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Tsunami alert withdrawn

NEW DELHI The Union Home Ministry late on Wednesday withdrew the tsunami alert issued in the Andaman and Nicobar islands and the other coastal States.

An official spokesman said the alert, issued earlier in the day in the wake of a powerful earthquake in Sumatra, Indonesia, had been withdrawn as there was no imminent threat.

Earlier, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and all coastal States had been asked to take precautionary measures, such as informing fishermen not to venture into the sea. The armed forces had been alerted for any evacuation.

The "tsunami alert" had been issued on the basis of information received from the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

The alert was issued after an earthquake, of magnitude 8.4, hit southern Sumatra at 4.41 p.m. on Wednesday. According to INCOIS, there was a possibility of this massive earthquake triggering a tsunami in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The administration had been advised to take all precautionary measures and remain in the highest state of preparedness. Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Puducherry had been asked to maintain vigil.

The Hawaii-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre had also issued a tsunami warning.