# India gets tsunami-ready



Dr Srinivas Kumar Tummula demonstrating the Indian Tsunami Early Warning System in Hyderabad earlier today.

By Sarah Wade-Apicella

**HYDERABAD, 6 September 2016** - Communities, local authorities and national disaster management authorities from 24 Indian Ocean countries are gearing up to put to the test their tsunami readiness during the 2016 tsunami mock drill "IOWave16" beginning tomorrow.

The two-day drill will test the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS) for the efficiency and efficacy of the messages issued from the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre hosted at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) in Hyderabad, one of three regional centres. And it will also test communities' readiness to receive and react to the messages according to their community preparedness plans.

"We want to involve the 'last mile', not only in India, but among the 24 active countries participating in the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System", says Dr. Srinivas Kumar Tummala, in charge of the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre and Chair of the IOTWMS.

In India, the IOWave16 drill will test both of this year's IOWave16 scenarios. The first will simulate a magnitude 9.2 Southern Sumatra earthquake on September 7, and the second will simulate a magnitude 9.0 earthquake in the Makran trench south of Iran and Pakistan on September 8. Two levels of participation will also be tested. "Level II" will reach local communities across eight states in India.

The Indian Tsunami Early Warning System (ITEWS), operating 24/7 since 2007, is made up of three parts: identification and risk assessment, detection and dissemination, and capacity building through community awareness and preparedness. The Indian system is also one of three regional Tsunami Service Providers providing real-time tsunami alert information since 2011 to National Tsunami Warning Centres – the other two are in Australia and Indonesia.

The centres were established under UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Indian Ocean, the group that serves as a regional body to plan and coordinate the design and implementation of an effective and durable system.

The Indian system will issue both national and regional alerts from its system, with color coding to differentiate "warnings", "alerts" and "watches" at national level, and "threat" or "no threat" status to Indian Ocean nations. Messages will go out over SMS, email, global telecommunication system (GTS) and fax, with links to a web-based bulletin system, public within India and accessible via password to the 24 participating countries.

The IOTWMS is the only system to have a feedback mechanism. Indian Ocean nations will each have a link to provide web-based feedback on the message received. "Getting feedback is a













The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction took place in 2015.

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critical component to test how nations will use the system and identifying any needed changes." said Dr. Tummala.

"Within India, the state level emergency operations centre will receive messages from INCOIS and take the decision on how to act, informing the District Emergency Operations Centre, who in turn, will communicate to all the local authorities, who will transmit the message to volunteer community leaders, who will finally transmit any warning message through any designated warning instrument, like drums", said Dr. Kamal Lochan Mishra, Chief General Manager of the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), one of the eight states participating in the drill. In order to avoid message failure, the OSDMA is also able to release messages directly to volunteers at district level. "It's a kind of check and balance mechanism", Dr. Mishra added.

The IOWave16 drill is an important part of exercising disaster risk reduction at regional, national and local levels. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the global blueprint for implementing disaster risk reduction adopted by UN member states at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015, aims among its seven global targets to increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people, as well as to substantially reduce global mortality.

The Government of India has embraced the Sendai Framework, recently adopting its first-ever National Disaster Management Plan. "The Sendai Framework and disaster risk reduction is very much a part of our government and state mission. It's a survival tool", said Dr. Mishra.

"We have captured many things from the Sendai Framework and incorporated them into our State Disaster Management Act. The first mandate of disaster management is to survive, and since our successful preparedness for Cyclone Phailin, our motto has been zero casualties", says Dr. Mishra.

While 24 countries will test their tsunami readiness, they will also be testing their capacity to reduce disaster mortality which is the first target of the first Sendai Framework and also the theme of this year's International Day for Disaster Reduction. World Tsunami Awareness Day will be celebrated for the first time this year, on November 5.

## Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

24 countries taking part in tsunami drill

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United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction - Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (UNISDR AP)

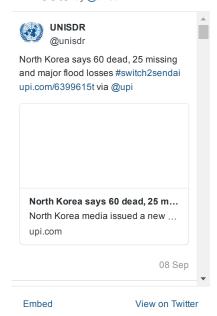
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