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English News

28 AUG APUCEN ASSISTS NEPAL EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) through the Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN) with the cooperation of voluntary body MMICARE Association have provided assistance to the people of Nepal recently to help them to rebuild their lives after an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck Nepal on April 25, 2015.

According to the Executive Director of APUCEN Associate Professor Madya Dr. Aileen Tan Shau-Hwai, the 'Rebuild Nepal 2015' project was meant to heed the call of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Malaysia such as MMICARE Association, which has direct connections with the NGOs in Nepal to provide immediate assistance to the Nepalese people who were badly affected by the earthquake.

"USM through APUCEN is committed to provide relief and assistance as much as possible to lighten the burden and sufferings of the victims and their families, in helping them to rebuild their lives after the earthquake; this is in accordance with the objective of USM to share the available knowledge and expertise in global university-community engagement projects," said Aileen Tan, lecturer of USM School of Biological Sciences.

"The 'Rebuild Nepal 2015' Project was officially announced by the USM Vice-Chancellor who is also the President of APUCEN, Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman while chairing the 6th Regional APUCEN Council Meeting in Chiangmai University on June 17 2015, urging members of APUCEN to be involved in a global humanitarian relief effort such as this," she said, who is also the head of APUCEN delegation for this mission.

The results of early observations of the badly-affected regions last June by the NGOs in Nepal revealed that the current immediate need is to have temporary shelters to function as houses, schools and medical centres for the earthquake victims.

The condition worsened when the existing tarpaulin tents cannot withstand the heavy rains and strong winds of monsoon season in August and September.

"Members of APUCEN especially Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), AIMST University, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Sri Begawan (KUPUSB) and USM have collectively provided contributions to this project by allocating 24 temporary shelters to the residents of Kakani in the north of Kathmandu, with each consisting of 12 pieces of zinc plates, a piece of 4-metre PU flooring and a solar-powered light," said Aileen Tan.

APUCEN and MMICARE also provided three shelters to Gowla Devi Primary and Elementary Schools where it is used as classrooms during the day and rooms for the local residents to sleep in at night.

Aileen Tan said, her team was very happy as the residents there were provided with temporary shelters which were sturdier compared to the ordinary tents so that it can protect them during the monsoon season while waiting for rebuilding permanent brick houses to be completed. The feelings of joy could be seen on their faces as they held a special ceremony to honour the heartfelt assistance provided to them.

This effort was also in line with the basic aim of APUCEN, to be a platform for global university-community engagements and be committed in efforts to transform community beyond geographical boundaries, cultural and ancestral beliefs by bringing together the expertise and knowledge from its member institutions.

"Participation of USM in this project reflected its determination to be involved with community engagement programmes, to assist the victims of natural disasters locally or abroad, such as giving assistance to the flood victims in the East Coast states of Malaysia at the end of 2014," stressed further Aileen Tan.

APUCEN was established in 2011 with the role to promote the culture of university-community engagement in a proactive way. Currently, its membership stands at 76 members from 18 countries within the Asia-Pacific region.

Also present during the visit to Nepal were the Vice-President of Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Japan, Professor Toshiki Kumagai; Founder of MMICARE Association Pushparani Thilaganathan and local volunteers who were involved in the programme.

Translation: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin/Text: Tan Ewe Hoe/Photo: Courtesy of MMICARE



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