

RIMES TERMS TITLI CYCLONE 'RAREST OF RARE'

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A fisherman rushes for shelter as Titli hits the Gopalpur coast in Ganjam district.
file photoBiswaranjanRout

The Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for Africa and Asia, a 45-nation international organisation on disaster warning, has termed 'Titli', the severe cyclonic storm that devastated Odisha in October, as 'rarest cyclone'.

"More than 200 years of cyclone track history in the Odisha coast reveals that the Titli cyclone is the rarest of rare in terms of its characteristics such as recurvature after landfall and retaining its destructive potential after landfall and recurvature away from the coastal areas for more than two days," says RIMES in its latest report.

The UN-registered organisation said: "Considering the history of cyclone tracks, no synthetic track projection captures the Titli type of cyclones. The forecast information available lacks actionable early warning information such as no indication of occurrence of secondary hazards, including landslides far away from the coasts."

The severe cyclonic storm left more than 60 people dead, mainly due to land slide in interior Gajapati district. Odisha, which takes immense pride in disaster preparedness, was confounded in the wake of the damage to both life and property caused by Titli in interior districts.

Earlier, India Meteorological Department had called the formation of Titli as a 'rarest of rare' occurrence. The severe cyclone had changed its path after landfall.

According to RIMES, the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority faced challenges in anticipating and managing Titli's impact due to lack of impact-based actionable early warning information and prior experience not only in India but also elsewhere.

"The OSDMA, by learning the lessons from Titli cyclone, could evolve measures to minimise impacts in both coastal and non-coastal regions more effectively in future," it said.

The international body said: "The State government actions linked to the cyclone-risk management are also heavily focused on the coastal areas where cyclones cross at their peak intensities. Therefore, coastal areas now have been largely well managed through evacuations and other protocols, leading to zero casualties in these areas."

"The highest number of casualties occurred in a village called Baraghara in Gajapati district due to landslides. People did not evacuate, as the risk is unknown and also not expected. There was no pin-pointed forecast available what will happen where," it said.

The RIMES has recommended that a detailed risk assessment has to be carried out for Odisha to understand the risks in the light of the Titli devastation.

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