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HOW DID THE CATASTROPHIC FLOOD OCCUR?

- The Langtang Lirung peak lies in the Himalayas near the China-Nepal border, at an elevation of roughly 8,000 metres.
- Glacial ice had broken and meltwater had accumulated to form a large lake within the high-mountain area.
- A massive section of glacier, described as around 2,000 feet wide, collapsed into the lake.
- The impact breached the lake and sent floodwater into the Bhoj/Bhote river system in Tibet.
- Such an event is known as a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF).
- The Tibetan river becomes the Bhote Koshi in Nepal; floodwater then surged through the Bhote Koshi, Trishuli and Narayani rivers.
- Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts were among the areas heavily inundated.
- Sections of roads between Netravati/Rasuwigadhi and Syabrubesi were washed away, and river levels remained above danger level for many hours.
- An initial theory that a magnitude-4.4 earthquake had triggered the disaster was later rejected in the source; further study indicated that the flood resulted from glacial collapse rather than an earthquake.

NEPAL FLOOD - WAS IT A GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST?

- On the morning of August 26, 2026, a destructive flood suddenly surged through the Bhote Koshi-Trishuli river valleys near Nepal's border with China.
- Villages, roads, bridges and hydropower facilities in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts were damaged or swept away.
- » How does it happen
 - In high mountains, meltwater can collect behind natural barriers made of ice, rocks and loose sediment, forming a glacial lake.
 - These natural dams are inherently unstable because they are made of loose material rather than solid bedrock.
 - A Glacial Lake Outburst Flood occurs when such a natural dam fails suddenly.
 - Failure may be triggered by a glacier or ice mass collapsing into the lake, an earthquake, intense rainfall, gradual weakening of the natural dam, or a large ice avalanche; in some cases a destructive flood can occur even without a pre-existing lake.
- » Key lesson
 - GLOFs are a recurring natural hazard across the Himalayan range.
 - Nepal, India - especially Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Uttarakhand - Bhutan, Pakistan, Tibet and western China are all exposed.

- Studies indicate that global warming is causing glaciers to melt and retreat, increasing both the number and size of glacial lakes over recent decades.
- Nepal has experienced similar events before. In August 2024, two glacial lakes above Thame village in the Everest region reportedly burst, damaging homes and infrastructure.
- In May 2025, a sudden lake outburst in the remote Tilgaun/Jumla region destroyed bridges and displaced 32 villagers, even without rainfall.
- The source cites such events as evidence of growing glacier instability.

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