

# EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **1<sup>st</sup> Regional Earthquake Response Seminar Ends with Formation of Core Group for Regional Support**

**DHAKA, June 2**—The 1st Regional Earthquake Response Seminar, a high-profile four-day conference organized by the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka and the Armed Forces Division, ended today with formation of a core working group to establish a framework of capabilities for regional disaster response support among the countries of South Asia.

The seminar, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, brought together civilians and military from SAARC nations, the United States, and the international community to identify vulnerabilities and share solutions to domestic, regional and international challenges. Persons from different cultures, professional backgrounds and philosophies came together in a collaborative way and developed a series of action plans that each respective organization can use to improve disaster response mechanisms.

In his opening remarks to launch the seminar on Monday, May 30, Minister for Food and Disaster Management Dr. Mohammad Abdur Razzaque said that Bangladesh has experienced nearly 100 seismic disturbances in the last two years. Mentioning recent devastating earthquakes in Indonesia, Haiti, Chile, New Zealand, Japan and India, U.S. Ambassador Moriarty noted that natural disasters can strike anywhere at any time. He reiterated U.S. commitment to disaster management and humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh and in all of South Asia, and recalled American efforts after the devastating cyclone of 1991. "When disaster struck, we answered the call for assistance. But there is always more to learn." U.S. Pacific Command's Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Director Lieutenant General John Goodman said, "In the first 48 hours we are alone," speaking on behalf of disaster victims, and said it is vital to know who is doing what and where at that moment of crisis.

Nearly 50 participants from the U.S., India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Indonesia and the Philippines, different embassies in Dhaka, and over 200 members from the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Bangladesh Army, Police, Fire Brigade and Civil Defense, Border Guards Bangladesh, the Coast Guards, Ansars and VDP attended the seminar.

Among the keynote paper presenters were Dr. Zamilur Reza Chowdhury, former Vice Chancellor of BUET; Prof. Higgins of Oregon State University; Col R Khatri, Nepal Army; Indonesian

Disaster Management National Agency; Dr. Maksud Kamal of Comprehensive Disaster Management Program (CDMP); Director, Operations and Planning of Armed Forces Division (AFD); Dr. O. P. Mishra of SAARC Disaster Management Response Center; Arjon Katoch, Team Leader of UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination; and Antonio Massell, Regional Disaster Response Advisor of UNOCHA Regional Office for Asia & Pacific.

Dr. Mishra, from the SAARC Disaster Management Center, has been appointed to prepare a list of regional priorities and incorporate them into the SAARC disaster response mechanism framework. The core working group will convene again in Nepal July 25-28 to further develop a way forward to establishing an effective regional disaster response capability.

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## **GR/ 2011**

Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: [DhakaPA@state.gov](mailto:DhakaPA@state.gov); Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov)