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NATION

INDIA WARMS UP FOR TSUNAMI MOCK DRILL

Monday, 08 September 2014 | Kumar Chellappan | CHENNAI



In order to assess the preparedness of various disaster management agencies, scientists of Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services will lead 24 countries in an inter-continental tsunami mock drill named 'Indian Ocean Wave 14' on September 9 and 10. Countries lying in the rim of the Indian Ocean and spread across the continents of Asia, Africa and Australia will participate in this drill.

It may sound shocking, but the truth is that not a single resident along the 7, 517 km Indian coast has

been told either by the National Disaster Management Authority or the State agencies what to do in the eventuality of a tsunami attack. "Though more than 18,000 people perished in the December 2004 tsunami attack, the Union or the State Governments have not done anything to create an awareness among the coastal community about tsunami," said James Vincent and Justin Antony, leaders of fishermen welfare organisations based in Kanyakumari.

This is in stark contrast to what is happening in Indonesia which bore the brunt during the tsunami waves of 2004. "Each household along Indonesian coast is always ready with a packed suitcase. It has a set of spare dress for each member of the family, originals of ration card, bank pass book, property documents and two bottles of mineral water," Ardito Kodijat, head, Indian Ocean Tsunami Information Centre, Jakarta, told The Pioneer. He said disaster management organisations, both military and civil, are prepared to face any eventuality at any time. "We have trained the coastal communities how to react when tsunami warnings are issued," said Kodijat.

"This exercise, organised under the auspices of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, is expected to increase preparedness, evaluate response capabilities in each country and improve coordination throughout the region. The drill also aims to evaluate the system's operational capacity, the efficiency of communications among the different concerned actors, and the state of preparation of national emergency services," Dr Satish Shenoy, director, INCOIS, told The Pioneer over phone from the control room of the National Tsunami Early Warning Station at Hyderabad. Dr Shenoy along with Dr Srinivasa Kumar, Project Manager NTEWS will lead the exercise which begins at 5.30 am on Tuesday.

"We will issue tsunami alert on a real time basis to all the 24 countries including India. We will generate and disseminate 15 tsunami notifications to both national and regional contacts through satellite phones, email, fax, SMS as well as the web. The recipients at the national level include control rooms of National Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Home Affairs, Disaster Management Offices of all Coastal States/UTs, NDRF, Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy and Critical Coastal Installations (Ports, Power Plants, etc.)," said Dr Srinivasa Kumar.

Interestingly, a special drill is being held on Wednesday for Pakistan and Iran. The NTEWS will issue alerts to both the countries about a possible tsunamigenic earthquake at Makran Trench, south of Pakistan and Iran. Though Pakistani Army violates all norms and kills Indian soldiers, it is the Indian scientists which alert Pakistani disaster management organisations about any impending tsunami waves and that too free of cost!

India did not have a tsunami warning system till 2004. Scientists led by Dr Shylesh Nayak, well known remote sensing scientist, perfected an immaculate early tsunami warning system by 2007. But the UPA Government's Disaster Management Authority failed time and again to disseminate the data provided by INCOIS to the last mile resulting in large scale death and destruction like the 2013 cloudburst in Uttarkhand.

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Telangana Chief Minister —K Chandrashekar Rao

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Professional Cricketers Association chief —Angus Porter

My mother refused to acknowledge my knighthood, which I found bitterly hurtful. She was embarrassed, bitter and jealous.

Oscar-award winning actor —Ben Kingsley