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Indonesia trembles, India does the drill

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Panic but no tsunami from strong Indonesia quakes.

NEW DELHI: The earthquake off the western coast of [Indonesia](#) generated a serious [tsunami](#) scare on India's east coasts for over four hours. But, it turned out to be an opportunity for a 'real-time' drill for the disaster response and warning system.

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) quickly provided details of the quake and posted a series of alerts. It issued the more serious "warning" notifications for some locations in Andaman and Nicobar, while most mainland coastal areas were placed on "alert". INCOIS posted the earthquake as "massive".

Alerts issued by the ministry of earth sciences and [the National Disaster Management Authority](#) (NDMA) soon after the tremor along northern Sumatra were later withdrawn, with government ruling out the likelihood of a tsunami. Initial reports had suggested a strong possibility of the earthquake 33 km beneath the sea triggering a tsunami.

As the tsunami failed to appear, the alerts were downscaled but the event put the [National Disaster Response Force](#) (NDRF), army, IAF, Coast Guard and civil authorities in coastal states on their toes and tested the disaster response systems put in place after the devastation caused by the tsunami in 2004.

"It gave us a real drill kind of situation where we put our system in place and took all precautions as per standard operating procedures," said NDMA vice-chairman M Shashidhar Reddy.

Even as states put out tsunami warnings across eastern coast, the government placed six

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battalions of the NDRF on alert here to be flown to the Andamans in case of emergency and positioned another six teams in Chennai and 15 in Guntur.

"These teams have not been activated as the threat of a tsunami has dissipated," said K M Singh, a member of NDMA. The quick response was a good sign that the early responses devised to alert Indian Ocean nations are working, unlike in 2004.

Reddy told TOI that although the tsunami possibility is virtually ruled out; concerned authorities have not lowered their guard yet.

After the first quake, experts expected two-metre high waves to hit India, but that didn't happen and an insignificant rise was recorded along the islands. The initial projections issued by the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) showed the tidal waves triggered by the quake hitting parts of Nicobar, Komatra and Katchal minutes after it struck the region at 2:08 pm IST.

Union home secretary R K Singh, who reviewed the situation in the aftermath of the quake, said there was no cause for panic and the government was ready to deal with any eventuality.

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redif_man (India)
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These tsunami and earthquake drills need to be practiced and understood by the most vulnerable - those living along coasts, those who live or work in older buildings, schools, hospitals, market places and public offices and of course the members of rural communities. The emphasis should be on everyone recognizing an event prediction warning and promptly reacting in the best manner possible.

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