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24 Coastal Villages in Odisha Recognised by UNESCO as 'Tsunami Ready'

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Context:

On **16th November 2024**, it was announced that **24 coastal villages in Odisha** have been officially recognized as **Tsunami Ready** by UNESCO during the **2nd Global Tsunami Symposium** held in Indonesia. This recognition was based on a verification process conducted by the **National Tsunami Ready Recognition Board (NTRB)**, which includes scientists from the **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** and officers from the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**.

About the Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme (TRRP)

The **Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme (TRRP)**, run by UNESCO's **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)**, is a **voluntary, international community-based initiative** aimed at enhancing **tsunami preparedness** in coastal areas worldwide. The program focuses on **risk prevention** and **mitigation strategies** to protect **lives, livelihoods, and property** from tsunami threats.

Key Features of the TRRP:

- **Goal:** Build resilience against tsunamis through awareness and preparedness initiatives.
- **Preparedness Indicators:** The program evaluates coastal communities based on **12 preparedness indicators**, ensuring consistent evaluation.
- **Renewal:** Recognition is renewed every four years, ensuring continuous improvement in preparedness.

Tsunami Characteristics

- **Definition:** Tsunamis are a series of large waves caused by underwater disturbances such as **earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, or coastal rockfalls**.
- **Speed:** Tsunami waves travel at speeds of over **500 miles per hour (mph)** in deep water. As they approach shallow coastal waters, their speed decreases to about **20-30 mph**, but their height increases significantly.
- **Wave Characteristics:** The speed of a tsunami wave depends on the **ocean depth**, not the distance from the wave's origin.

Steps Taken by India to Enhance Tsunami Preparedness

India has made significant progress in **tsunami preparedness** through various initiatives aimed at **early warning systems, disaster management, and coastal mapping**:

1. **Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC):**

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- Provides **tsunami advisories** to **25 countries** in the **Indian Ocean region**, ensuring **last-mile connectivity** for tsunami warnings.
- Equipped with a network of **tsunami buoy systems** that provide **real-time data** for early warning.

1. **Real-Time Network of Tide Gauge Stations:**

- **INCOIS** has established a **real-time network of tide gauge stations** along the Indian coast, enhancing monitoring capabilities.

1. **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA):**

- Provides comprehensive **guidelines** for the **management of tsunamis** within India, ensuring that preparedness measures are standardized and regularly updated.

1. **Modeling and Mapping:**

- **Mapping of tsunami risks** is carried out along the Indian coastline, and the **early tsunami and storm surge warning system** is continuously improved to ensure the effectiveness of disaster response mechanisms.

Significance of Odisha's Recognition

The **recognition of 24 coastal villages in Odisha** as Tsunami Ready is a significant achievement for India in terms of **disaster preparedness** and **community-based risk management**. Odisha, a state frequently threatened by natural disasters like cyclones and tsunamis, has invested in strengthening its coastal communities' resilience to tsunamis.

By implementing the preparedness indicators outlined in the TRRP, these villages have demonstrated their ability to:

- **Raise awareness** about tsunami risks.
- Establish effective **evacuation plans** and **warning systems**.
- Ensure **community participation** in disaster preparedness activities.

This initiative not only enhances the **safety** of local communities but also strengthens **India's role in global tsunami risk management efforts**.

The **Tsunami Ready Recognition** for these villages in Odisha is a step forward in India's commitment to protecting coastal communities from the devastating impacts of tsunamis. With continued efforts in **early warning systems**, **community awareness**, and **government policies**, India is paving the way for greater resilience in coastal regions across the nation.