

Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC)
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Press Brief on IOWave18 Tsunami mock Exercise on 4th & 5th September, 2018

India, along with 23 other Indian Ocean Nations*, is participating in a major Indian ocean-wide tsunami mock exercise (drill) on 4th & 5th September, 2018. The Exercise, known as IOWave18, is being organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, which coordinated the setting up of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS) in the aftermath of the 26 December 2004 tsunami.

The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC), based out of the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. The ITEWC is capable of detecting tsunamigenic earthquakes within 10 minutes of the occurrence of earthquake on the seabed and issue timely tsunami advisories to disaster management officials as well as to vulnerable communities. This state-of-the-art warning centre, operational since October 2007, has all necessary computational & communication infrastructure for the reception of real-time data from seismic and sea-level networks, tsunami modeling, as well as generation and dissemination of tsunami bulletins for the entire Indian Ocean region. ITEWC functions as one of the Tsunami Service Providers (TSP) for IOTWMS and provides operational tsunami information to all the Indian Ocean rim countries. It will participate in the IOWave18 exercise both in its capacity as National Tsunami Warning Centre (NTWC) as well as Tsunami Service Provider (TSP) for the Indian Ocean region.

The IOWave18 exercise will simulate Indian Ocean countries being put in a tsunami warning situation and require the National Tsunami Warning Centre (NTWC), i.e., INCOIS in case of India, and the National and Local Disaster Management Offices (NDMO/LDMO) to implement their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). In addition to testing the SOPs and communication links at all levels of the warning chain, a primary objective of IOWave18 exercise is to enhance tsunami preparedness at community level. It builds on previous Indian Ocean exercises conducted in 2009 (IOWave09), 2011 (IOWave11), 2014 (IOWave14), and 2016 (IOWave16) and on recent mega mock tsunami exercise carried out on November 24, 2017.

IOWave18 Exercise will comprise two scenarios: the first will simulate an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 in the Makran Trench south of Iran on 4 September at 1130 IST and the second on 5 September at 0830 IST will simulate the magnitude of 9.3 at Northern Sumatra, Indonesia. Both exercises will be conducted in real time lasting for about 12 hours and ITEWC will issue 15 tsunami bulletins to both national and regional stakeholders through GTS, email, fax, SMS as well as on website.

The purpose of exercise is to increase tsunami preparedness, evaluate response capabilities in each state and improve coordination throughout the region. The drill will facilitate exercising the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the emergency services and evaluating their state of readiness to handle tsunami like emergency situations. The aim is to exercise all levels of the tsunami warning and response chain, with a primary focus on the local coastal community level.

In India, IOWave18 is being coordinated by Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) with support from National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Coastal States/UTs. The exercise will involve the evacuation of more than 1,25,000 people from the coastal communities of Odisha, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Gujarat and Goa. NDRF Battalions, Indian Navy, Indian

Coast Guards, Army, Critical installations (nuclear power plants), Port & harbors also participating the exercise. The end-to-end warning system from tsunami detection and forecast, threat evaluation and alert formulation, alert dissemination to public and their awareness and response will be put to test during this tsunami exercise.

In preparation for this exercise at national level, ITEWC has already conducted a training workshop and tabletop exercises to enable national stakeholders to streamline their SOPs. A manual comprising specifics of conducting the tsunami exercise, along with the detailed bulletins and feedback forms was also prepared and circulated to the stakeholders. Feedback from the participants after the exercise is expected to identify and fix any gaps in communication channels and the SOPs of all stakeholders.

** To date: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France (La Réunion), India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor Leste, Yemen.*