

DISASTERS UPDATE

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Moderate intensity quake rocks Gujarat

Press Trust of India

Posted online: Wednesday, **March 29, 2006** at 1521 hours IST

AHMEDABAD, March 29: Parts of Gujarat were on Wednesday jolted by a slight intensity earthquake, the Indian Meteorological department said.

The quake, measuring 3.5 on the Richter scale, occurred at 12.19 pm, the Met office said.

The epicentre of the tremor lay in Kutch region of Gujarat.

Gujarat was rocked by a major quake on January 26, 2001, in which thousands died.

'India's bird flu fight hit by bad samples'

Reuters

Posted online: Wednesday, March 29, 2006 at 1837 hours IST

Mumbai, March 29: India's efforts to contain bird [flu](#) in poultry were being hindered by spoiled blood samples, the head of the country's top animal diseases laboratory said on Wednesday.

There are some gaps, no doubt. Starting from collection to the media in which samples are kept and then transportation," H K Pradhan, head of the High Security Animal Diseases Laboratory said.

"Many samples get spoiled. If the samples are totally bad, we cannot do anything," he said.

On Tuesday, there were seven new cases of bird flu in poultry in Maharashtra and one case in Madhya Pradesh.

Jalgaon: Culling of birds in full swing

Jalgaon, March 31 (UNI): An estimated 40,000 birds have been culled in avian flu-hit area till late Thursday evening after 22 villages were quarantined and movement of people and vehicles restricted in six tahsils following the second outbreak of the bird flu in Jalgaon district of northern Maharashtra on Tuesday.

District Collector, Vijay Singhal, who visited Erandol and Paldhi villages to oversee the culling operation, yesterday night said 82 teams of the State Animal Husbandry Department were working in full swing to accomplish the task of killing about 2.10 lakh chickens in 288 villages targeted under the operation.

The culling was first undertaken in 22 villages located in the three km radius of Badgaon, Utar, Parora, Varad, Paldhi and Erandol from where samples of dead birds had tested positive for the H5N1 virus, he said, adding the operation would be extended to another 266 villages situated in the ten km range of the flu-hit villages.

With the second outbreak affecting six tahsils, the total number of tahsils hit by the avian flu in Jalgaon has gone upto 10. Four were affected during the first outbreak confirmed on March 14, necessitating slaughtering of 95,000 birds in 174 villages.

After the first outbreak, officials of animal husbandary department had undertaken random sampling across all the 15 tahsils of the district. Official sources said test reports of samples collected from the remaining five tahsils are still awaited from Bhopal's High Security Animal Disease Laboratory.

Earlier in February, more than three lakh birds had to be slaughtered in Navapur in Nandurbar district, also in northern Maharashtra, when India's first outbreak of the avian flu was confirmed on February 18.

Movement of poultry stock, people and vehicles have been banned in 22 villages and trains ordered not to halt at Paldhi and Pardhadi railway stations. Bus services to and from 22 villages will also remain suspended until the culling was over and affected villages disinfected, the Collector said.

Of the 2.10 birds to be culled in 288 villages, as many as 72,500 layers will be slaughtered in 16 poultry farms. The remaining are scattered in backyards of village houses.

Sale of poultry and eggs in the affected area has been banned and the weekly bazars in the villages remained shut.

Police patrolling is continuing to enforce quarantine in 22 villages.

Workshop on biodiversity conservation today

Special Correspondent

Udhagamandalam: A workshop on 'Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development' for non-Governmental organisations would be organised by the C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre (CPREEC) in association with the British High Commission here on Friday.

Development programmes

According to a CPREEC press release issued here on Thursday it would be part of the series of workshops being organised with the objective of providing participants an understanding of the design and implementation of sustainable development programmes with special reference to biodiversity conservation.

Urgent need

India was one of the 'mega-diverse' nations and had a rich biodiversity heritage. However, there was an urgent need for conservation and sustainable use of the diversity. While fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of the components of these resources should be ensured to conserve biodiversity, the immediate task would be to evolve and enforce time-bound programmes aimed at saving plant and animal species as well as habitats of biological resources.

Fire Department declares 144 more buildings unsafe

M. Srinivas

Structures located in Begumpet, Somajiguda, Banjara Hills, etc.

- All these buildings do not have the required 6 m open space around them*
- This renders fire-fighting exercises impossible in case of fire breaking out*
- Many of the buildings do not have emergency lighting or fire extinguishers*

HYDERABAD: The Fire Services Department has declared that another 144 multi-storied buildings in city and its suburbs were unsafe, as they were not complying with the mandatory fire safety measures.

This is in addition to the 2,073 high-rise buildings that have been earlier declared unsafe by the department.

"Looks like we are waiting for another Pushpanjali fire mishap to happen in these buildings," the official said.

The buildings are located in Begumpet, Somajiguda, Punjagutta, Banjara Hills, East and West Marredpally, Kukatpally, Serilingampally, Saroornagar and Vanasthalipuram.

The department, during an inspection conducted February and March, found that none of the 144 out of 367 buildings inspected, have six metres space in all four directions, which is required for fire fighting in case of a mishap.

"It is not possible for firemen to enter these buildings, mostly residential towers, to manoeuvre and take up rescue operations," an official who inspected the buildings said. He said that some of the buildings have open space less than one metre.

Under these circumstances, it is difficult for even fire tenders to reach the spot and control fire.

Many of them did not have emergency lighting and fire extinguishers to put off flames.

Open space

The official explained that the width of hydraulic platform is 2.5 metres with extension of one metre jack on either side and therefore 4.5 metres minimum open space is required merely for parking of the equipment at the spot.

Besides, minimum 1.5 metres open space is required for manoeuvrability of men and equipment.

When contacted, Director-General of Fire Services Alok Srivastava told *The Hindu* on Thursday that a sub-committee comprising officials from MCH and Fire Services had been constituted and held a meeting on Tuesday to discuss the measures to be taken in these buildings.

"We have decided to obtain views from the builders and residential welfare associations. We are also planning to conduct mock drills to identify deficiencies and operational constraints," he said.

'Disaster proof' schools to save lives, says U.N.

29 Mar 2006

Source: AlertNet
By Emma Batha



Kashmiri earthquake survivors attend a school in the mountain village of Narda Jian, some 60 km (37 miles) northeast of the earthquake-devastated city of Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. **REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton**

BONN (AlertNet) – The United Nations is launching a campaign to “disaster proof” schools to reduce the numbers of children crushed to death in earthquakes or washed away in floods.

Some 18,000 children died in the Pakistan quake in October when their schools collapsed on top of them – roughly a quarter of the total death toll. Reinforcing the buildings would have cost as little as a dollar a child, one aid agency said last year.

The new campaign by the United Nations’ International Strategy for Disaster Reduction will also push governments to make lessons on natural hazards and how to reduce the risk of death and injury part of the school curriculum.

“The children are the ... decision makers of the future. If you want to make a safer world I think you have to target children,” ISDR spokeswoman Brigitte Leone said in a meeting at the Third International Early Warning Conference in Bonn.

“We have two main objectives: to make schools safer and to get disaster reduction into the curriculum in primary and secondary schools.”

ISDR consultant and hazards expert Ben Wisner said there were an estimated 34 million children living in the 20 countries that registered the most deadly earthquakes during the 20th century.

The campaign will launch in June in Paris.

Aid agency ActionAid is also launching a project to make schools safer and introduce disaster risk reduction into the curriculum. The programme will initially focus on Nepal, India, Malawi, Ghana, Kenya, Haiti and Bangladesh.

SUCCESS STORY

Bangladesh is often cited as an example of how inexpensive grass roots initiatives can save lives.

Bangladesh’s disaster management minister, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, said all schools built since 2004 had been designed to double up as flood shelters. New schools are built from reinforced concrete and elevated from the ground.

The country is also running a massive public awareness programme on risk reduction with a strong focus on reaching children through the classroom, he said.

The minister contrasted the cyclone that hit Bangladesh in 1991 with one that struck Los Angeles the following year. Some 138,000 people were killed in a single night in Bangladesh; just 18 died in Los Angeles.

He said that without the resources of a developed country Bangladesh had to exploit low-tech solutions.

“We now have around 3,000 cyclone shelters in coastal areas and off shore islands and around 30,000 trained volunteers,” he told AlertNet.

The number of deaths in recent cyclones has fallen to 200 to 300, he said.

Qld kids back in classrooms after cyclone disaster

PM – Wednesday, 29 March , 2006 18:34:00

Reporter: Melanie Christiansen

MARK COLVIN: In another sign that North Queensland life is returning to normal after Cyclone Larry, the last of 156 damaged schools reopened today.

Surrounded by battered and destroyed buildings, students from the Innisfail State High School attended their first classes since the cyclone.

But while the schools are back in business, many North Queenslanders are still relying on government support to help them through the disaster.

Nearly a million dollars has been paid out, just in the thousand-dollar cash handouts to affected families.

Melanie Christiansen reports from Innisfail.

MELANIE CHRISTIANSEN: Despite heavy rain, 178 Innisfail high school students, about a quarter of the school’s population, turned up for class today.

STUDENT 1: Yeah, it looks really sad, and yeah, it doesn’t look like the school, but yeah.

MELANIE CHRISTIANSEN: What do you think about being back at school?

STUDENT 2: Um, it’s not bad. I mean, we get to see all our friends and see how much the school’s been really wrecked badly. But it’s okay, yeah, it’s pretty good.

MELANIE CHRISTIANSEN: Are you happy to be back?

STUDENT 3: Um, yeah I’m happy to be back, because it’s been boring at home, so yeah.

STUDENT 4: Oh, it’s pretty bad. Like, our spot where we sit’s over there, it’s just gone.

STUDENT 5: It’s under the floorboards.

STUDENT 4: It’s under the building somewhere, so...

MELANIE CHRISTIANSEN: With ten demountable classrooms ready, Principal Julie Pozzoli gathered the students together under a leaking roof in the assembly area to welcome them back.

JULIE POZZOLI: Basically we’re expecting the first part of today you people will sit around with your friends, your classmates and just basically talk. We know that talking’s part of the healing process, talking is not while I’m speaking, thank you, gentlemen. Thank you.

And we will go from there. Okay, so we understand that you... this is possibly the first time you have seen your friends, and so there are stories to be told and you need to tell them. That’s part of getting organized.

MELANIE CHRISTIANSEN: And one of the school’s student leaders, Chris Fisher, appreciated the time to catch up with friends.

CHRIS FISHER: 'Cause, um, for the first couple of days mobiles coverage didn't work, so you couldn't text your friends and say what's happened, are you okay, and a lot of my friends are farming community, like farming members, so just seeing what's happened with them and just generally seeing them in your face and knowing that they're all right, it's just real... like, relief.

MELANIE CHRISTIANSEN: There's relief too elsewhere in Innisfail, as the emergency response to the cyclone winds down. The evacuation centre at the local TAFE has provided accommodation for up to 200 people left homeless by the cyclone. Today it's nearly empty and getting ready to close down.

But many people in the cyclone-hit region are still relying on help from the Government. The Federal Human Services Minister, Joe Hockey, was in Innisfail today to talk to Centrelink workers who've been handing out relief payments.

JOE HOCKEY: Uh, it continues to be case that the most significant grant that we're paying out is the \$1,000 to people who are affected, have difficulty living in their homes. So far Centrelink has paid out nearly \$1-million in cash to people in the region who are affected, and that system is working well.

We've certainly cut the corners on a number of processes to make sure that we've been able to get the cash out.

MELANIE CHRISTIANSEN: And with some locals concerned that the Government should be contributing more to cyclone-hit communities, Joe Hockey says there is more help coming.

JOE HOCKEY: We're looking at all options. I'm looking forward to my chat to Peter Cosgrove. Good to see you, mate.

PETER COSGROVE: Yes, g'day minister, how are you?

JOE HOCKEY: Fantastic.

PETER COSGROVE: Welcome.

JOE HOCKEY: Thank you. Thank you. And we'll have a chat about those things, but there's still... look, you know, anything that can be done will be done.

REPORTER: Those thousand-dollar grants are drying up pretty quickly. How soon will it be before you can announce some more help?

JOE HOCKEY: Well, the Prime Minister has been in consultation with Peter Cosgrove and a range of community leaders. The Prime Minister has indicated that he'll be making further announcements. There's more information.

REPORTER: How soon?

JOE HOCKEY: It'll be very soon. Surprisingly soon.

MARK COLVIN: Joe Hockey ending that report from Melanie Christiansen in Innisfail.

CNN AIRED GLOBAL OIL DISASTER

Wednesday, March 29, 2006 – FreeMarketNews.com

Last week, CNN aired a one-hour documentary on oil presenting a scenario of global disaster that could happen soon. It goes like this: Al-Quida terrorists, known for their proclivity for asymmetric timing, destroy much of Saudi Arabian oil production during a vicious hurricane that strikes Texas oil refineries. In days, a large piece of global oil production and refining is crippled for an indefinite period, tripling the global oil price and causing a crash in all world markets.

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staff reports – Free-Market News Network

UN Insists on Anti-Disaster System

Berlin, Mar 29 (Prensa Latina) The creation of an early-warning system against natural disasters such as the Asian tsunami or the Kashmir quake must be defined before 2015, the UN declared Wednesday while closing the 3rd International Conference on Early Warning in Bonn, Germany.

The call is part of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's exhortation after the December 2004 tsunami, which killed 217,000 people in Asia.

That phenomenon centered the Bonn conference, where the UN promised Indian Ocean rim states will have a warning system against seaquakes by July.

The meeting also expressed concern for nations where thousands of people were killed had not taken all the necessary steps to ensure that warnings reach their people.

Ln/ymr/mf

Highlights of Clinton's speech on disaster reduction

30 Mar 2006

Source: AlertNet

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton has urged the world to invest more in early warning systems to prevent the scale of death and destruction seen in the tsunami and other natural disasters. Here are highlights from the speech he gave to the Third International Early Warning Conference in Bonn in his capacity as the U.N. Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery.

The Indian Ocean tsunami ... was the loudest wake-up call of many about the need to reduce risk and improve management of natural hazards.

... the U.N. mission has been to build back better, to ensure that these recovery efforts do not simply restore communities to their pre-tsunami vulnerability, but instead leave the survivors of the disaster safer than before, including with effective early warning systems. We owe it to them and the memories of their loved ones to deliver on that promise. Of course, we gather here because making communities safer is a global priority that goes far beyond the tsunami's reach. From Sri Lanka to Haiti, to Turkey, to recent events in Mississippi and Louisiana in the United States, we have seen years of development wiped out in a matter of moments or days. These have taken a heavy social and economic toll and will continue to do so. The total number of people affected each year by natural disasters vastly increased in the last decade.

...

Last year ... 97,000 people lost their lives in nearly 150 disasters, the largest number of deaths of course coming in Kashmir. In 1998, disasters caused 65.5 billion dollars in economic losses worldwide. In 2004, because of the tsunami, hurricane Ivan and other disasters, losses were about 120 billion. In 2005, losses were 220 billion.

People in the insurance industry tell me that aggregate losses in the last ten years were three times greater than in any previous decade on record. From Aceh to New Orleans to Kashmir, unfortunately, the main victims of disasters don't have insurance. They are the poor and the vulnerable and often those with the least political influence to get the changes needed that guarantee them and their families a decent life.

...

Why are there more disasters with greater economic and social cost? I think part of the aggregate cost is simply a function of growing population. We now have 6.5 billion people in the world. We are likely to have 9 billion by 2050. Almost without exception, the population growth is occurring in the poorest countries where they will be least able to do what you are here recommending that we all do.

...

The rich countries will pay sooner or later if we let the disasters occur, (they) will just wind up spending more money. But we have a very bad habit of ignoring the problems of our poorer brothers and sisters until they are too grave, too painful and, alas, too expensive to ignore.

...

The second major factor is rapid urbanization, more people living in concentrated areas. More often than not, driven by poverty, these populations mostly settle into the more hazard-prone areas: flood planes, coastal areas, unstable hillside slopes or near active volcanoes.

Third, their and our economic activities take a toll on natural defenses against hazards. Witness the lesser impact of the tsunami in places where the coral reefs or the mangrove trees remain intact. The recent landslides in the Philippines occurred often on totally deforested slopes. Sustainable development, therefore, is imperative for human and economic as well as environmental reasons.

Fourth, our economic behavior is plainly affecting the climate. Nearly 90 percent of all natural hazards are climate or weather-related. And these extreme weather events are increasing in their number and intensity. Last year was a record hurricane season, reflected in part where the hurricanes so severely battered the Gulf Coast of the United States, Katrina and Rita.

...

The planet is warming faster than most experts thought even as recently as two years ago. The ice is melting more quickly, not simply on the North Pole and the South Pole, but – particularly troubling for those of us in the northern half of the planet – on Greenland ... if the Greenland icecap melts in total, it could raise the level of the North Atlantic by about 40 feet. And at predicted levels, it's going to raise the level of the North Atlantic enough to cause calamitous damage some time in the next 30 to 40 years.

...

We know that continued climate change will force almost all agricultural production north if you are in the northern hemisphere, or south if you are in the southern hemisphere which could create tens of millions of food refugees in the next few decades.

Finally, it is nearly a certainty that by 2050, unless we do something to reverse this trend, we will have the loss of many, many cities along the coastal planes and whole island nations.

Indeed, I often think about one of the nations that I have worked hard to help in the tsunami, the Maldives, a small country with only 130,000 people for which I have developed a great affection. My successor in interest at some future point will not have to worry about them anymore; we will just take a bunch of boats and take them away as their little nation vanishes under the water.

...if you want a disaster prevention system that works, we have to address this. We have to do more to address the underlying causes of vulnerability.

...

We know that urbanization, if managed properly, needs not increase risks, but there must be building codes and there can be building codes and standards even in poor countries that save lives.

We know that if the mangrove trees had not been torn down anywhere where they previously stood in the tsunami-affected countries, the losses would have been substantially smaller in those places.

In the Kashmir earthquake last October, schools crumbled, crushing to death 18,000 students and nearly a thousand teachers. Even though it's a poor area, they could have had simple basic building standards which would have saved lives. I saw the same thing

in 2001 in India, in Gujarat, where the earthquake did so much damage to hundreds of villages as well as the largest cities in the province.

When hurricane Luis hit Saint Martin in 1995, with stricter building codes on the French side of the island, the buildings there were far less damaged than those on the Dutch side, even though the center of the storm was closer to the French side.

...

Micro insurance should be vastly expanded so that poor people around the world can transfer risk and recover more quickly. Only one percent of the households and businesses in low-income countries have any kind of catastrophic insurance coverage, compared with 30 percent in high-income countries.

We know that education and awareness can play a vital role and sometimes traditional knowledge is as good as science. When the tsunami hit Simeulue Island of Aceh, people rushed to the highlands. Only seven people out of the total population of 80,000 died. Early in the last century, Simeulue suffered a tsunami and through an oral history, generations of island residents had been educated about changes in the oceans just before a tsunami strikes. That lore saved many thousands of lives.

...

Early warning systems are the key to effective risk reduction. They do save lives and livelihoods. And, as I said, in the world we live in, with so much division between rich and poor, they also save an enormous amount of investment for the donor countries who will be called upon to help when people die from such disasters.

Bangladesh learned about the value of these things in 1970 when a cyclone resulted in more than 300,000 deaths. The government and people subsequently put in place effective early warning and preparedness measures involving modern cyclone-forecasting systems and more than 5,000 people to get the message to the villages.

When a cyclone of similar force struck in 1997, 200 people were killed, which brings up to mind a point I want to make. The interesting thing to me is what Bangladesh did to marry old-fashioned communication with modern technology, the so-called 'last mile' of the early warning system. It's something that we dare not forget in our UN work for the tsunami...

All the sophisticated technology won't matter if we don't reach real communities and people. Satellites, buoys, data networks will make us safer, but we must invest in the training, the institution building, the awareness raising on the ground.

...

About 100,000 new homes have been built or are under construction today across the tsunami-affected region. Thousands more are in the pipeline. Some 400 permanent schools are under construction and with the work on temporary facilities, children went back to school more quickly than I thought they would. Tourist numbers are on the rebound in Thailand, in the Maldives.

In Sri Lanka, over 70 percent of households are reported to have regained a steady income. I am still frustrated that close to 50,000 people remain in tents in Aceh, but I am pleased that the temporary shelter construction has been moving much more rapidly.

...

The last time I went to Aceh, I went to one of the camps for the internally displaced where there were thousands of people living ... I was greeted by the elected leader of the community, a fellow just like everybody else living in the camp, and his wife and his son.

This little boy of theirs, nine years old, was the most beautiful child I have ever seen. It was shocking; I could hardly get my breath when I looked at him: luminous eyes, bright smile. So I said to my young interpreter: I believe that's the best-looking boy I ever saw in my life. She said: "Yes, he is a beautiful boy. And before the tsunami, he had nine

brothers and sisters. Now they are all gone.”

...

The last stop I made in this little tent city was the Maternal and Child Health Clinic and as I was about to leave, the mother of this little boy who had lost nine of her own children came up to me holding a baby.

She informed me that this baby was the youngest baby in the camp – it was two days old – and that she was bringing it to me because in their culture ... a woman does not get out of bed for 40 days after she gives birth.

So this woman who has lost nine of her own children is holding this baby and says: “We want you to name this child.” So I looked at her and I said: “What is the word in your language for ‘new beginning’?” And she said: “Well, lucky for you, in our language the word ‘dawn’, which is a girl’s name in English, is a boy’s name. So we will call this boy Dawn. And whenever we see him, we will think of a new beginning.”

I could not imagine the courage of that mother having lost nine of her own children, holding that baby and smiling and talking about new beginnings. So think about them when you make these recommendations and when we see them through.

Bomb Drill Tests Disaster Response

Queens Tribune online, March 30, 2006

By **JEFF FEINMAN**

The often peaceful neighborhood of Maspeth turned into bedlam last weekend after a bomb blew up on the Conrail tracks, leveling a Long Island Rail Road train and killing or injuring more than 100 people.

Or at least that’s how the story went. Nobody was really hurt. No bomb actually blew up. But the city’s emergency services were put to the test in Operation Trifecta, a daylong terror drill staged in Queens on Sunday.



Emergency crews in protective suits work at the terror drill.

The drill tested the NYPD, FDNY and more than 20 other local, state and federal agencies on their response to the chemical explosion. 1,500 response workers took part in the drill, which cost approximately \$700,000 on a grant from the Department of Homeland Security.

“I’m happy and I’m actually a little surprised that it worked as well as it did,” said Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno.

Emergency officials will evaluate response times and other critical procedures over the next several months and a full report on the exercise will be released over the summer. Queens will continue with a keen eye on disaster response as the New York Disaster Interfaith Services and the OEM will offer emergency preparedness training as it pertains to Houses of Worship. The Queens event will be held at Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center at 113-01 101st Ave. in Richmond Hill on Wednesday, April 5, between 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The event is open to the public, and will offer a presentation on how to put together a household disaster plan. Event lecturers will provide training on the significance of a Go

Bag – a household emergency supply kit – and a House of Worship response plan to be prepared for any emergency.

To learn more, go to www.nyc.gov.

'Disaster Action Teams' created by Red Cross will respond to fires, other public emergencies

The News-Reporter, News March 30, 2006

The American Red Cross of Augusta has just launched five fully trained volunteer "Disaster Action Teams" to respond to local disasters throughout the greater Augusta area.

The Disaster Action Teams (DAT) are comprised of 3-4 community volunteers which respond to local disasters including residential fires and other public emergencies. Currently, each DAT team is on-call once every five weeks, covering overnight and weekend hours.

Ray Edgar, director of Emergency Services at the Augusta Red Cross, notes that DAT volunteers are prepared to provide immediate, identifiable emergency services to disaster victims and emergency relief workers. DAT volunteers also provide comfort to the victims families and are trained to refer them to appropriate sources for long-term needs.

"It's hard work, but it's work worth doing," said Margaret Denson, a business administrator in Augusta and appointed DAT team captain. "It feels good to be helping people this way."

Edgar further stated that the Augusta Red Cross plans to continue to expand its DAT initiative. Eventually, he said, the Red Cross chapter hopes to have at least one DAT in each of the eleven counties it serves, including Richmond and Columbia as well as Burke, Glascock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Taliaferro, Warren, and Wilkes counties.

"We've got big plans," Edgar said. "We want Augusta to be the place where other Red Cross chapters come to study how to build effective Disaster Action Teams."

In addition to local DAT responsibilities, each disaster volunteer is enrolled in the American Red Cross Disaster Services Human Resources System, which deploys available volunteers to serve in national disasters when needed.

The American Red Cross of Augusta is currently recruiting volunteers for the DAT program. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age, in good health and possess a valid driver's license. DAT volunteers must complete four disaster management trainings as well as First Aid and CPR certification. For more information on becoming a Disaster Action Team volunteer, call Ray Edgar at 706-724-8481.

The American Red Cross is where people mobilize to help their neighbors - across the street, across the country and across the world - in emergencies. Each year, in communities large and small, victims of some 70,000 disasters turn to neighbors familiar and new - the nearly 1 million volunteers and 35,000 employees of the Red Cross.

Through more than 800 locally supported chapters, more than 15 million people gain the skills they need to prepare for and respond to emergencies in their homes, communities and world. Some four million people give blood - the gift of life - through the Red Cross, making it the largest supplier of blood and blood products in the United States.

The Red Cross helps thousands of U.S. servicemen separated from their families by military duty stay connected. As part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, a global network of 181 national societies, the Red Cross helps restore hope

and dignity to the world's most vulnerable people. An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs. The Red Cross is not a government agency; it relies on donations of time, money and blood.

Fears fade on Barrier Reef bleaching disaster

Stephen Lunn

March 31, 2006, The Australian

THE Great Barrier Reef is far more resilient to rising water temperatures than scientists feared, with less than 1 per cent of its coral affected by bleaching after the hot summer.

Scientists had predicted that as much as 60 per cent of the reef's coral might suffer bleaching, which occurs when warm temperatures rob the living coral of nutrition.

But professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, from the University of Queensland's Centre for Marine Studies, said yesterday that samples he had collected from the various parts of the reef showed the fears were unfounded.

Professor Hoegh-Guldberg's survey showed coral north of the Keppel Islands near Rockhampton had escaped bleaching, and less than 1 per cent of the outer reef had been affected.



Photo provided by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows a mound several feet high of star-lobed coral at Buck Island Reef National Monument in St. Croix, Virgin Island, that was bleached and stressed in the fall of 2005, because of record-hot waters in the Caribbean. In Puerto Rico, colonies of 800-year-old star lobed coral died from the bleaching. Photo: AP [Photo Gallery](#)

"I was surprised about the fact that we had some bleaching within the coastal regions, but it wasn't as bad as we'd seen in the Keppel Islands (previously)," he told ABC TV. Probably about 1000sqkm of reef has experienced moderate to severe bleaching but, given the size of the Great Barrier Reef, this is quite a minimal impact."

In January, the professor's team at the University of Queensland had initially been concerned that the 2005-06 summer could be a repeat of 2001-02, when more than half the reef was bleached and between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of the coral died.

The concern had arisen after above-average sea temperatures had been recorded through the summer months.

"This year we are worried because we have higher (temperature) anomalies which may result in greater damage," Professor Hoegh-Guldberg said at the time.

But their concerns proved unfounded, confirming the views last month of scientist Peter Ridd, who said the Great Barrier Reef was one of the world's most resilient ecosystems.

"The only place that's probably better is Antarctica," said Dr Ridd, from Townsville's James Cook University.

A spokesman for conservation organisation WWF, Richard Leck, still offered a warning if ocean temperatures rose.

"By 2050, unless we build the resistance of the reef, we will be faced with a pretty diminished resource," Mr Leck said.

Any damage to the reef would hurt the economies of Queensland and Australia.

The reef is worth \$5.8 billion to the national economy, employs more than 60,000 people and is visited by more than two million tourists each year.

Scientists are urging state and federal governments to reduce greenhouse emissions to avoid the bleaching that hit east Africa in 1998, when 50 per cent of its reefs were lost.

Three strong quakes kill 50, injure 850 in Iran

Tehran, March. 31 (AP): Three strong earthquakes followed by several aftershocks jolted western Iran overnight and early Friday, killing at least 50 people and injuring at least 850 more, state media reported.

The initial quake of magnitude 4.7 struck a mountainous region in western Iran late Thursday. It was followed by a quake of magnitude 5.1 that struck Boroujerd and Doroud, two industrial cities in western Iran, at 11:06 p.m. local time Thursday (1936 GMT), state television said.

A third temblor of magnitude 6.0 hit Doroud and surrounding villages at 4:47 a.m. local time (0117 GMT) on Friday, the television reported.

In all, 12 aftershocks had been registered since the first quake, said Nabi Bidhendi, head of Tehran University's Geophysics Institute.

The quake in the middle of the night caused panic, with citizens in Doroud running out of their homes. Many spent the night in open space, residents said.

"We are afraid to get back home. I spent the night with my family and guests in open space last night," Doroud resident Mahmoud Chaharmiri told The Associated Press by telephone.

Such quakes have killed thousands of people in the past in the Iranian countryside where houses are often built of bricks, but did not initially appear to cause such widespread devastation this time, Chaharmiri said.

The epicenter was in the mountainous villages south of Boroujerd and north of Doroud in western Iran.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported a 5.7-magnitude quake at 4:47 a.m., followed by a 4.7-magnitude 15 minutes later. Their epicenters were 210 miles (340 kilometers) southwest of Tehran.

The area had been hit by a 4.7-magnitude quake the day before, the USGS said.

A total of 50 bodies had been pulled out of destroyed houses in Silakhor, a region north of Doroud, state television said. Most of the 850 people injured were in bed when the quake struck.

In all, 200 villages were damaged by the quake, some of them totally flattened, said provincial official Ali Barani.

Barani told IRNA that rescue teams had been sent to the region to help the survivors. He said survivors were in urgent need of blankets, tents and food.

First television images of the quake showed survivors standing next to their destroyed houses in villages north of Doroud. The television also showed dozens of sheep and goats killed by the quake.

Barani said hospitals in the cities of Doroud and Boroujerd were full to their capacity and could not receive further injured, the television reported.

Officials also called on doctors and nurses on leave to get back to work to help treat the injured. Iranians are celebrating Nowruz, or new year, and most government offices are closed and their staff on holiday.

Doroud governor Nasrollah Rashno told IRNA that the quake damaged buildings in rural areas and cut telephone lines.

In February 2005, a 6.4-magnitude quake rocked the town of Zarand in southern Iran, killing 612 people and injuring more than 1,400.

A magnitude-6.6 quake flattened the historic southeastern city of Bam in the same region in December 2003, killing 26,000 people.

Iran is located on seismic fault lines and is prone to earthquakes. It experiences at least one slight earthquake everyday on average.

Cyclone hits Aus town

Friday, March 31, 2006 (Perth):

The remote northwest Australian fishing town of Onslow was lashed by torrential rains and winds as tropical cyclone Glenda crossed the coast on Thursday.

The city's power generator was broken and a small fire broke out in a cyclone shelter, but there were no reported injuries, State Emergency Service spokesperson Cheryl Greenough said today.

She said there were no reports of substantial damage, despite Onslow being in the storm's direct path.

Cyclone Glenda first hit land along the sparsely populated Pilbara coast, about 1,000 km north of the state capital Perth, at about 4 pm local time (0800 GMT). Its full fury hit Onslow at about 7 pm (1100 GMT). (AP)

*Compiled by
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