

NRA blames worker shortage

National Reconstruction Authority Chief Executive Officer Govinda Raj Pokharel has blamed a shortage of skilled workers and the lack of substantive initiatives among the survivors as major reasons behind the slow pace of reconstruction of homes affected by the Gorkha Earthquake two years ago.

Speaking at an event in Kathmandu on Thursday, Pokharel stressed the need for giving a momentum to the reconstruction process.

According to the NRA, 580,071 households have so far received the first instalment of the house reconstruction aid. The number of recipients of the second instalment stands at 34,937.

“There has been some progress in recent months. However, we need to do a lot. We need to give a major boost to the reconstruction drive,” Pokharel told the event organised by the South Asia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment (Sawtee).

He added that the recipients of the first tranche of grants were reluctant to proceed for the second as the amount provided by the government is not enough to build homes.

In the immediate aftermath of the quakes, the government had decided to provide Rs200,000 per household as private housing aid, which was later increased to Rs300,000 to be issued in three instalments—Rs50,000, Rs150,000 and Rs100,000.

“Most of the recipients of the first tranche have built temporary homes,” he said.

The rebuilding authority plans to mobilise the newly-elected people’s representatives in earthquake affected districts for managing the post-quake recovery and reconstruction process.

Former vice-chairman of National Planning Commission Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, presenting a paper, said that technical and administrative requirements for acquiring the amount discourage beneficiaries from accessing the grants.

“Financially stable people aren’t keen to collect Rs300,000 going through bureaucratic hassles. Those financially deprived are clueless how to seek additional funds for rebuilding homes,” Pokharel said, asking the government to cut red tape.

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