

4th May 2015 - Newsletter No. 4 "Earthquake in Nepal"

OM MANI PADME HUM

(Mantra – in Tibetan Buddhism, expression of the fundamental belief in compassion)

Today is the 9th day after the quake. Today is the first full-moon day in May and Buddha Jayanti day – Buddha's birthday. May all the butter lamps burn (small or large bowls with clarified butter are lit as light offerings) for the many people who had to lose their lives through the earthquake. May they rest in peace. May all the butter lamps shine as a glimmer of hope for the relatives of the many missing persons.

Like a miracle, individual survivors are being found in the rubble again and again. It has been possible to evacuate a large number of people who were in the remote districts and the affected regions. But it is the many aftershocks that are preventing the local people from being able to rest. There has been talk of 121 aftershocks with a magnitude of over 4.

The Israeli military, flanked by the Nepalese Army and sniffer dogs, carried out a huge search and rescue operation with helicopters last Friday in the Langtang region. There is talk of 170 locals and 150 foreign tourists who have been reported as still missing in this region.

As in all the other regions, tents are also needed urgently in the Langtang region that lies approx. 140 km north of Kathmandu. The pre-monsoon season has already set in. Waterproof tarpaulins or proper tents are absolutely vital. Food is becoming scarce. We are considering how we can transport these goods despite blocked access routes.

We are able to report good news from our groups. Our small Manaslu group was evacuated on Saturday and flown to Kathmandu. A short article with photo even appeared in Spiegel online.

<http://www.spiegel.de/.../erdbeben-in-nepal-viele-auslaender-...>

During the course of last week we were always in close contact with the relatives and the Germany Embassy. We are glad to say that our guest was able to get on his return flight today as planned.

Our Everest group was also able to fly from Lukla to Kathmandu this morning. It had already been possible to bring the return flight forward, too.

Our Upper Mustang group arrived in Jomsom today, and will be flying to Pokhara tomorrow, if the weather plays along, and driving back to Kathmandu from there. Actually, the group had not been all that aware of the earthquake itself. In Jomsom a few of the mud houses have collapsed, but in Lo Manthang and the other villages in the Upper Mustang region the houses are not damaged.

On Saturday the "Nepaltag (Nepal Day) 2015" was held in Cologne; it was organised by the German Nepal Friendship Association in Cologne (Deutsch-Nepalische Gesellschaft - DNG Köln). Due to the current circumstances the program was changed. Besides the President of the DNG and the Honorary Consul, Ram Pratap

Thapa, the Mayor of Cologne, Andreas Wolter, and the Chargé d'Affaires and Deputy Ambassador for Nepal in Berlin, Prakash Mani Paudel, attended as guests of honour.

The talk held by Prof. Dr. Birger Lühr, geophysicist, "Earthquake in Nepal - after the quake is before the quake" was particularly interesting. He explained that earthquakes have been recorded in Nepal since 1255. In the 19th century the strongest quakes recorded were in 1810, 1830 and 1866. Insofar, one can speak of a time interval of approx. 75 years. The time interval since the last severe earthquake on 15.01.1934 with a magnitude of 8.4, was slightly exceeded by the present quake on 25.4.2015. Prof. Dr. Lühr pointed out that tension builds up again after the quake and that the population must already start preparing itself for the next earthquake. The brick construction of the houses will have to be changed. Houses with several storeys are not suitable. Work will have to be done in the right direction for generations to come.

Wolfgang Hruschka, from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in Bonn, reported on the aspects of the current economic cooperation focussed on. He told us that it will be possible to use the funds for Health, Energy and Economic Development already promised by the Foreign Office, for the reconstruction work and that these funds will be further increased. Mr. Hruschka praised the good work of the Nepalese Army that has set up an Operations Centre. The cooperation between the three ministries (the Federal Foreign Office, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of the Interior) that have taken over the coordination of the entire disaster relief, has not yet run completely smoothly. One very positive piece of news is that the Technical Relief Service (THW) has already set up a water treatment facility in Kathmandu and is thus able to cater for 15,000 people per day. Another water treatment facility is to be set up at another location.

Mention was made in other talks, for instance, of a possible change in the corrupt, power-hungry government being brought about by the younger generation. But due to the younger generation not being brought up and encouraged to carry out any political activity, this is a difficult aspect. There are next to no youth organisations and young politicians. Due to Nepal's history and culture, the people in Nepal do not become politically active until they are much older.

The expert for South Asia, Jorge Scholz began his presentation with the words: "The earthquake does not undergo change itself. It is merely a catalyst and reveals weaknesses and strengths. Good coordination is an absolute must."

The bad coordination / lack of coordination by the government is one thing. Another is thwarting the action taken by the Big Brother India and the help and support by the Chinese, and using the disaster for political purposes. Mr. Scholz explained that it is not a question of raw materials, but trading routes, i.e. trading routes that China is already creating in three corridors, completely legally, and that subsequently form the connection between China, Asia, Africa and Europe.

Nepal has always been the buffer zone between India - Pakistan – China. Let us hope that the country's 'sandwich' position does not additionally turn out to be fatal with regard to world politics.

Namaste

Temba & Sabine