

and are made accountable for their act, all through their life.

As India is not a high-income country, municipal councils usually do not have the resources to employ adequate number of civil engineers as inspectors. Even if they do, these positions are often poorly paid. So it may be difficult to attract experienced and qualified civil engineers, who can achieve more than simply checking the basic calculations of building projects. In addition to this, it is difficult to see how proper building inspection can be achieved, given the widespread corruption in obtaining building permits. Some may agree that increasing penalties for negligence in building safety could have some positive results in the future. However, considering the rate of growth in India, especially in the cities, it is a daunting task to carry out proper inspection, even if it is assumed that there will be the needed political and ethical will behind this intention. Another approach would be to increase public awareness and in effect, make the potential buyers of houses a group of 'inspectors'. This can be less expensive and at the same time, much more effective.

In India, where the population is business and initiative-oriented, the existence of 'demand' has a significant role in the way socio-economic and political structures in the society form these inter-relationships. In other words, if only people show as much interest in the earthquake safety of their apartments, as they do in choosing the size of tiles, doors and taps used, then it will be more likely that building contractors will stick to the rules and regulations. In addition to this, the initiation of a general insurance scheme for buildings can also have a significant role in ensuring constructions being built according to building safety regulations. It is very likely that insurance companies would refuse to provide insurance for a building that is not earthquake-proof or at least ask for higher premium. Unless there is a finance-related regulation, rules are very difficult to be implemented. Finally, an efficient civil defence system has to provide quick and effective response to the needs of disaster-stricken people.

The Gujarat, Latur and Chamoli earthquakes have shown that, in contrast to limited response of the state, the

involvement of the non-governmental organizations in emergency aid and service was partly effective. It is here perhaps that the international community can have a significant role. The transfer of know-how in rapid rescue methods and designing of effective disaster preparedness plans are the areas in which the international community can provide India with the necessary resources for capacity strengthening. This will certainly be better than help rendered in a catastrophe, although the care shown by the international community by providing a large number of relief aids, is nevertheless deeply appreciated by the public.

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Taxonomy in India

The communication by Pushpangadan and Narayanan Nair¹ is highly informative. The field of taxonomy, neglected in the Indian subcontinent for the last three decades, regained importance after the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD-1993) and its effective implementation in India from 1994. Taxonomy plays an important role in getting the sovereign right of countries to their biological wealth. As the authors noted, in recent years, the field of systematics failed to attract the attention of young researchers, students and even the university/college teachers. Most of the universities/college departments of botany do not even have a good taxonomist.

Study of monotonous floras and mere listing of taxonomic characteristic in-

formation may not be understood by the workers in related fields. More information on ecology, conservation and utilization needs to be included in every description. Only a field biologist can give all these information.

Considering the importance and the need to hasten our bioprospecting studies and to establish our rights over economically and medicinally important endemic flora, taxonomic research/researchers should be encouraged and priority should be given to taxonomy-oriented projects/programmes. Training programmes should be conducted at the national level for young researchers by institutions involved in biosystematics, as practised in National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI). These actions

may help to give life to the field of biosystematics and to the 'taxonomist' – the endangered species.

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