

THE HINDU EDITORIAL ANALYSIS





Vocabulary

1. SEISMIC (Adjective)

Meaning: Relating to earthquakes or other vibrations of the earth; here also used figuratively as something of enormous significance or impact

Synonyms: Tectonic, Earth-shaking, Tremor-related, Groundbreaking, Monumental, Massive, Transformative

Antonyms: Insignificant, Minor, Trivial, Negligible, Superficial, Inconsequential, Stable

Example: The resignation of the long-serving chairman caused a seismic shift in the company's leadership and strategic direction.

2. ROLLBACK (Noun)

Meaning: The reversal or cancellation of a previously introduced policy, regulation, or decision

Synonyms: Reversal, Withdrawal, Cancellation, Retreat, Rescission, Revocation, Undoing

Antonyms: Implementation, Enforcement, Introduction, Advancement, Progression, Continuation, Enactment

Example: The rollback of the fuel subsidy reform triggered widespread protests among low-income households across the country.

3. RESILIENCE (Noun)

Meaning: The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; the ability to withstand and adapt to challenges

Synonyms: Strength, Toughness, Adaptability, Durability, Endurance, Flexibility, Recovery

Antonyms: Fragility, Weakness, Vulnerability, Brittleness, Helplessness, Susceptibility, Frailty

Example: The community demonstrated remarkable resilience by rebuilding their lives within months of the devastating flood.

4. CITYSCAPES (Noun)

Meaning: The visual appearance or landscape of a city including its buildings infrastructure and surroundings

Synonyms: Urban landscape, City skyline, Metropolitan environment, Built environment, Urban fabric, City panorama, Urban setting

Antonyms: Rural landscape, Countryside, Wilderness, Natural environment, Village setting, Open land

Example: Rapid industrialisation transformed the cityscapes of several coastal towns beyond recognition within a single decade.

5. WITHSTAND (Verb)

Meaning: To remain undamaged or unaffected by something; to successfully resist or endure a force or pressure

Synonyms: Resist, Endure, Survive, Bear, Tolerate, Weather, Sustain

Antonyms: Yield, Succumb, Collapse, Surrender, Crumble, Fail, Buckle

Example: The new bridge was engineered to withstand wind speeds of over 200 kilometres per hour during cyclones.

6. STRINGENT (Adjective)

Meaning: Strict, precise, and demanding; leaving no room for flexibility or deviation

Synonyms: Strict, Rigorous, Severe, Tough, Demanding, Uncompromising, Exacting

Antonyms: Lenient, Flexible, Lax, Loose, Mild, Relaxed, Permissive

Example: The stringent emission standards introduced by the regulator forced several older factories to shut down permanently.

7. FRAGILE (Adjective)

Meaning: Easily broken or damaged; not strong or stable; vulnerable to disruption

Synonyms: Delicate, Brittle, Vulnerable, Weak, Frail, Unstable, Precarious

Antonyms: Strong, Sturdy, Robust, Resilient, Durable, Stable, Tough

Example: The fragile economy of the drought-affected district could not absorb another season of crop failure.

8. HOLISTIC (Adjective)

Meaning: Considering something as a whole rather than just its individual parts; addressing all aspects together

Synonyms: Comprehensive, Integrated, All-encompassing, Inclusive, Complete, Unified, Thorough

Antonyms: Partial, Fragmented, Narrow, Incomplete, Selective, Isolated, Piecemeal

Example: The government adopted a holistic approach to rural development addressing healthcare education infrastructure and employment simultaneously.

9. MITIGATION (Noun)

Meaning: The action of reducing the severity, seriousness, or painfulness of something

Synonyms: Reduction, Alleviation, Minimisation, Moderation, Lessening, Relief, Softening

Antonyms: Aggravation, Intensification, Worsening, Escalation, Amplification, Exacerbation, Increase

Example: The city invested heavily in green infrastructure as part of its climate change mitigation strategy.

Tone:

The tone of the passage is **measured and reform-minded with a sense of urgency.** The author neither celebrates the rollback nor condemns it outright — he treats it as a moment that demands honest and careful thinking. The language is technical yet accessible, policy-oriented rather than political. Phrases like **"directionally correct"**, **"wider consultation"**, and **"holistic and implementable"** reflect the tone of a pragmatic reformer who understands both the scientific necessity of change and the ground-level realities that make hasty implementation dangerous. The urgency builds quietly through the passage, peaking in the final lines where the author reminds the reader that with India's urban expansion underway, getting this framework right has never mattered more.

Theme:


The central theme is **the urgent need for a scientifically sound, financially viable, and widely consulted earthquake zoning framework for India.** The author argues that the BIS revision was directionally correct in moving toward globally accepted probabilistic seismic hazard assessment, but its rollback reflects legitimate concerns about cost, execution, and the impact on economically fragile regions and India's vast informal housing sector.

A strong secondary theme is **the tension between scientific rigour and practical implementability in disaster preparedness policy.** The author makes a nuanced point — the problem is not the direction of reform but the absence of holistic consultation across ministries, regulators, industry, and planners. Layered beneath both themes is a third concern — **climate resilience** — reminding the reader that earthquake zoning reform is not just about seismic safety but about future-proofing India's built environment against multiple overlapping risks.

A seismic decision: On revision to India's earthquake zoning, rollback

India needs a holistic, implementable earthquake zoning framework

The Centre's rollback of the revision to India's earthquake zoning by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), follows a major challenge to the methodology used, which some engineers believe are out of sync with site-based evaluations. Yet, the reversal is driven largely by the massive cost and execution implications, as the decision impacts urban planning, disaster preparedness and climate resilience. The current earthquake zoning exercise is an opportunity to disaster- and climate-proof cityscapes, power infrastructure, dams, highways, and homes and offices as India undertakes an urban infrastructure expansion. Getting the zoning framework right has, arguably, never been more important. At the heart of the debate lies the scientific approximation of possible earthquakes and their intensities, vis-à-vis the preparedness of the built environment to withstand them. Globally, most advanced economies and seismically active regions now use Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Assessment (PSHA), a dynamic framework that models earthquake risk through probability-based simulations of ground motion. Until now, India has primarily used a simpler fixed zoning model. The BIS's attempt to move toward this globally accepted framework is, therefore, directionally correct. However, some structural engineers and policymakers argue that the revisions, which were notified in November 2025 and withdrawn on March 3, were too stringent.



The proposed framework introduced an entirely new top-risk category, Zone VI, covering most of Kashmir, parts of the Himalayan belt, Kutch in Gujarat and the north-east. Urban planners worry that such zoning could stall developmental and infrastructure activity in already economically fragile regions, and potentially push more housing into the informal sector — which already accounts for nearly 80% of India's homes. Estimates suggest that a one-zone increase could raise costs by around 20%, and two zones by nearly one-third. For major infrastructure such as metro rail systems, dams and power stations, the cost implication could be significantly higher. Pushback to the BIS revisions has come from both the private sector and within government, including the Ministries of Housing and Urban Affairs, Home Affairs, the Central Water Commission and the National Dam Safety Authority. Another layer in this debate is climate. The construction sector in India is among its largest dispersed sources of carbon emissions. While a revision in the earthquake zoning framework is necessary, it requires wider consultation across ministries, regulators and industry stakeholders. Only a holistic and implementable framework can strengthen disaster resilience and address climate mitigation, affordability and execution challenges.

Writer's point of view

The writer's point of view is that of a ****pragmatic policy thinker**** who sees India's earthquake zoning reform as both urgently necessary and dangerously easy to get wrong.

On the rollback, the writer neither celebrates nor condemns it. Cost concerns — a one-zone increase raising costs by 20%, impact on economically fragile regions — were real and legitimate. But rolling back without replacing is not a solution.

On the BIS revision, the writer firmly believes the direction was right. Moving toward Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Assessment aligns India with global standards. The problem was not the destination but the process — insufficient consultation and underestimation of implementation challenges.

On the informal sector, the writer is particularly concerned. With nearly 80% of India's homes informal, stricter norms without addressing affordability will simply push more housing underground making resilience harder to achieve.

His deepest concern is timing. India is in the middle of a massive urban expansion. Getting the framework wrong now means locking in vulnerability for decades.

Mcq's

Q1. What can be inferred from the fact that nearly 80% of India's homes are in the informal sector?

- a) The informal sector is entirely unregulated and poses no risk during earthquakes**
- b) Stricter zoning norms that raise construction costs could push even more housing into the informal sector making earthquake resilience harder to achieve**
- c) India's informal housing sector already meets all earthquake safety standards making zoning revisions unnecessary**
- d) The government deliberately excludes informal housing from earthquake zoning frameworks to reduce compliance costs**
- e) India's urban planning policies have successfully reduced the share of informal housing over the past decade**

Answer: b

Q2. When were the BIS earthquake zoning revisions notified and when were they withdrawn?

- a) Notified in January 2025 and withdrawn in February 2026**
- b) Notified in March 2025 and withdrawn in January 2026**
- c) Notified in November 2025 and withdrawn on March 3, 2026**
- d) Notified in July 2025 and withdrawn in December 2025**
- e) Notified in September 2024 and withdrawn in November 2025**

Answer: c

Q3. Read the following sentence from the passage:

"The Centre's rollback of the revision to India's earthquake zoning follows a major challenge to the methodology used, which some engineers believe are out of sync with site-based evaluations."

Which of the following gives the correct meaning, one synonym, and one antonym of the word "rollback"?

a) Meaning — a forward movement toward stricter regulations; Synonym — advancement; Antonym — withdrawal

b) Meaning — the reversal or cancellation of a previously introduced policy or decision; Synonym — reversal; Antonym — implementation

c) Meaning — a gradual and phased introduction of new safety standards; Synonym — transition; Antonym — stagnation

d) Meaning — a government review of existing policies without making any changes; Synonym — assessment; Antonym — revision

e) Meaning — the complete replacement of an old framework with a new one; Synonym — overhaul; Antonym — retention

Answer: b

Q4. The author states that *"getting the zoning framework right has, arguably, never been more important."* Which of the following is the underlying assumption?

- a) India has never had any earthquake zoning framework before the BIS revision of 2025
- b) India's current phase of massive urban infrastructure expansion makes the consequences of inadequate earthquake zoning far more severe than in the past
- c) Earthquake zoning frameworks are only important for countries that experience frequent seismic activity
- d) The BIS is the only institution capable of designing and implementing an effective earthquake zoning framework for India
- e) Getting the zoning framework right will completely eliminate earthquake related casualties in India

Answer: b

Q5. According to the passage approximately what percentage of India's homes are in the informal sector?

- a) 60%
- b) 90%
- c) 70%
- d) 85%
- e) 80%

Answer: e

Q6. The author argues that India's move toward Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Assessment is directionally correct. Which of the following if true would most strengthen this argument?

- a) Several Indian states have already adopted PSHA and reported higher construction costs without any measurable improvement in earthquake safety outcomes**
- b) PSHA has been adopted by most advanced economies and seismically active regions globally and has demonstrably improved earthquake preparedness**
- c) The BIS introduced Zone VI covering economically fragile regions making PSHA implementation politically and economically unviable**
- d) India's construction sector is among its largest sources of carbon emissions making any further regulatory burden counterproductive**
- e) The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has formally opposed the BIS revisions citing unacceptable cost implications**

Answer: b

Q7. Which of the following best describes the tone of the passage?

- a) Alarmist about the dangers of earthquake risk in India's rapidly expanding cities**
- b) Critical of the government's rollback and dismissive of cost concerns**
- c) Balanced and reform-minded acknowledging both the necessity of revision and the legitimate concerns about implementation**
- d) Celebratory about India's urban infrastructure expansion and its earthquake preparedness**
- e) Neutral and purely descriptive without any policy recommendations**

Answer: c

Q8. The author argues that the BIS's move toward PSHA is directionally correct despite concerns about cost and implementation. Which of the following if true would most weaken this argument?

- a) PSHA has been successfully implemented in Japan and the United States reducing earthquake related casualties significantly**
- b) Independent studies show that PSHA models have overestimated seismic risk in several Indian regions leading to unnecessarily stringent and costly building standards**
- c) India's informal housing sector already accounts for nearly 80% of homes making any zoning revision difficult to enforce**
- d) The proposed Zone VI covers economically fragile regions like Kashmir and the north-east where infrastructure development is already limited**
- e) The construction sector is among India's largest sources of carbon emissions making regulatory reform necessary from a climate perspective as well**

Answer: b

Q9. The phrase "out of sync" as used in the passage means:

- a) Technically advanced beyond current engineering capabilities**
- b) Not in agreement or alignment with something else**
- c) Ahead of its time and therefore difficult to implement immediately**
- d) Deliberately designed to exclude certain regions from safety frameworks**
- e) Inconsistent with international best practices in seismic assessment**

Answer: b

Q10. Read the following statements and choose the correct option:

1. India has primarily used Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Assessment before the BIS revision

2. The proposed Zone VI covered most of Kashmir, parts of the Himalayan belt, Kutch in Gujarat and the north-east

3. A one-zone increase in earthquake zoning could raise construction costs by around 20%

4. The rollback of the BIS revisions was supported by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

a) Only statements 1 and 3 are correct

b) Only statements 2 and 3 are correct

c) Only statements 2, 3 and 4 are correct

d) Only statement 2 is correct

e) All statements are correct

Answer: c

Q11. Which of the following best captures the central theme of the passage?

- a) The dangers of earthquake risk to India's rapidly expanding urban infrastructure**
- b) The need for a holistic and implementable earthquake zoning framework that balances scientific accuracy with cost affordability and execution challenges**
- c) The failure of the BIS to consult adequately with engineers and policymakers before introducing the earthquake zoning revision**
- d) The role of climate change in making earthquake zoning reforms more urgent for India**
- e) The conflict between urban planners and structural engineers over India's seismic risk assessment methodology**

Q12. Read the following conclusions and choose the correct option:

- 1. The rollback of the BIS revision was driven primarily by cost and execution concerns rather than purely scientific objections**
- 2. Moving toward PSHA is the right direction for India even though the specific implementation required wider consultation**
- 3. Stricter zoning norms without addressing the informal housing sector will leave the majority of India's homes outside the safety framework**
- 4. India's construction sector has no role to play in addressing climate change alongside earthquake resilience**

- a) Only statements 1 and 4 are correct**
- b) Only statements 2 and 3 are correct**
- c) Only statements 1, 2 and 3 are correct**
- d) Only statement 3 is correct**
- e) All statements are correct**

Q13. Which of the following best reflects the writer's overall point of view?

- a) The government was right to roll back the BIS revisions as the cost implications were simply too large to justify**
- b) India should abandon the PSHA framework entirely and continue with the existing fixed zoning model**
- c) The earthquake zoning revision was necessary and directionally correct but required wider consultation across ministries regulators and industry before implementation to produce a holistic and implementable framework**
- d) India's informal housing sector must be completely formalised before any earthquake zoning revision can be effectively implemented**
- e) The BIS should have limited the Zone VI classification to Kashmir only rather than extending it to the Himalayan belt Kutch and the north-east**

Q14. Which of the following best summarises the central argument of the passage?

- a) India's BIS earthquake zoning revision was scientifically flawed and the government was right to roll it back given the massive cost implications for urban infrastructure**
- b) India's rollback of the earthquake zoning revision reflects legitimate cost and execution concerns but the need for a scientifically sound holistic and widely consulted framework remains urgent especially given India's massive urban expansion**
- c) India must immediately adopt PSHA without any modifications as it is the globally accepted standard for seismic hazard assessment used by all advanced economies**
- d) The informal housing sector which accounts for 80% of India's homes is the biggest obstacle to effective earthquake zoning reform and must be addressed first**
- e) India's construction sector must reduce carbon emissions before the government introduces stricter earthquake zoning norms that could further increase construction costs**

Q15. Which of the following sentences if inserted after "only a holistic and implementable framework can strengthen disaster resilience and address climate mitigation, affordability and execution challenges" would most logically complete the author's argument?

a) Therefore the government must immediately reinstate the original BIS revision without any modifications to avoid further delays in earthquake preparedness

b) Rushing an inadequately consulted framework or indefinitely deferring reform are both unacceptable — India's urban future demands a framework that is scientifically rigorous, financially viable, and politically executable

c) The BIS must therefore limit the new zoning framework to only the highest risk regions like Kashmir and the north-east to minimise cost implications

d) India must therefore invite international experts from Japan and the United States to design its earthquake zoning framework from scratch

e) The informal housing sector must therefore be completely regulated before any new zoning framework is introduced to ensure universal compliance

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