

'Awareness on Disaster Management is Key'

Express News Service

Hyderabad: Ten years after the catastrophic Tsunami in Indian Ocean left around two lakh people dead and thousands missing from the coastal states, the Union government now claims to have one of the most effective earthquake alert system in the world. "Now we have one of the best technologies in the world to detect earthquakes in the oceans," said Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences. With the services of Indian Tsunami Early Warning System (ITEWS) at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, India is the only country to have an observation system which covers both the ends of Indian Ocean.

"In fact, India is the hub of Tsunami-related information. We even send alerts to 26 other countries, including Australia," said Dr Shailesh Nayak, Secretary to the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences. ITEWS, which works throughout the year, is capable of noticing even the minor alterations in the wave

TACKLING DISASTERS

■ India has the best tech in world to detect earthquakes in oceans: Vardhan

■ India is the hub of Tsunami-related information, says senior official

■ System to send alerts even to remote areas being explored

movement in the Indian Ocean. It was established by the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences after the 2004 Tsunami to predict natural disasters and cyclones. This was the same system which alerted Andhra Pradesh government during the recent Hudhud cyclone as well.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of ITEW, Harsh Vardhan described it as a milestone in the history of earth sciences. However, he felt that this system alone is not enough to handle major disasters like Tsunami. "Without spreading awareness about disaster management, the technology alone

cannot save lives," he said.

Speaking at a national workshop on 'Indian Tsunami Early Warning System: Progress, Challenges and Future Roadmap - A review of the developments during last decade' here on Friday, the Minister said a programme would be introduced at INCOIS to train volunteers on handling natural disasters.

He said the Union ministry of earth sciences is planning to prepare 3D geographic information system (GIS) maps of the most vulnerable coastal areas as part of boosting the existing observation system. Shailesh Nayak, who was Director of INCOIS in 2004, felt the need for introducing a system which can send the alerts effectively even to the most remote areas. To achieve that, he proposed a sophisticated coordination system among States to share the information. "Though many of the States are not vulnerable to the Tsunami, we must sensitise them," he added.

YSujana Chowdary, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, was present.

Sujana Believes Humans Can Change Direction of Cyclones

Hyderabad: Is it possible to manually divert the direction of cyclones even before they hit the coast? Shocking it may sound, but Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences YSujana Chowdary believes that it is possible in future and that would be the best solution to protect human lives and properties from deadly cyclones like the Hudhud.

Addressing a national workshop on 'Indian Tsunami Early Warning System: Progress, Challenges and Future Road Map - A review of the developments during last decade' held here on Friday, Chowdary took the audience by surprise when he said, "Diverting the direction of cyclones could be the best solution to protect ourselves from them. I also asked our Secretary to study the possibilities of creating a technology which can make it pos-

sible". Though he earlier said "Nature can't be altered, we can only prevent the damages", later he had a change of mind and stated, "May be it is possible in future". Recalling that ancient India was the world leader in many fields, including science and technology, Chowdary said that the country has the capability to regain its position as a global leader.

A businessman, Chowdary has some marketing tips for the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) to boost its revenues. When INCOIS officials explained to him their plans to collaborate with telecom companies to share information on potential fishing zones through mobile apps, the Minister advised the officials to charge the users to access the information. The plan was planned to be a free service.