



*JPNN/Kathmandu/ Apr 25, 2015/Nepal was today struck by the worst earthquake in 80 years, leaving nearly 1,500 people, including two Indians, dead in flattened houses and buildings including the iconic Dharhara tower and renowned Darbar Square in the heart of the capital. The quake measuring 7.9 on Richter scale, which was followed by 16 aftershocks of magnitude 4.5 or greater, striking heavy casualties in Kathmandu and injuring thousand others. Hundreds were feared missing across the country. "Army estimates death toll as much as 1457 so far,"*

*Nepal's Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat tweeted. He said, "90 per cent of approx 1000 homes and huts reduced to rubble in Barpak Larpak area." Two Indians, including the daughter of an Indian embassy employee, were among those killed in the powerful earthquake, an Indian embassy official said. A house in the Indian Embassy complex collapsed, killing the daughter of a CPWD employee. Death of another Indian was reported at Bir Hospital. Fifty-two stranded Indians were tonight flown back home by an Indian Air Force aircraft from the Nepalese capital. Another 200 Indians stuck in Kathmandu are expected to be brought back by tomorrow. According to Nepalese Home Ministry figures, 150 people lost lives in neighbouring Bhaktapur, 250 in Sindhu, 67 in Lalitpur and 37 in Dhading district. Besides, 20 people were killed in the country's eastern region, 33 in western region and rest in other parts of the Himalayan nation. The earthquake around 11:56 am with epicentre at Lamjung, around 80 kilometers northwest of Kathmandu, had its impact in several cities in Bihar, West Bengal and UP and tremors were felt across vast stretches of east and northeast India. It was also felt in Southern and Western parts of India, China, Bhutan and as far as Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to the Home Ministry, at least 51 have died in India. Miraculously the famous 5th century Pashupatinath temple here was undamaged, while a number of old temples were razed. Several buildings, most of them old, in the densely- populated Kathmandu Valley collapsed, killing hundreds. Over 200 bodies have been retrieved from the debris of two-century old nine-storey landmark Dharhara tower in the centre of the capital. Kathmandu's Darbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage site, was completely damaged in the quake which was the worst to hit Nepal and surrounding regions after the earthquake of 8.4 magnitude which occurred along the Nepal-Bihar border in 1934.*

*Video footages showed a number of buildings having caved in or developing huge cracks. Many of the city roads have suffered wide craters in the impact, affecting movement of vehicles and rescue operations. Army, police and emergency workers were pressed into service for rescue of those trapped and rushing injured survivors to hospitals. Many of the injured could be seen suffering bleeding injuries covered in dust from the debris. Indian Embassy spokesperson Abhay Kumar said some walls have collapsed in the impact of the earthquake and the embassy has*

set up two helplines +977 98511 07021, +977 98511 35141. Fifty doctors have arrived from India to provide emergency services. India dispatched as many as four aircraft including a C-130 plane carrying three tonnes of relief supplies and a 40-member rescue team to Nepal. Nearly 125 people from Maharashtra and Telangana were stranded in Nepal after the earthquake. Four Chinese nationals, including a climber, were killed and five were critically injured in the earthquake. Hospitals were over-crowded with injured, with many of them being treated in the open outside the hospitals. An emergency cabinet meeting has announced 29 districts as crisis zones, the Home Ministry said. The quake caused avalanches on Mount Everest, sending mountaineers running for cover. Gyanendra Shrestha, an official at the Ministry of Tourism, said that 10 people including foreign climbers have been killed in the avalanche triggered by the earthquake. The earthquake first struck around 11:56 am (local time) followed by aftershocks, Nepal Police spokesperson Kamal Singh Bam said.

Nepal's TV channels showed dozens of bodies lined up on ground after the earthquake. Television pictures also showed some of the people rescued from under the debris. A Nepali minister said there had been "massive damage" at the epicentre. "We need support from the various international agencies which are more knowledgeable and equipped to handle the kind of emergency we face now," Information Minister Minendra Rijal said. Initially measured at 7.5 magnitude, the quake was later revised to 7.9, with a depth of 15 kilometres. National radio warned people to stay outdoors and keep calm as more aftershocks were feared. The Tribhuvan International Airport has been closed. AFP