

A 'Shradhanjali' for Gujarat February 24, 2001

By J.M. SHENOY

When we created TiE , one of our goals was wealth creation," muses Bakul Joshi on a tony California Sunday afternoon at the Swami Narayan Mandir in Milpitas.

"We wanted to create entrepreneurship. Now, we are learning about creating social entrepreneurship," says Joshi, one of the leaders of The Indus Entrepreneurs, or TiE.

He was participating in a shraddhanjali (condolence meeting) for the Gujarat earthquake victims organized by Swami Narayanis (and their association BAPS Care), TiE and over two dozen San Francisco Bay area organizations.

The theme of the shraddhanjali was not just reiterating the community's commitment to rehabilitate the earthquake-devastated regions of Gujarat. It will take at least 15 years to rehabilitate quake-stricken Gujarat, speaker after speaker told more than 150 people gathered at the Swami NarayanMandir. "We cannot be complacent."

The response to the earthquake relief has brought the community even closer than the Kargil war did, many people feel. "Kargil showed how our community could come out in the open in big numbers and support India," says Jeevan Zutshi, a community leader and President of Indo-American Community Federation based in Fremont. "We have built on that unity and we are showing a great sense of urgency."

The Milpitas event was among over a dozen similar events held across America in which a wide swathe of the Indian community reaffirm edits desire to carry on with the fund-raising events.

The Gujarati Cultural Association in San Jose, for instance, organized a movie marathon at Naz 8 Cinema, which is owned by a Pakistani businessman, in Fremont. About \$10,000 was raised. Plans are a foot to hold similar marathons in other cities.

On February 28, Indian-Americans are holding a rally in Washington to urge the American government to allot at least \$100 million (apart from the \$10 million already committed) for Gujarat. Several Republican and Democrat Congressmen who criticized the George W Bush administration for not doing enough for Gujarat are expected to address the gathering.

"Republican and Democrat activists in the Indian American community are joining hands for this effort", says Krishna Srinivasa, Atlanta-based businessman and community activist. "We are speaking with one voice".

On March 2, TiE and several other organizations will be hosting a fund-raiser in San Jose that is expected to raise \$2 million. "Everyone connected with the organization is coming free", said Raj Desai from TiE. "That includes former president Bill Clinton, artistes from India and the US including Shabana Azmi and Sharon Stone".