

LEARNING FROM THE HIMALAYAS

 by Cristina Serra

Bishal Upreti of Nepal, winner of the 2015 C.N.R. Rao Prize, is exploring the geology of the Himalayan region to help understand today's earthquakes.

The earthquake that has rocked the city of Katmandu, Nepal, on 25 April 2015 was just one devastating temblor among about 50 detectable quakes that occur each day on Earth. Nepal, in particular, is one of the most earthquake-prone areas in the world, and studying its geology provides important lessons for understanding and managing the risks of future disasters.

Bishal Upreti, a Nepali geologist elected to TWAS in 2006, has been studying the region for over 40 years. His findings are now being used to evaluate the seismic hazard in the Nepal Himalayan region. For his outstanding contributions, he has been selected as the recipient of the 2015 C.N.R. Rao prize for scientific research, receiving the award at TWAS's 26th General Meeting in Vienna, Austria.

The prize is named after TWAS Founding Fellow and former TWAS President C.N.R. Rao, an eminent Indian chemist who served as chairman of the Science Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India from 2004-2014. The prize was established in 2006 to acknowledge scientists from developing countries who have made significant contributions.

"I am highly delighted to receive the prestigious C.N.R. Rao Prize from TWAS," Upreti said. "I consider this prize to be an honour not only to me but an honour to the entire geoscientific community of Nepal. This prize certainly motivates me to contribute more in science in the developing countries."

In his investigations of the Himalayan Mountains, Upreti has provided a valuable historical contribution to the knowledge of the region. His research explores the ancient history expressed in the rock and deep tectonic plates, but it has a direct value for the present – and the future.

Upreti has mapped active faults to build the chronology of the historic and prehistoric earthquakes in the Nepal Himalaya. In the first days after the 2015 quake, he was involved in

providing technical information on the disaster and on safety measures. His GPS data were analyzed and put to use within three days.

Upreti, recently named the TWAS Council Member for East and South-East Asia, is a professor of geology and TWAS Research Professor (2012-2017) at the University of Zambia in Lusaka.

He is also the president of the Disaster Preparedness Network-Nepal [DPNet Nepal], a network of more than 100 NGOs, UN agencies, Nepalese government ministries and other organisations working in disaster risk reduction.

Upreti is also involved in outreach activities: Through public and school lectures, radio and television programmes, he helps communities – and the world – to prepare for future earthquakes. 

Learn more:
www.twas.org/node/11451

▼ TWAS Fellow Bishal Nath Upreti of Tribhuvan University in Nepal accepts the 2015 C.N.R. Rao Prize at the opening ceremonies of the 26th TWAS General Meeting in Vienna. At left is TWAS President Bai Chunli.

