

Aceh's ache ending

5/12/09 So too an Indian worry *Amir Quasem*

There appears to be a marine equivalent to the old saying about it being "an ill wind that blows no good". For it was the devastating tsunami of 26 December that projected the insurgency-hit Aceh region of Indonesia into international focus, and the relief and rehabilitation exercise acquired such momentum that a European-brokered peace deal between Jakarta and the Free Aceh Movement is now being played out. The security forces are being thinned down, rebel weaponry is being surrendered and de-commissioned. Hopefully there will be an "all lived happily ever after" ending to a 30-year secessionist movement that cost some 15,000 lives. That a federal-type solution has been worked out is commendable: it permits the people of Aceh to fulfil their own aspirations without compromising Jakarta's overall sovereignty — that was battered over East Timor. No nation wants its territory or sovereignty whittled away. The world community must not forget Aceh quickly. It is a complicated process being worked out and there could be occasion when some external assistance may be required to cement arrangements.

At a time when increasing violence marks insurgencies the world over, the movement towards a surrender of arms and withdrawal of "outside" forces seems like a fresh, exemplary, tide. That a killer tidal wave helped usher in a new spirit of accommodation is almost unbelievable. Just recall that initially the Indonesian authorities were hesitant about permitting international aid workers to operate in Aceh, apprehending that the means of fuelling insurgency would be delivered under the garb of relief material. "Put" on the map because it was all but wiped out, Banda Aceh now serves as a ray of hope to those seeking resolution of similar struggles. While Aceh may have appeared a dull blip on New Delhi's politically-cluttered radar screen, for those safeguarding our island territories the troubles there were "live". Aceh is so close to the Nicobar group that is so far — geographically and otherwise — from the Indian mainland. That was one apprehension, remote perhaps. The other, less remote, was that if violence in Aceh escalated beyond a point, refugees may have moved to our smaller, sparsely populated islands. The head of the Andaman & Nicobar Integrated Command has now been relieved of one potential headache.

THE STATESMAN

Opp to push for Arroyo impeachment

Philippines Daily Inquirer/ANN

MANILA, Sept. 7. — Opposition lawmakers will file a petition before the Philippines Supreme Court tomorrow to reopen the impeachment case against President Ms Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the House of Representatives.

San Juan Representative Mr Ronaldo Zamora, the lead prosecutor of the pro-impeachment bloc, said the dismissal of the three complaints against Ms Arroyo violated the Constitution.

"It is a petition to compel the House and the justice committee to reopen the case and conduct the hearings in a fair manner," Mr Zamora told reporters on the side of an anti-Arroyo rally at the People Power monument along EDSA.

Among the alleged violations was the decision of the justice committee to tackle "prejudicial questions" regarding the three complaints before determining their sufficiency in form and substance.

Mr Zamora said the move resulted in the dismissal of the Opposition-backed amended version of the complaint filed by lawyer Mr Oliver Lozano, along with another filed by lawyer Mr Jose Rizalino Lopez.

The committee was left to take on the original Lozano complaint, which it dismissed after determining that it was not sufficient in substance.

Mr Zamora said they would also question the committee's recognition of the Lozano complaint even if it was not properly verified.

In a 24-hour session that ended yesterday afternoon, the plenary voted to adopt the justice committee report that dismissed all three impeachment cases against Ms Arroyo. Under House rules, this means that no impeachment case can be filed against the President for one year.

Mr Zamora rejected Arroyo's call for reconciliation when she failed to answer allegations of vote-rigging and corruption. "Reconciliation should be based on justice and fairness," he said.

Mr Zamora was also at a loss on why lawmakers identified with Estrada did not vote against the justice committee report. "Well, I do not want to blame them."

The San Juan lawmaker admitted that two weeks ago, the pro-impeachment bloc sought Estrada's help to gather the 79 signatures required to transmit the amended complaint directly to the Senate for trial.

Arroyo survives impeachment bid

S B Arroyo - Philippines

Opposition vows to take up the issue to apex court

P. S. Suryanarayana

11/12/04

SINGAPORE: The Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on Tuesday survived an impeachment move by a huge margin and debunked the politics of "people power" which had brought her to office in the first place.

The Opposition vowed to fight back by taking Ms. Arroyo's alleged "electoral fraud" to the apex court and by mobilising public opinion more vigorously.

She acknowledged that "the Opposition put up a good fight" and that she would now offer her "hand of reconciliation, for the national interest."

Even as the former President, Corazon Aquino, the celebrated icon of the original "people power" movement in the Philippines, led the Opposition protesters outside the House of Representatives in Manila, the chamber dismissed the impeachment complaint by 158-51 votes. Six members abstained.

With the Opposition failing to reach the threshold of 79 votes required to send the issue to the Senate for trial proceedings, Ms. Arroyo declared victory and called it "a glori-

ous day in history" for the Filipino people.

The impeachment move's focus was that Ms. Arroyo had "cheated" and won the last presidential election in 2004 by "fraudulently" influencing poll officials. As the Vice-President in 2001, she first assumed the highest office by succeeding the then President, Joseph Estrada, who was forced by "people power" to step aside. Charges of nepotism and related corruption were also made.

Ms. Arroyo said in a celebratory statement that the people had now displayed "grand political maturity" by choosing to keep a President in office through a vote in "the halls of constitutional democracy." She commended them for not "forcing a President out of office through people power."

The Presidential Office said Ms. Arroyo would now attend the prospective United Nations summit and preside over the Security Council session, with no political clouds hanging over her head. The reference is to the rotational turn of the Philippines to preside over the Security Council.

The Opposition leaders maintained that they would keep up the political pressure on her, irrespective of the likely attitudes of the Filipino armed forces and the clergy.

Peace eludes Aceh talks.

Associated Press

HELSINKI, Jan. 30. — Members of the Indonesian government and Aceh rebel leaders cut short talks on tsunami relief operations and ways of ending a 30-year conflict in the breakaway region, but Finnish mediators invited them to continue negotiations later.

The two sides met at a secluded manor house north of the Finnish capital, Helsinki, for talks convened by former Finnish President Mr. Martti Ahtisaari. He did not reveal why the closed-door talks, which had been scheduled to continue today, finished a day early, but said he had invited both parties for a second round of meetings in Helsinki.

Neither party had yet accepted the invitation, Mr. Ahtisaari said, adding that he would be "highly disappointed" if they did not return to Helsinki.

Indonesian communications minister Mr. Sofyan Djalil described the meetings as "quite hopeful" and said that the two sides would meet again soon.

Mr. Ahtisaari said no cease-fire agreement had been reached and declined to comment on the stands of the two sides.

3 1 JAN 2005

THE STATESMAN

Bush, Koizumi in Thai polls!

The Nation/ANN

BANGKOK, Jan. 20. — Top world leaders, including US President Mr George W Bush, Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi and Chinese Premier Mr Wen Jiapao, became part of the ruling Thai Rak Thai election campaign, raising some eyebrows among Bangkok-based diplomats who questioned its appropriateness.

Initially, some perplexed but a quiet diplomacy from some of the countries whose leaders were used has ended in the removal of the posters of them side to side with Thai Rak Thai candidates.

At the centre of attention was TRT's Ms Orathai Thanjaro, MP candidate for Bangkok's Bang Rak constituency, who appeared on her series of campaign posters showing

her shaking hands with Mr Koizumi and Mr Wen.

Another attention was Monthaburi's Mr Bang Buathong Apiwan Wiriyachai of Thai Rak Thai, who used the background photo of Apec summit in Bangkok showing the pictures of Prime Minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra and several world's leaders including President Bush.

TRT spokesperson Mr Suranand Vejjajiva said he has received complaints from unnamed concerned parties over the use of world leaders in the TRT campaign especially of Ms Orathai.

TRT has ordered these campaign posters removed, he said. "The party didn't suggest the candidates to use this inappropriate kind of photos on the posters," he said and added that it could affect the reputation of the leaders shown on the posters.



Mr Koizumi: 'Just not done'

However, he said, the party so far didn't receive any concerns from the embassies.

The Japanese embassy has requested Ms Orathai to withdraw all the campaign posters showing her shaking hands with Mr Koizumi immediately because it can cause misunderstanding, a Japanese diplomat said yesterday.

THE STRAITS

21 JAN 2005

Jakarta wants foreign troops in Aceh "scaled down"

By P. S. Suryanarayana

Singapore
17/1/05

SINGAPORE, JAN. 16. Indonesia has suggested that the strength of the foreign troops on relief efforts in the tsunami-hit Aceh province be "scaled down". The Jakarta-based representatives of the countries with military-run relief operations in Aceh have been informed accordingly in the context of the Indonesian Government's move to set a three-month time-frame for the foreign troops in that province to leave.

Foreign diplomatic sources in Jakarta told *The Hindu* of the Indonesian suggestion for a

"scale-back" of the military-led relief operations. Those with troops for humanitarian work in that province at present include the United States, Australia, Malaysia and India. Japan is engaged, too, in preparing for a military-driven humanitarian mission.

On a related front, the visiting U.S. Deputy Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, was understood to have been given a similar clarification when he met the Indonesian Defence Minister, Juwono Sudarsono, in Jakarta today. The U.S. had sought clarification following a confirmed suggestion from the Indonesian

authorities, a few days ago, that they would like foreign troops to depart by March 26, three months from the date of the tsunami disaster.

Even at that time, some other countries, whose military presence in Aceh was not as large as that of the U.S., were informed of the need for a "scale-back" of their humanitarian operations.

Toll 1.65 lakhs

The updated death toll in Indonesia now stands at about 1,15,000, while the overall fatalities in all the tsunami-hit countries has risen above the 1,65,000 mark.

THE HINDU

17 JAN 2005

Singapore shifts focus to reconstruction

SB Area
By P. S. Suryanarayana

PRD-12 1671
pore's military units and civil defence force in Indonesia.

SINGAPORE, JAN. 15. The recent tsunami disaster has sparked a "new spirit in Asia" towards regional cooperation, and Singapore is seeking to render help to the affected countries, especially Indonesia and Sri Lanka among others, by turning the focus on where the City State "can really make a difference on the ground in a pinpointed fashion."

This was indicated by the Singapore Education Minister, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, after he returned from India, which he visited to participate in the "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas," and Sri Lanka, where he assessed its post-tsunami requirements of reconstruction.

Mr. Shanmugaratnam told *The Hindu*: "We have responded very quickly. The [Singapore] Government has committed resources that are significantly greater than anything we had previously done." The total package included the assistance rendered by Singa-

"Immediate needs met"

In a separate media interaction, the Singapore Defence Minister, Teo Chee Hean, said: "The Indonesian authorities and the military are now in the process of moving from the emergency relief phase into the reconstruction phase. So, our assistance there in Indonesia is also moving into that phase."

In Sri Lanka, too, according to Mr. Shanmugaratnam, "the immediate crisis relief effort is being addressed already." The "Sri Lankan authorities as well as the people on the ground gave me the impression that those immediate needs have been met, by and large." There could still be some "pockets" with "unmet demand" for relief supplies. But, with "the first phase of rescue and relief coming to an end," it was now a matter of "looking forward to the next phase — rebuilding and rehabilitating the community" in Sri Lanka.

THE HINDU

16 JAN 2005

Jakarta curbs on foreign relief workers in Aceh

Guardian News Service
Banda Aceh, January 13

INDONESIA ON Wednesday began restricting the movements of the 2,000 foreigners helping the tsunami relief operation in Aceh, ordering aid groups and journalists to register, seek permission before leaving the province's two main towns, and only travel with a military escort.

The government also indicated that it would like most foreign nationals to leave the province by March 27 or when the majority of Acehese requiring assistance are in camps accessible by road.

Aid agencies appeared unconcerned by the move confining their access to Banda Aceh and Meulaboh, but separatists are interpreting the move as the start of the Indonesian military's campaign to reassert its grip over a region that was in a state of civil emergency and off-limits to foreigners before the December 26 disaster.

The authorities are using the threat posed by the Free Aceh Movement (Gam), which has been fighting for independence since 1976, as the reason for the clampdown. "The government would be placed in a very difficult position if any foreigner who came to Aceh to assist in the aid effort was harmed through the acts of an irresponsible party,"



A tsunami survivor speaks to a friend at a satellite phone booth set up by an international aid organisation on Wednesday.

Budi Atmadi, the operations chief of the government's disaster relief team, said.

Indonesia's military commander, General Endriartono Sutarto, said on Wednesday that Gam had not suspended its operations. "We have had confirmation that Gam is still conducting armed activity," he said. "They say their struggle is for the people of Aceh but it is clear that it is not. That is why we have introduced the new procedure. I don't want foreigners killed."

Violence cloud over aid workers

Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Jan. 9. — Indonesia today warned aid workers that Aceh rebels are sheltering in camps for tsunami survivors, while a burst of violence hit Sri Lanka, signaling a potential resurgence of long-simmering rebellions that could hamper help for victims of the two-week-old disaster.

Adding to the destitute survivors' misery, tropical downpours complicated relief efforts already hamstrung by impassable roads and destroyed bridges.

Decades-old conflicts in Indonesia and Sri Lanka have been dormant in the days since the magnitude-9.0 earthquake and tsunami struck. But they

have been reignited as aid workers poured into the region with emergency assistance, some traveling to areas where outsiders are almost never allowed.

The workers have exercised caution amid the increasing security worries — but don't want anything to slow the flow of help to the desperate.

Ethnic tensions overshadowed UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan's tour of devastated areas in Sri Lanka. Hundreds protested in the Tamil-dominated north after he acceded to a government request not to visit areas under rebel control. A rare burst of violence between Christians and Hindus in eastern Sri Lanka, where a massive effort is under way, revived security fears for relief workers there. At least

three people were killed and 37 injured.

The Indonesian government warning offered no details about the infiltrations, but came hours after police in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, blamed separatists for a night-time burst of gunfire close to the main UN compound in town.

A local military spokesman said volunteers must understand that Aceh "is not like other regions in Indonesia... This is still a conflict-torn region".

Security concerns in Indonesia have also been heightened by the appearance of the Lashkar Mujahideen, an extremist group with alleged links to the Al-Qaida. The outfit has set up an aid camp, but says it only wants to help and won't target foreigners.

THE STATESMAN

10 JAN 2005

Militancy shadow over relief efforts

Reuters
Galle, January 9

LONG-RUNNING armed rebellions in Indonesia and Sri Lanka cast a shadow today over massive relief efforts in two nations devastated by the tsunami two weeks ago.

The Indonesian Defence Force has received reports that members of the separatist Free Aceh Movement (FAM) have infiltrated into refugee camps and mingled with victims of the quake-triggered tsunamis, a military spokesman said.

"Intelligence reports say that the separatists are using the current situation for their interests," Col Ahmad Yani Basuki, chief of the Defence Force headquarters' Information Task Force, said here on Saturday.

According to him, the movement has recently set up camps and collected levies on refugees. "They took relief aid sent to the camps. But they will soon run away if troops come," Basuki added.

The rebels often ambush distribution of relief supplies and clashes with the government soldiers were unavoidable.

In Sri Lanka, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the government should use the support it was receiving from around the world to heal the country's ethnic divisions and end a civil war with Tamil rebels. The government blocked Annan from visiting tsunami-hit areas in the rebel-held north and east of the island yesterday, citing security concerns.

"The world wants to help Sri Lanka to recover and rebuild," the secretary-general told on Sunday. "I hope that Sri Lanka would use the support and the goodwill, not only to recover from this tragedy but as an opportunity to unite in the work for peace. I'm hoping to be able to come back and some day be able to visit all parts of the country, not only to visit all parts of the country which I hope will be rebuilt but also to celebrate peace."

SB Annan
quoting
HD-19 811

7,118 more bodies recovered in Indonesia

BANDA ACEH, JAN. 7. The U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, described the devastation on Indonesia's tsunami-battered Sumatra island on Friday as the worst he has ever seen, while authorities there pulled 7,118 new bodies from the rubble bringing the confirmed overall death toll to nearly 150,000.

Twelve days after the tsunami hit, Mr. Annan and World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, flew over the island's west coast in a Singaporean helicopter and later drove around the shattered coastal town of Meulaboh, where families picked through piles of rubble two metres high.

"Utter destruction"

"I have never seen such utter destruction mile after mile," a shaken Mr. Annan told reporters afterward. "You wonder where are the people? What has happened to them?"

Relief workers were still trying to come to terms with the scale of the December 26 earthquake and killer waves that hit 11 nations. With tens of thousands and still missing and

threatened by disease, the United Nations said the number of dead would keep climbing.

"I think we have to be aware that very, very many of the victims have been swept away and many, many will not reappear," the U.N. Humanitarian Chief, Jan Egeland, said in New York. "The 150,000 dead figure is a very low figure. It will be much bigger."

Hardest hit

Hardest hit was Sumatra, which was closest to the 9.0 magnitude quake, where all of Indonesia's some 100,000 deaths occurred.

The country increased its toll by 7,118 on Friday, after uncovering thousands of bodies in and around Meulaboh, which was cut off from the rest of Sumatra for days because roads were swept away and sea jetties destroyed.

Mr. Annan's visit came after he attended a summit of world leaders in Jakarta on Thursday on how to turn one of history's largest-ever aid packages — nearly \$4 billion (euro3 billion) in pledges — into food for the

hungry and shelter for the homeless. The U.N. chief urged nations to come up immediately with their promised aid, and to break with past practices of pledging much and delivering little.

Australia leads the world with a total aid pledge of \$810 million (euro615 million), followed by Germany, Japan and the United States.

Private donations were also pouring in. A telethon in Saudi Arabia raised \$67.4 million (euro51.13 million) in 11 hours: with donations ranging from diamonds to tents and blankets. In Norway, four young girls sold their Christmas presents, raising nearly 6,000 kroner (\$1,000; euro756).

Meanwhile, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, toured stricken areas in Sri Lanka, where more than 30,000 people died, and promised long-term U.S. help for rebuilding an economic recovery.

"Only by seeing it on the ground can you really appreciate what it must have been like on that terrible day," he said. — AP

Delhi asserts itself at aid summit

S B Arora (a)

HTC & Agencies
New Delhi/Jakarta, January 6

A CONFIDENT India today asserted itself as a leading regional player and emerging world power, telling a global aid summit that the nation didn't need tsunami relief from the West. Rather, it was delivering aid to the countries in need as much as the rich nations were themselves doing.

"So far we have managed on our own," a blunt Natwar Singh told the Jakarta meeting on tsunami relief, attended by leaders of 26 nations and international organisations. "It is our evaluation that we can deal with

pital ship anchored off the coast of Aceh, the worst hit area, imploring that New Delhi was not a seeker of aid any more but a giver. "We are happy to place the strengths of the Indian Navy for use in humanitarian relief in the region," he declared.

India circulated a document at the meeting detailing "our approach and experience in handling natural disasters", indicating it was in a position to offer guidance to other countries.

"The lessons we learnt from the Orissa cyclone, the Gujarat earthquake and other disasters have helped us effect a paradigm shift in our approach to disaster management," Singh said.

'Time to deliver': At the meeting, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan told the rich nations that the time for promises was over; now they had to deliver. Reaching aid to the millions of tsunami victims is "a race against time" and nations must immediately convert their pledges into cash.

While nearly \$4 billion has been pledged worldwide, the UN has warned that some promises might not be honoured, as in previous disasters. Annan had appealed to donor governments yesterday not to "rob Peter to pay Paul" by diverting cash from other crises.

See also Pages 2&3

DAMAGE DOSSIER

India's financial loss, according to home ministry figures (in Rs)

Tamil Nadu 2730.70 crore

Andhra Pradesh 720.73 crore

Kerala 1358.62 crore

Pondicherry 512 crore

Total 5322.05 crore



Details for Andaman and Nicobar Islands still being worked out

the challenges, in so far as they affect India, with our own resources. It would, therefore, be appropriate that international relief is directed where it is most urgently required."

The foreign minister went on to cite how India had kept a hos-

UN Fears Tens Of Thousands More Dead

Banda Aceh (Indonesia): The global push to reach Asia's tsunami survivors was held up on Tuesday by a plane crash in Indonesia and heavy rain in Sri Lanka as the United Nations warned that tens of thousands more people may be dead.

US secretary of state Colin Powell held talks in Thailand on creating a tsunami warning system at the start of a regional tour which will include a crisis summit on Thursday in Jakarta on the tragedy that has claimed nearly 150,000 lives.

Fund-raising for the millions left destitute by the massive waves reached a feverish pitch, with former US presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush entering the aid campaign. But the growing momentum to help those affected was grounded in the worst-hit

PAGES 12 & 13

Indonesian province of Aceh when an accident closed down the airstrip at Banda Aceh, the main hub for relief shipments.

A Boeing 737 cargo plane bringing in supplies hit a buffalo on the runway, which could be out of action until the end of Tuesday as equipment was brought from Singapore to remove the jet which damaged its landing gear, officials said.

In Sri Lanka's eastern Ampara district, where some 8,000 people were swallowed by the wall of water which battered 11 countries on December 26, torrential downpours hampered attempts to get food and medical supplies to thousands of homeless and hungry. Government spokeswoman Tara de Mel said the flooding raised fears of waterborne disease and that urgent efforts were under way to get safe drinking water to those in shelters.

The confirmed death toll from the international disaster neared 146,000, with 52 countries reporting that their nationals were dead or injured.

The official number of dead on Sumatra



Nurse Clairisse Courrot, working with Medior, a French voluntary doctors group, and two-month-old tsunami victim Jaya Priya share a flight moment at a relief centre near Velankanni in Tamil Nadu on Tuesday

Island, including Aceh, just off the epicentre of the powerful deep-sea earthquake that triggered the tsunamis, rose on Tuesday to 94,100, with 387,607 people listed as displaced.

But the UN's emergency relief coordinator, Jan Egeland, warned that the total toll from the waves that reached as far as Kenya, may never be known.

"The toll will grow exponentially on the western coast of Sumatra," Egeland told a briefing at the UN headquarters. "We may be talking tens of thousands of further

deaths in this area."

Powell began his trip to the region in Thailand, where he agreed to cooperate in developing an early warning system to avert future tsunami disasters amid outrage that the Indian Ocean lacked the technology available for the Pacific.

"We would like to have expertise and technical assistance from the US to install an early warning system in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea," Thai foreign minister Surakiart Sathirathai said. AFP

Car Nicobar Tribals Enjoy Panchayati Raj

By Nitin Yeshwantrao/TNN

Car Nicobar: "Main ek Hindustani hoon. Main sirf Hindi mein baat karunga. Please, aap mujse English mein baat na karo," says 50-plus Obed Janathan as he offers one plastic chair to this reporter. Though homeless, hungry and mourning, Janathan, 'captain' (chief) of the tsunami-ravaged Kakana village, makes it amply clear to this reporter his dislike of anything remotely "videshi", while being proud of his tribal culture and belief.

While many in the outside world believe that the tribals of Car Nicobar are hostile and primitive in their habits, the truth is they are anything but this. Highly literate, god-fearing and friendly, the Nicobarese

► 30 years of labour lost in a day. Page 13

have more than once displayed great hospitality despite adverse circumstances.

Despite inadequate supply of food and water, not once did they hesitate to offer whatever little they could to this reporter. "Aap to hamare mehmaan hain. Aap ko aise hi kaise bhej sakte hain (You are our guest. You cannot go like this)," says Silas Loyet, of Kakana camp, as he thrust a freshly-cut coconut to this reporter's hand.

The young Nicobarese riding on bicycles in the scorching sun would often take the trouble of inquiring if they could offer a coconut while politely turning down requests for a double-seat ride, saying that they had to carry a load of foodstuff back to their families.

The tribals here have a model panchayati raj, where the village captains and second captains, as the deputies are called, are elected for a five-year term. If that was not all, even the religious head of the village ('bishop') is changed every five years after a proper democratic process of elections.

5 JAN 2005

AP

Aid finally begins to reach decimated Aceh province

SB *Am* *11-1* *101*

Banda Aceh (Indonesia): Substantial aid finally began reaching desperate refugees in devastated areas of northern Sumatra on Saturday as American warships, led by the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, arrived offshore and a fleet of helicopters airlifted critical supplies to stricken towns in Aceh province.

Flying through pounding rains, a dozen Sea Hawk helicopters from the Lincoln ferried food, water, medicines, tents and other supplies from warehouses at Banda Aceh airport to refugees in decimated Indonesian coastal towns and inland villages that had been virtually cut off when the tsunami destroyed roads, bridges

and communications a week ago. It was the beginning of what was expected to become a steady stream of international aid for Indonesia and a dozen other countries on the rim of the Indian Ocean, where estimates of the dead hovered between 140,000 and 150,000. Serious injuries were believed to exceed 500,000, and the likelihood of epidemics of cholera and other diseases threat-

ened to send the totals much higher.

As the first trickle of supplies broke through, the global relief effort to save an estimated five million homeless survivors of last weekend's undersea earthquake and tsunami was reinforced on Saturday when Japan raised its pledge of aid from \$30 million to \$500 million, the largest contribution

so far. Combined with a \$350 million pledge by the US on Friday, this brought the total contributions of more than 40 nations to \$2 billion, according to the United Nations.

Secretary of State Colin Powell and Governor Jeb Bush of Florida, the president's brother, were expected to arrive in the re-

gion on Sunday with a team of experts to tour some stricken areas and to assess the needs. Their schedule was still being worked out, officials said. The need is indeed enormous, especially in Aceh province, where towns and villages were destroyed. Meulaboh, on Aceh's west coast, was flattened, and as many as 40,000 of the 120,000 residents were killed. NYT News Service



US air relief for Kuede Teunom

In Aceh, most have gone forever

By John Aglionby

BANDA ACEH, JAN. 2. I thought I would know what to expect when I arrived in Indonesia. A few days before I had seen the devastation wreaked by the tsunami in Phuket in Thailand. But nothing prepared me for Banda Aceh: the assault on all my senses of the smell, the sight and even taste, of the rotting bodies.

I had arrived in the Thai resort of Phuket the day after the tsunamis but by then even in the worst affected areas, the majority of the corpses had been collected. The bodies did not look pretty at the morgue; severely distended and many with their clothes ripped off by the sea. But at least they were at the morgue and at least most of the faces were recognisable to those who knew them.

Identification impossible

But in Indonesia's Banda Aceh — close to the epicentre of the earthquake — the scale of the carnage was so much greater. I could tell only if the bodies were male or female, but in most cases little else, the skin turned a reddish shade of black, facial features erased, making identification virtually impossible for the scores of people who streamed down to the ravaged areas to try to find their families

and friends.

Those were the corpses you could see. Buried beneath the rubble and the mud are the thousands unlikely ever to be recovered. A similarly large number have been washed out to sea. One day, perhaps, one will drift ashore onto some tranquil beach or another will get caught up in an unsuspecting fisherman's net. But most are gone forever.

Then there is the devastation to buildings. In Thailand it had looked bad enough.

There shop fronts were trashed, cars stacked on cars. Signs had fallen onto a promenade that was impassable in many places.

But the buildings were visible for what they were before the tempest came, recognisable for what they had been before last Sunday's assault by nature.

In Banda Aceh, only a handful of buildings still stand in the affected areas, dotted randomly around the landscape. They offer no clue as to why they escaped the 10-metre walls of water and the rest did not.

In this devastated landscape people pick through the wreckage, hoping to find some of their property, or even a living person trapped in the rubble.

In Banda Aceh, it was not only the severity of the devastation that contrasted so sharply with

that in Thailand but also the distance that the damage extended.

In Phuket the tsunami, for the most part, only affected properties along the seafloor or perhaps for a couple of blocks deep; the carnage in Banda Aceh went on for miles.

In a city of horrific sights, one of the weirdest was the 50-foot fishing boat that had taken over the car park of the Medan hotel, a good 5 km from the coast. Incredibly it was standing upright and still appeared intact.

I thought the devastation in Banda Aceh was the worst that I would see, I was to be proved badly wrong.

The day I arrived in Banda Aceh the first stories were beginning to trickle out from the west coast, the area closest to the epicentre. Indonesia's President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, described the reports as "frightening," particularly from the largest town in the region, Meulaboh. He said the rate of destruction was 70 to 80 per cent and initial estimates of the dead, based on nothing more than rough guesswork, was a minimum of 10,000.

Television footage confirmed his prediction. Meulaboh made Banda Aceh look serene. Barely a single neighbourhood had escaped the tidal waves that crashed over the town three or

four times and left it several metres underwater for a while.

Scenes of World War

It reminded me of the pictures of cities in Germany during the Second World War that had endured a heavy Allied bombing: the odd lucky building had escaped unscathed but the vast majority were unfit for human habitation at best, and only several inches above the ground at worst. My immediate thought was that the number of dead must have been much more than 10,000 of the 40-50,000 population. Then the second night in Banda Aceh I heard about a string of towns north of Meulaboh that had been completely levelled, where six-inch-high rubble was considered high. Where nothing was left at all.

The following day I set off to these towns. We drove about 13 km out of town until we came to the first destroyed bridge, near an army barracks that made Meulaboh look semi-respectable. Then we started walking, accompanied by a few dozen people hurrying off down the coast to see what was left of their relatives' homes. Three-and-a-half hours later we arrived at Leupueung, the first big town outside Banda Aceh. It had disappeared. —©Guardian

Newspapers Limited 2005

THE HINDU

3 JAN 2005

THE HINDU

Orphan adopt rush in Lanka

Colombo, Jan. 1: Grieving families of children who died in the tsunamis in Sri Lanka are taking away orphans without official approval to replace their lost loved ones.

The government has pleaded with parents to stop, while Save the Children asked them to follow proper adoption procedures. An official from the department of child care and protection said he had heard of a dozen cases in Galle and Matara, on Sri Lanka's southern coast, in which orphaned children had been taken by bereaved families. The exact circumstances in which the children were taken, or if they were related to the families taking them, is as yet unclear.

According to yesterday's figures, 28,627 people died on the island, with children accounting for a third of the victims. Save the Children's office in Sri Lanka said it had also heard of impromptu adoptions. "The families doing this are trying to deal with their own grief of having lost their children," said Maleec Callyanaratne, the group's spokesman.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Trek in wasteland of death

RICHARD C. PADDOCK

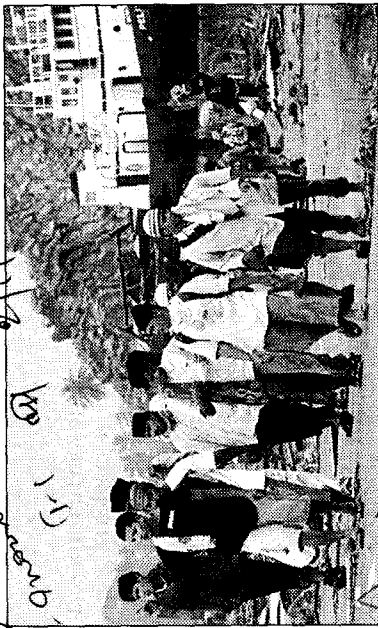
Lhoknga (Indonesia), Jan. 1 For five days, the three friends walked across a 153-km wasteland of death and destruction.

Living on coconuts, cassava and unopened noodle packets they found along the way, they hiked along the west coast of Sumatra through 150 villages that had been reduced to rubble by Sunday's massive earthquake and tsunami.

They swam across 15 rivers where bridges had been washed away. They passed more bodies than they could count, including some that had lain in the tropical sun for so long they had burst. But for five days there was one thing they didn't see: another living person.

Yesterday, Nurdin Mohammed, 30, Abidin Zainal, 30, and Imran Burhan, 23, swam across their final river and arrived in Lhoknga, a coastal village on the northwestern tip of Sumatra.

Lhoknga also was obliterated by the tsunami, but from there it was just a few short miles by car to their home village on the outskirts of Banda Aceh, the Aceh



Indonesians walk on a highway in Lhoknga district, 20 km southwest of Banda Aceh. (Reuters)

provincial capital. "I just want to go home," Mohammed said.

The account of the trek by the three construction workers painted a picture of destruction so severe that all the survivors appeared to have fled their villages along the coast for safety in the steep hills above the shore.

The west coast of the Indonesian island is so difficult to reach that authorities still are uncertain how many people have died. The death toll in Indonesia stands at more than 80,000.

In some parts of Sumatra's west coast that rescue

ga, about 16 km west of Banda Aceh, illustrates the power of the quake and tsunami along the west coast.

Yesterday, resident Sabari Mohammed Ali came back for the first time since he lost his wife and daughter in the tsunami. Ali, who ran a small canteen at the beach selling rice dishes, said he was at the beach when the quake hit. He quickly went home and brought his 16-year-old daughter, Nina, to the beach.

Soon, he noticed the water suddenly recede and expose the coral reef. It was strange, he said, but he didn't know that was the sign a tsunami was coming. Moments later he saw a wave in the distance. When it smashed into the reef with huge force, he realised the family was in trouble.

He and his wife, Hafni, their son, Surya, 9, and Nina all jumped on his motorbike and tried to outrun the wave.

But the wave caught them when they had gone more than two miles. He was able to push his son onto the roof of a house, but he could not get back to his wife or daughter.

LOS ANGELES TIMES- WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

Tsunami toll on the rise, aid gushes in

By Tomi Soetjipto and Dean Yates

Banda Aceh (Indonesia): A legion of ships and planes has delivered aid to millions of Asian tsunami survivors after New Year revellers around the world paused to mourn victims of one of the worst disasters in living memory.

UN secretary-general Kofi Annan called for a major logistical operation to help countries shattered by Sunday's tsunami, which by the latest count had killed 125,930 after India added another thousand fatalities. The UN emergency relief operations coordinator said the death toll was approaching 150,000, with a third or more of them believed to be children.

"We mourn, we cry, and our hearts weep, witnessing thousands of those killed left rigid in the streets," Indonesia President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said in a subdued New Year address.

Rescue teams say aid has started to reach stricken areas, six days after the monster waves obliterated beach towns and sucked tourists out to sea or inland in a torrent of mud and debris.

They were racing against time with an estimated 5 million people in the disaster areas facing grave difficulty getting food and clean water. Health authorities warned of a second wave of deaths from contagious diseases.

Helicopters from the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier ferried relief supplies on Saturday to Sumatra, an Indonesian island the



Thais collect donations in Patang on Saturday

size of Florida, where aid workers have encountered unimaginable scenes of devastation.

With more than 80,000 confirmed deaths, Indonesia was the hardest hit after a 9.0-magnitude earthquake less than 150 km (95 miles) off the northern tip of Sumatra triggered a tsunami that ripped across the Indian Ocean to Africa. Officials said the Indonesian figure may soar past 100,000. Sri Lanka has reported more than 28,500 deaths and India nearly 12,000.

Trying to understand the misery bewildered many. "The scale of hu-

man tragedy in South Asia is beyond our ability to characterise," said Thomas Tighe, head of US aid group Direct Relief International.

"The numerical death toll represents individual people, each someone's son or daughter, brother or sister, mother or father, or friend."

Relatives and friends flying to Asia in the hope that loved ones were alive scoured gruesome mosaics of photographs of distorted faces pinned on bulletin boards alongside personal possessions that someone might recognise.

Hundreds of thousands sheltered

in makeshift tent camps around the Indian Ocean. Thirteen countries were hit by the tsunami.

"These are clothes given to us by rich people. They came last night," said Zulkifli, a 65-year-old plantation worker wearing a sarong as he gleefully tried on a coat at a refugee centre in Banda Aceh in north Sumatra. Much of the city of 400,000 people was levelled. Quake aftershocks have become a daily event since Sunday and they rattled homes and shelters overnight, sending many people scurrying outside into early morning rain.

One of the largest aftershocks since the tsunami quake six days ago was registered in the sea 215 miles (345 km) from the city on Saturday, but was not expected to cause damage.

Airport Logjams: A multinational force of aid workers, military aircraft and ships descended on Asia. But lack of fuel for trucks, impassable roads and downed bridges hindered deliveries from airports and harbours to disaster areas.

"The aircraft going in and going out are just taxing the capacity to the very limit," said Michael Elmquist, head of the UN disaster relief operation in Indonesia.

In Sri Lanka, the worst-hit nation after Indonesia, aid officials said Colombo airport was also being swamped by aid.

In Thailand, forensic experts tried to identify thousands of rotting corpses stacked in Buddhist temples. One aid group alone was sending 1,000 body bags.

Reuters

Quake rocks Sumatra

JAKARTA POST/ANN

JAKARTA, Jan. 1. — A large earthquake struck under the sea off Sumatra Islands today, seismologists said. The Hong Kong Observatory reported a "severe earthquake" at 6.22 a.m. (GMT), with an estimated magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter Scale, with its epicentre 350 km west of Banda Aceh.

The quake was close to the epicentre of last Sunday's earthquake, which measured 9.0 on the Richter scale and unleashed tsunami which killed at least 125,000 people around Asia. In Banda Aceh no tremor was felt today.

However the State Seismological Bureau of China said the new tremor had a magnitude of 7.0. "This is the biggest earthquake we've monitored in the region since 26 December when there were earthquakes of 8.7 and a 7.5 in magnitude," an official of the State Seismological Bureau of China said.

"It is hard to say if there will be more tsunamis because there are a lot of factors involved." The US Geological Survey's website said. Thai seismologists measured the quake at 5.4. An official at France's Observatory of Earth Sciences of Strasbourg however said the new quake measured 6.5 on the Richter Scale, making it a large tremor although nowhere near as big as last Sunday's.

THE STATESMAN

2 JAN 2005