

NEELUM VALLEY NEWS

Update on the work of the Murshid Hospital & Health Care Trust following the 8 October 2005 earthquake in Northern Pakistan and Kashmir – on the Web at www.lopo.org.uk/news

26 November 2005: Issue 3

First Helicopter drop

With the winter weather coming in rapidly, it will soon only be possible to reach the cut-off villages by helicopter.



On 21 November the first drop was made by our team. "We were loaned use of one Mi8 helicopter today which flew three sorties delivering 7.5 tons of rations to an army depot at Dohulian," said Adeel Hasan. He has been ably overseeing the entire logistics and sourcing of our relief goods and personally went to supervise, flying in with the first sortie and returning with the last.

This important mission heralds the way forward after the snow arrives in earnest.

More added to the Relief Pack

Our standard 15kg pack has been upgraded to include a further 2kg of rice on the advice of those working locally. The new packs will therefore weigh 17kg.

Medicines needed urgently

Our people in the field have identified an urgent need for certain medical supplies due to local shortages. The cost of the supplies is not high, but they are critical and will save lives and help those injured.

Some examples of medicines required are: antibiotics (eg. Amoxil), pain killers (eg. pholcodeine), essentials such as Ringer's solution, normal saline and intra-venous tubes, needles, etc etc.

Aftershocks and building supplies

After the main earthquake, there have been well over 1000 aftershocks. Some of them are relatively minor, but others are not!

These aftershocks can cause unstable structures to collapse and people are being forced to seek shelter wherever they can to survive. Abdul Hameed, in charge of one of our forward camps, has reported the need for cement (2.5 tons), corrugated iron sheets and nails. These are being sourced and transported to the area to provide emergency temporary structures.

Just who are we helping?

Dodhniyal is one of the centres of our relief work. There is a population of 11,648 people in 2060 families in the area. These are split between 11 hamlets ranging from Churry with only 50 families to Subhi with some 400.

Our experts have calculated that these families will require some 30 tons of rations to help them survive the winter.

Distribution continues apace

Of the 25 tons received, only 80 packs remain in Deolian and 200 in Nauseri. These remaining packs will be distributed to the villagers who have been issued with vouchers so that they can come and collect their packs. The vouchers help avoid queues and make distribution easier.



On 22 November a further 10 tons of supplies reached the Muzaffarabad base camp and 9 tons were sent to both forward camps.

“I walked to a remote location to talk to the villagers and to motivate our trekkers to distribute the packs expeditiously. Everything seemed orderly and people were satisfied,” said Asad Maroof. “I managed to engage a 4x4 truck that can take a load of four tons which is the maximum allowed on the road. I am planning to have one load delivered to Kutan, which will then be the farthest point to reach by road. This may be considered as our third mobile forward camp.”

At least another 20 tons are required before the winter closes in and seals the access routes completely.

A near miss!



On one of the trips up the valley delivering supplies, one of our trucks was involved in a very near miss! Just as they were approaching a stretch of road, there was a major landslide that narrowly missed killing a stream of people trying to move down the valley from the high mountain areas. Fortunately, nobody was hurt and the road was cleared after some hours by the army.

Landslides like this are happening every day and as the winter weather sets in they will become more dangerous and more frequent.

Michael Palin lends support



Traveller, broadcaster and author, Michael Palin has sent a message of support for our fund raising efforts. Messages have also been received from the Lord Mayor of London and Dr Maleeha Lodhi, the

High Commissioner in London. The first concert in London by LOPO raised over £1000 on the night – another concert is scheduled for 1 December and donations are still coming in.