

From: "Shyam Parekh" <shyam_parekh@hotmail.com>
To: <environmentaljournalists@yahoogroups.com>;
<environmentaljournalists@yahoogroups.com>
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2001 7:57 AM
Subject: [environmentaljournalists] URGUNET:Gujarat Earthquake

- > Dear All,
- > I am Shyam Parekh, Senior News Correspondent with the Times of India,
- > Ahmedabad, (Gujarat) India, specialising in environment.
- > I am writing this with an express purpose to update you all about the
- > situation here and seek your help - information wise.
- > As you all must have known, my state has been ravaged by an earthquake
- > which
- > measured 7.9 on the Richter scale and was the biggest since the one we had
- > experienced in 1819.
- > There have been as many as 200 tremors since the quake hit us, stunning
- > everyone of us.
- > A day after the quake I managed to reach to a place called Bhachau which
- > is
- > a taluka (a district division) headquarter. I could not believe my eyes
- > that
- > while all the government aid, international rescue teams, armed forces,
- > international media and TV personnel focused on the district headquarter
- > called Bhuj (the district is called Kutchh) there was absolutely no aid, I
- > repeat there was absolutely no help from outside the town here after 35
- > hours of the devastation.
- > As a result some 10,000 residents of this town which had a population of
- > 35,000 have perished from what I estimate and what the surviving locals
- > told
- > me. There 'were' 72 smaller towns and villages around Bhachau with a
- > population of 1.5 to two lakhs (0.2 million). All these villages have
- > perished, repeat they have perished. Not a single man-made structure has
- > survived the quake. As entire villages and towns have dis-appeared under
- > debris and the administrative people from the village too have gone
- > underneath nobody is there tell what is the real damage.
- > Though the government has not accepted the death-toll in Kutchh district
- > alone will cross one lakh or more.
- > I am talking about only one taluka called Bhachau, which is the worst hit.
- > There are dozens more around it and nobody knows what is the situation
- > there as the state government, the Centre and the administration have
- > focussed on the city of Bhuj, which had a population of nearly 2.5 lakhs
- > and
- > where nearly 20,000 have died.
- > I request you all to spread the word that the devastation is complete

- > here, many many more time than what is seen on the TV or read in the
- > newspapers.
- > So if your countries/organisation are sending rescue teams and aid please
- > ask them to focus more on places from where there are no reports. Just
- look
- > at the map and find out Kutchh distcit in the Westernmost tip of India and
- > things will be clear.
- > If teams are coming here ask them to go fully equipped for themselves with
- > food, water etc. There are dcaying corpse everywhere and no rescue work is
- > needed. Lots of medical attention including psychological treatmetn will
- be
- > necessary, as those who survued and ssen their relatives getting buried
- and
- > tortured under rubble for 36 hours before they died have become quite
- > strange.
- >
- > I will request one more help from you all, its pleasesend me as much
- > information on earth-quake as much you can, particularly about seismic
- > acitivity in this region as we have only very sketchy information.
- > We would like details about possibility of recurrences, how to repair the
- > buildings multi-storeyed in Ahmedabad which have developed cracks and
- faults
- > as about two million people in Ahmedabad alone and some five million in
- > Gujarat, are on roads as they are not allowed to stay in shattered
- > buildings.
- > Please let me know very URGENTLY about the repairing and restucturing of
- > buildings to make them livable.
- > My contact:
- > Shyam Parekh,
- > Senior News Correspondent,
- > The Times of India,
- > AHMEDABAD.
- > Phone: 91-79-6585778 / 6582151-5 / 6582886
- > Fax: 91-79-6583758
- > e-mail: shyam_parekh@hotmail.com
- > Cellular: 98250-22968
- >

> Get Your Private, Free E-mail from MSN Hotmail at <http://www.hotmail.com>.

>

>

Two days later Mr. Parekh sent the following:

----- Original Message -----

From: "Shyam Parekh" <shyam_parekh@hotmail.com>

To: <environmentaljournalists@yahoogroups.com>;
<environmentaljournalists@egroups.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2001 7:06 PM
Subject: [environmentaljournalists] Profuse Thanks! more info..

- > Dear All,
- > I don't know how should I thank you all for giving the moral support and a
- > large number of replies. The purpose was to let everyone know the ground
- > reality.
- >
- > It wouldn't be possible for me to thank everyone individually as our city
- > keeps shaking every now and then and the people have to run out for open
- > space, and the days are very busy. Besides we all are homeless as the most
- > lived in apartments, which are now abandoned.
- > My idea for sending the message was to make all you wonderful people aware of
- > what is really happening in this part of the world.
- >
- > I would not like to blame anyone, but I surely feel that had our government
- > disseminated information properly and the e-media been little more
- > investigative, things would have been better and the relief teams would have
- > known where to go, rather than focusing on just one area.
- >
- > I will put my point this way primary estimates of our visit show that
- > (though they are not authentic nor for publication purpose just for sharing
- > in our fraternity) we probably have upto 50,000 casualties in Bhuj alone,
- > now nearly 20,000 in Bhachau town, 10 to 15,000 in Anjar, 5,000 in
- > Gandhidham (Kandal port), 10,000 in Rapar and absolutely no idea about the
- > 880 odd villages. Nobody even knows whether they exist or have perished.
- >
- > The figures might be challenged or appear to bloated, as many people heere
- > feel. But I believe and everyone agrees that where entire villages and towns
- > have perished there is no one to estimate precise number. Besides there are
- > no chances of many survivors after such long time. The unbearable stench
- > there is proof enough.
- >
- > I will be really grateful if somebody helps me to locate:
- >
- > # some of the best disaster management experts in the world, who have dealt
- > with such situations and would talk with me, as I want to do an interview at
- > the EARLIEST. (cellular phone: 98250-22968) This is really URGENT
- >
- > # Experts who worked at San Francisco and in Japan after the major quakes
- > there and can guide us.
- >
- > # Structural engineering experts who would tell us how to make houses

- > livable as some two million people in Ahmedabad city itself are on streets,
- > not to talk about many more elsewhere in the State.
- >
- > # Some feedback on likelihood of future seismic activity and earthquakes.
- >
- > # If you are not aware, what we really need is sophisticated equipment like
- > Rebound Hammer, X-rays and sonars for inspecting and restoring the
- > buildings.
- >
- > # Ideally, instead of passing over the financial assistance or other things
- > it will be better if the agencies send their representatives to supervise
- > the distribution and relief work.
- >
- > # We are also facing a threat of epidemic as thousands of corpses will keep
- > degenerating for long. What to do?
- >
- > # Above all, as much more info one can on either predicting (if possible)
- > and mitigating the EQ damage.
- >
- > # Gujarat has only one seismograph, at Bhuj and the other one at Bhavnagar
- > fitted since September after intense seismic activities were registered
- > there in September 2000. If the aid agencies can get this or other
- > sophisticated gadgetry fitted at places it will prevent future damages.
- >
- > Some of the group members have asked me about whereabouts of people. I have
- > not been able to do anything in this direction but will try soon.
- >
- > Thank you once again for showing solidarity and spending your time to help us.
- > Bestwished. Shyam. (pardon the errors)
- >

> Get Your Private, Free E-mail from MSN Hotmail at <http://www.hotmail.com>.