



A banner showing victims of the Nepal earthquakes in April and May is displayed at a memorial rally in Bhaktapur last week. Photo: AP

Global aid money for quake rebuild languishes

Nepal

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Kathmandu

Two months after foreign countries and international agencies pledged \$US4.1 billion (\$5.925 billion) to help Nepal recover from its worst ever natural disaster, the government has yet to make arrangements to receive the money and has spent nothing on reconstruction.

The United Nations estimates that almost 3 million survivors of twin earthquakes in April and May – around 10 per cent of the Him-

alayan nation's population – need shelter, food and basic medical care, many in mountainous, hard-to-reach areas.

Govind Raj Pokharel, chief executive officer of the newly created National Reconstruction Authority, said the government was unlikely to start spending the money until October at the earliest, because of delays in approving plans and concerns about starting building work in the monsoon season.

“The government's response has been slow, I accept that,” he said.

Nepal has been criticised for its chaotic response to the quakes that

killed almost 9000 people. Four months later, many partially damaged buildings in Kathmandu are still standing and rubble is strewn across public parks. Tens of thousands of people are living in plastic tents.

Maili Pariyar, 50, knitting a purse to sell outside her tent, said she had only received food and tent materials from aid agencies. She had not been given anything by the government.

“We have lost everything, we are desperate,” she said. “How much longer do we have to wait for help?”

Dr Pokharel said the govern-

ment had erred by trying to pass a contentious constitution that divided the country into new regions – which has led to violent clashes.

“We would have liked it if they concentrated on the reconstruction first,” Dr Pokharel said. “That would have been better.”

Jamie McGoldrick, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nepal, said the government had been sluggish.

“The government needs to get going,” he said. “The next big challenge is to ensure that people living in tents are prepared for the [northern] winter.”

Reuters