

Messaging: Right Honorable Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala

### Earthquake Safety Day 1999

#### Message from

## PM Koirala

On the occasion of first Earthquake Safety Day 1999, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said in a message, "since Nepal lies in the seismic high risk zone, frequent occurrence of tremors in the future cannot be ruled out. Although, earthquake cannot be prevented, its impact can be mitigated and in the present context this is quite important."

Stressing the need for serious efforts from local, national and international levels for mitigating the damages caused by earthquake, the Prime Minister said there are many basic things the government has to do to reduce the effects of earthquake by remaining within the limits of the resources available.

He also paid tributes to known and unknown persons who lost their lives in past earthquakes.

### Message from ESDNC Chairman

Earthquake Safety Day National Committee chairman and Minister for Science and Technology Bhim Bhadur Rawal said in a message that the science has not yet been able to prevent earthquake nor can tremors be predicted, in such a situation earthquake has been a serious challenge to developing countries like Nepal which has in high risk seismic zone.

He also called on all sectors associated with development and construction to give priority to earthquake resistance/safety measures in their work.



## A MILESTONE

*Nepal has observed first Earthquake Safety Day on January 16, 1999 to create awareness on earthquake safety and preparedness. Sixty five years earlier i.e. on January 16, 1934 (Magh 2, 1990 Bikram Sambat) Nepal experienced a devastating earthquake. More than eight thousand people lost their lives, and huge loss of property was experienced in that disaster. Nepal is situated in earthquake prone zone. Therefore tremors are not new things for Nepal. But the earthquake of 1934 measuring 8.4 on the Richter scale was devastating. In 1988 also Nepal experienced smaller but another devastating earthquake that claimed 721 lives and 5 billion Rupees worth of properties.*

*Being an earthquake prone country it is very important and essential to create awareness among the people as well as policy makers, about such disasters, so that they can mitigate the adverse impact and cope better with the potentially tragic situation. Keeping this reality in mind, His Majesty's Government has decided NSET's request to observe the second day of month of Magh as Earthquake Safety Day, annually. Apart from creating*

*awareness about earthquakes, the theme of the day was to share knowledge and information about safety measure and disaster management.*

*The event was observed this for three days. Program included paying tribute to the victims of past earthquakes, awareness rally, public function, earthquake safety exhibition, earthquake photo exhibition, street drama, emergency treatment demonstration, essay and art competition on earthquake safety themes.*

*NSET-Nepal has played a key role to make the program a success. The strong support from government and non-government sectors were the pillars of the success. It was really a new experience for the people of Kathmandu Valley. So they participated with full enthusiasm. The active participation of foreign participants was also notable.*

*Nepal has started its long journey of raising awareness of public and policy makers an earthquake safety and preparedness. First Earthquake Safety Day has proved itself as a first mile stone of the journey.*

## First Earthquake Safety Day Inaugurated by Prime Minister

*Kathmandu Jan 16:*

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala inaugurated the national ceremony of the First Earthquake Safety Day held in the capital today. The event with the objectives of educating the residents and leaders of Kathmandu Valley about earthquakes, safety ideas from the natural disaster and the work of many institutions which have been working on disaster management in Kathmandu Valley, was jointly organized by Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Society for Earthquake Technology – Nepal (NSET-Nepal).

As long as man does not realize that nature is a part of his life, disasters will continue to haunt human – civilization, said Koirala, the chief guest of the program. The more man becomes arrogant about his technological developments, the more he gets backfired from the nature. But of course, if used properly, technology can help reduce the adverse impact of natural calamities, he added.

The Premier, while addressing the inaugural ceremony also remembered the day in 1934 when a major earthquake had hit Nepal that resulted into the death of more than 7500 people. "We were studying outdoors in our school when a swarming-bees-like cows, does among others, began to behave strangely. At a distance I could see cloud of dust emerging from different buildings that had collapsed due to the tremor," he remembered.

In today's context, said Koirala, we can basically take two preventive measures against such major earthquakes, first people should be made aware about earthquakes and second, the government and local bodies as Municipalities should make construction rules mandatory so as to make buildings capable of resisting earthquakes.

Earlier, Prime Minister Koirala affixed the postage cancellation marks on special covers to mark the Earthquake Safety Day and gave away prizes to award winning students in earthquake related essay writing and painting

competitions. He also released two publications of Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project (KVERMP): The Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Action Plan and The Earthquake Scenario for Kathmandu Valley.

Bhim Bahadur Rawal, Minister of Science and Technology, who chaired the program, said that the risk of a major earthquake has remarkably increased in the capital. "The government will be serious on the implementation of the suggestions made by the two publications of KVERMP released today. The Ministry of Science and Technology will try its best to co-ordinate among the different organizations involved in the earthquake safety measures," he added.

Member Secretary of the Earthquake Safety Day National Committee, Punya Prasad Neupane stressed on the preventive measures to reduce the casualties and property loss from earthquakes. "Nepal is an earthquake-prone area and, more importantly, the risk of the tremor-caused ruins is seriously on the rise," he added.

Explaining his organization's objective as safety of the society, Amod M. Dixit, Project Director of KVERMP and Secretary General of NSET-Nepal, said that the Action Plan produced by his project was the result of an integrated effort of 90 organizations-including both government and non government. 'A sound coordination among all the organizations involved can lead to the reduction of the devastating impact of earthquakes.' Dave Hollister Director of Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Bangkok expressed his happiness over the inaugural ceremony of the First Earthquake Safety Day in Nepal. 'It is good to see such awareness creating program taking place in Nepal.'

Brian E. Tucker, President of Geohazards International, a non-profit making corporation based in the USA, had some alarming points in his speech. 'If the shaking of the 1934 earthquake were to occur again today,

thousands of people will die; tens of thousands will be injured and hundreds of thousands will be homeless. The success of today's inaugural ceremony is the first step toward earthquake safety.'

Renowned building expert Dr. Ananda S. Arya, Professor Emeritus with University of Roorkee, India, expressed his happiness over the formation of NSET. 'We had suggested the formation of such a body when we were working with the National Building Code Project



Earthquake Awareness rally

in the past,' he said adding 'if building by laws are made mandatory, the new constructions can be saved from seismic destruction.'

Other foreign guests representing various international organizations involved in earthquake safety programs expressed their views during the programme. Following the inaugural ceremony, an exhibition on earthquake-related issues was made public and a street drama on the earthquake disaster was also presented.

### Prize Winners

#### Essay Competition

- First - Mr. Prasanna Kafle, *Shree High School, Udaypur*  
 Second - Mr. Prakash Shakya, *Manakamana H.S., Kathmandu*  
 Third - Mr. Sanjeev Shrestha, *Janata H.S., Palpa*

#### Art Competition

- First - Miss Rashmi Amatya, *Nightingale Intl. School, Lalitpur*  
 Second - Miss Samjhana Khatri, *Lalitkala School, Kathmandu*  
 Third - Sidhartha Shrestha, *Sitaram H.S., Kathmandu*  
 Consolation - Khem Singh Gurung, *Basanta Ritu School, Kathmandu*

## From Kathmandu Valley's Earthquake Scenario

The following earthquake scenario describes the possible physical damage and social impact due to earthquake shaking similar to that which occurred in the 1934 earthquake of Kathmandu Valley.

### BHAICHA'S STORY



Earthquake Awareness  
Scenario Hand Book

Version in English and Nepali

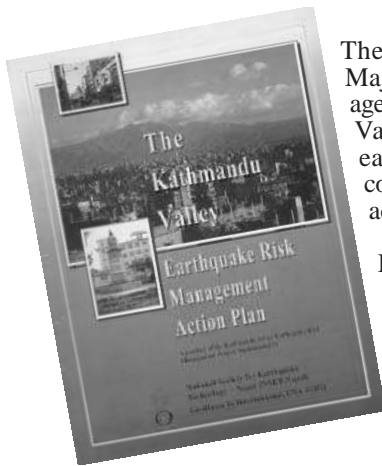
#### Bhaich is running.....

Bhaich is a friendly, lower middle-class man who works as a clerk in a financial company. He is riding his bicycle on an errand for his branch chief. As he reaches Durbar Marg, his bicycle suddenly loses its balance and he falls over. Bhaicha is confused because his bicycle has not collided with anything, nor has it hit a bump in the road. He notices that other people around him have also fallen down and he is surprised to see that motorbikes and other vehicles are swerving and shaking. While trying to determine what is happening, he hears a low rumbling sound like that of a storm and sees many people running in all directions and he notices the swaying of buildings and trees. Only then he realizes that he is experiencing an earthquake. He

leaves his bicycle on the roadside and starts running. He thinks of his family and, forgetting his errand, runs towards home.

It is difficult to run because the ground is still shaking strongly and there are many frightened and confused people in the streets. A house collapses directly in front of Bhaicha, blocking his path. He realizes that he could be crushed by falling debris and starts to move with a little more caution. Bhaicha is scared, but he stumbles on in the direction he thinks is towards home, trying to avoid other people and falling objects. Bhaicha reaches an open space and stops, unsure of where he is. The shaking has stopped, but the collapsing buildings are no longer recognizable and the air is thick with dust. He takes a deep breath, realizing that it will be difficult to find his way home.

## High Lights of The Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Action Plan



The Kathmandu Valley  
Earthquake Risk  
Management Action Plan

The purpose of this plan is to assist His Majesty's Government of Nepal, concerned agencies, and the municipalities in Kathmandu Valley to reduce Kathmandu Valley's earthquake risk over time by identifying, coordinating and focusing risk management activities.

Eight long-term objectives define a comprehensive program for reducing the risk faced by Kathmandu Valley residents. These objectives incorporate the wide array of needs faced by Kathmandu Valley and recognized the importance of addressing all major aspects of risk.

#### Objectives

1. Improve emergency response planning and capability.
2. Improve awareness of issues related to earthquake risk.
3. Integrate seismic resistance into the process of new construction.
4. Increase the safety of school children and school buildings.
5. Increase the seismic performance of existing buildings.
6. Improve the seismic performance of utility and transportation systems.
7. Increase experts' knowledge of the earthquake phenomena, vulnerability, consequences and mitigation techniques.
8. Improve long-term community recovery following damaging earthquake.

#### Implementation Strategy

##### Building Support for the Plan and Earthquake Risk Management in General

- Using transparent and inclusive processes
- Making decision rationally
- Using open financial policies
- Building relationship with other groups
- Raising general awareness
- Educating decision makers through awareness efforts
- Conducting regular public hearings
- Formally presenting plan to government agencies
- Informing the international community in Kathmandu Valley about the plan

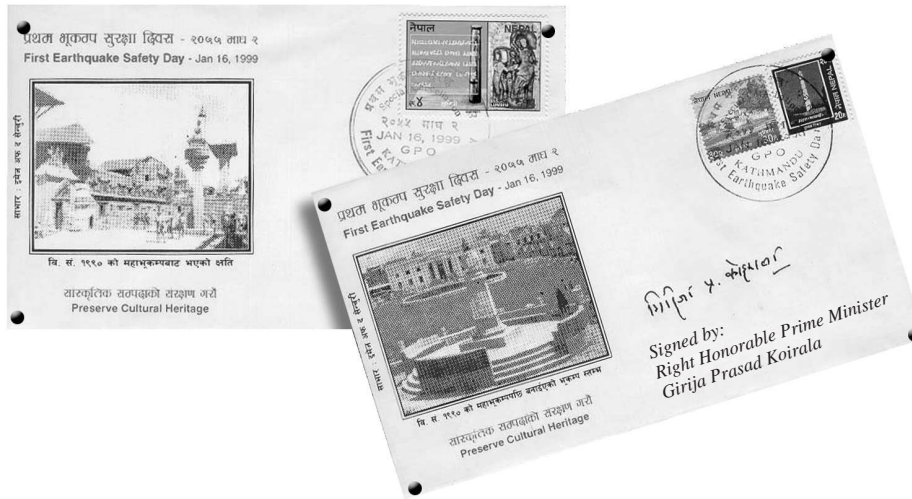
##### Supporting the Individual Initiatives

- Coordination initiatives
- Planning initiatives
- Arranging technical support
- Conducting peer review of initiatives
- Seeking external funding for respective agencies
- Publicizing successful initiatives

##### Keeping the Plan Going

- Monitoring the initiatives annually
- Evaluating the objectives and strategies periodically
- Creating a new edition of the plan periodically

# Clip Board



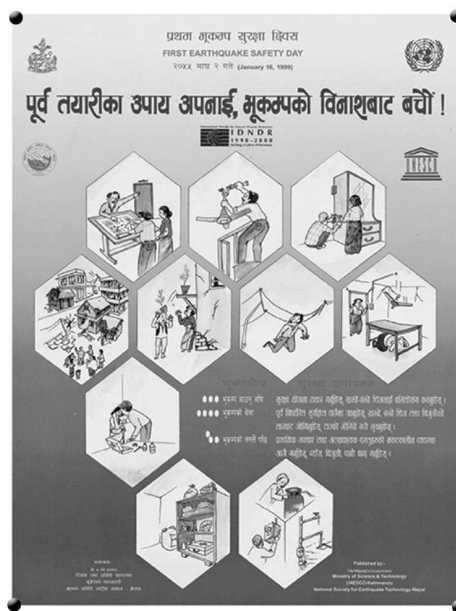
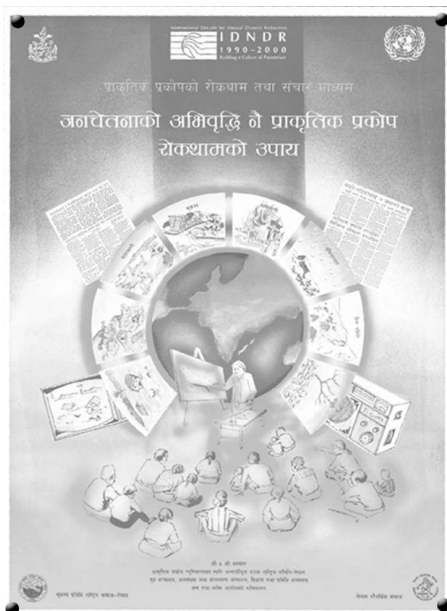
(Top)  
Envelopes published for "First Earthquake Safety Day - July 16 1999."

Signed by: Right Honorable Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala

(Bottom)  
Poster - Natural Disaster Prevention and Communication System

Poster - First Earthquake Safety Day July 16, 1999

# Publications of NSET-Nepal



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