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Page: p. 55 – 57

REVIEWS

NEPAL CRISIS A CALL TO UNITE MULTILATERALLY AGAINST NATURAL DISASTERS TO PROTECT REGIONAL ECONOMIES FROM FALLING

Text by Harsha Udayakantha Peiris / Pictures courtesy of Asian Productivity Organization



Bhaktapur used to have the best preserved palace courtyards and old city center in Nepal, and is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO for its rich culture, temples, and wood, metal and stone artworks. The Nepal earthquake that struck on 25th April 2015 damaged most of the historic town of Bhaktapur.

ON 25th April 2015 Nepal was hit by a devastating earthquake. Later it was named as the Gorkha earthquake. The devastating tremor that centred in Western Nepal killed more than 8,790 people and injured more than 22,300 creating a huge damage to property and world heritage monuments. The earthquake occurred at 11:56 NST on the day with a magnitude of 7.8 Mw.

THE FIRST 24 HOURS

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck 80 km east of Pokhara in Nepal, devastated the country causing human casualties and other damages across the Himalayan nation. Nepal required immediate international help. The Indian Air Force, and the Army immediately sent search and rescue teams to Nepal. Medical assistance and heavy equipment for rescue operations were also arriving in

Nepal from India. The exact number of lives lost and the damages were yet to be ascertained by that time. There was a communication breakdown due to destruction of infrastructure. Estimates suggested that the death toll would be more than 1000 lives at the time. Chances were that this number could dramatically increase in the hours to come as information came in. During this national crisis, Nepal that was largely unprepared for a situation like this was struggling to coordinate an emergency response. So far, the AHRC had received information that health workers, the Red Cross, police, army, the civil society and members of the public were involved in rescuing and assisting those in need. Hospitals were filled with injured, and most patients were treated outside in the open due to the fear of aftershocks. Fearing aftershocks people

had taken refuge in open areas. With night fast approaching and heavy rains in the horizon the first night after the quake was going to be one of the worst for all in Nepal. It was a devastating earthquake after more than 80 years of the recent history of Nepal. That night and the following days were the most strenuous for authorities in Nepal.

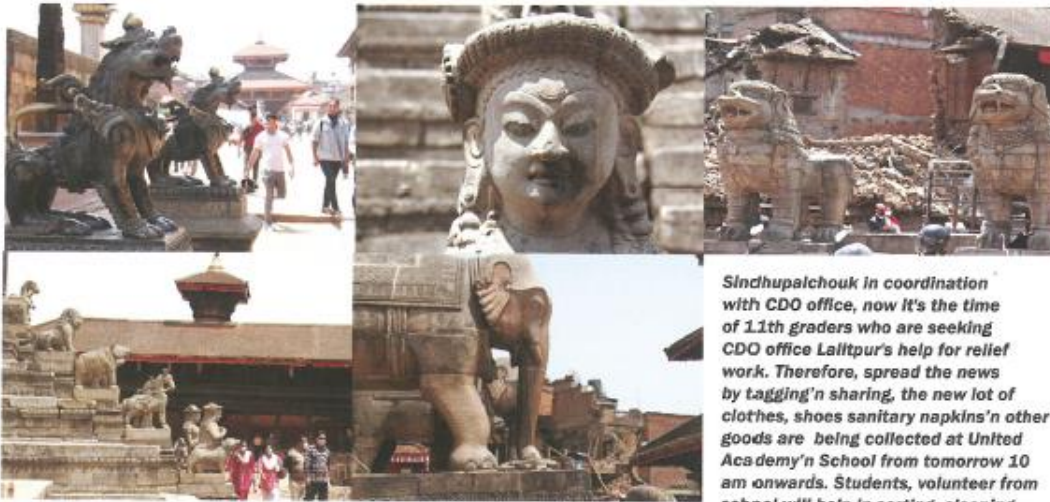
COLLABORATIVE EXERCISES BRING COMMUNICATION TOGETHER TO ASSIST

During this hour of crisis, the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) called upon the international community, and international agencies to assist Nepal unconditionally. The Nepal Minister for Information Minendra Rijal had made a call for international support. He said that Nepal needed support from various international agencies which were more



Damages to World Heritage sites in Patan City after the 25th April 2015 Nepal earthquake

JULY - AUGUST 2015 • SRI LANKA THE TREASURE ISLAND • 55



Some images the of the world heritage site in Bhaktapur badly damaged by the earth quake

knowledgeable, and equipped to handle the kind of emergency the Nation had faced. " Nepal and Nepalese people need your support during this hour of crisis," he urged.

This major quake was then followed by more than hundred aftershocks. For days people stayed outside their homes both day and night fearing another major hit. Before people could recover, a second major earthquake occurred on 12 May 2015 at 12:35 NST with a moment magnitude of 7.3 Mw. Tremors were felt through the region. More than 80 people were killed and around 2,000 were injured by this aftershock. This latest earthquake hit near the town of Namche Bazar, near Mount Everest. The tremor was felt as far away as the Indian capital Delhi, as well as Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The same created strong tremors for a second time in the capital of Nepal, Kathmandu, which was badly damaged in the previous month's earthquake. **"This is a really big one,"** Prakash Shilpakar, the owner of a craft shop in Kathmandu, told the Reuters news agency. Reports said people rushed from buildings in Kathmandu as the quake struck at 12:35 local time (07:50 GMT). The epicenter of the latest earthquake was 83km (52 miles) east of Kathmandu, in a rural area close to the Chinese border. It struck at a depth of 18.5km (11.5 miles), according to the US Geological Survey.

To date, people are unable to properly plan and start rebuilding and are now lost due to continued daily aftershocks.

Soon after the first major hit in April, Kedar Bhattarai the Associate Editor, 'Gorkhapatra Daily' who experienced the devastation and the shock of it reported that casualties were being found around Kathmandu and mostly the western part of Nepal. **"We have no electricity, no water and we all are under open sky,"** he mentioned in his immediate FB Chat.

After the first major hit Shubhendru Parth Deputy Editor at 'Governance Now' in India, writing from his country said that the Indian Parliament had taken resolution to put in all efforts in Nepal and Spain had sought India's help to evacuate their citizens from Nepal.

"My home state Bihar has been badly hit... But my friends and relatives are safe... Other states like West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi felt the tremors... Not much damage though," he tweeted.

"Doctors are still working in

Sindhupalchouk in coordination with CDO office, now it's the time of 11th graders who are seeking CDO office Lalitpur's help for relief work. Therefore, spread the news by tagging'n sharing, the new lot of clothes, shoes sanitary napkins'n other goods are being collected at United Academy'n School from tomorrow 10 am onwards. Students, volunteer from school will help in sorting, cleaning, folding, packing'n stamping goods and United Academy students will take responsibility of field survey and coordination, with local bodies'n distribution. Good going kids ! U r all patriots in true sense'n I salute your feeling for our country'n countrymen. Love u all, God bless u all !" Seema Rana Sangpang writing on FB on 4th May 2015 at 7.20pm local time from Chapagaon, Nepal shared her experience with fans.

A special convoy of SL Army had been deployed to assist urgent facilitation for the Nepalese quake victims. The Government of Sri Lanka had also urged any voluntary doctors and nurses to accompany the fleet to assist Nepal quake victims. Several radio and television networks in Sri Lanka had also come forward to collaborate and coordinate citizens to help Nepal at this hour of distress. Accordingly, the most required donations from Sri Lankan citizens were to be air lifted to Nepal the following day. Rev.Banagala



Pictures indicating rural villages in worse condition. Some villages were completely destroyed and villagers whose houses were destroyed had little choice but to sleep outdoors

Upatissa had also commenced another programme with the assistance of government authorities to send the most required supplies to Nepal during the days that followed.

DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURE CROPS

Joselito C. Bernado – Director of the Agriculture Department of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) visited Nepal soon after the devastation.

He stated that the farmers were in dire need of support as they suffered the loss of seeds of paddy just before the time of plantation as the devastation occurred.

“As farmers have lost their livestock, they need support from national and international sector to continue their life as normal,” he added. He also said that he would work towards enhancing the capacity of farmers in Nepal.

DAMAGE TO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The devastating Nepal quake made massive damages and destruction to a number of World Heritage Sites and tourist attractions in the country such as the Kathmandu Durbar Square, the Bhaktapur Durbar Square, the Changu Narayan Temple, the Lalitpur Durbar Square, the Pashupatinath Temple – the main temple remained intact though some of the other temples on that area collapsed, the premises where Boudhanath Stupa exists – the main Stupa remained intact, and some of other temples on that area collapsed and the Lord Swayambhu Nath temple area with no damage to the main temple but several other temples on that area.

GEOLOGISTS' VIEW

Geologists now say that this latest trend of series of earth quakes are resulting the creation of new plates in the geo-platform in the region. Even Sri Lanka is not safe anymore under such circumstances. “The latest geo-separation zone is located only 500-700km from Sri Lanka. It has started separation for more than 50 million years ago. It can sustain for the next 10 million years. Before the separation, it creates an unstable geo-zone that makes a huge area to split across and the sequence has already started in the Indo-Australian geo-platform. This initiation can have a greater impact even causing massive earth slips that occur time to time in the Central Hills in Sri Lanka,” says Geologist Prof.C.B.Dissanayake.

“The overall instability being created

thereby will open more avenues to make the region a major earth quake prone zone,” geologists fear. There is a report in Portugal that says a major quake that shook Colombo on 15th April 1615 had killed over 200 people and damaged a vast amount of property.

CALL TO UNITE MULTILATERALLY

Time has reached therefore, for all to think innovatively in collaboration of the oncoming danger. Geologists and scientists should start acknowledging the masses at large and more and more about any future situation that can arise from such natural disasters. Constructors, planners, civil engineers and architects should newly think of the latest modes of building construction methodologies from domestic to sky-riser levels. Extra precautionary procedures should be introduced to safe guard world heritage sites in the regional economies from sudden natural disasters as such sites play a major role in boosting national economy via the industry of travel and tourism.

MAKING SL READY A TIMELY NECESSITY

Greater lessons should be learned especially from frequently earth quake prone countries in the region and about their experienced procedures of disaster management and preparation to minimize damage to life and property. International television channels such as the NHK frequently shares experiences with the rest of the world on how Japan has implemented a number of successful innovative programmes to reawake the nation after the great eastern Tsunami disaster in Sendai prefecture. Sri Lanka should also share such programmes and make them educational avenues at home and school to prepare the nation for an unexpected natural devastation in any time in future.

After all, helping each other should not be taught, limited experienced only at home or school and among the local communities any more. With the latest disaster in Nepal, there is a call for multilateral sharing of resources, intellect and manpower for caring and assisting to rebuild. And being a country with a huge potential of resources, a diverse industry of agriculture, historic venues, several World Heritage Sites and industries that considerably contribute to the national economy via the trade of travel and tourism and related segments, Sri Lanka should also pay a wider attention towards the

recent Nepal crisis as the island too has the potential to be included in the target area of such natural disasters in the region. Therefore, the authorities should made citizens vigilant and timely acknowledged of such devastations and management of such situations with lessons learnt from the past and present incidents that shook the island and neighborhood. Nepal crisis is the latest challenge against regional economies to start learning, experiencing and sharing it collaboratively, helping to rebuild lives, hopes and dreams of Nepal, the land of temples and gentle people.

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