

India, 23 others conduct 12-hour mock tsunami drill

Events of December 26, 2004 re-enacted



Google image of the Indian Ocean where the 12-hour mock tsunami drill was conducted.

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HYDERABAD: People living in some of the vulnerable areas along the coast were evacuated in Orissa, Puducherry and Maharashtra as India joined 23 other Indian Ocean Rim nations in conducting a 12-hour mock tsunami drill codenamed 'Exercise IO Wave11.'

During the exercise, the operational efficacy of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWS) was tested, as the events of December 26, 2004, when a 9.2 magnitude tsunamigenic earthquake occurred off the North West coast of Sumatra, were re-enacted, followed by an ocean-wide tsunami.

First bulletin

The 24/7 state-of-the-art Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) here swung into action soon after the earthquake was simulated at 6.30 a.m. and issued the first bulletin in five minutes to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Ministry of Home Affairs and State disaster management agencies.

- ITEWC issues first bulletin five minutes after earthquake is simulated
- Preparedness of emergency services put to test

Simulated wave

Using modelling data, ITEWC subsequently issued 15 bulletins indicating the height of the tsunami waves at different locations as it travels along the coast. It takes about 12 hours for the simulated wave to cross the Indian Ocean and reach the coast of South Africa.

All coastal States, Union Territories, the Indian Navy, the Coast Guard, the National Disaster Response Force, the State disaster management agencies, ports, harbours and critical installations like the Atomic Power Plant at Kalpakkam participated in the exercise as the preparedness of the emergency services was put to test.

Tsunami warning system

The event also saw the transition of ITEWC into a Regional Tsunami Advisory Service Provider for the Indi-

an Ocean countries, along with similar systems of Australia and Indonesia. UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova marked the transition of responsibility for the tsunami warning system through a video address to authorities of India, Australia and Indonesia.

Rectify deficiencies

Briefing reporters, Sateesh Sheno, Director of the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), which houses ITEWC, and M. Shashidhar Reddy, NDMA Vice-Chairman, said the main aim of the exercise was to find out if there were any gaps and to plug them. The NDMA and the Centre would try to rectify the deficiencies, if any, and improve the system.

Mr. Reddy said the NDMA was planning to conduct a huge multi-State earthquake preparedness exercise in one of the northern States.