

February 2025

**Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Analysis Initiative (UDAAI)
Monthly Reports**

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

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About UDAAI Monthly Reports

Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Analysis Initiative (UDAAI) is a monthly initiative by Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation. The goal of the UDAAI reports is to document disasters and accidents in Uttarakhand, leading to human and ecological casualties. UDAAI is based on media reports in respectable publications in English and Hindi newspapers, as well as news portals. UDAAI neither attempts nor claims to document all disasters and all accidents in Uttarakhand; its focus instead is to document major casualties and non-casualty events on a regular basis.

We strongly believe that with the perils of inclement climate and unabated disasters, the ecologically fragile and earthquake-prone state of Uttarakhand needs to take many more steps to increase its disaster preparedness. We therefore see UDAAI as a document that highlights attention towards the urgent need of a holistic disaster management and accident minimization policy framework in Uttarakhand.

It is our earnest hope that UDAAI will spur political leadership, policy makers, bureaucracy, research and academic institutions, businesses, civil society organisations, media and the citizenry at large to initiate inclusive, regular and action-oriented conversations on the subjects of resilience, mitigation and adaptation in Uttarakhand. With mainstreaming and a greater focus on the issue, there is likely to be an improvement in the process of planning of climate actions and disaster management in Uttarakhand.

1. February 1, 2025 : 1,500 houses across four districts develop cracks due to railway work

Over 1,500 houses across four districts have been damaged due to blasting work for the 125 km-long Rishikesh - Karanprayag railway project, local residents have alleged. However, Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) said surveys are underway to take stock of the damages and they have paid a compensation of 1024.33 lakh to those affected.

"We have paid compensation for cracks and damages in over 1,500 houses allegedly due to blasting for construction of tunnels in the railway project. We have paid compensation for damages in 601 houses in Pauri Garhwal, 488 in Rudraprayag, 300 in Chamoli and 150 in Tehri Garhwal on the basis of reports received from respective district magistrates," an official at Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) said requesting anonymity.

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Shalini Devi, pradhan at Rampur village in Pauri Garhwal, said, "Around 50 houses in Kandi, Margudh, and Rampur villages were damaged due to blasting for the construction of the tunnel. We don't feel vibrations anymore but it was scary during the blasting. In kutchha houses, cracks are bigger and wider. A list of affected houses have been submitted to the district administration, but we are yet to receive any compensation."

In January 2023, the railways said that cracks were reported in Maroda village in Rudraprayag while carrying out slope stabilisation work. It cited three landslides and added the design scheme of slope stabilisation was therefore changed to a stronger and more reliable one.

The Railways maintained a geological survey was carried out to ascertain the hazards in advance. An airborne electromagnetic survey was also carried out to find out the water bodies above the tunnel alignment to preserve groundwater and the environment, it said.

A railway official said the damages in houses are not due to control blasting, but construction problems. "We have been regularly monitoring the cracks, We also installed crack metres in houses which showed no change in size during control blasting." He said it is the sound generated during blasting that causes problems.



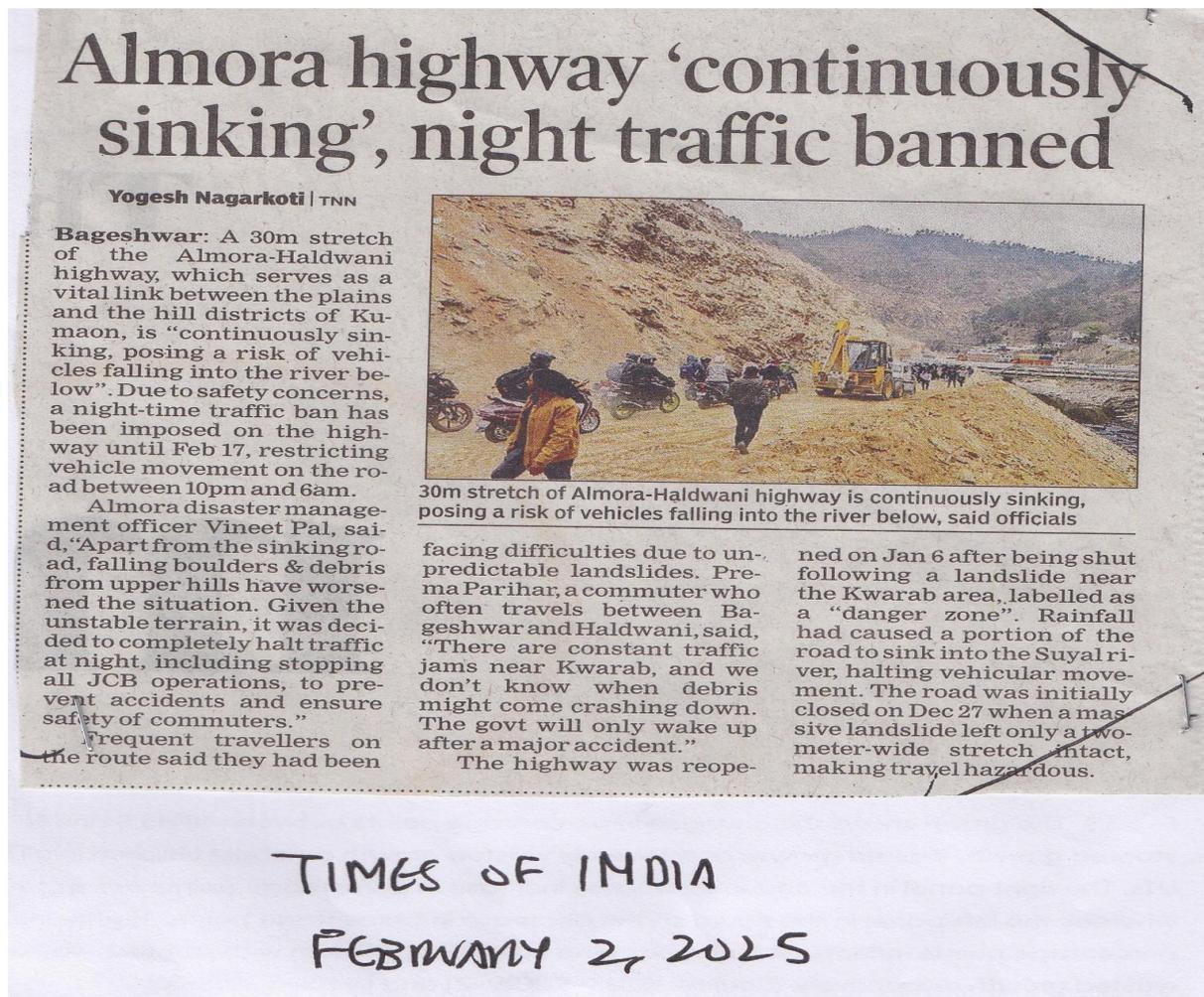
2. February 2, 2025 : Almora highway 'continuously sinking', night traffic banned

A 30m stretch of the Almora-Haldwani highway, which serves as a vital link between the plains and the hill districts of Kumaon, is "continuously sinking, posing a risk of vehicles falling into the river below". Due to safety concerns, a night-time traffic ban has been imposed on the highway until Feb 17, restricting vehicle movement on the road between 10pm and 6am.

Almora disaster management officer Vineet Pal, said, "Apart from the sinking road, falling boulders & debris from upper hills have worsened the situation. Given the unstable terrain, it was decided to completely halt traffic at night, including stopping all JCB operations, to prevent accidents and ensure safety of commuters."

Frequent travellers on the route said they had been facing difficulties due to unpredictable landslides. Prema Parihar, a commuter who often travels between Bageshwar and Haldwani, said, "There are constant traffic jams near Kwarab, and we don't know when debris might come crashing down. The government will only wake up after a major accident."

The highway was reopened on Jan 6 after being shut following a landslide near the Kwarab area, labelled as a "danger zone". Rainfall had caused a portion of the road to sink into the Suyal river, halting vehicular movement. The road was initially closed on Dec 27 when a massive landslide left only a two-meter wide stretch intact, making travel hazardous.



3. February 3, 2025 : Series of tremors in Uttarkashi rattle residents; seismologists urge caution

Uttarkashi in the Garhwal Himalayas has witnessed an unusual series of seven consecutive quakes within a week -- between Jan 24 and 31-- ranging from 2.7 to 3.5 in magnitude, triggering panic among the local residents.

It began with three consecutive tremors on Jan 24 of varying magnitudes, with the highest being 3.5. The following day, a 2.7-magnitude quake struck Uttarkashi town. This was followed by tremors of the same magnitude each on Jan 29, 30, and 31. The epicentre of almost all the quakes was located near Bhatwari and Badkot areas of the district. Notably, Uttarkashi lies in Zone IV of India's seismic zonation map, making it highly prone to earthquakes

The district witnessed one of the most devastating quakes striking the Garhwal region in recent history in 1991, which claimed over 700 lives.

Experts have identified these successive quakes as an "Earthquake Swarm" -- a phenomenon where multiple small tremors occur in a specific area over a short period. Seismologists have long warned that a 'Big One' is due in the Himalayas anytime soon.



About Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

SDC Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, citizen engagement and capacity building in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. The foundation works in partnership with institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand and other stakeholders such as research & academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses & trade bodies, schools & colleges in the state.

Climate and environment conservation, waste management, sustainable urbanisation and a basket of sustainable development issues are key focus areas of the foundation.

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PS : Errors or omissions in UDAAI documentation, if any, are purely unintentional. In case any errors or key omissions are detected or any fresh updates are available for events that are already documented, SDC Foundation may kindly be notified at email id contactsdcuk@gmail.com. We shall make the necessary corrections in subsequent versions of the monthly reports of UDAAI.