



INDIA: EARTHQUAKE

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The Disaster

First reports are emerging of a major earthquake in western India near the Pakistan border earlier today. Information from the stricken region is sketchy and anecdotal at present with media bulletins putting the early death toll at figures ranging from 25 to 120. The quake, measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale was centred 20 kilometres north east of the town Bhuj in the western state of Gujarat, according to the seismological bureau in Delhi. There are also reports of deaths in the city of Ahmadabad in western India and in the Pakistani city of Hyderabad. News just in from Ahamabad indicates that the local hospital is struggling to cope with the number of injured. The disaster struck at 08h50 (local) on the morning of the 51st anniversary of India's transition to a republic - a national holiday. Eyewitnesses spoke of buildings swaying in Delhi and Bombay, hundreds of kilometres from the epicentre. Tremors were felt across the country in the states of Maharastra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The International Federation's regional delegation in Delhi was quickly into action and is liaising closely with the Indian Red Cross headquarters to obtain hard information from the local Red Cross branch, which is already responding to the disaster, in conjunction with the authorities. In Geneva, the International Federation Secretariat is standing by to release cash from its disaster fund and respond to media queries. A FACT alert has been issued.

Needs

It will be for the Indian Red Cross, which is in touch with the Indian government, to indicate whether international assistance is required, though, judging from early reports, there is a strong possibility that significant resources may be needed to respond to this disaster. More information will be communicated in this regard as it comes to hand.

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