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## INTEGRATED SETTLEMENT FOR QUAKE SURVIVORS: PM DAHAL LAYS FOUNDATION STONE

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- SUDIP KAINI, GORKHA

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Oct 8, 2016- Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Friday laid the foundation stone for a pilot project on integrated settlement for survivors of the earthquakes of April and May, 2015 at Gupsipakha, Laprak.

Under the project, 612 houses would be built and handed over to the local survivors of the devastating earthquakes. The project is being built through financial support of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA). “The works at the project site would commence after the onset of winter,” said PM Dahal, who had arrived at Laprak with Chief Secretary Somlal Subedi and NRNA President Shesh Ghale. “We couldn’t start the work earlier because of monsoon,” Ghale said, adding, “The new houses built in the settlement would be handed over within a year of beginning of the construction.”

On April 24, The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), the NRNA and the Central Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Urban Development had signed a tripartite agreement on development of the settlement in Laprak as part of the post-earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation drive. The deal was sealed at presence of President Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

The government has already agreed to hand over 18.3 hectares of land to earthquake survivors to build the settlement, although land ownership certificates are yet to be handed over to locals. However, the land is sufficient to build 444 houses, as per a press statement issued by the NRNA.

Ghale asked the government to arrange the deficit land. “To build all 612 houses, we still need additional 150 ropanis of land,” District Forest Officer Jibnath Poudel said.

The NRA has allowed the NRNA to extend a grant of up to Rs250,000 to build each house in the settlement. This amount is Rs50,000 higher than the grant amount of Rs200,000 that the NRA is extending to others whose houses were completely damaged by quakes of last April and May.

The extra amount, according to the NRA, is being given to cover the cost of transporting construction materials, and house owners will have to build the house themselves based on design approved by the NRA. Since this grant is being extended by the NRNA, the NRA had earlier asked the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) not to distribute the grant amount in the area.

Also, the NRA had previously asked the MoFALD to propose budget required for development of basic public infrastructure in the model settlement and the Ministry of Energy to deliver electricity. It has also asked the Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitation to identify drinking water sources and propose budget required to set up drinking water and sanitation facilities in the settlement.

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