

Tsunami warning centre begins drill

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Director of Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, Satheesh C. Shenoi (left), along with in-charge of the National Tsunami Early Warning System, T. Srinivasa Kumar, explaining at the state-of-the-art Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre preparing bulletins in Hyderabad on Tuesday. Photo: Nagara Gopal

The Hindu

The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) here was abuzz with activity at 5.30 a.m. on Tuesday. Scientists scrambled to disseminate bulletins to government agencies in the country and advisories to 24 Indian Ocean Rim nations as the two-day ocean-wide drill began to test the emergency response services.

The drill, aimed at testing the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation system, began after a computer model-simulated, 9.1 magnitude undersea earthquake — that could trigger huge tsunamis — was introduced in the warning system. The system sounded a beep and the scientists issued a start-up message that an earthquake had occurred.

The first bulletin was issued at 5.40 a.m., mentioning that a magnitude 8.5 temblor, which was scaled to 9.1 later, had occurred south of Java, Indonesia. This was followed by 14 more bulletins in the next 12 hours, each giving an assessment of the threat posed by the tsunami and the resultant water levels.

The bulletins were issued using different modes of communication, including GTS, email, fax and SMS to the control rooms of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Disaster Management Authority, relief commissioners of all coastal districts, ports, the Coast Guard, the Indian Navy and critical installations including nuclear plants at Kalpakkam, Tarapur and Kudankulam, among others.

Talking to *The Hindu*, T. Srinivasa Kumar, in-charge of ITEWC, housed at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), said the processes and Standard Operating Procedures put in place for disseminating the bulletins were quite effective. “All these worked perfectly and there was no technical system failure,” he added.

The drill is expected to increase preparedness, evaluate response capabilities in each country and improve coordination throughout the region.

On Wednesday, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake in the Makran Trench, South of Iran and Pakistan will be simulated and the drill will begin at 11.30 hours IST and continue for 12 hours.

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