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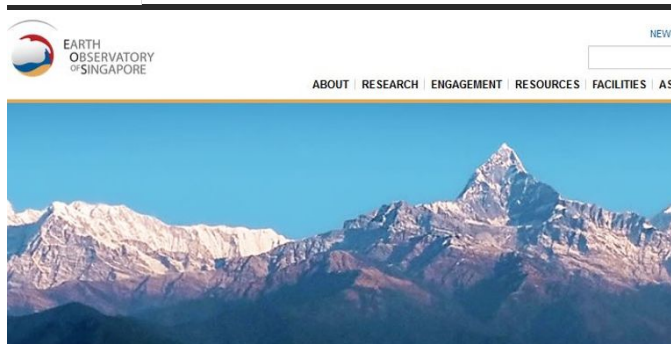
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# NTU scientists offer breakthrough in earthquake predictions

The NTU team found that tremors or earthquakes below a Richter scale of 2 potentially act as a precursor to larger earthquakes, and there is also a discernible pattern to them.

Posted 05 Apr 2016 11:19

PHOTOS



Screengrab of the Earth Observatory of Singapore website.

CAPTION

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SINGAPORE: Scientists from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) at its Earth Observatory of Singapore (EOS) have discovered a way to forecast earthquakes based on tremors or earthquakes below a Richter scale of 2.

In a press release on Tuesday (Apr 5), the NTU team said such slow fault movements or vibrations potentially point to an impending earthquake. There is also a discernible pattern to them, it added.

So far, scientists believe that larger earthquakes are unlikely to occur following tremors or small-scale earthquakes that are caused by small vibrations or slow fault movements such as those observed in the area of Parkfield along the San Andreas Fault in California, USA, the press release said.

"This discovery defied our understanding of how faults accumulate and release stress over time. These vibration patterns are caused by alternating slow and fast ruptures occurring on the same patch of a fault," said Assistant Professor Sylvain Barbot, from NTU's Asian School of the Environment and an earth scientist at EOS.

"If only slow movements are detected, it does not mean that a large earthquake cannot happen there. On the contrary, the same area of the fault can rupture in a catastrophic earthquake," he added.

Seismic hazards in the South-east Asia region will probably come from an impending large earthquake in the Mentawai seismic gap in

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Sumatra, Indonesia, which is a current area of active monitoring and investigation.

EOS scientists previously pointed out a large earthquake may occur any time in this area southwest of Padang – the only place along a large fault where a big earthquake has not occurred in the past two centuries. The team’s latest findings could potentially be applied in the seismic monitoring of the area to help better forecast large earthquakes in the region, the press release said.

The study which has major significance on the prediction of earthquakes was led by Asst Prof Barbot’s PhD student, Miss Deepa Mele Veedu, and was published in scientific journal Nature.

- CNA/kk

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