

# Earthquake, giant waves torment Japan

**Tokyo:** A magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck off the northeastern coast of Japan on Monday, prompting authorities to urge residents to stay away from coastal areas where tsunami waves of up to 3 metres were expected.

Two hours after the tremor, which struck at 4.53pm (local time), tsunami waves as high as 80cm had been detected. A tsunami warning was later downgraded to a tsunami advisory.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage, Japan's top government spokesperson Minoru Kihara told a news conference as night fell in the capital Tokyo.

Several port towns including Otsuchi and Kamaishi — both hard-hit by a massive



**The coastline of Tomakomai, Hokkaido Prefecture, after the tsunami advisory was issued on Monday. (Reuters)**

earthquake and tsunami in 2011 — earlier issued evacuation orders for thousands of residents, according to public broadcaster NHK. Bullet train services were halted and some

motorways were closed due to the tremors.

Following the quake, the government issued a warning of a heightened risk of a megaquake.

Normally, the probability of an earthquake of magnitude 8 or stronger striking along the Japan Trench and Kuril Trench in the Pacific off northern Japan in a week is about 0.1 per cent, but during the week that follows Monday's quake, it will be higher at around 1 per cent, a government official told a press conference.

"Please take anti-disaster steps, while embracing the idea that one must protect one's own life," the official said.

Reuters