

## Editorial Team

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## Road damage lead towards food crunch

Shortage of food items has hit the mountainous districts of Bajhang and Darchula on the eve of Tihar. Mainly, it is the remote villages of the districts — Gongal, Chaigaun, Sainkhola and Kada — that are facing food scarcity for last one week. One has to walk for 2-3 days from Bajhang district headquarte, Chainpur to reach the VDCs.

In Darchula, main road was damaged in the rainy season, and is one of the main reasons for food shortage. The district is virtually cut off from the headquarters. Road is in poor condition for last three months. Bid to make it operational is being made with the help of a dozer. According to a report, locals of remote villages of Darchula go to Dharchula in India to purchase daily food items.

Food supply in Bajhang district has also been hit due to road damage in Saddy, said DSP Til Bahadur Chand of Regional Police Office, Dipayal. Absence of government officials in the offices like Far Western Regional Office of Dipayal and Food Store room of Chainpur is also causing of food shortage. The locals blame that the officials have not yet returned from the Dashain vacation.

Food shortage during Dashain and Tihar, the greatest festival of Nepal, is an age-old problem in these districts. 'The government has been turning deaf ear to the woes of the villagers,' said Bhanubhakta Joshi, secretary of CPN-UML Bajhang district committee.

*(Posted on 9th November)*

## Disaster risk reduction plan in offing

Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula said that Nepal was on the final stage of formulating national strategic plan on disaster risk reduction to implement Hyogo Framework for Action at the national level. "Nepal has initiated legal reforms to incorporate adequate provision for effective disaster risk reduction," he said.

Addressing at high level 'Second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction' Conference in New Delhi, Minister Sitaula said by being inspired from the global platform, Nepal had established a participatory, professionally competent, high-performing National Program on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in pursuit of mainstreaming DRR on national development framework.

Sitaula has pointed the necessity of collective help for disaster reduction. "The newly established SAARC Disaster Management Center also needs collective support for strengthening its capacity to be transformed into the center of excellence in disaster reduction in the region," he said.

He also said the conference had provided an opportunity to regenerate better understanding, sharing thoughts and exchanging views on wide range of concerns of DRR.

The conference is being organised with the objective of reviewing the Hyogo

## Loss of lives this monsoon

Baglung	29
Banke	28
Gulmi	19
Rautahat	12
Bajura	11
Bardia	10
Sindhuli	10
Darchula	9
Ramechhap	9
Sindhuli	10
Baitadi	8
Dang	8
Pyuthan	7
Salyan	7
Mahottari	7
Siraha	7
Kailali	6
Kaski	6
Makwanpur	6
Udayapur	5
Jajarkot	5
Kalikot	5
Arghakhachi	5
Saptari	5
Jumla	4
Surkhet	4
Jhapa	4
Chitwan	4
Morang	4
Sunsari	4
Nawalparasi	3
Rukum	3
Dhanusha	3
Achham	3
Khotang	2
Bhojpur	2
Panchthar	2
Sarlahi	2
Parsa	2
Palpa	2
Bara	2
Dhading	2
Rupendehi	2

Bajhang	1
Tanahun	1
Sindhupalchowk	1
Lalitpur	1
Dadeldhura	1
Kavre	1
Mustang	1
Myagdi	1

(As of 30th October, 2007)

### Major Displacements

Saptari	10000 family
Siraha	6000 family
Mahottari	3700 family
Bardiya	2500 family
Dhanusha	2050 family
Parsa	2000 family
Rupendehi	2000 family
Sunsari	1000 family
Banke	750 family

Total displacement: 48000 family

Total affected population:

Around 4 lakh 72 thousand (as of 30th October, 2007)

Sources : NRCS, Media reports/MCN

### Disaster Related Reports

[Situation Repot NRCS, 10th Sep](#)

[NRCS Bulletin 21st Aug, 2007](#)

[WHO SITREP \(5-19th Aug,2007\)](#)

[OCHA Situation Report,13th Aug](#)

[WHO SITREP \(4-12 Aug,2007\)](#)

[Sink or Swim \(Oxfam Int\)](#)

[DM Report \(MCN\) 2006](#)

[NRCS Bulletin 29th July, 2007](#)

[Baglung Landslides Report, 2007](#)

[Flood scenario of Saptari,2007](#)

[Report on relief, Mahottari,2007](#)

### Snapshots



Children affected by flooding in remote Western Nepal. (File Photo: Save the Children)

Framework for Action progress, assessing board-based cooperation and collaboration, sharing and exchanging experiences and strategizing for developing a vision and roadmap for the region of Asia pursuit of effective DDR. The conference with the theme 'Development without Disaster' ends Thursday.

(Posted on 9th November)

## Bihar seeks high dams on rivers from Nepal

PATNA: Bihar government has sought the Centre's permission for issuing bonds worth Rs 2,000 crore for reconstruction of infrastructure damaged due to the 'unprecedented' floods this year. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar today said he met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Delhi on Sunday and sought permission for issuing the bonds. Several organisations were ready to subscribe to them.

Kumar, who was speaking after distributing cheques totalling Rs 20 lakh among 936 farmers as input subsidy at Rajopur in Begusarai district, said he had also sought a special economic package of Rs 18,000 crore for infrastructure building. He told the gathering that proposals of Rs 11,000 crore for inter-linking and deepening of river beds, reconstruction of roads, bridges and culverts had already been submitted to the Centre and he had requested the Singh to constitute a special group at the PMO for speedy clearance.

To find a lasting solution to recurrent floods the prime minister had been requested to intervene and get high dams constructed on rivers originating from Nepal. Kumar said 2.1 crore people were affected and Rs 170 crore spent on relief distribution during 2004 floods, while this time a population of 2.5 crore was hit by the deluge and the government had so far spent over Rs 1,300 crore on relief.

The quantity of foodgrain made available to each flood-hit family was hiked to 100 kg from 25 kg. Besides they were also given Rs 250 in cash. The government gave a compensation of Rs 1.5 lakh to the families of each of those killed in the floods, he added. (PTI)

(Posted on 5th November)

## Earthquake shakes central Nepal

A mild earthquake measuring 5 points on the Richter scale shook Kathmandu at 3:40 pm Monday, spreading fear of aftershocks among residents. Shramthali VDC of Nuwakot district that lies 30km north to the capital was the epicenter of the earthquake, according to National Seismological Centre at the Department of Mines and Geology.

Many people rushed out of their homes and offices as the tremors were felt for some four seconds. A couple of mild, immeasurable earthquakes were also experienced after the 5.0 Richter scale earthquakes. However, there are no chances of its going again. "No damage has been reported due to the earthquake, said Mr.Somnath Sapkota, chief of National Seismological Center." Nepal lies in the lap of the Himalayas, which is a high seismic risk zone. Due to Indian tectonic plates sliding 2m north annually, Nepal is considered an earthquake prone region.

The recent earthquakes recorded in Nepal include a 4.0 Richter scale earthquake (epicenter-Dolakha) on October 12, 4.2 Richter scale earthquakes (epicenter - Sarsing, Rasuwa) on September 7, 4.1 Richter scale earthquakes (epicenter-Jugu, Dolakha) on the same day.

## Our Words

Disaster Watch Newsletter is now going to change its pattern. Along with the end of monsoon, daily updates will not be available but new updates will be posted regularly. Disaster Watch Newsletter would be made more interactive henceforth.

We will start regular columns and invite guest, viewers to have their say on different disaster issues. Suggestions and feedbacks would be heartedly appreciated .

## Highlights

Flood hit five thousand family of Mahottari district will soon get food aid worth NRs 20 million from World Food Program. Food aid will be provided for severely ravaged 5758 family which will carry them for one month. (23rd Sep)

Transport service in Jhaukhel VDC-3 of the Changunarayan road section in Sallaghari of Bhaktapur has been closed since 15 days after landslide swept away the road. Following the halt in transport service locals of Changunarayan, Pikhel, Jhaukhel, Duwakot are forced to walk. (22nd Sep)

Advertising Association of Nepal (AAN) and Nepal Telecom (NTC) has extended the time for SMS donation for flood victims to October 17. NTC customers have to SMS 1410 to donate Rs 10 and 1450 to donate Rs 50. In the past one month 37,145 SMS were sent for Rs 10 and 10,262 SMS for Rs 50. (18th Sep)

In a bid to support disaster victims of Nepal, students of Budanilkantha School have organized an art exhibition at Nafa Gallery Kathmandu. Two hundred pictures are being exhibited with the price range NRs 200 to NRS 5000. (16th Sep)

A policeman at the Kirne Post, Surke Majhi, has gone missing in the Tamakoshi river of Sindhupalchowk district. Majhi had gone to the river to take bath at 1:30 pm on Tuesday, but never returned, DSP Surendra Mainali said. (12th Sep)

(Posted on 30th October)

## Landslide ravaged road hassle passengers

Thousands of bus passengers and pedestrians have been bearing insurmountable hassles each day after landslide swept away a 100-meter stretch of the Sunkoshi-Katari section of Siddhicharan Highway in Udayapur district some three months ago. The disruption on the only highway joining the remote districts of mid-eastern Nepal has also posed difficulty in the supply of daily necessities including food, clothes, kerosene and salts to Okhaldhunga, Solukhumbu, Khotang and other adjoining districts.

Locals, bus passengers and transport entrepreneurs blamed the apathy of Department of Road (DoR) for their troubles. They have alleged DoR has not heeded their problems even after repeated delegations for the same.

On July 25 this year, landslide had eroded 40-meter stretch of the road in Thanti area that lies between Lekkhani and Hardini VDC of Udayapur district.

Locals alleged that failure on the part of DoR to respond promptly resulted in damage to an additional 60-meter road stretch.

A large number of women and children traveling through the highway are forced to put their lives at risk as the authority has failed even to construct a foot trail. Eyewitnesses said a youth had fallen to his death some one month ago while crossing the steep hill there. Thanti stretches to 31 km of the 47 km long Katari-Sunkoshi section of Siddhicharan Highway. There are altogether 52 buses to ferry passengers to Thanti area while only three buses are stranded on the other side of the damaged road. This has made thousands of bus passengers walk for 16 km.

Besides ferrying passengers, daily necessities including food, salt, kerosene, sugar and clothes were being transported to Okhaldhunga, Khotang and Solukhumbu districts through the highway since five years ago. Currently, altogether 130 trucks are operating in Katari-Thanti section of the highway.

Transport entrepreneurs vented anger against DOR alleging that the authority had made no substantive effort to repair the road. "They [DoR officials] do not heed our problems no matter how many times we make requests to them. They are turning a deaf ear to the problems of the people," charged Tej Bahadur Sunar, a bus driver associated with the local Haleshi Transport Entrepreneurs' Association.

According to Sunar, altogether 185 buses and trucks have collected Rs 10,000 each to open a temporary path to help passengers and light vehicles cross to the other side of the damaged road.

Meanwhile, DoR said efforts are underway to construct a 15-meter high wall to facilitate the movement of vehicles. "In the beginning, we had planned to set up a 40-meter long bailey bridge. The plan was aborted halfway as landslide swept away 60-meter more of the road stretch," said Tulasi Prasad Sitaula, director general of DoR.

Sitaula claimed that vehicular movement in that road section would soon become normal once the wall construction is completed. "This, however, would be a temporary measure as the road section was badly damaged. We are currently in the process of arranging necessary budget to construct a separate road in that section," he added.

(Posted on 30th October)

Tribhuvan Highway, one of the major roads linking capital with other parts of the country had damaged at the Naubise-Simbhanjyang stretch due to the landslide since Thursday. (7th Sep)

The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers has received Rs. 500,000 from Employees' Provident Fund, for the victims of disaster. (6th Sep)

Landslides occurred at Laghuwa of Tansen-Tamghas road section has disrupted vehicular movement since Tuesday. Passengers bound for Gulmi are left stranded. (5th Sep)

74-year-old Bhim Bahadur Pakhrin of Padampokhari VDC drowned in the flooded Rapti river, Monday. The elderly man was swept away by the current while trying to cross the river. (4th Sep)

In Banke district 2,500 flood-hit locals of Holiya VDC have started coming down with many diseases as they have not been provided any relief material as yet. Locals complained that the foodstuff provided by the Red Cross Society was also inadequate. (4th Sep)

As a post flood consequence, fever patients are crammed in district hospital of Syangja. At least 60 patients of fever used to come for the checkup daily. (3rd Sep)

A landslide triggered by three days of heavy rainfall has blocked the Kusma-Baglung section of Pokhara. (1st Sep)

The cases of encephalitis and meningitis viral fever are rapid in Nepalgunj aftermath of flood and inundation. Till now four persons were died of encephalitis and more than 30 were affected. (30th Aug)

As a consequence of flood triggered circumstances, at least 60 persons are affected from viral influenza in Narayan Khola VDC-3 of Sarlahi district. (30th Aug)

## Nepalese experts to learn flood defence

*SciDev.Net*

The UN has announced a new training programme to help five Asian countries including better plan for and cope with flood damage. The UN University launched their flood risk assessment programme on 15th October at the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand.

Water experts and officials from China, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam will take part in a 14 week pilot programme to learn the tools and methodologies necessary to carry out realistic flood risk assessment.

The training will also cover risk assessment case studies in the participants' countries: Beijing, Kathmandu, Pampanga River Basin in the Philippines, Colombo and Hanoi.

Srikantha Herath, senior academic programme officer at the UN University, said the training will cover the use of rainfall and hydrological models to simulate the flow of water over land and in rivers, as well as the interaction that occurs during flooding.

The training will also include economic risk assessment. Flood control measures can be extremely expensive, said Herath, so it is important to work out how to minimise losses, especially if floods turn out worse than expected.

The training programme is the result of a meeting in 2003 — which gathered water experts from around Asia and the Pacific, including China, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam — to discuss water related threats and possible risk studies.

Last year Thailand experienced its biggest flood in 60 years, resulting in economic losses of over US\$500 million. Thai water management officials say the country cannot properly prevent and mitigate floods as it lacks integrated flood assessment strategies. According to a senior official at Thailand's water resources department, who did not wish to be named, several agencies have been working on methods to measure precipitation and water run-off, but they have not worked together, resulting in incompatible data and preventing proper planning for floods.

"If we receive training from the countries where integrated water management has been adopted, it may help us to think better," said the official.

*(Posted on 18th October)*

## NEPAL: Schools identified as key in earthquake preparedness

Earthquake-resistant building trainer Balkrishna Kasula is worried that thousands of schools in seismically active zones throughout the country are poorly built and vulnerable to earthquakes. For the past several decades, Kasula has been involved in rebuilding poorly built schools and houses to ensure they are more earthquake-resistant, with the aim of reducing casualties in the event of a strong earthquake.

"There is no guarantee that anyone or anything is 100 percent safe in a big magnitude earthquake, but we can at least work towards reducing the [potential] damage," Kasula told IRIN.

Seven thousand residents of Kusma, district headquarter of Parwat, are suffering from water scarcity as the pipe line of main supply center was swept away by the landslide. (25th Aug)

The Thai government has extended an assistance of Rs 3.9 million for flood victims on Friday. (25th Aug)

The Women Foundation (WF) on Thursday provided shelter boxes worth Rs 10 million to 129 flood victim families of Balaha Sabhara VDC at Dahanusha. (24th Aug)

Marwadi Service Trust, Birgunj handed over relief materials worth NRs. Five lakh Rupees to NRCS Parsa chapter. (23rd Aug)

NRCS Makwanpur distributed relief materials to 16 flood displaced family of Dhiynal VDC. (23rd Aug)

All Banks and financial institutions of Chitwan together ventured to solace disaster victims and collected NRs Sixty Thousand Five Hundred. Money was handedover to NRCS Chitwan. (23rd Aug)

Five thousand houses were damaged in Bardia due to the flood of Babai and Karnali river. Out of them 144 houses were fully damaged. (22nd Aug)

Janapriya Campus of Pokhara announced free education in all faculties to the flood and landslides victims of Guaulichaur and Jaljala of Baglung district. (21st Aug)

Eighty percent of the farms in Dhanusha and Mahottari districts havebeen washed off by flood. (20th Aug)

Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) has provided Rs.225,525 to flood victims through Kantipur Flood victim Relief Fund. (18th Aug)

Road links between rural areas and district headquarters Gaur, Birgunj have been respectively severed in Rautahat and Parsa district. (18th Aug)

700 people are displaced from Rajapur Tapu in Bardia, fearing of flood. (17th Aug)

According to the Nepal National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) - a major local civic group involved in earthquake disaster education and seismic risk reduction projects in Nepal - over a thousand schools in Kathmandu alone are at risk. None of the surveyed public and private school buildings complied with the prevailing seismic code, said NSET officials.

"This is really a worrisome situation given that Nepal ranks as the world's 11th earthquake risk country," said NSET engineer Ram Adhikary. He said his organisation was very alarmed to discover that most buildings were non-engineered, used traditional weak materials, had untied gable walls with heavy walls and roofs, and that most were elongated in plan. Adhikary said this was a recipe for disaster.

"Nepal has suffered at least 10 big earthquakes in the last 68 years," said Adhikary, adding that a big one was due any time now, given recent earthquake patterns. In 1934 a large earthquake killed over 17,000 people in one minute in both Nepal and the adjoining Indian state of Bihar. Most of those killed were in Kathmandu, according to NSET, which is concerned that an earthquake of similar magnitude today could kill over 100,000 people and destroy over 60 percent of the buildings in the capital alone.

*"Schools... the most important focus"*

In the 1988 earthquake in Udaypur District, nearly 400km southeast of Kathmandu, about 6,000 schools [CHECK FIGURE: SEEMS A LOT OF SCHOOLS FOR A MERE DISTRICT] were destroyed, but children were lucky that the earthquake took place out of school hours, NSET specialists said. Over 300,000 children had been unable to attend their schools for several months following the quake.

"Not all hope is lost and all we have to do is to educate people on the importance of seismically strengthened buildings and a preparedness plan," said Kasula, who, along with other trainers from NSET, has trained over 4,000 people in Nepal. However, for disaster safety experts, strengthening school buildings alone cannot help. There is a need to educate school children and teachers on how to prepare themselves, they say.

"Schools remain the most important focus for us since they serve as both shelter during earthquakes as well as a good medium through which to spread awareness," said NSET Director Ram Chandra Kandel, who explained that training and educating children on preparedness can help to disseminate information to the community. "Already, this methodology is already proving to be quite successful in mass education through school teachers and students," said Kandel.

Kandel gave a shocking scenario of what might happen if the current scale of unpreparedness were to continue. His technical team said that if the current lack of intervention-poor education on earthquakes and failure to make schools earthquake-resistant - were to persist, a major earthquake could kill or severely injure some 29,000 schoolchildren in Kathmandu and destroy over 77 percent of its schools. (Source : IRIN)

*(Posted on 16th October)*

## **Five Asian nations including Nepal to study flood, climate risks**

A new U.N. course will help five Asian nations cope with a predicted worsening of floods due to climate change that may threaten cities from Beijing to Hanoi, the U.

Flood of Susta river, Nawalparasi forced to displace one hundred family. (17th Aug)

Flood victims in Bardiya demonstrated in front of the Red Cross Society Thursday alleging that it was biased in distributing relief materials. (16th Aug)

Thirty thousand villagers of six villages in Rautahat are at risk due to the swollen water of Bagmati, LalBakiya and Jhanj river. (17th Aug)

Flood victims in Bardiya demonstrated in front of the Red Cross Society Thursday alleging that it was biased in distributing relief materials. (16th Aug)

Landslides induced by the continuous rainfall for two days obstructed Baitadi-Darchula stretch of Dashrath Chandra highway (15th Aug)

An engine steamer of Geruwa river of Bardia fell into the flooded water Monday. A conductor of steamer, Rajesh, went missing whereas 10 passengers were rescued. (15th Aug)

For the demand of relief materials, flood victims of Mahottari are regularly demonstrating in district head quarter Jaleswor.

32 districts of Nepal, out of 75, are affected by flood and inundation, according to the Home Ministry.

The lawmakers of Banke and Bardia, worst flood hit districts, asked the government to think about the impact of dams and barrages constructed by India along the border.

Staffers and the management of Spice Nepal Private Ltd, provider of Mero Mobile, have dispatched relief materials worth NRs. 426000 for flood victims.

Rainfall and flood destroyed seventy five percent of vegetable crops in Rupandehi.

in Mahottari, Madhesi Maitri Kendra, a civil society in the district working for the welfare of flood victims, postponed providing free-of-cost meals to victims, citing fatigues of their volunteers and lack of funds.

N. University said on Sunday.

Experts from China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Nepal and Sri Lanka would take part from November in a three-month course run by the U.N. University in Thailand to help map risks of downpours, rivers breaking their banks and rising sea levels. If successful, the course could be expanded to other regions.

"Catastrophic floods may become much more common," Srikantha Herath, senior academic officer at the U.N. University in Tokyo, told Reuters. "Asia suffers most from floods of all the regions and we want to prepare for what may happen." The courses, gathering two-four experts from each nation, would identify risks of floods, potential economic damage, and help work out everything from better designs for dykes to better weather forecasts and flood warnings.

Flooding linked to monsoon rains killed more than 3,000 people and affected more than 100 million people in south Asia this year with damage to property estimated in the billions of dollars, the U.N. University said. "The time to assess the risk to people and property, especially in large urban centres, and to act on that information is now," said Janos Bogardi, the vice rector of the U.N. University which groups academics around the world.

Studies by the U.N.'s climate panel, awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with former U.S. Vice President Al Gore on Friday, project more floods, more powerful storms and a rise in sea levels of up to 59 cms (two feet) this century. Among ideas are that cities should have systems that would, for instance, channel flood waters that topped dykes into low-lying parks or other areas where it would do least damage, Herath said. And a small ramp or a couple of steps up from street level around stairs down to metro stations could help protect subways. (Reuters)

*(Posted on 16th October)*

### **Three drown to death in Achham**

Three youths drowned to death in Kailash river when they were returning home from Santada VDC of Achham district after shopping for Dashain today. Two others were injured in the incident.

Reban Kumari Rawal, 15 and Kamala Rawal, 11, daughters of Padam Bahadur Rawal of Santada VDC-7, and Mata Kumari Rawal, 18, daughter of Dev Bahadur Rawal of the same place drowned to death. Amba Kumar Rawal, 16, and Bharat Rawal, 22, swam to safety but were injured.

All five were swept away while crossing the Kailash river instead of using a bridge over the river which was half a kilometer away. The dead bodies were cremated today while the injured are undergoing treatment in Santada sub health post.

*(Posted on 16th October)*

### **Saptari flood victims outraged**

Flood victims of Saptari district complained here on Friday that they are not getting relief. Their complaints come at a time when authorities concerned are claiming that they have distributed relief amounting to Rs 10 million to over 4000 flood victims of 25 VDCs in Saptari district under the World Food Programme.

The flood victims, saying that they have not received relief yet, gheraoed president of the Nepal Red Cross (Saptari chapter) Jogendra Bhagat in Rajbiraj for three hours on Friday. "We have been forced to stage a demonstration as real flood victims have been deprived of relief," Karodevi Mahato of Pakari-7, one of

Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal handover NRs 2.5 million for disaster victims on 2nd August.

55 VDCs of Mahottari is affected from flood. Properties and infrastructures worth NRs 70 million has been lost.

Dharampur VDC of Jhapa suffered a loss of NRS 30 million.

Home minister advised the local administration to form an all sided team to carryout relief and rescue operations.

Danda dam and embankment unilaterally made by the Indian government inundated 6 VDCs of Rupandehi district.

Rainfall is significantly higher this year than 2006, according to Meteorological Forecasting Division.

Lawmakers blamed Indian dams for floods in the contiguous areas of Nepal.

## Asia Watch

### Millions die a slow death from arsenic poisoning

By S.N.M Abdi

BENGALIS love nothing more than a plate of steaming rice. But British researchers have just discovered that millions of people in West Bengal are eating rice laced with arsenic every day. Paddy grown in the communist-ruled province is contaminated by arsenic in the groundwater. And most of the poisoned crop is consumed in West Bengal. Arsenic causes cancer, damages internal organs and cripples people for life.

British scientists have advised Bengalis to wash rice thoroughly before cooking it to minimise the effects of arsenic. They also advocate the traditional method of cooking rice — boiling it in lots of water and draining off the excess water — rather than cooking it in a pressure cooker or microwave oven.

The latest findings have not come as a surprise to researchers at Jadavpur University's School of

some 2,000 flood victims of different VDCs, who arrived in Rajbiraj to stage a demonstration.

"Relief provided by the WFP has not reached the real victims due to a dispute," an official of the Saptari chapter of the Nepal Red Cross said. Former chairman of the chapter Bijayananda Jha, coordinator of the relief distribution committee Jagadish Aryal, treasurer Gajendra Kumar Singh and Danalal Yadav, accusing president Bhagat of distributing relief materials recklessly, had sent a letter to the central office of the Red Cross a week ago. The letter has accused Bhagat of objecting over the list of flood victims and not distributing relief to them.

*(Posted on 13th October)*

### No festive mood for flood displaced

Some 200 families displaced by the recent series of floods in Kailali District are yet to return to their homes even though Dashain, greatest Nepali festival, is just a few days away. Families displaced from Bhajani, Lalbojhi and Thapapur VDCs in Kailali district, who are now sheltering in transitory camps at Mahunyal community forest near their devastated villages, have yet to overcome the effects of the flooding that took away their homes.

"Since the flood turned our land barren, we don't even have fodder for our cattle," Sagune Odh, a local farmer of Bhajani VDC-9 said. "The flood took away our fields and cultivation. Returning there is a distant prospect for us," a saddened Odh said. The locals said that although they had minor floods every year, this year's flooding was highly destructive by comparison.

According to another local, Dhan Bahadur Bohora, the flood devastated some five bighhas of land and cultivation in the villages. Meanwhile, claiming that they have requested government authorities and the political parties to look into the issue of their proper settlement, the displaced are at present occupying the community forest for shelter.

*(Posted on 13th October)*

### Rain troubled festive mood

Incessant rainfall has erode festive mood ahead of this year's Dashain for villagers in Taplejung district. During this time, houses used to be coloured before start of Ghatasthapan and Navaratri in the past. But, this year people could not prepare anything for Dashain due untimely and unexpected rainfall.

One Maina Adhikari of Taplejung's Fulbari VDC said Dashain began before she could decorate the house by colouring it. "I could not collect brown and red colour soil for colouring my house due to the rainfall," she said.

Dharma Prasad Dangal of Nighuradin -1 has also similar problem. He also complained that rainfall has troubled the festive mood. He recalled that everyone in the neighbourhood had walked up to Fakmari in the past, which could not happen this year due to the rainfall.

The festive mood is nowhere at Fungling, Medibung, Agedim, Simle, Dokhu, Bahanande, Hangdewa near Taplejung. People, who used to paint their houses, could not do this time. Rukmina Dhakal of Taplejung's Khokling VDC said she could not have a feeling of Dashain for failing to paint door, windows black. Colouring house is an important part of Dashain festival, she said.

Rainfall in rural areas of Taplejung hindered their attempt to dry up of rice and

Environmental Studies (SES). For nearly two decades, led by environmental scientist Dipankar Chakraborty, SES has been fighting the insidious, subterranean threat posed by arsenic — in quantities around 30 times higher than is regarded as safe by the World Health Organisation — in the drinking water in nine districts.

Interestingly, arsenic is so addictive that millions who regularly drink the toxic water find it more palatable than rainwater. "Up to four million people are sick with chronic arsenic poisoning, with symptoms including skin diseases, melanomas and deadly carcinomas, have got so used to drinking arsenic ground water that they have acquired a taste for the water of death," says Chakraborty. "This added complication must be tackled on a war footing. It's a shame that we have taken so long to discover the addictive nature of arsenic." Poisoned by the wells they dig to provide fresh water, millions in the eastern state are slowly dying.

Arsenic in the form of insoluble salts occurs naturally in the bedrock that underlies most of West Bengal's 88,000 square kilometres. Under normal conditions, the ground water stays relatively free of arsenic. Arsenic stays in the system for months slowly destroying the human body. Arsenic attacks all living tissue and many victims suffer early damage to blood vessels, which reduces the flow of blood to and from their organs and so speeds up the damage to other tissues. Death is almost inevitable.

(KOLKATA CALLING)

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preparation of beaten rice, said Ram Kumari Baral of Taplejung's Hangderwa VDC.

(Posted on 13th October)

## Cantonment in danger of landslide

The site of Maoist militia camp at Khayarmara VDC-8 of Mahottari district has been in danger of landslide. The Khayarmara river abutting a hill where the camp of Ram Brikshya Memorial Brigade is located has eroded the campsite causing landslide following rainfall Tuesday.

The landslide originated from inside the storeroom of the camp, Commander of the Camp Management Department, Sudhir said. The Maoist militia said they were facing difficulties even to protect food grains and other goods in the camp because of the landslide.

Similarly, a woman combatant Pabina expressed her woes that they could not sleep well as the landslide still continued. The locals said the concerned sectors should take immediate initiatives to protect the campsite where a whole brigade of the militia is stationed.

(Posted on 12th October)

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