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Article For Reading -

Damage control: On the Tibet earthquake
Adherence to existing regulations can limit the impact of earthquakes

This week, an early-morning earthquake in Tibet of magnitude 7.1 and originating at a depth of 10 km has reportedly claimed at least 100 lives and damaged buildings and houses. The tremors from the quake were felt in Nepal as well as parts of Bihar and even New Delhi, thousands of kilometres away. The main earthquake was followed by at least two aftershocks. If the epicentre had been located closer to India, the damage could have been manifold. Earthquakes in the Himalayas evoke a special kind of dread in the country. Memories of two deadly quakes in Nepal in April and May of 2015 that killed at least 9,000 and caused incalculable damage still bubble up. The tectonic plates are the gigantic shards into which Earth is broken up. Layered on them are the continents and the seas. These plates are constantly in motion — colliding with, diverging with, or sliding past one another. The Indian plate collided with the Eurasian plate and the crust tilted upwards, creating the Himalayas. The fractured zones along which they interact create the fault lines where earthquakes occur. By studying these faults and the pattern of past earthquakes, seismologists can estimate how much latent energy at these fault lines, which can run thousands of miles, has been released and how much of it still resides in them.

Scientists have long warned of a massive, overdue earthquake in the Garhwal-Kumaon range because of what is known about the pattern of quakes in the region. The records of the last 300 years suggest that those that have occurred have not released all the pent-up energy and that is why there is a broad consensus among experts that an 8-magnitude temblor is overdue. Unfortunately, predicting the day and time is outside the ambit of current science. Thus, the best we can hope for is insulation against the projected damage. It is in this context that infrastructure development in the Himalayan region must be viewed. While several of these projects are intended to smooth the movement of people and goods, the recurrent landslides and glacial lake outbursts that wash away dams, hydropower projects, and roads serve as a constant reminder of the inherent fragility of the region. Every form of infrastructure in the region — power plant or dam — must take into account the imminence of a major earthquake and the associated costs factored into planning. Adhering to already existing building codes, not only in the Himalayas but in the surrounding Indo-Gangetic plains, can go a long way in limiting the inevitable damage

Summary –

A devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Tibet has claimed over 100 lives and caused widespread destruction, with tremors felt in Nepal, Bihar, and Delhi. The Himalayan region, formed by the collision of tectonic plates, is highly prone to seismic activity, and experts caution that an overdue 8-magnitude earthquake could strike the Garhwal-Kumaon range due to unrelieved tectonic stress.

The article emphasizes the critical need for earthquake-resilient infrastructure in the fragile Himalayan region, where frequent landslides and glacial outbursts amplify risks. Adhering to established building codes and incorporating seismic considerations in development plans across the Himalayas and Indo-Gangetic plains are vital to minimizing damage and ensuring safety.

Vocabulary –

1. Adherence (Noun) (पालन)
Meaning: The act of sticking firmly to a rule, belief, or practice.
Synonyms: Compliance, observance, obedience
Antonyms: Disregard, negligence, disobedience
Example: Adherence to safety protocols can save lives during natural disasters.

2. Fragility (Noun) (नाजुकता)
Meaning: The quality of being easily damaged or delicate.
Synonyms: Delicacy, brittleness, vulnerability
Antonyms: Strength, durability, robustness
Example: The fragility of the Himalayan ecosystem requires careful planning for infrastructure development.

3. Temblor (Noun) (भूकंप)
Meaning: An earthquake.
Synonyms: Quake, seismic event, shock
Antonyms: Stability, stillness
Example: The temblor caused widespread panic in the affected region.

4. Pent-up (Adj) (संचित)
Meaning: Held back or restrained.
Synonyms: Repressed, suppressed, accumulated
Antonyms: Released, expressed, liberated
Example: Scientists fear that the pent-up energy in the fault lines could trigger a major earthquake.

5. Latent (Adj) (अव्यक्त)

Meaning: Existing but not yet developed or manifest.
Synonyms: Dormant, hidden, underlying
Antonyms: Apparent, active, visible
Example: The latent energy within tectonic plates often leads to devastating quakes.

6. Imminence (Noun) (निकटता)

Meaning: The state of being about to happen.
Synonyms: Proximity, closeness, nearness
Antonyms: Remoteness, distance, improbability
Example: The imminence of an earthquake demands strict adherence to building codes.

7. Resilience (Noun) (लचीलापन)

Meaning: The ability to recover quickly from difficulties or adapt to challenges.
Synonyms: Toughness, flexibility, endurance
Antonyms: Rigidity, weakness, fragility
Example: Building earthquake-resilient structures is vital in seismic zones.

8. Seismology (Noun) (भूकंप विज्ञान)

Meaning: The scientific study of earthquakes and their causes.
Synonyms: Earthquake science, geophysics
Antonyms: N/A
Example: Seismology plays a critical role in understanding tectonic activity.

9. Hydropower (Noun) (जलविद्युत)

Meaning: Power derived from the energy of falling or flowing water.
Synonyms: Water power, hydroelectricity
Antonyms: Fossil fuel energy, thermal power
Example: The recurrent landslides often damage hydropower projects in the region.

10. Magnitude (Noun) (परिमाण)

Meaning: The size, extent, or importance of something, often referring to earthquakes.
Synonyms: Intensity, scale, extent
Antonyms: Insignificance, triviality, smallness
Example: The magnitude of the earthquake caused severe damage across the region.