

Nepal asks international community to send tourists there

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Kathmandu: Nepal today appealed to the international community to send tourists to its famed heritage sites to revive its ailing tourism industry as it reopened another heritage palace complex, nearly two months after deadly earthquakes damaged many historical sites and killed nearly 9,000 people.

Hanumandhoka Durbar Square, a medieval period temple and palace complex enlisted in UNESCO World Heritage site was reopened today for tourists here.

Speaking during its opening, Tourism Minister Kripasur Sherpa called international community to send more visitors to the heritage sites of Nepal to help rebuild the monuments and shrines devastated by the earthquakes.

The earthquakes that struck Nepal on April 25 and May 12 have damaged nearly 90 per cent of the palaces, shrines and monuments which were built at least 300 years ago.

The Kathmandu Municipal Corporation (KMC) has provided helmets to the tourists willing to visit the cultural and religious site of Hanumandhoka Durbar Square here belonging to the Malla era.

"If you want to help Nepal send visitors to our monuments and shrines. There are beautiful places and historical and cultural sites which are less affected by the earthquake and it is safe to visit these places," Sherpa said.

Nepal government yesterday had opened Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Bouddhanath, Pashupatinath and Swoyambhu, enlisted by the UNESCO as heritage sites.

More than 128 tourists have visited Kathmandu Durbar Square within 48 hours of its opening.

Bhesh Narayan Dahal, Director General of Department of Archaeology have asked the government a fund of Rs 1.8 billion for the next fiscal year for renovation and reconstruction of the devastated shrines and monuments of Kathmandu valley.

He said the government will soon start the reconstruction and renovation works at the heritage sites and it will be completed within the next 5-79 years period.

Nepal is still recovering from two major quakes and several aftershocks that have killed nearly 9,000 people and left a trail of destruction at famous cultural sites.

Nepal has a huge tourism industry which saw an inflow of over 5,85,000 tourists, including 1,00,000 from India in 2014.

Tourism is a top forex earner for Nepal. More than one million people of the country are getting direct employment in the tourism sector.

- PTI