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Expert decries inaction on building earthquake-resistance structures in city

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Ahmedabad Nothing much has changed since January 2001 when the earthquake created havoc in Ahmedabad as far as the state of earthquake-resistant buildings here is concerned. If the situation then can be graded as two on the scale of 10, today it can at best be graded at four.

Sudhir Jain, Director, Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IIT-G) and a globally respected expert in Earthquake Engineering with more than 150 research papers to his credit, claimed the above in Ahmedabad on Thursday. Jain made his observations while delivering a lecture on 'Rehabilitation of Earthquake Damaged Structures.'

Jain, who also unveiled his Rapid Visual Screening (RVS) method while outlining seismic retrofitting methodologies, said: "RVS was developed with the help of CEPT University in Ahmedabad where we studied 270 buildings that were damaged during the 2001 earthquake. It's a method of cumulative assessment of about 10 parameters, and assessing the possible damage to a building in case of earthquake."

Since RVS takes only 15-20 minutes to assess a building, once standardised, it will be a very beneficial tool for all the structural engineers, claimed the IIT-G's director.

Blaming the real estate boom for much of the negligence, Jain also highlighted the two fundamental problems in building earthquake-resistant structures.

He noted, "Firstly, there is no 'competence-based licensing', as a result, non-competent persons are designing buildings. Secondly, there is no legal framework to fix responsibility on the defaulting parties, whose sole intention is to earn profits."

Jain also proposed solutions like mandatory adherence to Indian Earthquake Code, generating community awareness, strict measures like de-licensing the defaulting professionals, among others to improve the prevailing situation.