after the earthquake, relief workers in Gujarat continued to extricate corpses from the state's concrete graveyards. But elsewhere, India was digging deep into its soul. It has come up with both relief supplies and hope. Supplies are pouring into devastated Gujarat. Nearby Maharashtra has opened up its hospitals in Mumbai and Pune. Political parties have cast their cynicism aside and are rushing supplies to Gujarat.

The ruling Nationalist Congress Party sent off two truckloads of medicines, blankets, food and other essentials on Monday. Accompanying the relief were doctors and nurses. The NCP's rival in Maharashtra, the BJP, has begun its relief effort by organising blood donation camps and helping co-ordinate other relief measures.

## Accept taxes willingly, says PM

PRIME MINISTER Vajpayee said in Lucknow on Tuesday that the Gujarat earthquake had cast a shadow over the Union Budget. The quake-triggered economic setback has been colossal, he said, adding: "I'm sure people will willingly accept the new taxes as they are fully aware of the fact that the burden is not because of wrong policies of the government". An all-party meeting has been convened in Delhi on February 3 to deal with the Gujarat situation. **HTC, Lucknow**

And in Chennai, the state assembly passed a special resolution whereby MLAs would donate a month's salary towards Gujarat's rehabilitation.

But it isn't just political parties who have come forward to stand by Gujarat. Tamil Nadu MLAs were following the example of state government employees who decided to contribute a day's wages. Government employees in Rajasthan have done the same.

And political parties have directed their workers to make personal contributions to the relief kitty, before going

out to solicit donations.

Wealthy industrial houses have also come forward. Dhirubhai Ambani, patriarch of the Reliance group of industries, has contributed Rs 5 crore to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. And workers at TISCO have donated a day's wages totaling Rs 3 crore. Tata Steel has also rushed supplies of blood and blankets to Bhuj.

The Industrial Development Bank of India has pledged another Rs 5 crore: Rs 1 crore towards the Prime Minister's relief fund, and the rest towards the

construction of homes and hospitals.

At the badly hit Kandla port, the Navy has converted its ships, the INS Nirdeshak and the INS Jamuna, into floating hospitals, and rushed medical teams to Jamnagar and Bhuj.

While several agencies work towards treating Gujarat's sick and wounded, the Punjab government has decided to provide victims cooked food. Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal has offered to have meals for one lakh people every airlifted to Gujarat.

The meals would be cooked at the Golden temple in Amritsar.

The LIC has also reacted to the tragedy in a very humane way. Apart from setting up relief camps, it has also made settlement of claims a simpler affair. It will accept death certificates issued by any local authority, in case municipal certificates are not available.

(With inputs from Mumbai, Chennai, Jaipur and Chandigarh)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 JAN 01

# Relief pours in as nations hike aid

40-14  
31/1  
By Our Special Correspondent *Mujar*

**NEW DELHI, JAN. 30.** Quake relief donations from abroad and within the country continued to pour in today with the British, German and Australian Governments raising the financial assistance in view of the severity of the disaster. Ministers and Members of Parliament also announced donations while public sector companies like the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) pitched in as well.

The British Government has increased its allocation to Rs. 70 crores (10 million pounds). It has also arranged to fly out three aircraft with tents and other shelter items from the Department for International Development. A fourth aircraft carrying trauma equipment and plastic sheeting has also been despatched.

Germany has made a commitment of Rs. 27 crores, including funds for a Red Cross mobile hospital in Bhuj, water purifying installations and housing

announced donation of one month's salary and Rs. 10 lakhs allocation from the MP Local Area Development (MPLAD) fund. These include the Urban Development Minister, Mr. Jagmohan, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, Minister of State for Petroleum, Mr. E. Ponnuswamy, and the Rajya Sabha member, Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad. In addition, Mr. Jagmohan announced a contribution of Rs. 25,000 from the trust constituted from the royalties of his old books.

The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Ms. Najma Heptullah, has donated Rs. 1 crore out of her MPLAD fund. She has also written to the Government to suitably amend the guidelines for the MPLAD Fund which restrict MPs from allocating the funds only in their respective constituencies. The VSNL has announced a donation of Rs. 10 crores to the PM's Relief Fund while the oil sector PSUs will be contributing Rs. 40 crores.

THE HINDU

31 JAN 2001

# Pak relief plane lands amid debris

Our Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI 30 JANUARY

**T**HE FIRST Pakistani relief aircraft, a military C-130 plane, arrived in Ahmedabad on Tuesday with relief material for the Gujarat quake victims. Pakistani officials here said two more aircraft would be despatched over the next couple of days with more material.

But an unforeseen problem has arisen as the world rushes aid into Gujarat. The relief plane loads from overseas are running into a traffic jam over Gujarat's skies. Large cargo aircraft like Boeing 747s carrying 100 tonnes of material cannot land in Bhuj, a tiny airport without any capacity for quick or efficient off-loading.

Ahmedabad airport is itself not much bigger, with rough estimates holding that the airport may be clogged for three hours flat out if such aircraft landed there.

A large number of such cargo aircraft are therefore landing in Delhi and Mumbai and the materi-



**BURY THE HATCHET: A Pakistani air force plane unloads blankets and tents at the Ahmedabad airport on Tuesday. — AFP**

als are then being transported by road, rail or air in smaller batches. This is adding to the time-lag of getting relief to the quake victims, which in the current situation is frustrating, officials said, since

time is of vital importance.

Pakistan despatched a plane load of tents and blankets for India's earthquake victims on Tuesday, following a day of needless crossed wires over whether

New Delhi would accept help from its enemy. A Pakistani military transport C-130 aircraft took off from Islamabad airport at 9:24 a.m., headed for Ahmedabad.

Pakistani officials were quoted as saying that Pakistan had sent 200 tents and 2,500 blankets in the aircraft and would send three similar consignments over the next two days.

Seven cargo planes were due to land in Bhuj throughout the day. These included two planes with water equipment from the German Red Cross and a Finnish Red Cross flight carrying a 350-bed field hospital. Britain is sending out four more planes carrying about 1,200 tents and emergency relief equipment.

Announcing that Britain would increase its aid for the earthquake victims to £10 million, international development minister Clare Short said blankets, shelter and food would be priority items flown to India in four more plane loads.

*The Economic Times*

31 JAN 2001



TREMORS CONTINUE TRIGGERING PANIC AND EXODUS ✓

# PM grants Rs. 500 cr.; toll 30,000

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, JAN. 29. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today admitted that the Gujarat Government had been initially "slow" to react to Friday's quake and said the Centre would set up a permanent National Disaster Management Cell to rush assistance in such a situation.

(A PTI report quoted officials as saying the toll could go beyond 30,000 and that it could be over 20,000 in Bhuj alone. Following fresh tremors in Ahmedabad and the continuing shocks in the Kutch region, including Bhuj, panic-stricken residents began migrating to safer places amid fears of an outbreak of epidemics what with decomposed bodies lying under the debris.)

Talking to mediapersons here after a visit to some of the affected areas in Kutch district and Ahmedabad city this evening, Mr. Vajpayee said he had never seen a "natural disaster of such fury" and assured all necessary assistance to the State Government. It

was not necessary to formally declare the quake a "national calamity" but the Centre was "treating" it as one.

## No curbs on foreign aid

Describing the quake as "one of the worst natural calamities in the country and the world," Mr. Vajpayee said the Centre had decided to remove all restrictions on accepting foreign technology and assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas.

Announcing an immediate assistance of Rs. 500 crores from the National Calamity Fund, which he said was only initial help and that more would be coming as and when required, and another Rs. 20 crores from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, Mr. Vajpayee said the Centre had approached the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for a soft loan of about Rs. 6,500 crores. In addition, the Finance Ministry was taking several steps to provide resources to meet the calamity including relaxation of the cap on the State Government's ways and

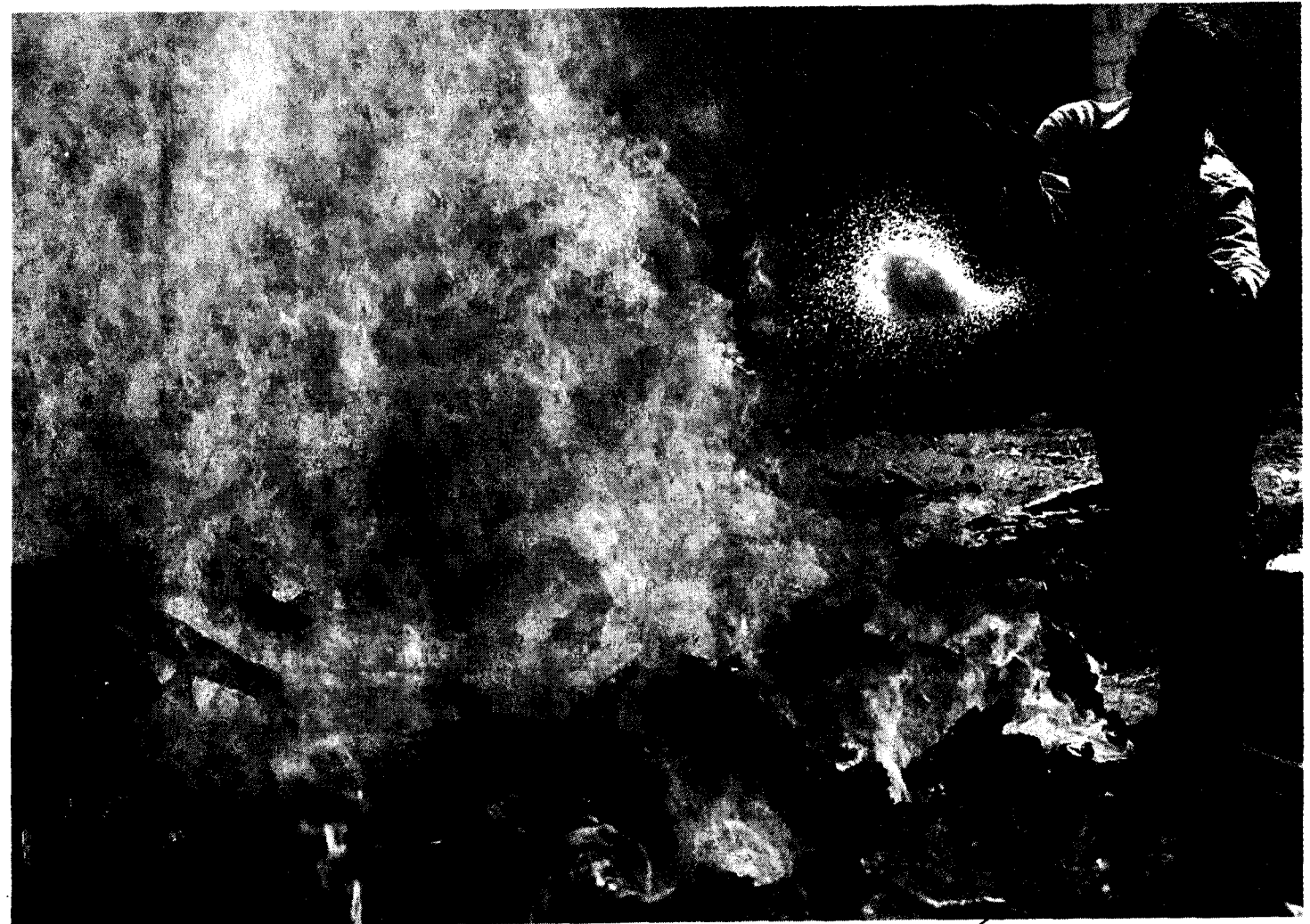
means account with the Reserve Bank, while aid from many national and international sources was pouring in.

The Prime Minister, who was to undertake an aerial survey of Bhuj and address a press conference here at 5 p.m. was more than three hours behind schedule because he changed his programme to meet the affected people in the district. Brushing aside security objections that there was no bullet-proof car available, Mr. Vajpayee forced the authorities to land his helicopter at Kandla and went in an ordinary car to Bhuj, about 60 km away, visiting Anjar town and Ratnal and Kukma villages en route. He was accompanied by the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and some central BJP leaders.

Pointing out that during the Orissa cyclone and the quake now the rescue and relief operations faced "practical difficulties" and that the country was "still not equipped and prepared" to meet a calamity of such magnitude, he said it had been decided to set up a permanent National Disaster Management Cell.

The cell, details of which were being worked out, would procure necessary equipment, which this time had to be rushed from foreign countries to detect life under the debris, help to rush rescue and relief materials, and be always prepared to rise to the occasion in such a situation besides keeping a constant vigil.

More reports on Pages, 13, 14, 15



A sorrowful Mukesh Purohit throws a handful of rice onto the funeral pyre of his friend Hemang Amin's family at a cremation ground in Ahmedabad. The entire Amin family consisting of Hemang, his wife Alka and their two children, Ishan and Vishwa, were killed when their four-story Chandrama Apartments collapsed. — AP

## World Bank to provide \$300 m

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 29. The World Bank today offered an immediate assistance of \$ 300 million for emergency rehabilitation work. In the second phase, it will put together a long-term package for a new loan. The announcement was in response to a request today by the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha. The Bank has offered assistance in two phases. First, about \$ 300 million would be available immediately. Second, within six months, the Bank along with the Gujarat Government would put together a longer-term reconstruction and disaster mitigation package for which a new loan would be provided, most likely on concessional terms.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has also expressed readiness to extend all financial and technical assistance within its capability to help Gujarat and the Central Government. As a start, the ADB is ready to deploy a team of disaster management experts to assess the damage and determine an action plan to contain and mitigate the quake's impact.

More reports on Pages, 13, 14, 15

THE HINDU

30 JAN 2001



# PM announces Rs 500-cr quake relief package

Rathin Das  
Ahmedabad, January 29

AFTER a tour of some of the worst-hit areas of earthquake-devastated Gujarat, Prime Minister Vajpayee today announced a preliminary Rs 500 crore relief package for the state.

Mr Vajpayee conceded: "It took time to settle things in terms of the official machinery getting into action, because of the holiday (Republic Day)."

He announced that a national disaster management cell would be set up in Delhi "to take care of national calamities and their relief and rescue measures".

The PM aerially surveyed the worst-hit district of Bhuj. Then, after landing in the port city of Kandla, he drove back for three hours to Bhuj via

the ghost towns of Ratnal, Anjar and Ukma stopping only to talk to villagers on the way. He did it despite misgivings expressed by his Special Protection Group personnel about using non-bullet cars.

In the state capital, residents of Ridhi apartments returned cheques of Rs 1 lakh they had received as compensation for their destroyed houses. They told the PM that they were contributing the money for relief work for the

more needy.

The Prime Minister announced that an Empowered Group of Ministers (EMG) have been constituted to constantly monitor the situation in Gujarat and take speedy steps for proper mobilisation and coordination of relief and rehabilitation activities. The EMG would be headed by Union Home Minister L.K. Advani and would comprise the Ministers of Defence, Finance, Food, Health, Urban Development and Housing.

While describing what he saw as a "national calamity", Mr Vajpayee declined to speculate on a final death toll. "There are a lot of figures going around, I'm not going to comment on that," he said.

Defence Minister George Fernandes had yesterday estimated the death toll at "20,000, probably more."

Officially, the death toll (based on the body count so far) is 6,362, with more than 15,000 injured.

Mr Vajpayee called for cross-party unity to accelerate the relief effort. "We must all set aside political differences and tackle this together. We are trying to speed it (relief work) up," he said.

ON PAGES 11 AND 13

- Tremor in Bangalore
- US Gujarat mount relief offer
- Critical railway link restored

## Relief from Pak

PAKISTAN ON Monday announced it would begin airlifting a large quantity of tents and blankets to Ahmedabad for distribution among earthquake victims after India conveyed its willingness to accept its offer of relief supplies, Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said. Earlier, General Pervez Musharraf said India had declined to accept Islamabad's offer to send relief supplies.

Mubashir Zaidi, Islamabad

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 JAN 2001

# Diplomatic aftershocks, political tremors

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 29. — The Gujarat earthquake has caused diplomatic aftershocks and political tremors. For such occasions are often messy and misunderstandings can happen.

For instance, it was a case of "Thank you, Gen Musharraf, but no thank you." According to the Pakistani military ruler, he had offered blankets and tents for the quake victims but New Delhi asked for sniffer dogs. And when he offered sniffer dogs, India preferred Swiss sniffer dogs.

While Gen Musharraf said he offered help but the response was "unfortunate" and added that "they said they had plenty at home. They thanked us". India said such remarks are "a trifle misleading".

The foreign ministry spokesman said: "No offer of assistance was declined... We are in touch with Pakistan. The Indian High Commission in Islamabad conveyed to the authorities there about the specific requirements that are in consonance with our priorities". He added that there was no

## Pak aid will be accepted: PM

AHMEDABAD, Jan. 29. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today said if Pakistan offered aid for quake-hit Gujarat, India would readily accept it. He was talking to reporters here. — SNS

country-specific demand for relief and India would accept assistance from everywhere.

The Crisis Management Committee spokesman Mr Bhaskar Barua today said India "does not ask anybody for aid" and when questioned about Pakistan, he said the only offer had come from the Aga Khan Foundation. He said the Centre had asked other countries to specify what it is sending and only then would aid be accepted. It is seen as a more diplomatic way of refusing offers of blankets and biscuits.

What India actually needs is medical teams with tents, beds, medicines, ambulances and mobile operating theatres. Also

required are equipment for lifting debris and cutting stone slabs and clothes for survivors. NGOs were welcome to set up large tents. Biscuits, bread and milk powder as well as drinking water pouches were urgently needed, sources said.

## Rules simplified

The Centre today considerably simplified the procedure to enable foreign countries and organisations contribute for quake relief without any hassles, a home ministry spokesman said.

No permission would be required for the receipt of foreign contribution in the PM's Relief Fund, the Chief Minister's Relief Fund or any other fund set up by the state government or any of its departments.

No permission would also be required if the foreign contribution is sent to any government department/agency/local body.

Political parties have also begun drumming up funds for the people of Gujarat. The BJP

■ See AID: page 8

THE STATESMAN

30 JAN 2001

# European Union for aid to rebuild homes

By Sushma Ramachandran

NEW DELHI, JAN. 29. The European Union donors, as part of relief measures for the Gujarat earthquake victims, will seek to provide, in the long term, assistance for rebuilding homes and reviving the economy through small and medium enterprises, besides helping in infrastructural development like bridges and telecom projects. This was stated by the visiting Commissioner for External Relations of the European Union, Mr. Chris Patten, today. In an informal chat with *The Hindu*, he said the need for assistance in these areas was mentioned by the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha during their meeting today.

Mr. Patten said India and the European Union were seeking to resolve a major irritant in bilateral relations by setting up a joint consultative working group on anti-dumping. The group would seek to ensure that the issue of anti-dumping investigations does not poison the cordial bilateral ties between India and the EU. The need for an institutional mechanism to have a dialogue on this issue had been felt for some time. The Indo-EU Joint Commission meeting next month would discuss the issue.

Mr. Patten said anti-dumping investigations do not have the purpose of limiting trade. The aim was to ensure that trade was more open and countries abided by rules. Referring to the spate of disputes between the EU and India on

dumping, he said there was a need for dialogue on a regular basis.

As far as the number of cases concerned, he felt the Indian side had filed more disputes against the EU than the other way round.

Another joint working group on information technology had been set up and it was expected to discuss the specifics of cooperation in this sector at the first meeting to be held here tomorrow. Yet another joint working group of officials and experts is being set up on terrorism.

Earlier, the first Indo-EU Round Table was launched with eminent persons from both sides attending the meeting. The Round Table is co-chaired by former Home Secretary, Mr. N.N. Vohra and Mr. G. Frerichs, President of the European Economic and Social committee.

The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, delivering the opening address, said he had proposed establishment of such a forum when he met Mr. Patten in Brussels in September last. Given its non-governmental nature, the Round Table was expected to go beyond the scope of discussions associated with inter-governmental bodies. Though non-binding, its recommendations would provide direct inputs to both government and European institutions. Among the issues proposed to be taken by the Round Table are trade and globalisation, crime and drug trafficking, envi-

ronment and sustainable development and social and cultural matters.

As long-standing partners, India and the EU had to build upon the past and take forward the spirit of Lisbon where the first-ever EU-India summit was held last year, Mr. Patten said. Mr. Patten also addressed the Indian business community today at a meeting organised by the FICCI where he sought to set at rest misapprehensions about the World Trade Organisation (WTO). "While understandable, I believe they are misconceived."

While clarifying the issue of linking trade with environment and labour standards, he said civil societies were legitimately concerned about these issues.

To avoid legitimate environmental concerns being abused by protectionists, the WTO rule book needs to be clarified on that count. "If things are left as they are, the WTO panels will continue to make decisions affecting the environment. These must remain the prerogative of sovereign governments," he felt.

On labour standards, he said the EU does not envisage negotiating this in a new round, though others would certainly want to do so. He invited India to work with the EU to create a credible alternative to pre-empt protectionism. A multi-institutional dialogue on trade and social development outside a round could be one such option.

THE HINDU

30 JAN 2001

# Enough relief but no coordination

By Kalpana Sharma

BHUJ, JAN. 29. Three days after the massive earthquake that devastated Gujarat, particularly Kutch, there are still villages where no help has reached. One such village is just 5 to 7 km from Bhuj.

Sukhpar has been flattened. You would not know this if you drove past it. But walk through any lane and you see scenes reminiscent of the devastation in Latur, Maharashtra, in 1993. Beautiful old houses, temples, new constructions are now just a pile of rubble, twisted metal, glass shards and personal belongings strewn all over the place.

Even this relatively well-to-do village, with a majority of Patels, is in a state of shock. Families huddle together under bamboo and tarpaulin-covered tents. They have pooled their resources, run a community kitchen and survived three nights in the open. "We have helped ourselves," says Pramilaben. But no one from the Government has yet come to find out what they need. The lone earthmover removing rubble belongs to a private contractor.

Like many other villages in Kutch, Sukhpar has links stretching across the world. Mr. N.V. Budia, a postal worker in England, stands sadly in front of his half-completed house. "I moved to England in 1967 and decided to build a house here so that I could come and go. This earthquake has changed all that."

Not far from his house is a Swami Narayan temple built by the community with contributions from their kin living abroad. Its 100-foot-high tower has been knocked sideways. Adjacent to the temple is a house where the owner ambitiously provided a ramp on which he would drive his brand-new Indica. Now the ramp has collapsed and the car is squashed below a cement slab.

The task of counting the dead and assessing damage to property is virtually impossible, given the spread of the tragedy. The civil administration is seriously strapped because the State continues to be without electricity, water and telephone links.

Open-air collectorate

The collectorate of Bhuj is

working in the open. The Collector conducts meetings on his lawns, surrounded by debris. Ham radio operators are his only way of keeping contact. Teams of volunteers turn up asking what they should do. In the midst of such acute infrastructure problems, there appears to be no central direction coming out of the local administration.

As a result, one lot of volunteers does not know that the other exists, though they could help each other. On January 27, a team of 25 doctors flew in from Delhi with the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes. But having arrived, the faculty from the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences found no one to direct them. They are now operating in a makeshift tent on the Jubilee Maidan in the heart of the city in a camp run by the

RSS. The doctors work without electricity and do what they can to mend limbs and bandage wounds. They face an acute shortage of splints and stretchers.

Their urgent need for at least a temporary operation theatre cannot be fulfilled because there is no electricity and the civil hospital has been destroyed. These specialists say they are doing no more than advanced first-aid as streams of the wounded continue to pour in. Unknown to this team, a group of doctors from Mumbai flew into Bhuj on Sunday, bringing with it a portable generator, tables that could be used for operations, sterilisers and medicines. After a day of trying to find out where they should go, the doctors gave up and returned to Mumbai.

The absence of a central control room to monitor relief measures

is already becoming evident. While it may be too early to judge — as the task of finding the living under the debris is the most urgent — it is clear that a system needs to be established urgently. Ms. Sushma Iyengar, representing a coalition of NGOs working in Bhuj, says the need of the hour is supplies and not more people pouring into Bhuj.

She says the city will collapse if supplies continue to arrive in an unplanned manner and volunteers appear without knowing what to do. Instead of ensuring that food reaches the areas where no help has been given, trucks drive through Bhuj distributing prepared packets of food and sachets of water to whoever happens to be around. This, says Ms. Iyengar, is not a constructive way to help in the present crisis.

THE HINDU

30 JAN 2001

# Shattered Gujarat struggles to cope with widespread chaos

## Vajpayee announces Rs 500 cr central aid for quake relief

The Times of India News Service  
AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI: Ignoring the weatherman's advice not to visit Gujarat in view of the impending aftershocks, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee toured some of the quake-ravaged areas on Monday, accompanied by a high-level ministerial delegation which also included home minister L.K. Advani.

After an aerial survey, Mr Vajpayee announced central assistance of Rs 500 crore. He told journalists that he had already sanctioned Rs 10 crore from the PM's Relief Fund and pledged Rs 20 cr more from the kitty. He also announced that a national disaster management cell would be set up in Delhi to tackle the fallout of natural calamities.

Mr Vajpayee was accompanied by health minister C.P. Thakur, railway minister Mamata Banerjee, senior BJP leader Sahib Singh Verma and army chief S. Padmanabhan.

Three days after the quake flattened many parts of Gujarat, official estimates put the toll at 20,000, although most private and state agencies have contested the figure. The unofficial figure has been put at 50,000 dead. Meanwhile, hopes of finding survivors in the quake-ravaged areas are fast fading

mainly due to the seemingly unsurmountable odds that the relief personnel and volunteer groups are facing.

Rescue operations have been stepped up in most places with assistance from foreign experts and equipment. But the general picture of relief operations is one of total chaos.

The government is still to put in place an effective machinery that can reach out to victims spread over the vast hinterland. Even foreign aid workers do not have a clue as to how to reach the most-affected areas.

A large Israeli team, which was to fly in with a field hospital to Bhuj from New Delhi on Tuesday, was told instead to land in Ahmedabad. With 150 personnel, it is one of the biggest teams of doctors Israel has ever sent for a natural catastrophe outside the country. It was only after much persuasion that the team was finally allowed to land in Bhuj.

A senior IAS officer at the Gandhinagar control room said, "We are facing problems with the distribution of relief material as we do not have a functional system in place." The problem, the official added, had been compounded by a lack of communication facilities

## Desperation sets in among Kutch's famished

The Times of India News Service

AHMEDABAD: Having lived without food and water for four days, survivors of the earthquake in Kutch district have started looting vehicles carrying food packets and other relief material.

Officials in the earthquake control rooms in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar said there was utter chaos on the roads leading to Bhuj, Bhachau, Rapar and Anjar in Kutch district, with people pouncing on vehicles arriving with relief materials. Incidents of looting, which started on Sunday, continued on

Monday even as the Prime Minister toured the district. "Things may get out of hand as people are getting quite desperate," an official deputed for relief coordination said in Ahmedabad. Hundreds of trucks and other vehicles are on their way to Bhuj from Ahmedabad, and there are fears that they will never reach the western parts of Kutch district if the looting continues.

Meanwhile, relief material is arriving in Ahmedabad in a deluge from all over the country and abroad.

## Economy feels the tremors, tough fiscal steps are inevitable

By Priya Ranjan Dash

NEW DELHI: The country's flagging economy is likely to face enormous costs for repairing the damage done by the killer earthquake that has devastated large parts of Gujarat, India's second most industrialised state, economists said on Monday.

Finance minister Yashwant Sinha also acknowledged that enormous resources were required for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the affected people.

A FICCI estimate puts the earthquake losses at a colossal Rs 20,000-Rs 25,000 crore. Mr Sinha said there was no estimate of the extent of damage as yet, since the first priority was to carry out relief work. The finance minister, who has been under pressure to serve up a growth-stimulus budget for India's slowing economy, said the catastrophe could hit growth.

Reports of the government considering a 'Gujarat surcharge' on direct and indirect taxes were dismissed by Mr Sinha as "speculation". But tough fiscal measures in the forthcoming budget had become inescapable, he said.

The earthquake has made a huge impact on the government's

already gaping deficit. It has dashed all hopes of the government being able to contain its total borrowings at the targeted level of Rs 117,000 crore this year and the plan for cutting borrowings next year. The target, expressed in terms of a proportion of GDP, at 5.1 per cent, will be even more difficult to meet for the earthquake has taken a toll of the GDP growth itself.

The borrowings will be higher as the earthquake imposes massive expenditure beyond the budget while dampening revenue collections from Gujarat, a major contributor to the national exchequer. The situation, therefore, would seem to suggest that the government will have to go in for an additional revenue mop-up, perhaps even before it presents the budget on February 28.

The National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF), set up this year following the Eleventh Finance Commission recommendations, for instance, has to be replenished for the withdrawals already made and the huge withdrawals now required to be made. The NCCF, with an initial core amount of Rs 500 crore, stood drawn down by as much as Rs 424 crore as of last week due to flood and drought relief assistance to states. The initial demand from Gujarat is reported to be Rs 500 crore.

### IN THE EYE OF THE QUAKE

Hopes of finding survivors is fast diminishing

Relief operations are foundering, say officials

Some reports say more than 50,000 people may have been killed

The earthquake has shaken the government's already gaping deficit

A FICCI estimate puts the losses at a colossal Rs 20,000-Rs 25,000 crore

The Centre will have to go in for an additional revenue mop-up, perhaps even before the budget



EMERGING FROM THE SHADOWS: A local resident, Babbiben, recovers in a hospital in Bhuj on Monday.

# Atal finds broken relief chain

OUR BUREAU

*9.8.2001*  
**Bhuj, Jan. 29:** Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today pledged aid worth Rs 500 crore to Gujarat and complained that villages in and around the worst-affected region were not getting the necessary help fast enough.

Vajpayee said NGOs were doing a "good job" in the affected areas but a lot more needed to be done for the victims.

"Relief work needs to be speeded up," he told reporters in Bhuj after an aerial and road survey of the worst-hit areas. "The government is surveying the villages. There is a lack of relief work in the villages."

Vajpayee, who visited Ahmedabad later in the day, said the man-

*21*  
ner in which relief work was progressing showed that "the nation is not equipped to tackle the crisis. We had realised after the Orissa supercyclone that we have no disaster management cell which we can activate at the time of a crisis like the one Gujarat is facing today".

The Prime Minister announced that a national disaster management cell would be set up shortly in New Delhi to take care of natural calamities and their aftermath.

In Anjar, a town to the south-east of Bhuj so far bypassed by the main rescue effort, the smell of decomposing bodies hung in the air. But Vajpayee said there had been no reports of disease breaking out in Gujarat.

While making the aerial sur-

*20*  
vey from an Mi-8 helicopter, a grim-looking Prime Minister said "the death toll is increasing".

He, however, added that it was difficult to say how many people had been killed but cautioned it "should not be overestimated or underestimated". "This is an extraordinary disaster. Everyone has to face the problem together shoulder-to-shoulder," he said.

The Prime Minister said "neither funds nor any other kind of assistance will be a constraint" in ensuring that the state is rebuilt at the earliest. Besides the Central assistance, Vajpayee sanctioned an additional Rs 20 crore from the Prime Minister's relief fund over and above the Rs 10 crore already announced.

Vajpayee, who brushed aside

warnings of the dangers of the after-tremors to make this visit, drove 55 km by road from Kandla to Bhuj, stopping at Ratnal village and some other places on the highway.

He visited a destroyed village, a military hospital and a collapsed apartment building in Bhuj.

## World Bank aid

The World Bank today offered an immediate assistance of \$ 300 million as first tranche to carry out emergency rehabilitation work in the quake-hit areas of Gujarat.

Following finance minister Yashwant Sinha's request for a \$ 1 billion assistance for reconstruction work, the bank said it will provide both immediate and long-term support for reconstruction.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 JAN 2001

## 11-10 After the Shock 29/1

Earthquakes — the hammers of God, as they have been called — are beyond humankind's ability to forecast accurately. But earthquake relief can be managed efficiently to reduce fatalities. The first priority is to rescue those still alive under the rubble. That calls for cranes, blowtorches, sniffer dogs and acoustic equipment. All cranes and blowtorches available in Gujarat and other states should be rushed to the sites where multi-storeyed buildings have collapsed. The government should not fight shy of asking for help from expert search-and-rescue teams from Japan, Taiwan and the US. The state must mobilise as many orthopaedic surgeons as possible, and organise blood supplies (after thorough testing) from all over the country. Temporary shelter, blankets and food are the next priority, and call for a countrywide mobilisation effort. For the next week, while the rescue effort is on, political leaders and VIPs should keep away from the scene lest their presence should deflect attention from relief work. The only exceptions are the prime minister, the home minister, the defence minister and the three service chiefs. Other ministers and officials would do better to stay in their offices and help to coordinate operations on the ground. Lessons may be learnt from the Japanese handling of the aftermath of the Kobe earthquake, and our own experience in Latur. Temporary camps with ancillary facilities will be needed for the next few months. Gujarat is a rich state, and the well-to-do will surely rise to the challenge to come to the help of their unfortunate compatriots.

The tremblor has other harsh lessons to teach us. In many cases, a multi-storeyed building was reduced to a heap of rubble while its neighbours escaped unscathed. This selective visitation of disaster distinguished builders who paid adequate attention to earthquake-proofing regulations from those who cut corners and cheated their clients by getting around quality control norms. A comprehensive list of contractors ought to be compiled, and those guilty of such malpractices should be taken to task. Atomic power stations and dams have escaped damage; this shows that effects of earthquakes can be minimised if building regulations are strictly enforced. As often happens in India, corruption underlies our avoidable disasters. While earthquakes cannot be avoided, the corrupt practices of builders can be. As other natural calamities have proved, the most effective disaster relief organisation in the country are its defence forces. The armed services have better equipment and greater mobility than their civilian counterparts; equally importantly, they have so far been relatively free from political interference and allowed to function as a professional organisation. They are kept continuously trained, and have a chain of command not subject to political subversion. There are several disaster relief agencies and institutions working unobserved in this country. Media publicity about their role and methodology would help to re-assure the public at times of crisis like this.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 JAN 2001



# Gujarat jolted

By Manas Dasgupta

**AHMEDABAD, JAN. 28.** The people of Gujarat, yet to recover from Friday's tragedy, got another jolt when a quake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale, struck early this morning. The Chief Minister, Mr. Keshubhai Patel, claimed that there was no further loss of life or property but warned that another quake could strike in the next 48 hours.

The warning created panic among the people, who had already spent the last two days outdoors braving the cold. Meanwhile, there was no change in the toll in the Friday's quake, officially put at 10,902 yesterday including a body count of 6,072. However, Mr. Patel said the possibility of the toll going up to 20,000 or more could not be ruled out. (A PTI report quoting official sources said the toll had already touched 20,000.)

All schools and colleges have been closed till February 3 to avoid the congregation of a large number of students at one place.

Mr. Patel quoted Dr. Srivastava of the Indian Meteorological Department as saying that in view of this morning's quake, another shock with the same or even more magnitude could occur.

Urging the residents to stay away from even slightly damaged buildings, he said it was the only precautionary measure the Government could take at this stage.

He, however, denied reports in some cable television networks that the epicentre of Friday's quake, about 20 km northeast of Bhuj, had shifted towards Ahmedabad. The epicentre of this morning's quake was about 15 km further eastward bringing Ahmedabad, the State's major city, much closer to it.

At 6.32 a.m., panic-stricken people rushed out of their houses as the earth began shaking. Of the over 220 aftershocks felt since Friday, today's was the most severe. Since midnight last night, nine tremors, whose intensity ranged

from 3.1 to 4.6 on the Richter scale, were felt in the region. The last occurred at 9.12 a.m.

Mr. Patel said rescue teams today began exploring the hitherto inaccessible walled city areas of Bhuj, where about 75,000 people were feared trapped, but it would be some time before the rubble was cleared and actual rescue begun. A communication link with Bhuj was established through two

## Beating Retreat cancelled

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JAN. 28.** The Central Government today decided to cancel the Beating Retreat ceremony scheduled for tomorrow in view of the massive earthquake tragedy in Gujarat. The ceremony marks the end of the Republic Day celebrations.

The President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, has cancelled his three-day visit to Jaipur beginning January 30. Mr. Narayanan, who was scheduled to leave for the Rajasthan capital immediately after paying floral tributes at the Gandhi Samadhi at Rajghat here the same day, cancelled the trip in the wake of the quake in Gujarat, a Rashtrapati Bhavan spokesman said today.

satellite phone lines today.

## Affected towns 'adopted'

Similar efforts were being made in other affected towns of Kutch district with each one them being "adopted" by a major private sector company. The Reliance group, which adopted parts of Bhuj and Anjar towns, rushed 6,000 of its employees with necessary equipment and relief materials there, while Bhachau was taken up by Jayprakash Associates, and Rapar by Larsen and Toubro.

A team of experts from the National Building Board from Delhi would soon arrive here to exam-

ine damaged buildings, particularly in Ahmedabad, and determine whether they were safe for re-occupation.

With rescue and relief materials pouring in from all over the world, the Government has constituted an External Aid Co-ordination Cell under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister's financial adviser, Mr. S. K. Shelat, to coordinate foreign aids. Already seven flights carrying assistance from the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, Germany, France, Israel, Muscat and other countries have reached the city.

## Over 20,000 operations

Mr. Patel said 110 specialist doctors and 450 general practitioners besides 780 paramedical staff with 250 medical vehicles and 200 ambulance vans had reached Bhuj to begin the operations. Despite the lack of operation theatres and adequate staff, over 20,000 seriously wounded had been operated upon in the makeshift camps in Bhuj while another 21,000 were shifted to Patan, Radhanpur, Palanpur, Deesa, Mehsana, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Baroda and even Pune through some 150 State transport buses.

Mr. Patel said the Government had demanded an immediate ad hoc assistance of at least Rs. 500 crores from the Centre, adding the Reserve Bank had agreed to clear any Government bill as overdraft in the next one month. There was no special advantage in declaring the quake a national calamity but considering the magnitude, "it is as good as a national calamity". The Centre had promised to deal with it accordingly, he said.

The Chief Minister claimed that the Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada river was "intact" and there was "absolutely no damage" to it.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, accompanied by the Railway Minister, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, is scheduled to arrive in Bhuj tomorrow for an aerial survey.

## PM, Advani briefed

PTI reports:

Mr. Patel was also in constant touch with Mr. Vajpayee and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, on the rescue and relief operations undertaken in Bhuj, Ahmedabad and other parts of the State.

The Chief Minister, personally overseeing and monitoring the relief operations, contacted his counterparts in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Tamil Nadu and sought equipment to remove debris and blankets, medicines and food-stuffs.

More reports on Pages 13, 14, 15

## A baby sobs amid debris

**BHUJ, JAN. 28.** As rescuers pounded away at the twisted rubble of buildings looking for dead or survivors, it turned out to be the game of Russian Roulette — who survives and who dies.

After several hours of frantic but careful digging through the rubble, the eyes of tense Indian Air Force personnel and policemen suddenly lit up. They heard the faint sobbing of a baby amidst mounds of debris of a building in this town.

Hours later, rescuers pulled out Naina Badrasen and her one-and-half-year-old daughter Namrata. While Namrata, her pulse weak after spending 50 hours without food and water, was rushed to a nearby hospital, her mother died before rescue workers could reach her.

All over quake-ravaged Gujarat, it takes quite a few hours from the moment of hearing the trapped survivors' cry for help to locating their movement and finally pulling them out alive. Each and every block of rubble has to be dug carefully so as not to unsettle the already precariously-placed debris and every second is an intense battle between life and death. — PTI

THE HINDU

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AFTERSHOCKS CONTINUE; RESCUE WORK

HD-1  
7/11

# Quake toll crosses

By Manas Dasgupta

**AHMEDABAD, JAN. 27.** The toll in the earthquake, which rocked Gujarat on the Republic Day, reached a staggering 10,902 today, with another 35,000 injured and about 1.5 lakh people still trapped in debris across Bhuj and other towns in Kutch district. Their fate is unknown. (According to UNI, an estimated 16,000 people died.)

The border district of Kutch, which bore the brunt of the fury, was almost completely devastated with the old city areas of Bhuj, district headquarters, Anjar, Rapar, and Bhachau totally ruined, while the situation in rural Kutch still could not be ascertained. (According to a PTI report, 1,501 bodies have so far been recovered from the debris of the collapsed houses in Kutch district).

## 400 children buried

About 400 school children, who were participating in a procession on the occasion of the Republic Day, were trapped under the debris of falling houses in Anjar taluk of Kutch district in yesterday's earthquake.

The Chief Minister said only a few children escaped from the falling debris of houses, which collapsed at the time of earthquake, when they were passing through a lane.

He said operations were on to rescue the children. About 50 children were buried when their school building collapsed even as they were participating in a republic day function in Ahmedabad. Operations were on to bring them out.

Considering the situation in the old city areas, still inaccessible with nearly 1.50 lakh people trapped there, official sources did not rule out the possibility of the casualties crossing the one lakh-mark. The Chief Minister, Mr. Keshubhai Patel, who along with the BJP president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, and the general secretary, Mr. Narendra Modi, visited Kutch and Morvi town in Rajkot district, said the entire walled city areas of Bhuj with a population of about 75,000 had caved in and debris

blocked access from all sides, rendering relief and rescue operations impossible. The situation was the same in the old city areas of Anjar with a population of over 25,000 people, Bhachau with over 20,000 people and Rapar with about 15,000 people. No relief and rescue operations could still be taken up there.

The Bhuj hospital with over 100 patients, doctors and nurses has been totally destroyed with no information about their fate.

The destruction of the civil hospital in Bhuj also made relief work difficult in the absence of other major medical installations and because of an acute shortage of equipment. Make-shift arrangements were made in the open to provide medical treatment. At the instance of the Chief Minister, the IAF deputed a special aircraft to rush the emergency cases from Bhuj to the Rajkot and Jamnagar civil hospitals. In addition, 10 operation tables with equipment had been sent to Bhuj.

The entire Kutch district remained without supply of power and water, and faced an acute shortage of essential supplies, medical aid and other necessities. However, the Surajbari bridge, linking the district with the rest of the world, which developed cracks, was repaired and traffic restored this afternoon to transport relief and rescue equipment.

While the toll in the district alone was put at over 10,000, the number of dead in Ahmedabad, next worst-hit, rose to 380 with over 500 people still feared trapped under the debris of the 150-odd fallen buildings.

The fate of at least 40 more students of the Sacred Flower Higher Secondary School in the Maninagar locality was still not known. The school building collapsed when about 80 students were taking a science practical examination. While about 20 students escaped, jumping from the second floor, rescue workers extricated 20 bodies and the rest were still under the wreckage. An official spokesman put at 226 the toll in Rajkot, excluding Morvi town, which alone accounted for over 100 deaths. More than 32,000 people were injured in Kutch district alone, while the number of injured in the rest of the State was about 3,000.

## Sonia cavalcade stoned

The Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, who flew in here today to visit the affected areas, had to face the wrath of the suffering people, even as the relief and rescue oper-

ations continued at a very slow pace due to shortage of both manpower and equipment. In the Paldi locality, the security forces had to resort to a lathicharge when some persons began pelting stones at Ms. Gandhi's cavalcade protesting that the authorities had failed to rise to the occasion and mitigate their sufferings.

Shortage of essential equipment including gas-cutters, and even torches badly hampered the rescue work, putting the firebrigade personnel, assisted by the RAF, home guards and other para-military forces, at a great disad-

## 190 prisoners flee

While yesterday's earthquake in Gujarat claimed thousands of lives, it also meant freedom for about 190 prisoners who escaped taking advantage of a wall collapse in their jail in Bhuj.

The Home Minister, Mr. Haren Pandya, today said that of those who escaped, about 50 were hardcore criminals. There were 268 prisoners lodged in the jail.

Advantage. Ahmedabad city and surrounding areas continued to experience mild tremors, making restoration work difficult. An official spokesman said the city suffered 83 mild tremors yesterday and another 188 since this morning. Most people spent almost the whole of last night outside their houses despite the temperature dipping to 11 degree Celsius. Several residents of high-rise buildings, considered the most vulnerable to the after-shocks, deserted their houses to stay with friends or relatives in low-rise apartments.

## PM, Advani for Gujarat tomorrow

UNI, PTI report from New Delhi:

The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, would tour the quake-hit areas on Monday to assess the situation, official sources said today. Meanwhile, the Government announced full excise duty exemption for goods donated or purchased with cash donations for relief and rehabilitation. Exemption from customs duty was also provided for imported goods intended for donation.

THE HINDU

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# 1,500 feared killed in Gujarat quake

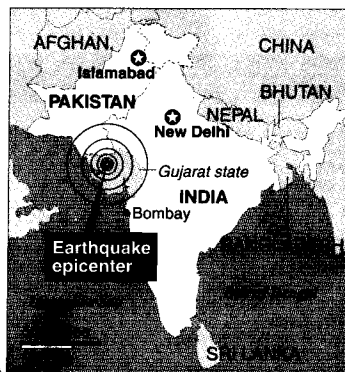
By Manas Dasgupta

**AHMEDABAD, JAN. 26.** At least 1,000 people were feared killed, including about 300 in Ahmedabad city, and several thousands injured in an earthquake which struck Gujarat this morning. Several hundreds were also rendered homeless. The Army was called in to assist civic authorities in the rescue and relief operations in Ahmedabad and some other parts. (A PTI report said the toll was over 1,500.)

An official spokesman said the toll was expected to go up further as thousands were still trapped under the debris of fallen buildings in several towns.

(According to PTI, the entire northern belt experienced tremors while "vibrations" from the severe quake were felt even as far south as Chennai. Mild tremors were also felt in Kolkata, Shillong, Agartala and Nepal.)

The quake, said to be the sec-



Source: USGS National Earthquake Information Center

ond strongest in the last 50 years in any part of India, measured 6.9 on the Richter scale, with its epicentre about 20 km northeast of Bhuj, district headquarters of Kutch, lasted several seconds.

The Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, who arrived here this evening for an on-the-spot study, told mediapersons that the number of casualties could be "in four figures". He said almost the entire belt from Bhuj to Rajkot was very

More reports, photos of earthquake on Pages 13 and 14.

severely affected but no immediate information was available about the extent of damage. The Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, rushed to Bhuj to assess the situation, particularly the defence installations in the border district. (A UNI report from New Delhi quoted the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, as saying the Government might consider declaring the quake a national calamity, if needed.)

## Communications hit

The Kutch and Saurashtra regions were said to be the worst affected and with the communication network badly hit, only sketchy reports reached the State headquarters. According to initial reports, at least 160 persons were killed in Bhuj, about 155 in Rajkot, 100 in Morbi, 87 in Jamnagar, 55 in Surendranagar, 25 in Porbandar, 30 in Wankaner, about 40 in Palanpur, 28 in Patan and about 10 each in Broach and Navsari. No information was available

from rural regions). Though the intensity was less severe than in the central and southern regions, Surat suffered extensive damage with 33 deaths reported from the city.

At least 10 students of the Morbi Engineering college in Rajkot district were killed when a hostel building collapsed. The town, main centre for manufacturing scientific clocks and virtually rebuilt after the 1979 Machhu-II dam disaster in which 2,000 people were killed, was again very badly affected.

## Bridge develops cracks

At least 150 buildings, including about a dozen high-rise structures, collapsed in different parts of Ahmedabad. By evening, 247 bodies had been recovered. The Nehru bridge, one of the six major bridges over the Sabarmati linking the old city with new Ahmedabad, developed a major crack in the middle.

It took several seconds for the people to realise what was happening as buildings began shaking around 8.50 a.m. and soon millions of people rushed out of their houses onto the roads. The entire city was hit by power failure. Most of the telephones remained dead. Mobile phones were also badly affected. Timely action by authorities averted a collapse of the western power grid after several power plants in the State collapsed.

Besides Mr. Advani and Mr. Fernandes, the Union Textiles Minister, Mr. Kashiram Rana, the BJP national general secretary,



**BLACK FRIDAY:** People gather in front of a collapsed building in Ahmedabad in the aftermath of an earthquake on Friday. — Reuters

Mr. Narendra Modi, and several other senior Central Government leaders reached here. The Chief Minister, Mr. Keshubhai Patel, asking the Government officials to immediately report back to duty (in view of the Republic Day, it

was a holiday today), also appealed to the people to have patience and cooperate with the authorities.

The Republic Day parade could not be held and a get-together at the Raj Bhavan this evening was

cancelled. The Chief Minister, who visited the civil hospital to console the family members of the deceased, ordered an inquiry to ascertain the causes of the quake and declared a state of alert in view of the fears that the quake

might hit any part of the State again during the next fortnight.

According to an official spokesman, today's quake was more intense than the 1993 Latur quake, which measured 6.3 on the Richter scale.