

# MUNICIPALITY PERMIT NOT SOUGHT BEFORE ILL-FATED BRIDGE WAS REOPENED: OFFICIALS

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Disaster and disaster management

Scouring for life:Rescue personnel conducting search operations after the suspension bridge collapsed in Morbi town of Gujarat on Sunday.AFP

Municipal officials of Morbi in Gujarat have alleged that no permission was sought from the civic body for reopening the suspension bridge that collapsed on Sunday.

It has emerged that after the renovation by private contractor Oreva Group, no safety audit was conducted.

With the reopening marked by a gala ceremony, it is unlikely that the event did not come to the notice of the administration which, according to Opposition party leaders, should have put a stop to any use of the bridge without requisite permissions.

“The Chief Minister is also the Urban Development Minister of the State and this is under his jurisdiction, so he must be sacked immediately,” Congress leader Pawan Khera told presspersons in Ahmedabad.

## No clarity

It is unclear how the Oreva Group managed to get the contract to maintain a historic bridge that required special expertise and attention given its age and the extensive damage it had suffered in an earthquake of 2001.

The Gujarat government has made no statement on the issue and no statement was forthcoming from the Oreva Group from Morbi or from their corporate office in Ahmedabad. Its main promoter Jaisukh Patel was not reachable. The police have arrested two senior managers of the firm.

Meanwhile, the tragedy remained the focal point of political developments on Monday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressing condolences in a choked speech in three political events in various parts of the State. The Prime Minister is scheduled to visit the site and will likely meet the families of victims on Tuesday afternoon.

## Roadshow cancelled

On Monday, he first attended the celebrations of National Ekta Diwas at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, then launched some development projects at Tharad and also inaugurated projects of the Railways in Ahmedabad.

The Prime Minister's roadshow in Ahmedabad was cancelled in the wake of the tragedy in Morbi.

Mr. Modi also held a review meeting at the Raj Bhavan in Gandhinagar and directed officials that all possible assistance be provided to families affected by the tragedy. The meeting was attended by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi, Chief Secretary Pankaj Kumar and Gujarat Director General of Police Ashish Bhatia, along with other

top officials.

Top Congress leaders, including Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, visited Morbi to meet the families of the victims and demanded strong action against those who had been negligent.

*(With PTI inputs)*

Neither the Gujarat government nor the Oreva Group has made a statement on the maintenance of the bridge

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