

Will it ever end?



Matt Rohr pushed snow off a driveway at 418 W. 12th Sunday afternoon after a storm dumped seven inches of snow on Goodland. Rohr said he was plowing snow to earn some money.

Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

Legislators continue discussions

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outage affecting about 75,000 Northern California customers.

Vice President Dick Cheney said the federal government will "do those things that we can to help, but the basic problem in California was caused by California." He said on ABC's "This Week" that the problem was California's flawed deregulation scheme and its cumbersome process for approving new power plants.

State legislators continued discussions Sunday on two bills that deal with the financially strapped PG&E and SoCal Edison.

The two companies say they have lost \$12 billion because they have paid sharply increased amounts for wholesale electricity while the state limits what they can charge their customers for that power.

One bill would authorize the state to step in and buy power from wholesalers under long-term contracts and sell it to PG&E and Edison customers. The other would provide the utilities with help in exchange for compensation.

The governor said Friday he prefers a plan under which rate payers or the state would receive stock options that could be cashed in when the utilities' financial condition improved. Davis is

expected to receive a state audit on the utilities' finances early this week.

Also this week, the state Public Utilities Commission could consider a proposal by PG&E that would require one of its counterparts, Southern California Gas Co., to buy natural gas for 3.8 million PG&E customers.

PG&E, in a filing earlier this month, warned the PUC that it could be forced to cut off gas service to hundreds of thousands of Northern California residents because of concerns about its stability.

PG&E is also asking the PUC to allow it to put gas suppliers first in line for payment to try to assure the gas companies that they will be paid.

Hope for survivors dwindling

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ing rare.

"Hope of finding survivors is dwindling hour by hour, but as long as there is hope, we won't give up," said Joachim Ahrens, spokesman for a Swiss government agency responsible for a rescue team in Bhuj. "The hopes are dwindling but they are not yet dead."

By official count, Friday's 7.9-magnitude quake had killed 6,287 people in the industrial state of Gujarat in western India, and the state's chief minister, Keshubhai Patel, said the toll could go as high as 20,000.

Tremors lasting up to 30 seconds continued to shake India today, panicking residents but causing no new damage beyond minor cracks in buildings. A magnitude-4.3 quake struck in the morning near Bangalore, a city 850 miles southeast of Friday's epicenter.

In the first estimate of the damage, the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry put losses at \$5.5 billion, in addition to a daily production loss of \$111 million, Secretary General Amit Mitra said.

Clearly overwhelmed, the government said Sunday it would ask for a \$1.5 billion loan from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for reconstruction.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, touring the devastation in Gujarat state today, announced a federal relief grant of \$108 million and an additional \$3 million from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

He added that he was creating a national disaster agency to ensure immediate response to emergencies. "The country is not ready to face such disasters."

Survivors today complained that

confusion and a lack of equipment was hampering search efforts. Rescuers lacked cranes, bulldozers and generators for lights. Soldiers were beginning searches at first light and stopping when the sun set.

"They work from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. only. This is emergency duty. They should work round the clock," said Pradeep Sheth, 46, who was rescued from under the rubble after seven hours.

Sheth, whose wife, mother and two daughters were still trapped in the debris, wondered how soldiers would clear the rubble. "There are live people trapped inside. We can hear their sounds," he said.

Survivors huddled in open fields, wrapped in blankets. Some organized free kitchens, cooking rice, vegetables and lentils in huge vats.

"We have only ourselves to turn to," said Ramiklal Jaisa, 72. He and 5,000 others have been camping in a field since Friday.

Vajpayee visited Bhuj Military Hospital as doctors performed abdominal surgery on a 4-year-old child pulled from the rubble Sunday. The people of Gujarat "are not alone in this. There are plans being drafted for rehabilitation and reconstruction of this area," a grim-faced Vajpayee said.

The United States on Sunday announced it would donate \$5 million to the rescue efforts.

In New Delhi, Agriculture Minister Bhaskar Barua appealed today to private aid groups for field hospitals, clothing, cranes and other equipment to help clear debris.

Two navy hospital ships and a third vessel equipped with medical equipment, blankets and tents were dispatched from Bombay, he said. About 750 doctors and other health workers, more than 5,000 rescue workers and

dozens of bulldozers have been sent, he said.

Pakistan will send a plane loaded with blankets and tents to neighboring India, the Pakistani foreign minister said, after New Delhi relented and agreed today to accept aid from Islamabad — an uneasy neighbor against whom it has fought three wars. As many as 18 people in Pakistan died in the quake.

As grieving relatives burned their dead in pyres in Gujarat's stricken towns, workers took heart from the occasional rescues.

Sunday night, they called into the concrete wreckage of a seven-story apartment building in Bhuj, thinking they heard the voice of a woman named Meeraben.

"Can you hear me? Meeraben, are you there?" called an army rescue worker, bending low to an 8-inch opening in the debris.

After a pause, a faint voice responded. It was Meeraben's neighbor, Kusumben Myacha, who for three days had been pinned under a massive chunk of cement without food or water, praying to her Hindu gods.

"Kusumben is alive ... Kusumben is alive!" shouted a girl pushing through the crowd. Workers pulled away concrete and metal slabs with their bare hands.

Today, Myacha, 40, recounted how the quake struck when she was in the bedroom of her first-floor apartment. Her husband and their children escaped before the collapse.

"When the quake started I thought I was dead," she said from a bed in a makeshift hospital. During her ordeal, she said, she recited verses from "Hanuman Chalisa," a holy book dedicated to a Hindu god revered for his bravery and loyalty and recited by Hindus to ward off danger.

Community group says law discriminates

WICHITA (AP) — A community group is claiming that a new Kansas law discriminates against some Hispanics who want to get drivers' licenses.

Sunflower Community Action had planned a meeting in Wichita Saturday with hopes of educating the public about the law, which went into effect last July. The law allows workers at

Division of Motor Vehicles offices to require people seeking a license to provide proof of legal residency. Proof could be in the form of a passport or documentation that shows refugee or resident status.

"It's hurting a lot of people, a lot of good people, who are just working and trying to survive," said Emira Palacios, a leader with Sunflower.

"It's like a double standard," Palacios said. Undocumented people "can get a tax I.D. number to pay their taxes, yet they cannot get a driver's license to drive to work. It's wrong."

The Kansas law, which is modeled after one in Colorado, originated as a bill introduced by former Sen. Ben Vidricksen of Salina.

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