

Japan to develop earthquake monitors

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Japan will develop an undersea network of seismographs and tsunami observation devices to minimize damage caused by predicted future earthquakes.

Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology will start the four-year project next year, setting up seismographs and tsunami devices off the Kii Peninsula in southeast Japan at 20 locations about 9 miles apart, the Asahi Shimbun reported Wednesday.

The monitoring system will provide data on changes in the Earth's crust and other activity that occur just before an earthquake. The ministry will use the information for research into short-term earthquake forecasts and to develop a more accurate model for long-term forecasts.

Data collected from the monitoring system during an actual earthquake will be immediately relayed to the Japan Meteorological Agency to help it issue emergency quake and tsunami warnings as quickly as possible.

The government says there is a 50- to 60-percent chance that a major earthquake will strike in the next 30 years.

Networks of underwater monitoring systems have already been established in seven areas around Japan by the Meteorological Agency, but the new project will be the largest in terms of number of devices used, the newspaper reported.

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