

Cancer risks from Teflon downplayed

Dover, June 29

A CONTROVERSIAL chemical used by DuPont Co. to make the nonstick substance Teflon poses more of a cancer risk than indicated in a draft assessment by the Environmental Protection Agency, an independent review board has found. Teflon is the black coating used on nonstick cookware.

The EPA stated earlier this year that its draft risk assessment of perfluorooctanoic acid and its salts found "suggestive evidence" of potential human carcinogenicity, based on animal studies.

In a draft report released on Monday, the majority of members on an EPA scientific advisory board that reviewed the

agency's report concluded that PFOA, also known as C-8, is "likely" to be carcinogenic to humans, and that the EPA should conduct cancer risk assessments for a variety of tumors found in mice and rats.

Environmentalists hailed the report, which will be discussed by EPA officials and SAB members in a public teleconference July 6, as an important step in holding government regulators and the Delaware-based chemical giant accountable.

The board's findings will increase pressure on the EPA to conduct human health risk assessments for liver, breast, pancreatic and testicular cancer, as well as PFOA's potentially toxic effects on the immune system, said Richard Wiles, senior vice

BODY TALK

president for the Environmental Working Group, an advocacy and research organization.

"This is contrary to the recommendation of the EPA staff and is a very important conclusion," said Wiles, adding that it would be very unlikely for the board to make any significant changes before issuing its final report for review by the EPA.

"This makes it hard for the EPA not to move forward aggressively," he said.

Enesta Jones, a spokeswoman for the EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances, said agency officials had not reviewed the advisory

board's report and do not comment on board recommendations until they are final.

"We're still working with industry and other people to gather data that will help us better understand PFOA," she said.

DuPont officials said in a prepared statement that human health and toxicology studies suggest that PFOA exposure does not cause cancer in humans and does not pose a health risk to the general public.

"To date, no human health effects are known to be caused by PFOA even in workers who have significantly higher exposure levels than the general population," the company said.

The company also said data from its employee health studies and those conducted by 3M Co.,

which stopped manufacturing PFOA in 2000, "deserve greater consideration in the EPA's final risk assessment rather than relying solely on animal testing models." DuPont's studies, which are still ongoing, have found elevated levels of total cholesterol and fats called triglycerides among workers exposed to PFOA, but no indication that PFOA was the cause of increased serum cholesterol and triglycerides.

While PFOA is used to make Teflon, it is not present in Teflon itself, which is applied to cookware, clothing, car parts and flooring. PFOA is also used to produce materials used in firefighting foam, phone cables and computer chips.

AP

Myanmar refugees rally against NHPC plant

'Project will displace 3,600 Kukis, submerge 17,000 acres of farm land'

Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of Myanmarese refugees, under the banner of the Anti-Tamanthi Dam Campaign Committee (ATDCC), held a demonstration here on Tuesday to protest against the construction of a 1,200 MW

power plant, coming up in the Kuki-dominated tribal area of Myanmar. The power plant is being constructed with the help of the National Hydro-electric Power Corporation (NHPC).

In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister, the Home Minister, and the Chairman-

Director of NHPC, the protesters said the dam would displace 3,600 ethnic Kuki people from 35 villages and submerge 17,000 acres of agricultural land. "All the manual works, will be for sure done by the local Kukis by use of force, thus leading to human rights abuses against the local population," the memorandum said. The committee also alleged that 80 per cent of the power gener-

ated from the plant, was likely to be exported to India to strengthen ties between the two countries.

'Stop investments'

Appealing to the Indian Government to stop the Tamanthi project which would "in no way benefit the local Kuki people," the memorandum said all forms of investments in Myanmar should also be stopped until genuine democracy was restored, as

the investment was strengthening the military dictatorship and supporting its strategy to subjugate the indigenous people.

Threat to wildlife

The proposed dam site being part of Myanmar's largest national park, the flooding would threaten the habitats of many endangered wild species including tigers, leopards, rhinos, Asian golden cats, gorillas and hornbills.

29 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

“Treat sunstroke deaths as human loss in natural disaster”

Orissa Government plea to Centre

Prafulla Das

10.15 2/6

BHUBANESWAR: As Orissa is witnessing a large number of deaths due to sunstroke and lightning in recent years, the State Government has approached the Centre to treat these deaths as human loss in natural disaster.

As many as 278 deaths due to lightning were recorded in the State last year. There have been 60 deaths by June 8 this year, despite scanty rainfall in the initial months.

If the Centre accepts the request, the ex-gratia amount for victims will increase from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 50,000. A total of 2,338 people died due to sunstroke between 1998 and 2004. The Revenue Department has confirmed 136 deaths this year.

The industrial town of Talcher experienced a maximum temperature of over 50 degrees Celsius earlier this month. Titilagarh town in Bolangir district recorded a maximum of 50.1 degrees on June 5, 2003.

The Centre on an earlier occasion turned down the State's request to treat heat wave as natural disaster. However, State Revenue Minister Manmohan Samal met Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil in New Delhi recently urging him to reconsider the State's request. The issues relating to natural disasters were discussed at the State-level Natural Disaster Committee here recently. The meeting, which was chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, underlined the need for amendments in the State Government's relief code to give adequate compensation for farmers who lost their crops due to hailstorm.

The State is also contemplating to amend its Relief Code to ensure adequate compensation for the loss of life and property due to attacks by wild elephants. The Centre's approval on the issue will be sought soon. As many as 259 persons were trampled to death by wild elephants in the State between 1995-96 and 2003-04.

Pareechu nightmare over, residents back

ARCHANA Phull
Rampur, June 27

RESIDENTS OF Rampur and adjoining villages on the banks of the Sutlej in Shimla and Kullu districts are back.

A day after flash floods in the river inundated villages and swept away bridges, they have come back to find their homes largely unaffected.

The Sutlej waters receded late on Sunday night, but the villagers fear it will come back. "I think we will now have to live with the fear of floods," said Rajesh Kumar, a Nogli resident, who is glad his house and shop are intact.

The discharge of water into the river, which rose to 5,000 cusecs on Sunday due to flash floods in its tributary Pareechu in Tibet, came down to 2,000 cusecs at Nathpa dam site and there were no reports of any further rise in its level upstream, official sources said.

The Hindustan-Tibet national highway had been blocked due to landslides along the Sutlej.

The 1,500-MW Naphtha-Jhakri hydro-power project, which was closed on Saturday due to heavy silting, remained closed for the third day and there were no hopes of early resumption of power generation, project general manager J.K. Sharma said.

Efforts are on to airlift the nearly 500 tourists, including 50 foreigners, stranded at various places in Kinnaur district, a senior official said.

An IAF helicopter, which made a sortie this morning to airlift the stranded tourists could not land due to bad weather and returned to Rampur, Deputy Commissioner, Kinnaur Amandeep Garg said. Nearly 100 tourists were stuck at Kalpa, 150 at Sangla, 70 at Pooh and 50 at Yangthang on the Hindustan-Tibet road, he said.

The Border Road Organisation was trying to reopen the highway and to clear the road at Malling to enable tourists and other people to return via Spiti and Keylong.

With inputs from PTI

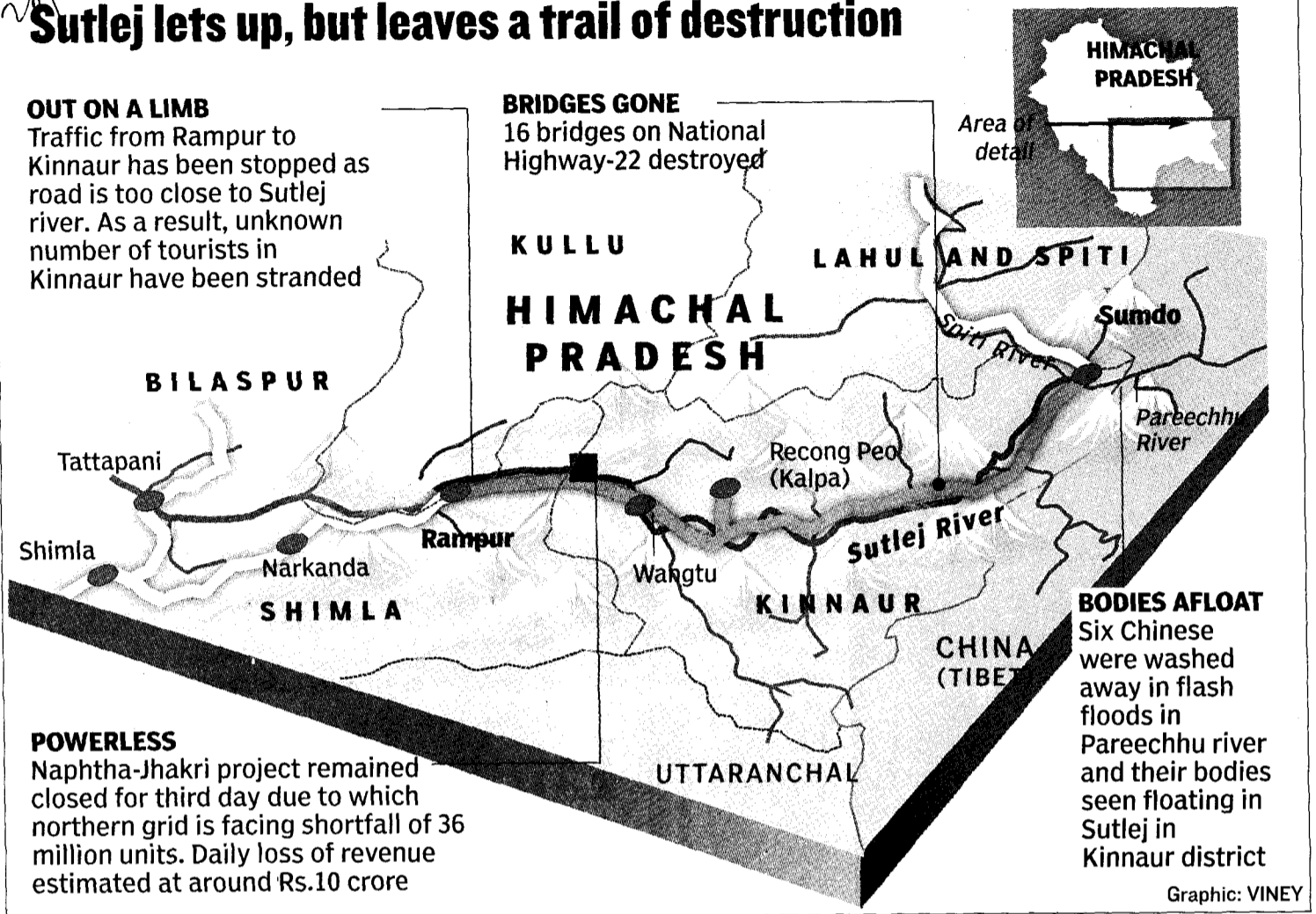
Sutlej lets up, but leaves a trail of destruction

OUT ON A LIMB

Traffic from Rampur to Kinnaur has been stopped as road is too close to Sutlej river. As a result, unknown number of tourists in Kinnaur have been stranded

BRIDGES GONE

16 bridges on National Highway-22 destroyed



POWERLESS

Naphtha-Jhakri project remained closed for third day due to which northern grid is facing shortfall of 36 million units. Daily loss of revenue estimated at around Rs.10 crore

BODIES AFLOAT

Six Chinese were washed away in flash floods in Pareechhu river and their bodies seen floating in Sutlej in Kinnaur district

Graphic: VINEY

Flood washes away 6 Chinese men

Agencies

Chandimandir (Haryana), June 27

SIX CHINESE nationals were washed away in flash floods in Pareechu river and their bodies were seen floating in the Sutlej near Sumdoh, six km from the international border, in Kinnaur

district of Himachal Pradesh, the army said here on Monday.

"The bodies of six Chinese people were seen floating down the Sutlej ahead of Sumdoh", major-general R.S. Gill of the Western Command, which is engaged in relief and rescue operations in flood-hit Kinnaur and Kullu dis-

tricts, told reporters here. The Chinese authorities had been informed about it, he added.

The bodies were likely to get entrapped in the tunnels of the Naphtha-Jhakri project and a warning had been sounded to all to inform the army authorities if they saw the bodies, Gill said.

Caught napping, again

DESPITE SATELLITE images of the lake on Pareechu river in spate, the state government kept sleeping over the matter till the flash flood struck.

Now, the government has asked its departments concerned to find out the cause of the flood this year. Better late than never.

HTC

Stop hydel projects until review, say environmentalists

HO-9
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Delhi Forum cites Nathpa-Jhakri and Teesta as case points

Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Environmental groups and social organisations have asked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to direct the Power Ministry to stop further construction of hydel power projects until a comprehensive review of the feasibility and impact of these projects is undertaken. In a statement issued here on Monday, Delhi Forum — a group of 18 organisations — pointed out that the Nathpa-Jakhri shutdown and the bridge collapse in Teesta stage-II hydel project confirm the concerns voiced by the social movements and civil society groups.

The World Bank-funded Nathpa-Jakhri hydel project in Himachal Pradesh has been shut down for the second time in two years because of heavy silt deposition in the Sutlej. This is being compounded by the rising water level due to an unexpected discharge from the Parachu in Tibet.

Concerns voiced

“Since the Nathpa-Jakhri project was conceived, various civil society organisations and the local people have repeatedly voiced concerns on the issues including the sudden surge

in water level due to glacial burst in Tibet,” Delhi Forum said.

The collapse of a Bailey bridge in the Teesta Loaw Dam hydel project, under construction by the National Hydel Power Corporation in the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal, reflects the track record of the NHPC — strewn with similar project sites — right from Parbati Hydel Project to Indira Sagar hydel project recently, the statement said. It raised questions on the rationale behind the construction of dams over unpredictable glacier-fed Himalayan rivers flowing through highly seismic and unstable rock formation zones.

“We also specifically request the Government of West Bengal and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council to immediately order a proper enquiry [in]to the accident in Teesta-III site, find out the responsibility of NHPC officials and make them accountable. The Labour Commissioner should also enquire into the details of the accident and find out how many workers have actually drowned, furnish a list of names of these workers, penalise related construction firm and NHPC for dereliction of responsibility and ensure that proper compensation is being paid to their next to kin,” the statement said.

Climate change blow to human cradle

The Sterkfontein Caves (South Africa), June 26 (Reuters): Climate change in Africa gave rise to modern humans. Now experts fear that global warming linked to carbon emissions will have its worst impact on humanity's cradle.

"Africa is the most vulnerable continent to climate change," said Jennifer Morgan, director of the Global Climate Change Programme at conservation group WWF.

"Most African livelihoods depend on rain-based agriculture so droughts and floods

will have a serious impact on the workforce," she said, adding that the continent's extreme poverty reduced its ability to cope.

Africa's plight will be high on the agenda of a Scottish summit of the Group of Eight industrialised nations next month which could herald increased aid flows to the region.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has also made climate change a priority of Britain's year-long presidency of the G8.

Global warming is widely

blamed on emissions of heat-trapping gases from cars, factories and power plants — gases mostly spewed from the rich world.

Climate change in Africa prodded mankind's distant ancestors along their evolutionary path as forests gave way to grasslands, forcing early humans into an open environment where it appears stone tools and long strides first developed.

But while most past changes in weather patterns were gradual — giving our prehistoric ancestors a chance to adapt — the pace of global warming today could over-

whelm modern Africa.

The UN projects that temperatures may rise by 1.4-5.8 Celsius by the year 2100.

Desertification threatens to drive millions of Africans from their homes, said a recent international report drawing on the work of 1,360 scientists in 95 nations.

Rising sea temperatures are also among the threats seen to the coral reefs off Africa's lush east coast, the life-blood of poor coastal communities dependent upon fisheries and tourism.

And this tragedy of the weather is unfolding across the continent where climate

change gave birth to modern humans.

The evidence for this is embedded in the Sterkfontein caves, 30 km northwest of Johannesburg, where hominid fossils dating back over four million years have been unearthed. "There was a drying up of Africa around 2.5 million years ago ... There was a change from forest to grassland," said Ron Clarke, who heads excavations at Sterkfontein.

Intriguingly, it was in this period that the Sterkfontein fossil record reveals our ancestors first making stone tools.

Climate change would con-

tinue to steer humanity's path.

"About 130,000 years ago, the climate switched ... briefly into a warmer, moister mode," write Chris Stringer and Robin McKie in their book *African Exodus: The Origins of Modern Humanity*.

The Sterkfontein Caves, surrounded by rolling farms, are again witness to environmental change — this time man-made.

"The water table below the caves is dropping because it is being pumped out by local farmers," said Clarke. And water in the area will become more scarce if temperatures rise as fast as some fear.

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No homes for tsunami survivors yet

A world of drifting 'ghosts'

JOHN Aglionby

BEFORE THE Boxing Day tsunami I'd never met anyone who had suffered so much that they had effectively lost their identity. In regular trips to the devastated regions in the last six months I've met thousands of such 'ghosts'; once proud people reduced to bedraggled, grieving bodies dressed in donated clothes and kept alive by the world's largesse.

It is only when one considers what it takes to rebuild someone's identity that one gets a sense of the size of the reconstruction task in Aceh and North Sumatra, the Indonesian provinces that bore the brunt of the December 26 earthquake and tsunami. First, you need to find two people you are not related to who can vouch for you. Then you need to see the village or neighbourhood chief. Then you need to take his letter to the sub-district chief. Only then do you get an identity card.

Meanwhile you start discussing with your neighbours who owns what land. You all go to the village chief and have letters drawn up confirming what has been agreed. Then the village gets its land ownership 'map' approved by the sub-district chief. You all go to the land agency and get your title deeds. Then you rebuild your house, return to your livelihood and — hey presto! — you have your identity back. Simple.

Multiply that process by half a million — not forgetting all the government offices lost, the devastated infrastructure, the fact there's a secessionist war going on and the psychological trauma affecting everyone — and you get an idea of why the head of the Indonesian government's new reconstruction agency demanded a four-year mandate.

And that's just the theory. Once you hit the ground and start getting into fine detail, the reality of what's required becomes apparent. Take, for example, the task of getting an identity card. In many villages surviving neighbours were scattered

across distances of dozens of miles. Many village and sub-district chiefs also died.

"There are just so many priorities, it is hard to know where to begin," one UN worker told me.

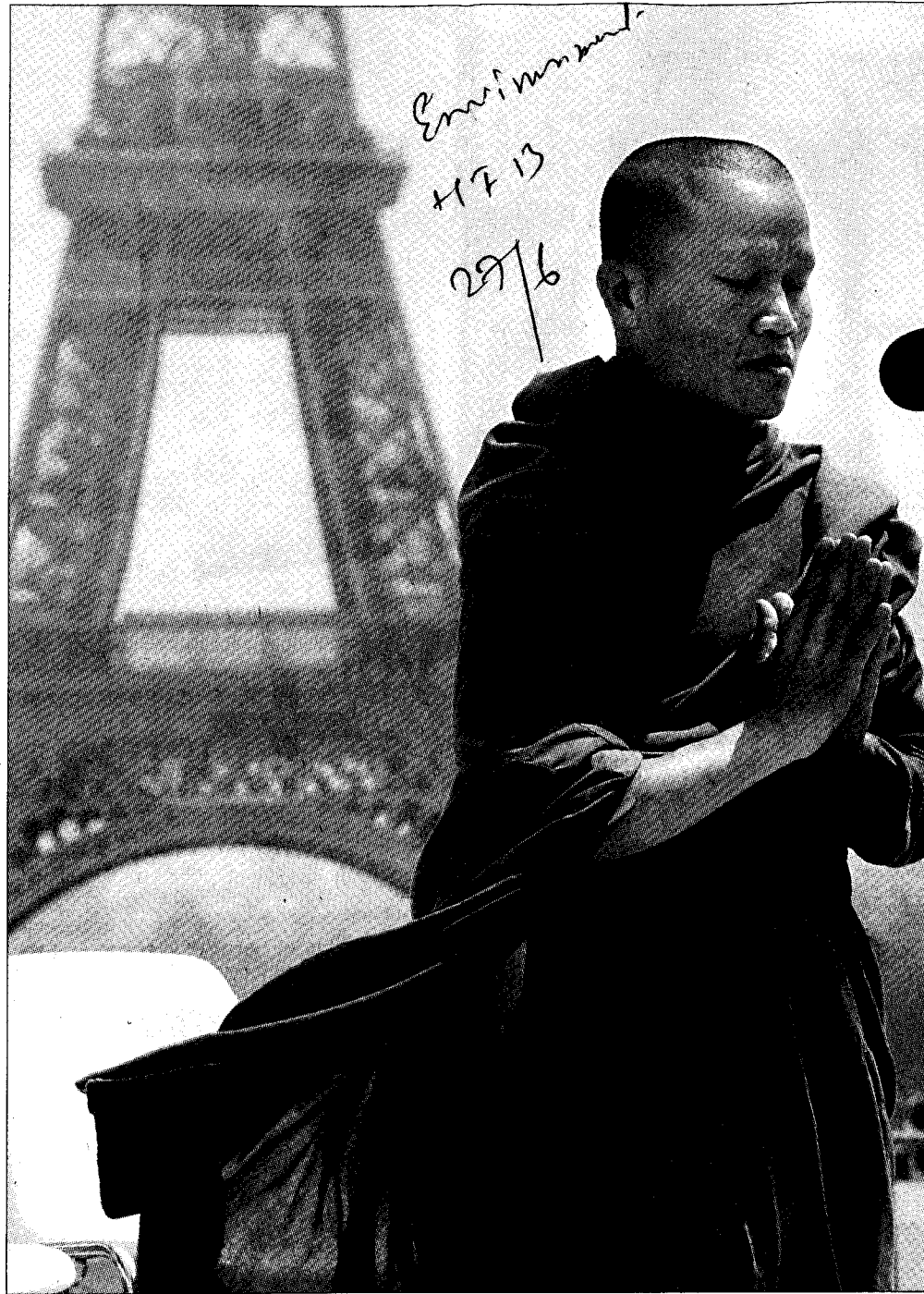
Securing a land title is even more complex. Before the tsunami most Acehnese had no idea what a title deed was, let alone possessed one. So this has been less a document replacement exercise, more an educational process. And for the officials it has been a case of climbing up a mountain of applications in the most trying circumstances imaginable. That assumes the land still exists. For many coastal communities, the waves washed away their land. Many people made their living from the sea, but the new coast belongs to someone else. So where should the former community be relocated?

It is not only the land registry officials who are struggling. Everyone is in the same boat. Everyone wants their house rebuilt, everyone wants a job, everyone wants a school for their children, everyone wants a health clinic, everyone wants a plough to prepare their fields for the August rice-planting season. But it just isn't going to happen.

Take house construction. It has been estimated that 130,000 homes need to be built, more than 10 times what is usually built across the whole of Indonesia each year. Even if everyone selects designs that require virtually no wood, it has been estimated that 10,000 40ft containers of timber will be needed every month for the next year. Where is that wood going to come from? Is it from environmentally sustainable sources? Is it reasonably priced?

Amid the mind-boggling statistics and army of so-called logistical experts, it is easy to forget this has been a human tragedy. An Oxfam project coordinator in Greater Aceh district told me that, in many of the villages he is responsible for, only 10 to 15 per cent of the community is showing real initiative and a desire to rebuild their lives.

Guardian News Service



A monk from France's Thai community holds prayers marking six months of the tsunami, which claimed the lives of quite a few French tourists in Thailand, at Trocadero in Paris on Sunday.

Could the tragedy have left a legacy of peace?

Reuters

Banda Aceh, June 26

FRUSTRATED, LIVING in tents and jobless, survivors of last December's tsunami that killed up to 232,000 people around the Indian Ocean are struggling to rebuild six months after one of history's worst natural calamities. In the countries most affected — Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand — survivors gripe that reconstruction of homes, the rebuilding of schools and the creation of work has barely begun. Emergency relief is still being distributed, with the World Food Programme feeding nearly two million people in the region.

But the tsunami could also leave a legacy of peace — and if the aid is properly deployed, upgrade infrastructure and leave better communities in the impoverished coastal regions of the tsunami zone.

Indonesia and separatist rebels in Aceh have resumed talks about settling a three-decade rebellion.

In Sri Lanka, a new pact to share \$3.0 billion in pledged aid with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels could help jump-start efforts to convert a three-year ceasefire into lasting peace after two decades of bloody civil war.

"One positive aspect is both the government and the LTTE have labelled it as the first step to recommencement of the peace process," said Kethesh Loganathan of public policy institute the Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Sri Lanka is building more than 90,000 homes for its half-million displaced people. Aid pledges by governments and multilateral organisations total around \$6.9 billion, while private donations total nearly \$5 billion.

But the bulk of that money has yet to be disbursed.

For victims, the memories of that fateful Sunday morning are vivid. Many have nightmares. In Aceh, where 168,000 people are dead or missing, bodies are still being found. Parts of its coast look like the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust.

In southern Thailand, where many foreigners were among the 5,395 people who died, small wreath-laying ceremonies were held on Sunday at a memorial on the tourist-island of Phuket. Gabor Szigeti, a 32-year-old Swedish survivor, returned to Khao Lak, a stretch of white beaches north of Phuket, where he saw so many others lose loved ones that day.

Szigeti and his wife survived when the monster waves smashed into his holiday bungalow. The couple returned to thank local Thais who helped them survive the ordeal, he said. "This helped us to get closure, I'd say. I feel a lot calmer," he said.

The 9.15 magnitude earthquake that erupted off the coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island, the strongest in 40 years, sent walls of water as high as 10 meters (33 ft) barreling into 13 Indian Ocean nations.

No place suffered more than Aceh. As many as 1,000 villages and towns were either damaged or wiped off the map. Little rebuilding has started and a massive clean-up is still going on. Indeed, it will take as long as 10 years to rebuild what was destroyed, the United Nations said last week.

Oxfam said in a report on Saturday that poor communities were vulnerable, partly because the tsunami affected some of the poorest in each of the three worst-hit countries.

Meltdown chill down Sutlej spine

MANJEET SEHGAL
WARRIOR AND
PRANAY SHARMA

HIMACHAL FLOOD FEAR: WHY THE RIVER ROSE SO FAST

Shimla/New Delhi, June 26: A long spell of snowfall and an abnormal rise in temperature have conspired to send a mountain of water roaring down the Sutlej, putting a 200-km stretch in Himachal Pradesh at risk and shutting down a power plant that feeds most of northern India.

Rapid melting of a cluster of glaciers in the region is being seen as the reason behind the sudden spurt in the water level.

"The water level of the Sutlej has gone up three times during the last three days. It is now 11 metres above normal," an official said.

The level started to dip late tonight but officials said the high alert would stay in place.

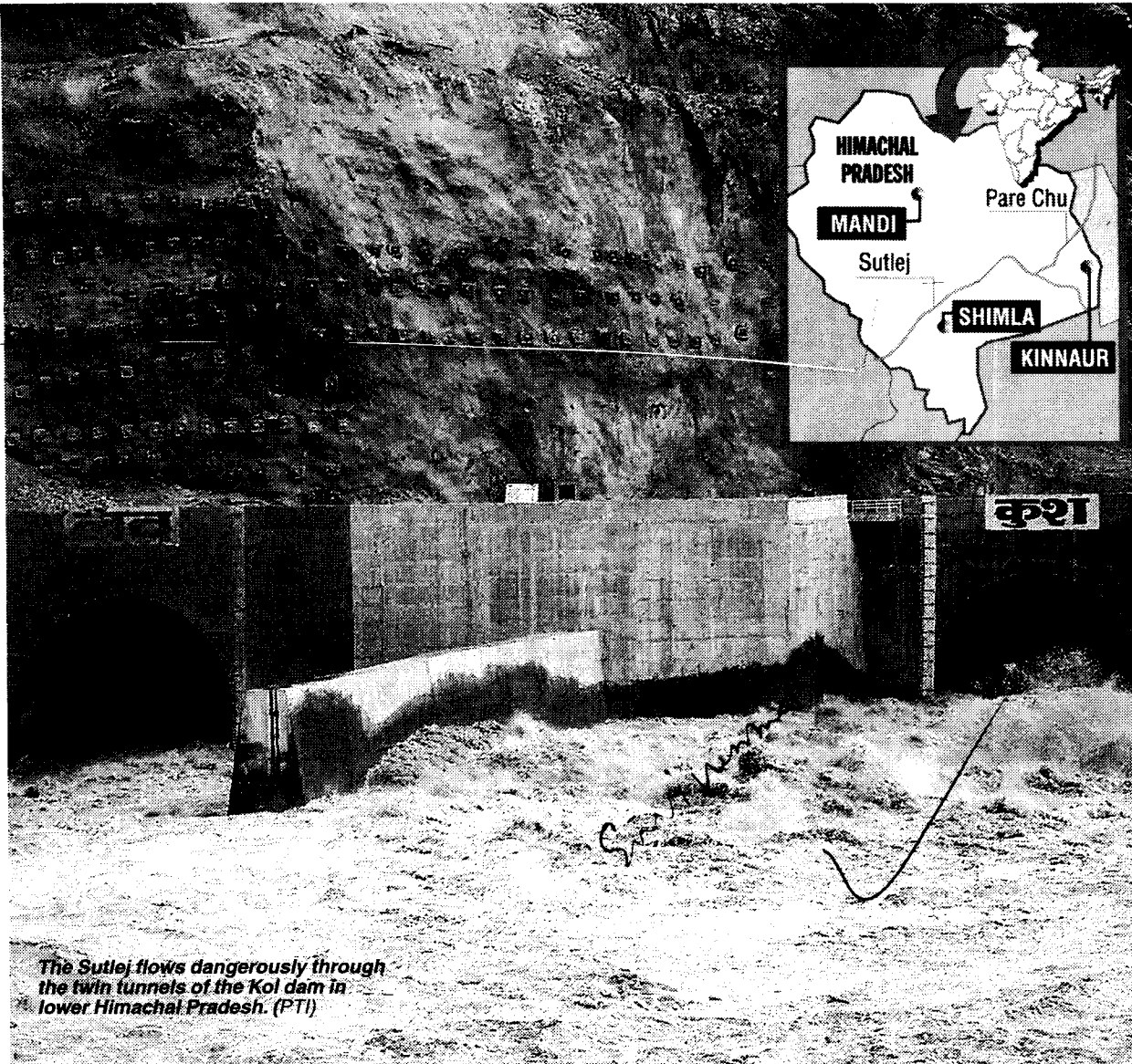
At least 10 bridges have been washed away and several houses submerged. No casualty has been reported yet but property valued at Rs 100 crore has been damaged. Around 5,000 villagers have been evacuated till late tonight.

At 9 pm, the surging water swept into Rampur, 130 km from Shimla and close to the Sutlej. Other areas on alert include Kinnaur, Mandi and Kullu.

The Nathpa Jhakri hydro power project, which supplies electricity to Delhi and eight other northern states, has been shut down since Saturday following the discharge of a heavy amount of silt. The closure will result in a revenue loss of between Rs 8 and 9 crore a day.

The crisis has a cross-border dimension, too, as one of the tributaries of the Sutlej, the Pare Chu, flows downstream from Tibet, where an artificial lake has formed. If the lake — formed by a landslide — bursts, the water level in the Sutlej will spin out of control and the crisis will escalate.

The Chinese ambassador in India, who called on chief minister Virbhadr Singh yes-



The Sutlej flows dangerously through the twin tunnels of the Kol dam in lower Himachal Pradesh. (PTI)

Scientists investigating melting glaciers in the Himalayas say high temperatures in June could have melted more snow, triggering lakebursts and cascading flows into rivers downstream.

"It is possible a lakeburst caused an abrupt release of water into a river causing a rise in water level," says Anil Kulkarni, a senior scientist at the Space Applications Centre in Ahmedabad.

The melting snow generates a lake at the glacier's terminus — the lower end of the glacier where it meets the rock. Rocks and mountain debris usually make a natural dam that blocks the water in such lakes.

But an increase in melting of snow during summer may lead to an overflow or break up the dam, causing an abrupt rise in the flow downstream.

Research has suggested that several hundred glaciers that feed the Sutlej are losing more ice during summer than they are getting in winter.

Himachal has some 1,987 glaciers, of which over 300 feed the Sutlej. These glaciers are spread over an area of 1,550 sq km.

Studies by the Space Applications Centre over the past five years have shown that the speed of glacial retreat in the Himalayas ranges from five metres to 20 metres a year.

G.S. MUDUR

terday, has assured India of regular updates on the lake's status. A similar spectre last year had caused some degree of tension between the neighbouring countries.

Delhi had proposed to send experts to the other side to find out the exact reason for the floods in Himachal Pradesh but Beijing was in no mood to entertain an Indian team. The ice melted later and it was agreed that the two countries will work closely with each

other if they face a similar situation in future.

Meteorological experts blamed the unusual rise in temperature this year for the melting of the glaciers. Besides, the area witnessed heavy snowfall this year.

"The average daily temperature in many areas of Kinnaur district has touched between 30 and 32 degrees," said S.P. Bhardwaj, a meteorologist. Normally, the tempera-

ture around 20 degrees in June. "Also, it continued to snow till May-end," he added.

The Centre held an emergency meeting of top officials in Delhi to assess the situation and put the army and air force on alert. At least 30 helicopters have been kept on stand-by.

Officials said the situation is not being described as "highly dangerous" but precautionary measures are

"Nearly 5,000 people from three villages along the 200-km stretch of the Sutlej have been evacuated to safer places," home secretary V.K. Duggal said after the hour-long meeting.

Duggal could not say whether there was a possibility of a breach on the Pare Chu. "This could be confirmed only tomorrow after the satellite pictures are made available to us," the home secretary said. He also informed the

Chinese authorities who have promised all necessary help."

Sonia in Shimla

Congress chief and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi is holidaying at a private cottage near Shimla in Himachal Pradesh.

Sonia, accompanied by daughter Priyanka and her family, reached Shimla today for the five-day break. Officials said that till Sunday evening, she had not been advised to change her schedule in the state.

Hope and despair in Asia on tsunami anniversary

Associated Press

VAKARAI, June 26. — Six months after the devastating earthquake and tsunami that killed 1,78,000 people in 11 countries and left another 50,000 missing and presumed dead, some Asian nations today held ceremonies to mourn those lost, while the survivors struggled to pick up the pieces.

In Sri Lanka — where a deal with Tamil Tiger rebels to distribute tsunami aid in guerrilla-held areas was only signed this week — the scale of the tragedy continues to haunt survivors, many of whom have yet to

rebuild their homes and lives. Thailand's southern tourist beaches that once saw throngs of foreigners were eerily quiet today, with luggage still buried in the sand, and posters for missing victims hanging on palm trees as grim reminders of what had happened. In Indonesia, where people gathered a day earlier to commemorate the death of 1,31,000 people, signs of hope filled the grounds of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque in the heart of hardest-hit Banda Aceh, as wedding parties took place throughout the provincial capital. In Sri Lanka's rebel-controlled Vakara

hamlet near the eastern city of Batticaloa, volunteers collected tsunami debris for an exhibition to mark the anniversary. School bags, books, shoes, tea cups, even television parts scattered by the waves were taken to the area's government school.

Organisers said the exhibition would help survivors work through their suppressed pain.

In some areas, an uncertain future and day-to-day problems took priority over commemorations. About 268 people living in an abandoned complex near Batticaloa were ordered to leave so a medical college could be built there.

27 JUN 2005

THE STATESMAN

26 JUN 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Govt to give more teeth to Wildlife Act

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI | JUNE 25

AFTER Prime Minister Manmohan Singh grilled the Ministry of Environment and For-

est officials on action taken since the CBI submitted its Sariska report in March this year, the Government today decided to act on the CBI proposal for reviewing the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, to strengthen its provisions against poaching.

The suggestions are likely to be forwarded to the five-member Tiger Task Force and be part of its report due next month.

Meanwhile, CBI Director U.S. Misra told an agency that "the Government has decided to set up a dedicated, investigative

task force — with members from the forest department, CBI and other agencies — to ensure conservation of tigers and other wildlife". While top environment ministry officials claimed they were not aware of any such move, sources attributed the confusion to a possible nomenclature problem as the proposal for the National Wildlife Crime Bureau — which will also include members from the CBI on deputation — has reached its final stage and is now with the Finance Ministry.

"The Prime Minister was very positive to our suggestions. Now it all depends on the ministry concerned how soon these changes can be brought about. However, the ministry officials didn't have much to list when



PM prods ministry into acting on CBI Sariska report

the PM asked them about what action had been taken so far," Deputy Inspector General B K Sharma, who led the CBI's Special Investigation Team in

Sariska, told *The Indian Express*. "We made a presentation which explained all the measures taken in Sariska and elsewhere, including monsoon patrolling and security protocol. We are satisfied with our efforts and open to any idea that helps the cause of conservation," Project Tiger Director Dr Rajesh Gopal told *The Indian Express*.

Apart from discussing ways to check poaching, the CBI in its 90-minute presentation at the PMO this morning confirmed *The Indian Express* March 16 report on at least 10 cases of tiger poaching in Sariska. Among the recommendations made by it to amend the Wildlife Act are:

■ Provision for filing direct chargesheet instead of mere complaints to make the prosecu-

tion process faster. ■ Provision for denying suspension or remittance of sentence on the basis of appeals moved. As under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, one convicted under Wildlife Act must stay behind the bars till one's appeal is heard and not get out on bail immediately.

■ Provision for calibration of punishment — one caught with 20 skins shouldn't be treated at par with one held with one skin. ■ Setting up of specific wildlife courts in different cities to do away with pendency of cases.

Leniency towards the bail applications moved by wildlife criminals has been a major problem faced by the investigative agencies. The latest to join the long list of absconders is Jassu

— a resident of Samalkha in Haryana and a supplier to notorious wildlife trader Sansar Chand — who recently managed to get out on parole from a Jaipur jail. According to information given to the authorities by Jeevan, one of the prime accused in the Sariska case, tiger and leopard skins were supplied to Jassu who passed them on to Sansar Chand's gang in Delhi. Jeevan was arrested in January 2005. He was given bail and is now absconding.

Commenting on the CBI's presentation, Belinda Wright, Executive Director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India, said, "The CBI has hit the nail on the head. So many key wildlife criminals are absconding after they were given bail."

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Centre sets up task force on tigers

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Environment

“10 big cats killed in the past two years in Sariska”

Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Central Government has decided to set up a dedicated task force for the conservation of tigers and wildlife sanctuaries in the country. It will also recommend the strengthening of laws against poaching.

This was announced by U.S. Misra, Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) here on Saturday after a meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the issue of tiger poaching in the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan.

However, Environment and Forest Ministry officials denied knowledge of any such decision having been taken.

“It was just a review meeting and no new decisions were taken. A task force on tiger already exists and the National Wildlife Crime Bureau is awaiting Cabinet approval, there is no need for a third set up,” they said. The Prime Minister’s Office did not contradict Mr. Misra’s statement.

• **Strengthening of laws against poaching suggested**

• **Members to be drawn from Forest department, CBI and other agencies**

• **Better training for police and forest guards stressed**

The dedicated task force would have members from the Forest Department, the CBI and other agencies for coordination. “There was a discussion on legal aspects of poaching cases and it was decided to review the law so that bail in such cases will not be easy,” Mr. Misra told reporters.

The Prime Minister in April last announced a special task force to review the management of tiger reserves in the country. Chaired by Sunita Narain, Director, Centre for Science and Environment, it is mandated to suggest measures to strengthen tiger conservation and improve

the methodology of tiger counting and forecasting.

The task force will submit its report in three months. Referring to the number of tigers poached in Sariska, Mr. Misra said there was evidence to show that 10 wild cats had been killed in the past two years.

“The Rajasthan police have also handed over four cases of poaching to the CBI which will be taken up in due course of time,” he said.

The CBI findings have emphasised the need to provide better weapons to forest guards and police officials in the tiger reserves to face poachers.

“The poachers are armed and hence it is necessary that the forest officials have better arms and ammunition,” Mr. Misra said. The CBI also stressed the need for better training of police and forest officials to counter poachers.

Pointing out that poaching increased during the monsoon, the CBI report recommends increased patrolling in the tiger reserves in the coming months.

26 JUN 2005

Pact on tsunami relief disbursal

Handwritten note: Sri Lanka 12/5/05

Sri Lanka will soon achieve a negotiated durable peace ensuring the rights of all communities: Chandrika

+ V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: An administrative mechanism for reconstructing Sri Lanka's tsunami-devastated coastline came into effect on Friday with Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) signing a Memorandum of Understanding for establishing a Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS).

the Tsunami Relief Council, aims at ensuring equitable distribution of international assistance for the reconstruction of the tsunami-devastated coastline. The MoU will be in force for a year, with an option to extend it for "an additional period or periods" by consensus between Colombo and the Tigers.

Representatives of the Government and the LTTE serially signed the MoU in Colombo and Kilinochchi, after the Janatha

Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) disrupted Parliament on Friday morning protesting against the move.

The eight-page MoU was signed by the Sri Lankan Secretary in the Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation, M.S. Jayasinghe, in Colombo minutes after protesting JVP MPs stalled a scheduled adjournment motion on the issue. As the JVP MPs invaded the well of the 225-member House and

raised slogans against the proposed move, Parliament was adjourned until July 5 without a debate on the issue.

The Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, described the P-TOMS as a "simple administrative arrangement to provide humanitarian relief" to the tsunami-affected.

Expressing confidence that Sri Lanka "will soon achieve a negotiated durable peace which will ensure the rights of all com-

munities," Ms. Kumaratunga appealed "to all concerned to put an end to divisive and confrontational politics."

Friday's signing of the P-TOMS marks the culmination of a heated domestic political debate on the need for Colombo to give a key role to the LTTE in post-tsunami reconstruction.

Editorial on Page 10

Lanka signs tsunami aid deal

SIMON GARDNER
& AJITH JAYASINGHE
COLOMBO, JUNE 24

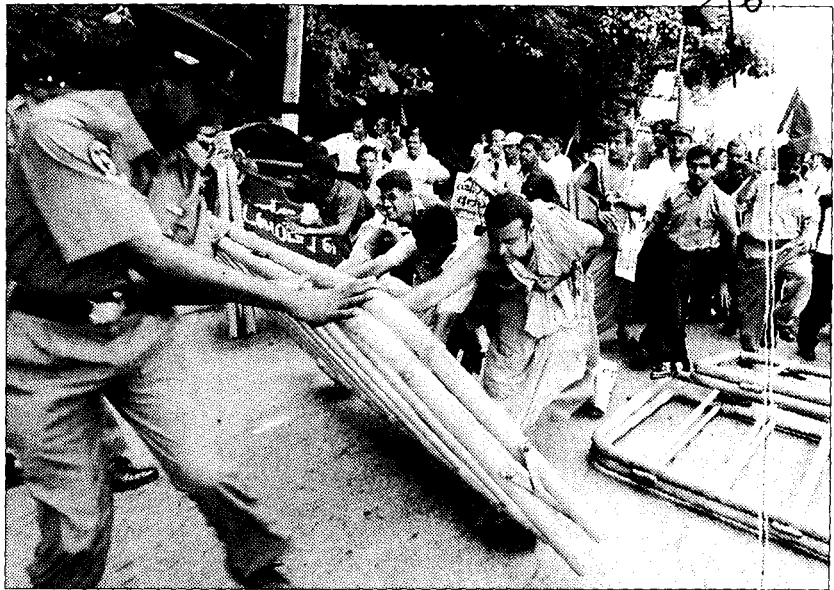
THE Sri Lankan government signed a long-awaited pact to share \$3.0 billion worth of tsunami aid with the Tamil Tigers on Friday, a senior government official said. The rebels were set to sign later in the day.

The long-awaited aid mechanism—under which committees comprising rebels, government officials and Muslims can recommend, prioritise and monitor projects—has been held up for months because of political bickering that has split the ruling coalition.

But, the rebels say, the pact could help jump start stalled talks aimed at converting a three-year ceasefire into permanent peace after two decades of war.

Senior government aides said Ministry of Rehabilitation Secretary M S Jayasinghe, a second tier official, was chosen to sign the pact on the government's behalf to play down the political importance of the divisive signing.

S. Puleedevan, who heads the LTTE's Peace Secretariat, said over the phone from the rebels' northern stronghold of



Buddhist monks and protesters break through a police barricade during a protest in Colombo on Friday. Reuters

Kilinochchi, that he would sign the pact later on Friday.

Parliament was forced to suspend a planned symbolic debate over the pact because of protests by hardline Marxists and politically pivotal Buddhist monks—both groups rabidly opposed to a deal that could legitimise the Tigers whom they

view as terrorists.

The Marxist People's Liberation Party (JVP) quit the ruling coalition last week over the aid-share proposal, reducing the government to a hamstrung minority in Parliament. Analysts say Sri Lanka could face a general election in months.

—Reuters

24 JUN 2005

Climate change: fiddling as planet burns

There is nothing left to debate about climate change; it is happening and each of us must act

Environment
FD-17

29/6

Henry Porter

LONDON: The great lie in the climate debate is that there is still a debate worth having. Opponents of change insist that the human factors in global warming are not proven and that we must wait until we have hard evidence before taking drastic action, which is as about as silly as saying there are two equally valid views on the issue of whether paedophilia damages children.

What is so destructive about this stance is that it claims equal weight and equal airtime. The 'balance' in newspaper reports, especially in the United States, is, in fact, a bias against the truth and weakens the case for immediate action against emissions of CO2. And while we hum and

hew, trying to persuade reluctant sceptics, the permafrost of the Arctic melts, sea levels inch up and the pH levels of oceans gradually drop because of the carbon that is absorbed from the atmosphere.

The following quote comes from an article in the *London Daily Telegraph* editorial pages last month (MAY). It captures perfectly the knuckle-headed entrenchment of the last century: "Climate change is an important, perhaps vital, debate, but it remains just that. Warning of disaster has become a global industry, and the livelihoods of thousands of scientists depend on our being sufficiently spooked to keep funding their research. The worry is that many of these

researchers have stopped being scientists and become campaigners instead." The author pretends to even-handedness, but his real message is that climate change is a scam to keep scientists in work.

Yet it is not scientists who are distorting the evidence, but the U.S. oil lobby and a cooperative White House. Last week, Philip Cooney, a White House staffer, was exposed by the *New York Times* for revising reports on global warming so that they cast doubt on the link between greenhouse gases and rising temperatures. Mr. Cooney, who has no scientific training whatsoever, resigned and took a job with Exxon Mobil, which is, incidentally, the company that produces twice

the CO2 emissions of Norway and is currently facing a consumer boycott in Europe. Mr. Cooney no doubt contributed to the White House's successful efforts to sandbag Tony Blair's plan of action to tackle climate change at the G8 summit next month. You have to hand it to the U.K. Prime Minister that he accepts the advice of his scientific advisers and has done all he can in Britain's presidency of the G8 to focus world leaders' attention on the problem.

But his chum Mr. Bush remains a delinquent simpleton in such matters. In the second draft of the G8 communiqué, the phrase "our world is warming" has been placed in square brackets, which means that the

statement is disputed by the U.S. and is likely to be excluded from the final document. American officials also pressed negotiators to delete sections which tie global warming to human activity and emphasise the risk to economies.

Cynical prevarication

James Connaughton who heads the U.S. organisation which, without a trace of irony, is called the Council on Environmental Quality, sought to reassure journalists with this statement: "It's very important to view [the deletions] in context, which overall is one of strong consensus about a shared commitment to practical action." How is the likely

deletion of "we know that the

increase [of the earth's temperature] is due in large part to human activity" a commitment to practical action?

U.S. policy seems to be simply one of cynical prevarication at the very least. Mr. Bush and the oil companies are hopelessly behind the times. Jeffrey Immelt, head of General Electric, the largest company in America, gave a far-sighted speech to the George Washington Business School last month and, though he did not attack Mr. Bush's policy, he made a very strong case for mandatory controls on carbon dioxide emissions. Mr. Immelt is not the kind of guy to follow some whimsical scientific fad. —

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Bush cold-shoulders global warming plea

Oslo, June 23 (Reuters): Unconvinced that the world is warming, President George W. Bush looks set to shun pleas by his main industrial allies to step up a fight against climate change at a Group of Eight summit next month.

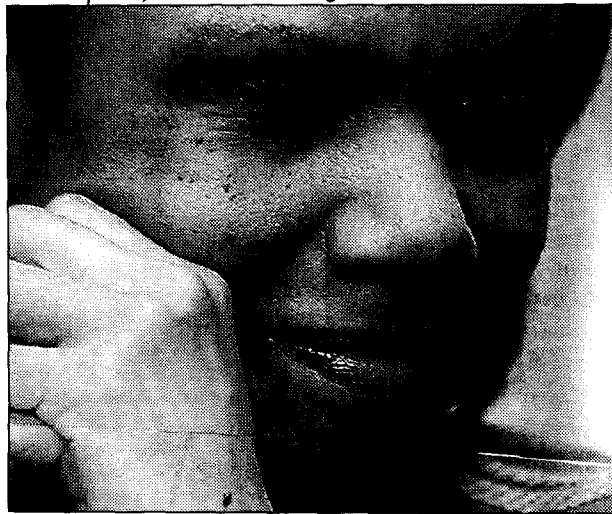
The July 6-8 talks will test how far other G8 nations, and big developing countries whose leaders will also attend, are willing to stick to UN schemes to curb emissions of heat-trapping gases without the US, the top polluter.

"The choice at the summit is a weak agreement or no agreement at all," said Elliot Diring, a director of the Washington-based Pew Center, an environmental think-tank.

"There is no indication that the Bush administration is willing to move in any significant way," he said of the Scotland summit, where climate change and aid to Africa are top themes.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the host, says that greenhouse gases from human activities may cause catastrophic floods, heat waves and storms that could drive many species to extinction and push up sea levels by a metre by 2100.

He calls climate change



US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice at the G8 foreign ministers' meeting in London. (Reuters)

"probably, long-term the single most important issue we face as a global community" — eclipsing threats like poverty, AIDS or terrorism.

But a leaked draft of a final statement for the summit underscores a gulf between Bush and Blair about the extent of the problem. It includes no firm targets, timetables or cash.

In a June 14 draft, the sentences: "Our world is warming" and "We know that the increase is due in large part to

human activity" are in brackets, indicating US disagreement.

Many scientists are aghast — the science academies of all G8 nations as well as of China, India and Brazil said this month that burning of fossil fuels in power plants, cars and factories seemed the main cause of recent warming.

"I think the consensus is very, very strong and very compelling that we are on a warming trend," said Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of a

panel of more than 2,000 scientists that advises the UN on climate policy.

"I do not despair," he added, pointing to measures by US states and companies to cut emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, and EU markets where industries trade carbon dioxide allowances as part of a long-term scheme to cut emissions.

Environmentalists hail Blair's drive against climate change, even though it always seemed wishful thinking that Washington might repay Blair's support for the 2003 war in Iraq by joining other G8 countries in capping greenhouse gas emissions.

"We think it's very important that (Blair) stands up to President Bush just as he did to other leaders in the EU budget debate," said Jennifer Morgan, climate expert at the WWF conservation group.

Blair is isolated in an EU row about the bloc's finances.

Morgan said that Blair should ignore Bush and work with China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, whose leaders will also attend.

G8 nations Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Canada and Russia have all signed up for the UN's Kyoto protocol.

21/02

Tsunami leaves a world of ghosts'

Sumatra
HD-11

The December 26 disaster left half a million people in Sumatra without identity cards or land.

John Aglionby

BEFORE THE December 26, 2004 tsunami I had never met anyone who had suffered so much that they had effectively lost their identity. In regular trips to the devastated regions in the last six months I have met thousands of such "ghosts"; once proud people reduced to bedraggled, grieving bodies dressed in donated clothes and kept alive by the world's largesse.

It is only when one considers what it takes to rebuild someone's identity that one gets a sense of the size of the reconstruction task in Aceh and North Sumatra, the Indonesian provinces that bore the brunt of the December 26 earthquake and tsunami.

First, you need to find two persons you are not related to who can vouch for you. Then you need to see the village or neighbourhood chief. Then you need to take his letter to the sub-district chief. Only then do you get an identity card. Meanwhile, you start discussing with your neighbours who owns what land. You all go to the village chief and have letters drawn up confirming what has been agreed. Then the village gets its land ownership "map" approved by the sub-district chief. You all go to the land agency and get your title deeds. Then you rebuild your house, return to your livelihood and — hey presto! — you have your identity back. Simple.

Multiply that process by half a million — not forgetting all the government offices lost, the devastated infrastructure, the fact there is a secessionist war going on and the psychological trauma affecting everyone — and you get an idea of why the head of the Indonesian Government's new reconstruction agency demanded a four-year mandate.

And that is just the theory. Once you hit the ground and start getting into fine detail, the reality of what is required becomes apparent.

Take, for example, the task of getting an identity card. In many villages surviving neighbours were scattered across distances of dozens of miles. Many village and sub-district chiefs also died. "There are just so many priorities, it is hard to know where to begin," one United Nations worker told me.

Securing a land title is even more

complex. Before the tsunami most Acehnese had no idea what a title deed was, let alone possessed one.

So this has been less a document replacement exercise, more an educational process. And for the officials it has been a case of climbing up a mountain of applications in the most trying circumstances imaginable. That assumes the land still exists.

For many coastal communities, the waves washed away their land. Many people made their living from the sea, but the new coast belongs to someone else. So where should the former community be relocated?

It is not only the land registry officials who are struggling. Everyone is in the same boat.

Everyone wants their house rebuilt, everyone wants a job, everyone wants a school for their children, everyone wants a health clinic, everyone wants a plough to prepare their fields for the August rice-planting season. But it just is not going to happen.

Amid the mind-boggling statistics and army of so-called logistical experts, it is easy to forget this has been a human tragedy. An Oxfam project coordinator in Greater Aceh district told me that, in many of the villages he is responsible for, only 10-15 per cent of the community was showing real initiative and a desire to rebuild their lives. While some of the rest are undoubtedly lazy, expecting the aid to fall into their laps, many are still too traumatised to act.

In such circumstances reconstruction cannot be rushed, argues Jon Lindborg, of USAID, the United States Government's development agency. "Until they're ready to rebuild their own communities, you can't do it for them," he said. While undoubtedly true, one also cannot just sit back and wait — which, to an extent, the Indonesian Government has been guilty of doing.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has exhibited a commendable sense of urgency, but the same cannot be said of those around him. At least six weeks were wasted while the planners wrote their 12-volume blueprint and a reconstruction and rehabilitation agency was established.

— ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

2 JUN 2005

2 1 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

Pataudi gets bail in poaching case ^{2/6}

Switzerland
11-1

Jhajjar (Haryana): Former Indian cricket captain Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, who spent two days in police custody after evading arrest for a fortnight for allegedly poaching wild animals, including a black buck, was on Monday ordered to be released on bail by a local court.

Amidst tight security and in jam-packed court-room, Pataudi was produced before chief judicial magistrate Sudhir Jiwan, who granted him bail on the condition of furnishing a personal bond of Rs 50,000 and a surety of like amount. Rejecting the prosecution argument for rejection of his bail plea, the court observed "If presumption of guilt is held against him at this stage, it would tantamount to crucifying the accused (Pataudi), hanging him first and trying afterwards."

Prosecution had opposed Pataudi's bail contending that the erstwhile nawab was absconding and did not appear before the police and surfaced and surrendered only when Punjab and Haryana high court rejected his anticipatory bail plea. However, Pataudi's counsel Bhushan Arya refuted the prosecution's allegations and submit-



ted that his client was trying to avail of rightful legal remedies and once the high court rejected his anticipatory bail he immediately surrendered before the court.

Pointing out the lacunae in the remand application produced by the prosecution, Pataudi's counsel said since there was no mention of his requirement for arrest of other co-accused, there was no need for sending his client to judicial custody as sought.

The counsel said Pataudi was 65 years and keeping in view his status there was no chance of his fleeing the jurisdiction of the court as he himself had surrendered. PTI

No let-up in heat wave, toll touches 183

Monsoon advances to Maharashtra, heavy rain predicted for North-East

30-11-5
110-15
20/6

BHUBANESHWAR: The death toll from a heat wave smothering much of the country touched 183 on Sunday, as the weather office reported that the monsoon is moving slowly toward the parched regions.

At least 39 and 37 people have died from the heat in the sizzling plains of northern Uttar Pradesh and the eastern State of West Bengal while another 11 people died in western Maharashtra and southern Andhra Pradesh. Seventy-five people have died in Orissa. With temperatures touching 51.1 C (123.9 F), West Bengal's Purulia district on Sunday was the hottest zone and hundreds of people were reported sick.

The weather office confirmed "a severe heat wave condition" in many parts of Orissa, neighbouring Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. It said the rains had "further advanced" from southern India to reach the central and eastern States as well as parts of Maharashtra at the weekend. The office also predicted heavy rain for Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland.

—AFP



AMID PARCHED LAND: Women returning home after collecting water at Jhajjar in Haryana. The northern and eastern parts of the country are reeling under heat wave conditions. — PHOTO: PTI

Indus water sharing: issues and concerns

M.S. Menon

INDIA'S HYDRO projects in Jammu and Kashmir are under threat. Citing gross violations of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) Pakistan is taking every opportunity to attack these projects to build up international opinion against India. Interestingly, the same treaty is depriving India of its legitimate share of Indus waters needed to meet the increasing demands of the co-basin States of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Our neighbour has already been able to stall the construction of the Wular Barrage project in Jammu and Kashmir. It has been successful in getting the World Bank's approval for appointing a neutral expert and thereby delaying our Baglihar project under construction. Now it is mounting attacks on the Kishanganga project being implemented in the State misquoting the provisions in the IWT.

The development of water resources in the Indus basin is governed by the provisions of the Indus Water Treaty signed in 1960 by India and Pakistan as a sequel to the partition of the undivided India in 1947 and the consequent division of the Indus basin between the two countries resulting in a dispute on sharing of the water resources. As per the treaty, the six rivers contributing to the Indus system were equally divided whereby three eastern rivers, the Sutlej, Beas and Ravi were allotted to India and three western rivers, the Indus, Chenab and Jhelum to Pakistan.

Since then the treaty brokered by the World Bank is being extolled as a model for international agreements on equitable water sharing and optimum utilisation of the water resources of common rivers. An impression has also been cre-

ated internationally that due to the inbuilt resilience, the treaty has survived many wars between the countries and is still working well.

An evaluation of the treaty provisions shows that equitable allocation of Indus waters was not intended by the vested interests and optimum utilisation was never the aim, as the underlying objective was only to perpetuate the dispute. The treaty outlived the tempests of history only because India was more accommodative to the demands of Pakistan.

THERE ARE MANY UNREASONABLE PROVISIONS IN THE INDUS WATERS TREATY

Any analysis of the principles of water sharing of international rivers then followed would indicate that the sharing is never based on the number of rivers in a basin but on the quantum of water carried by them. Further, while dividing the rivers equally, the treaty considered only six rivers, dropping a seventh river, the Kabul river, from the treaty, so as to create a false impression of apparently equal share distribution.

The proposals were certainly biased in favour of Pakistan since India got only about 20 per cent of the Indus flows while Pakistan got 80 per cent, even though the quantum of water contributed to the Indus basin is predominantly from India. The factors creating legal and equity rights in water

sharing as per international practices such as drainage areas, lengths of the arms or riverbeds of the rivers, dependent population, culturable areas, etc., on analysis, indicate that in this distribution, India should have got more than 40 per cent of the total waters of the Indus basin.

Accommodating spirit

There are many such unreasonable provisions in the treaty to which India had agreed in the interest of peaceful neighbourly relations and early settlement of disputes with Pakistan. But the accommodating spirit with which India had been approaching Pakistan to utilise our share of Indus waters as per treaty provisions has been considered a weakness by Pakistan emboldening it to make more demands to delay our projects.

Thus, even after four decades of the signing of the treaty, India has been able to develop only less than 15 per cent of the hydropower potential till now due to Pakistan's objections to our projects. Using the ambiguity in the treaty clauses and ignoring sound engineering practices, our neighbour is using it as a handle to scuttle India's projects in the J&K part of the Indus basin.

In view of these developments, time has come for a fresh thinking on the Indus Waters Treaty to take into account the apparent inequity in water allocation, the ambiguity in its clauses, etc. Though there is no exit option in the treaty, there is an option for review. Hence India should now take the lead to initiate discussions with the World Bank for a review of the treaty. In the meantime as there is no provision in the treaty to stop construction of the projects pending resolution of Pakistan's objections, immediate action is needed to implement them.

Baglihar: no violation of treaty, says Dasmunsi

HD-8
19/6
Srinivasan

Submits status report to Manmohan after visit to site

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: Union Water Resources Minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi on Saturday assured Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that there was no violation of the Indus Waters Treaty in the design of the 450 MW Baglihar hydroelectric project under construction in Jammu and Kashmir and that the project would be completed as per schedule.

Mr. Dasmunsi confirmed to *The Hindu* that he submitted his report on the status of the project to the Prime Minister after visiting the project site in Doda district on Friday. He undertook the trip to acquaint himself with the status of the project in the wake of the adjudication by a neutral expert appointed by the World Bank to resolve the differences between India and Pakis-

- Project will be completed on schedule
- India well placed to defend its case
- Neutral expert's report by March 2006

tan on the design of the dam.

"The Baglihar project design fully conforms to the provisions of the treaty and India is well placed to defend its case before the neutral expert," the Minister said. In his report, Mr. Dasmunsi apprised the Prime Minister of the technical details of the project and said he was convinced that there was "no fault in the technical design of the project." There should be no anxiety on the part of Pakistan on sudden

discharge of waters downstream from the project causing floods, as up to 110 kilometres it was India's territory that would be affected, if at all.

After the meeting of India and Pakistan with the neutral expert on June 9 and 10, it was decided that a Pakistani team would visit the project site in July before submitting its report. India would then respond to Pakistan's concerns in its "counter report," after which the neutral expert, Raymond Lafitte, would visit the project in October.

India has already invested more than Rs. 2500 crores of the total Rs. 4000 crores and the project is said to be past the halfway mark. It is scheduled to be completed by 2006-07. The Minister said he expected the expert's report to come out by March 2006.

In its last round of bilateral

talks, Pakistan had wanted India to suspend work on the project till its concerns on downstream flooding, low-level sluice gates and the freeboard (height) of the dam were addressed. India did not agree to stop construction but offered to make a few alterations in the design of the project provided it did not impact on the safety of the dam or the quantum of power that is to be generated for the northern grid.

The World Bank brokered the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 between the two neighbours. Under the Treaty, the waters of Ravi, Beas and the Sutlej are assigned to India and the waters of Jhelum, Chenab and Indus are allotted to Pakistan. The treaty allocates India 33 million acre feet (MAF) as against 135 MAF allocated to Pakistan from the western rivers.

19 JUN 2005

THE HINDU



'TIGER' IN CUSTODY: The former Indian cricket captain, Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, being escorted by policemen after he surrendered in a Jhajjar court on Saturday. Mr. Pataudi and seven others are facing a poaching case for

Pataudi surrenders in court

Police taken by surprise; other accused still at large

Special Correspondent

CHANDIGARH: The former Indian cricket captain Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, reportedly "evading arrest" for the last fortnight in connection with a poaching case registered against him and seven others, surrendered before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Sudhir Jeevan, at Jhajjar in Haryana on Saturday.

The judge initially remanded him to two hours' police custody and later extended it to a day.

The 65-year-old Nawab of Pataudi and co-accused Shashi Singh had been denied anticipatory bail by Justice Rajive Bhalla of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on Friday.

According to information here, the Jhajjar police, who had launched a search to arrest Mr. Pataudi and six others after registering a case under the Wildlife Protection Act for allegedly killing a black buck and two rabbits on the night of June 3, were reportedly taken by surprise when

the Nawab accompanied by his lawyers reached the court around 12.30 p.m. on Saturday. (One of the accused, Madan Singh, was arrested and subsequently enlarged on bail. The other six accused are still at large.)

According to the Inspector-General of Rohtak Range, V.N. Rai, after preliminary proceedings, the Jhajjar police took Pataudi away for interrogation. He was again produced in court in the afternoon and the judge accepted the police plea to remand him to a day's custody.

Sources said senior Jhajjar Police officers, including the Superintendent of Police and the Deputy

Superintendent of Police, interrogated the famous Test cricketer, who is also the husband of Film Censor Board chairperson Sharmila Tagore.

The Haryana police had intercepted a Maruti Gypsy on the night of June 3 near a wildlife sanctuary in Jhajjar and

claimed to have recovered the carcass of a black buck, an endangered species, and two rabbits. However, the accused were allowed to go. It was only much later that the Jhajjar police recovered the Gypsy from the New Delhi residence of Mr. Pataudi.

The Jhajjar police had issued three summons asking the accused to appear before the Investigating Officer to join the probe but there was no response.

PTI reports from Jhajjar:

The Nawab of Pataudi will be questioned by both police and forest officials and taken to the site of the alleged incident. "Whatever points were left out during the investigation, the police will try to clear them up during his police remand. Pataudi will be taken to the place where the actual hunting took place," said Jhajjar Superintendent of Police Hanif Qureshi after Pataudi was sent to police

custody for questioning.

The scene of the alleged black buck hunting incident is about 7 km from Jhajjar.

Mr. Qureshi said a .22 bore gun, bought legally, was one of the weapons seized, whose licence has not yet been submitted to the police. "We will try to establish the ownership of the weapon by questioning Pataudi about whether he owned the gun," he said.

If no licence is recovered, then the Arms Act can also be applied in the case, he added.

He said Pataudi would be questioned by police and forest officials of DFO rank.

Describing Pataudi's surrender as a "major achievement" for the Jhajjar police, he said: "Our case was so strong, because of which the High Court did not give anticipatory bail and today the Jhajjar Court remanded him to one-day police custody."

"Pataudi is cooperating in the investigation," he said.

Smrithi
19/6

Game over, gentlemen

SNS & PTI

CHANDIGARH, June 17. — The anticipatory bail pleas of former Indian cricket captain Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi and a co-accused in the black buck hunting case was dismissed by Punjab and Haryana High court today. "Sorry gentlemen. Petitions dismissed. All the best," said Vacation judge Mr Justice Rajive Bhalla while pronouncing

www.thestatesman.net
e-mail: thestatesman@vsnl.com



the verdict.

Pataudi and Shashi Singh moved the court on Tuesday after Haryana Police had booked them under the Wildlife Act following the finding of the carcasses

of a black buck and two rabbits in their vehicle on 3 June near a wildlife sanctuary in Jhajjar. He added that "minor corrections were required" and details of the order would be made available shortly.

The order came after a hearing that had lasted for over four hours. Shashi Singh's bail application was earlier rejected by a lower court in Jhajjar, which had asked him to approach the Special Environment Court in Faridabad for relief.

Another report on page 4

18 JUN 2005

দক্ষিণবঙ্গে তাপপ্রবাহ, বর্ষা আসছে গুটিগুটি পায়ে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: আঘাট মাসের প্রথম দিনেই দু-দুটো খবর। একটা খারাপ। অন্যটা ভাল।

খারাপ খবর: বর্ষা দেরি করায় তাপপ্রবাহের কবলে পড়ল রাজার ১৬টি জেলা। বৃহস্পতিবারেই এই নিয়ে সতর্কবার্তা জারি করেছে আবহাওয়া দফতর। ব্যতিক্রম উত্তরবঙ্গের তিন জেলা কোচবিহার, দার্জিলিং ও জলপাইগুড়ি। পাহাড় বৃষ্টিও নেমোছে। তাপপ্রবাহে দক্ষিণবঙ্গের চার জেলায় গত দু'দিনে মৃত্যু হয়েছে ১৫ জনের। শুধু বর্ধমানই মারা গিয়েছেন ১০ জন।

ভাল খবর: টানা আট দিন এক জায়গায় দাঁড়িয়ে থাকার পরে বৃহস্পতিবার সে সরল। আর সরল বেশ ভাল ভাবেই। বৃহস্পতিবার দক্ষিণ-পশ্চিম মৌসুমি বায়ু এক ধাক্কায় পৌঁছে

গিয়েছে উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলে। উত্তরবঙ্গের দোরগোড়ায়, অসমেও ঢুকে পড়েছে তা। আর কয়েকটা দিনের অপেক্ষা।

কিন্তু অপেক্ষাটা আর কত দিনের? স্বাভাবিক নিয়মে অসম থেকে উত্তরবঙ্গে বর্ষা ঢুকতে সময় নেয় পাঁচ দিন। কিন্তু এখন ওই পাঁচটি দিনকেও দীর্ঘ সময় বলে মনে হচ্ছে। অপেক্ষা আর সইছে না। অবিলম্বে বৃষ্টি চায় পশ্চিমবঙ্গ। গরমে, আর্দ্রতায় প্রাণ যায় যায়। বাড়াবাড়ি, বিহারের মতো মারাত্মক তাপপ্রবাহের কবলে পড়েছে পুরুলিয়া।

বাইকুড়া, বীরভূম, বর্ধমান রীতিমতো পুড়েছে। পাল্লা দিয়ে বাড়াচ্ছে জলসঞ্চিত মাঠের ফসল জলে গিয়েছে। ওই সব জেলায় গরমে মৃতের সংখ্যা বাড়ছে লাক্ষিয়ে লাক্ষিয়ে। বর্ধমান, বাঁকুড়া, পুরুলিয়া, বীরভূম ও দুই মেদিনীপুরে

দুকে পড়ে বর্ষা। সেই দিক দিয়েও বর্ষা এগোচ্ছে। তবে গুটিগুটি পায়ে।

গত ১৫ দিন ধরে রোজই বর্ষা সম্পর্কে প্রতিকূল সংবাদ দিয়ে চলেছে আলিপুর আবহাওয়া দফতর। বৃহস্পতিবার ছিল ব্যতিক্রম। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের আবহাওয়া বিজ্ঞান মন্ত্রকের পূর্বাঞ্চলীয় ডেপুটি ডিরেক্টর জেনারেল কুমুমকুমার চক্রবর্তী বলেন, “মাটি থেকে সাত-আট কিলোমিটার উচুতে একটি ঘূর্ণবাতের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। তার প্রভাবে নিম্নচাপের সৃষ্টি হতে পারে। আমরা সে-দিকেই নজর রাখছি। ওই নিম্নচাপটি তৈরি হলে তা তাজাতাই বর্ষা টেনে আনবে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে। কয়েক দিন ধরে পরিমণ্ডলে যে-পশ্চিমী হাওয়া ছিল, তা-ও নেই। পরিস্থিতি ক্রমেই বর্ষার অনুকূল হয়ে উঠছে।”

Symposium
Symposium

দহনে সব চেয়ে বেশি সমস্যায় পড়েছে স্কুলপড়ুয়ারা। গরমের ছুটির পরে সরকারি, বেসরকারি স্কুল খুলতে শুরু করেছে। কিন্তু এই দুঃসহ গরমে স্কুলে যাতায়াত বা ক্লাস করা কঠিন হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। শিশুরা স্কুলে আসছে হয়ে পড়ছে। এই অবস্থায় বেশ কিছু স্কুল গরমের ছুটি বাড়িয়েছে। স্কুলশিক্ষা মন্ত্রী কাজি বিশ্বাস বলেন, “প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা পর্যদ, মধ্যশিক্ষা পর্যদ বা সংশ্লিষ্ট সবাইকেই বলছি, অস্বাভাবিক গরমে পড়ুয়াদের অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়ার আশঙ্কায় কেনও স্কুল যদি বাড়তি কদিন ছুটি দেয়, তাঁরা যেন আপত্তি না-করেন।” অসম পেরিয়ে মৌসুমি বায়ু উত্তরবঙ্গ হয়ে গাঙ্গের উপত্যকায় নামার আগে এই পরিস্থিতি থেকে মুক্তি নেই। যদি না ওড়িশা হয়ে দক্ষিণবঙ্গে আগে

India seeks early warning system for disasters soon

DOHA: India on Wednesday emphasised the need to develop a worldwide early warning system for all natural disasters, especially in the Indian Ocean region, in the wake of the recent tsunami disaster.

Addressing the Ministerial Conference of G-77 countries here, Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahmed said that an early warning system was urgently needed in the region.

Recent advancement in science and technology provided unparalleled access to combat age-old problems of poverty, ignorance and disease.

Access to both new and appropriate technologies need to be enhanced greatly among developing countries to mitigate such catastrophies. A much more intense degree of cooperation at the international level coupled with increased flow of resources to the developing countries was imperative for such warning systems to materialise, the Minister said.

India also supported the extension of more debt relief to HIPCs (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) and low-income countries

facing problems of inadequate resources even for financing MDGs (Millennium Development Goals).

Debt restructuring for low-income countries, in general, and the HIPCs, in particular, should look beyond debt write-offs by focusing on stepping up investment opportunities in these countries, Mr. Ahmed said.

Combating HIV/AIDS

Mr. Ahmed agreed on the need for the international community to urgently provide resources for an expanded and comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS, while recognising the imperative need for funding the combat against other deadly diseases as well.

The Minister concluded with the belief that the 2005 summit would provide nations with an opportunity to restore the primacy of the United Nations in dealing with the development agenda and that it should regain the role of providing policy guidance to other bodies dealing with development issues. — UNI

Heat wave kills 140

Orissa's Talcher Coal Belt Records All-Time High Of 49°C

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The monsoons are just about eluding the horizon, leaving life at the mercy of a blistering sun and hot, dry winds. So far about 140 people have died due to the heat wave sweeping most of central and south India.

Maximum deaths were reported from Orissa, wilting at present under 49 degrees Celsius.

While the government has confirmed 55 deaths, unofficially the number is being pegged at 243.

Among the worst-affected in Orissa is Titilagarh at 47.5 degree Celsius, and the coal belt of Talcher, which recorded an all-time high of 49 degrees on Sunday.

"The whole area is virtually burning," said district collector Arabinda Padhi. As many as 30 deaths have been reported from Uttar Pradesh, which according to the local meteorological department, is in the grip of the "most severe and longest heat wave" in the last decade.

According to Lucknow chief medical officer Dr J P Yadav, so far 780 cases of diarrhoea have been reported in the city with four deaths.

Four people have died and 169 taken ill due to gastroenteritis. Temperature in UP is hovering between 43-46 degrees, which is 4 to 5 degrees above normal.

In Chhattisgarh, local media reports put the number of hot weather casualties at 24, but the government



Will The Crack Widen?

has no count. Chhattisgarh relief commissioner R C Sinha, said the state secretariat had received no report from the collectors in the districts about heatstroke deaths.

In Jharkhand, more than 12 people have died of heat-related causes as temperatures have soared to 46 degrees. Weather experts are foxed over the recent changes in weather conditions.

While the average temperature in

June last year was 31 to 35 degrees Celsius, this year it has crossed the 41 degree mark.

This is the first time in the last 25 years that the temperature has remained consistent between 40 and 42 degree Celsius during this time of the year, said weather scientist A Wadood of Birsa Agricultural University here. Bihar is grappling with the hottest summer since 1941, according to state meteorology director T N Jha.

"The temperature has been hovering around 44-45 degrees Celsius since the last week of May," he said.

According to reports, three under-trials in the Aurangabad jail in Bihar died in the last two days due to extreme weather conditions. "An extended spell of oppressive summer heat" is how the weathermen in Hyderabad term the prevailing summer conditions, which have taken temperatures in parts of Andhra Pradesh up to 47 degrees.

About 15 people have died.

Places known for their cool climes are also reeling under an unprecedented hot summer. Dehra Dun, a summer escape for most, also witnessed its highest temperature in a decade on Saturday when the mercury touched 40.

Other heat-related deaths were reported in western Maharashtra and southern Andhra Pradesh states, where more than 1,400 people died due to severe heat conditions in 2003.

দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ পর্ষদের বিরুদ্ধে ক্ষোভ পরিবেশ সংগঠনগুলির প্রমাণ চৌধুরী

দূষণের জন্য জরিমানা বাবদ পাওয়া টাকায় ফুলে ফেঁপে উঠছে রাজ্য দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ পর্ষদের কোষাগার। অথচ তার অর্ধেক টাকাই খরচ হচ্ছে না পরিবেশ রক্ষার কাজে। রাজ্যের দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ পর্ষদের বিরুদ্ধে এমনই অভিযোগ তুলেছে বিভিন্ন পরিবেশ সংগঠন। রাজ্যের পরিবেশ রক্ষার ভার যাদের হাতে, সেই দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ পর্ষদের ভূমিকা যে ক্রমশই দুর্বল হয়ে পড়ছে সে কথাও জানাচ্ছে এই সংগঠনগুলি।

পরিবেশ-কর্মী সুভাষ দত্তের বক্তব্য, পর্ষদের খরচের হিসাব দেখে মনে হয় না, দূষণ রোধ বা নিয়ন্ত্রণে তারা যথেষ্ট টাকা খরচ করছে। স্পঞ্জ আয়রন ও অন্য যে সব কারখানাগুলি পরিবেশ দূষিত করছে, নষ্ট করছে জমির উর্বরতা, নামমাত্র জরিমানা দিয়েই ছাড় পেয়ে যাচ্ছে তারা। সুভাষবাবুর এই বক্তব্য অবশ্য মানতে নারাজ পর্ষদের চেয়ারম্যান সুদীপ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়।

তার বক্তব্য, “জরিমানার টাকা জমা দিতে বলা হয় স্থানীয় প্রশাসন বা স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংস্থার কাছে। তারাই ওই টাকা পরিবেশ রক্ষার কাজে খরচ করে। পরিবেশ নষ্ট করার ক্ষতিপূরণ হিসাবেই এই আর্থিক জরিমানা করা হয়। জরিমানা জমা না করা পর্যন্ত কারখানাগুলি বন্ধ রাখার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়। ফলে শিল্প সংস্থাগুলি একটু চাপে থাকে।”

পরিবেশ আন্দোলনের সঙ্গে যুক্ত সংগঠনগুলির অভিযোগের তালিকা অবশ্য লম্বা। উন্নয়নের নামে কলকাতায় শ'য়ে শ'য়ে গাছ কেটে ফেলা হচ্ছে। সুদীপবাবুর বক্তব্য, “পর্ষদ শুধুমাত্র গাছ কাটার অনুমতি দিয়ে থাকে।” একটা গাছ কাটলে পাঁচটা নতুন গাছ লাগাতে হয়। কিন্তু নতুন গাছ লাগানো হলেও রক্ষণাবেক্ষণের অভাবে তার বেশির ভাগই বাঁচে না। কলকাতা পুর এলাকায় ভূ-গর্ভস্থ জলের স্তর ৯ মিটার নিচে নেমে গেছে। পরিবেশ-কর্মীদের অভিযোগ, রাজ্য সরকার বা পুরসভাগুলি এই বিষয়ে কোনও ব্যবস্থা নেয়নি।

বৃষ্টির জল সংরক্ষণও বাধ্যতামূলক করা হয়নি বলে অভিযোগ। বৃষ্টির জল সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ পর্ষদের চেয়ারম্যানের বক্তব্য, রাজ্যে ৫০টি স্কুলে ‘রেন-ওয়াটার হারভেস্টিং’-এর কাজ শুরু করেছে পর্ষদ। তা ছাড়া কলকাতাকে কেন্দ্র করে ২০টি স্কুলেও একটি ঠাণ্ডা পানীয় প্রস্তুতকারক সংস্থা ওই কাজ করবে। কিন্তু কলকাতায় যেখানে রাস্তায় জল পড়ে নষ্ট হয় সেখানে বৃষ্টির জল সংরক্ষণ কতটা সাড়া পাবে, তা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন দেখা দিয়েছে।

রাজ্য সরকারি বা বেসরকারি গাড়ির দূষণ-মাত্রা পরীক্ষা করার ব্যবস্থা প্রায় নেই বললেই চলে। কলকাতাকে বাঁচাতে ‘রেড ক্যাটেগরি’ বা ‘স্পেশ্যাল রেড ক্যাটেগরি’র শিল্পগুলিকে সরিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে গ্রামাঞ্চলে। দার্জিলিং বা দীঘায় প্লাস্টিক ব্যবহার বন্ধের নির্দেশ দিয়েও তা কার্যকরী হয়নি। ট্যাংকার ট্যানারিগুলিকে এখনও বানতলায় সরানো যায়নি। সুন্দরবনে ইকো-ট্যুরিজমের নামে যা হচ্ছে তাতেও অনেক চিন্তার কারণ রয়ে যাচ্ছে। কলকাতা ও আশেপাশে পুকুর বোজানোও চলছে পুরোদমে। — এ সব নিয়েও পরিবেশ সংগঠনগুলির অভিযোগের তির পর্ষদের দিকেই।

12 JUN 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Police raid Pataudi houses

OUR CORRESPONDENT

June 10: Mansur Ali Khan 'Tiger' Pataudi's houses were raided today after he failed to present himself before Haryana police by the 5 pm deadline in the black buck poaching case.

Hours after the deadline expired, the former cricket captain's bungalow in the capital's upscale Vasant Vihar and his ancestral homes at Pataudi in Haryana and Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh were raided.

An FIR had been filed against Pataudi and seven others by Haryana police after carcasses of a black buck — an endangered animal — and two rabbits were found in their vehicle during a routine highway check at Jhajjar, 65 km from Delhi, last Friday.

The Vasant Vihar residence of another accused, Sashi Singh, was also searched, the Haryana police inspector heading the six-member team to Delhi, Swatantra Singh, said.

A servant at the Pataudi home could give no clue to his whereabouts, Singh added.

Search parties have also been sent to Bhopal, Hyderabad and Gurgaon.

Jhajjar district police chief Hanif Qureshi said the accused had been given "enough" time.

Although they were caught with the carcasses, the accused had been allowed to go after they assured the police that as "responsible citizens", they would cooperate in the investigations as and when required, he said.

"Even after extension of the deadline, no one has come. It is only their lawyer who is here," he said.

Pataudi's lawyer Shyam Sunder Goyal said it was "unlikely" the former captain would present himself now.

"He will move court for anticipatory bail. That is his right," he said. He might approach the environment court at Faridabad tomorrow, Goyal added. There were also reports that he could move Haryana High Court.

Shashi Singh had applied for anticipatory bail in the Jhajjar court on Thursday, but was told the application could be filed only in Faridabad.

One accused, Madan Singh, has been arrested.

Killing a black buck is punishable with a minimum prison term of three years, that can go up to seven.

The police had earlier this week recovered the blue Maruti Gypsy in which Pataudi was caught with the carcasses from his Delhi residence.

Protest against tsunami relief proposal

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan police fired tear gas shells and opened water cannons in Colombo on Friday to disperse a group of protesters, including some Buddhist monks, who were demanding that the President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, withdraw her plan to enter into an administrative agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Earlier in the day, the left-nationalist, hardline ruling ally, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) issued a June 15 ultimatum for the President to withdraw the proposal, failing which they would pull out of the Government.

According to police estimates, over 200 protesters, including several Buddhist monks, from the Jathika Hela Urumaya had gathered at the Chatham Street, close to the President's official residence, to protest against the proposed Post-Tsunami Oper-

ational Management Structure (P-TOMS). One of the monks had reportedly doused himself with kerosene threatening to commit suicide before the police dispersed the crowd.

The monks have been demanding withdrawal of the proposal on the ground that it shares administrative power with "terrorists."

A section of the JHU monks are on a relay fast protest, demanding the withdrawal of the proposal.

The situation returned to normality after police dispersed the protesters.

"We have not yet got the answer we expected," the monks said as they left.

Chandrika holds talks

Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga held talks with clergy leaders from three Buddhist sects who were flown down to Colombo by a helicopter from Kandy. Details are not known.



STAGING PROTEST: Two Buddhist monks lie on the road after police fired tear gas during a protest in Colombo on Friday. — PHOTO: AP

1 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

Make global warming history too

The G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland must deliver on climate change as well as on poverty.

Robin Cook

CLIMATE CHANGE is in danger of becoming the poor relation at the G8 summit. It has no pop icons throwing gala concerts or summoning up a fleet of small boats to transport protesters across the Channel.

By contrast, Make Poverty History is proving the most popular mass movement of the year. Edinburgh has been placed in a state of fear and alarm by Bob Geldof's summons to a million people to march on it. Margo MacDonald, a member of the Scottish Parliament, cut to the heart of the global poverty debate by demanding to know where they were all going to find a toilet, which spectacularly missed the point of a demonstration in support of decent drainage for the people of Africa who have none all year round.

It should be a comfort to anyone on the Left that collective protest is alive and well, and that many of the public are so moved by poverty that they want to march and be counted. But it is perplexing that there is not a similar uprising to demand action to avert a man-made environmental disaster that threatens extinction to many surviving life-forms.

It is all the more perplexing as climate change will visit on the poor of the world a level of destitution and hunger that will swamp any progress on debt secured at Gleneagles. Africa will suffer both more frequent droughts and more serious floods. The projected increase in global temperatures within the lifetime of the younger protesters at Live8 could increase crop failure in southern Africa by half. By the centenary in 2036 of Hemingway's *Snows of Kilimanjaro* there will be no snow left on its summit.

Political leaders mostly handle this awesome problem by accepting it exists and then failing to follow through the implications for public policy. This week, the leader of the U.K.'s Conservative Opposition, Michael Howard, wrote in the London-based *Guardian* newspaper that climate change is one of mankind's greatest challenges.

Barely a month ago during the British election campaign, he presented a Conservative manifesto that did not once mention climate change or propose a single measure to halt it.

It is true that carbon emissions went down in the last decade of Conservative rule in Britain, but that was entirely a result of their pogrom against the British coal industry. It is also the case that emissions in the United Kingdom have increased in the past three years, partly because the dearer price of gas has produced a switch back to electricity generation from coal, which now has to be imported as all the pits were closed.

The lesson here is that if we want to halt global warming, we cannot leave the volume



A WARNING?: In this picture released by Greenpeace, two U.S. explorers in the Arctic display a banner calling attention to the issue of global warming.

of carbon emissions to be the plaything of the free market.

Margaret Beckett, the Minister at the U.K. Department of the Environment, has shown a strong commitment to tackling the issue, but the key levers of delivery are not in her hands. The Department of the Environment has the targets, but the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) has the power stations, Transport has the cars, and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office has the domestic houses. This summer, Ms. Beckett will publish the results of her review to put the government back on track to meet its targets to reduce carbon emissions. The review needs to firmly establish climate change as big a priority in everyone else's department as it already is in hers.

It also needs to recognise the urgency of bringing climate change under control in the near future. There is something almost reassuring about targets for greenhouse gas emissions half a century from now. Not a single member of the present House of Commons will still be there in 2050, if indeed rising sea levels have not by then obliged the Britain's ish Parliament to relocate from the Thames flood plain. It is easy for us to nod agreeably to tough targets so far in the future.

The harsh reality is that we do not have 50 years to get climate change under control. The Government convened an international conference of scientists earlier this year which produced alarming evidence that we may have less time than we thought to stabilise climate change. If we do not cut carbon emissions over the next decade, then the process may become irreversible. The Amazon rainforest may collapse into savannah and remove one of the carbon sinks. The increased acidity of the oceans may reduce their capacity to absorb half the carbon in the atmosphere. Once past these tipping points, the world will be confronted with runaway global warming.

All of which should give added urgency to the debate on climate change at the G8 summit. But you would search in vain for any hint of urgency over climate change in President George W. Bush's responses at his press conference with Tony Blair. It is a tragedy that at this moment in history the world has to negotiate with an American administration that is saturated in U.S. oil interests. Vice-President Dick Cheney came straight from the chief executive's chair at Halliburton, an oil construction company, and Mr. George Bush's election war chest had funds from Texan oil firms.

The American people repeatedly prove themselves more progressive than the alliance at the top between their political leaders and corporate interests, and a dozen States have now adopted their own strategies to cut carbon emissions.

But the harsh arithmetic remains that the total cut in greenhouse gases under the Kyoto Protocol by the rest of the world is entirely undone by the equal increase in emissions by the U.S.

The test of success of the G8 summit on climate change is whether Mr. President Bush is compelled to sign up to conclusions that accept there is a pressing problem and that the U.S. must be part of the solution to it.

It is a tribute to Mr. Blair's confidence that against the resistance of Washington he persisted in making climate change one of the two top agenda items for his G8 presidency. He now needs to be able to show that the peoples of the G8 countries demand action if he is to get Mr. Bush to open his eyes to the urgency of the problem.

Any retired pop star out there willing to launch a march to save the planet before it is converted into a pressure cooker? —
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Sardar Sarovar dam faces further delay

THE QUESTION: Who'll bear the cost of rehabilitating 5,000 more families?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, JUNE 10

FOLLOWING a Supreme Court order that increased the number of people to be rehabilitated, the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) is likely to be delayed by another two years. The order has led to differences between Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh over who would bear the cost of rehabilitating more people.

On March 15, the Supreme Court ordered that all adult sons (over 18) of each project-affected family (PAF) would constitute an individual unit and entitled to land. This would mean resettling another 5,000 PAFs, mainly in Madhya Pradesh.

The opinion expressed by the attorney-general of India (AGI) that the cost would have to be borne by Gujarat caught officials in the Narendra Modi administration off-guard. They argued that Madhya Pradesh should share the cost.

Meanwhile, the dispute has delayed rehabilitation and resettlement of the SSP-affected. Until the issue is resolved, the Gujarat government cannot raise the dam height — In January, it had got permission to raise it from 110.6 metres to 121.4 metres.

Former chief secretary and chairman of the Sardar Sarovar

Narmada Nigam Limited (SSNNL), P.K. Lahiri, says the state has already spent Rs 400 crore on rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R). The Gujarat government paid for the initial R&R in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, as provided in the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award.



“Gujarat and MP have worked out a mechanism since then on how to fund rehabilitation and resettlement. But there seems to be some misinterpretation, and Gujarat has been asked to bear the burden of rehabilitating new families,” Lahiri said.

When Gujarat Chief Minister Modi met his Madhya Pradesh counterpart Babulal Gaur recently, he requested him to speed up the rehabilitation. “But there was no discussion of Gujarat bearing all the expenses,” Lahiri said.

Gaur told *The Indian Express*, “We have been talking to officials from Gujarat and continue to do so. I have discussed it with Union Wa-

ter Resources Minister Priyaranjan Das Munshi. It is an important national issue.”

There are other disagreements too. “The real dispute,” said Lahiri, “is about paying interest on the money Gujarat has put in for R&R in beneficiary states and the sharing the cost of the SSP. The state has to recover over Rs 1,200 crore from beneficiary states, mainly MP, as its contribution towards the project excluding the Narmada Canal. MP is saying it won't pay the interest.”

The dam now stands 110.64 metres high. In January, the Narmada Control Authority (NCA) environmental group cleared construction up to 121.92 metres. Gujarat has already settled its 4,600 PAFs at 121.92 metres, to the satisfaction of the Grievance Redressal Authority (GRA).

But before the authority could verify PAFs and clear further raising of the height came the Supreme Court order. Also, following a Narmada Bachao Andolan application, the Supreme Court had, on March 15 ruled that families affected by the SSP would be allotted land regardless of whether they were deemed temporarily or permanently affected.

To construct the dam to the full reservoir level of 138.68 metres, 20,000 more people will need to be displaced. The Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited (SSNNL) had expected the entire R&R programme to be over by June 2006. But the Supreme Court order will set it back by two years.

With inputs from ENS Bhopal

11 JUN 2005 INDIAN EXPRESS

Fighting toxic pollution

Unfunded, unsung and unloved they may be, but local groups fighting toxic waste have become strong national and international networks.

Paul Evans

Environment 10-13 9/16

MORE THAN 100 community-based groups campaigning against some of Europe's most powerful companies now span Britain. Their beef is with landfill sites, waste incinerators and concrete kilns in their immediate locality.

Some groups are made up of hundreds of people, others very few, but all depend on dedicated, passionate individuals prepared to sacrifice everything to protect their communities from toxic pollution.

Unfunded, largely unsung and deeply unloved by the companies they target, they form part of an international network of people who put themselves on the line.

David Levy is chairman of "The Air That We Breathe", a group based in Westbury, Wiltshire, southwest England. He has campaigned against a local cement kiln, and against all cement kilns burning hazardous waste, for the past decade. He is an expert in his subject, but campaigning has come at a cost.

"In 1995 I went to a public meeting when Blue Circle Cement [now Lafarge] applied to burn tyres as fuel instead of coal," says Mr. Levy. "I thought this was a sensible idea but had questions about whether the emissions were safe. The more I looked into it the more concerned I became about the impact of cement manufacture on the environment and health. I was asked to front the community group and take on the fight."

Mr. Levy gave up his job as deputy head-teacher to campaign full-time against the burning of hazardous wastes in cement kilns.

He has taken his case to the high court and the court of appeal and lost; he has funded projects out of his own pocket. "I have lived on £5,000 a year for the last eight years," he says.

Lafarge Cement U.K.'s managing director, Jean Francois Saughtin, says he respects groups such as "The Air That We Breathe".

"We are committed to open communication and are actively engaged in dialogue with community groups across the country. Clearly these discussions can be around strongly held views; we respect this and welcome the rigour of debate."

Disillusioned with the British legal system, the U.K.'s Environment Agency and what he sees as the government inability to control big business and protect the environment and public health, Mr. Levy is looking to Europe.

In April, "The Air That We Breathe", together with the French group *Pour La Terre* — which has pulled off a legal challenge against a Lafarge cement kiln —

organised a conference in Nice, attracting dozens of similar groups from across Europe.

Such groups are increasingly confident of successfully using European Union anti-pollution legislation.

Pauline Smout, a member of the Hafod Environmental Group, based in Wrexham in north Wales, was also at the conference. Ms. Smout began campaigning in 1988 against a landfill site 100 yards from her house in Ruabon, Clwyd. "It was a terrible life. The smell was so bad, people were sick in the street. Once planning permission was granted there was no protection and the authorities hadn't got the guts to do anything. That site was capped four months ago and now another huge landfill site is planned a quarter of a mile away with housing on two sides."

Despite having to represent the group herself for financial reasons, Ms. Smout and the Hafod Environmental Group is taking the Welsh assembly to court this month over the second landfill site. "Sheer bloody-mindedness keeps me going," she says, "but it's difficult to always be in the awkward squad."

Such court cases are technically complex and characterise the Kafkaesque world of legal machinations, scientific jargon, contested analysis and expert opinion inhabited by toxics campaigners. Being committed is only the first step to effective campaigning.

Ralph Ryder was a labourer working next to a waste incineration plant in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, northern England, until, he believes, it made him physically sick. Now he scrutinises epidemiology studies, chemical reports and runs the network, "Communities Against Toxics" (Cats).

"I lost my job through ill health in 1990 because of the waste incinerator and couldn't understand why workers and residents were being ignored by the authorities," says Mr. Ryder.

"We found dozens of communities suffering from the effects of waste incineration and landfill. Since 1990 Cats has helped 37 communities and we have 300 member groups. Waste is the inefficient face of industry. We are seeing the influence of American industry weaken European legislation, and the World Trade Organisation working like an unelected industrial quango, making international law. People don't want to know until it impacts on them directly."

Back in the U.K., these toxics campaigners do not think much of the country's Environment Agency either, branding it "toothless" in its regulatory function and claiming it fails to give community groups the vital support they need. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

09 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

Pataudi faces arrest over poaching

RAJESH Moudgil/SATVIR Sarwari
Jhajjar, June 6

AFTER THREE days of the poaching incident allegedly involving Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi and seven other men, this sleepy town remained mired in utter confusion with the police and wildlife authorities speaking different languages and rumour running wild that the former Indian cricketer's arrest was imminent.

First to arrive here on Monday were range IGP V.N. Rai and state chief wildlife warden K.L. Manhas. While the former stuck to the official line "the matter is still being looked into and there is absolutely no pressure to spare Pataudi," the latter stressed his office ought to have been involved



Manhas, on the other hand, fumed that none from the police had informed him about such a serious incident till Monday evening. Stressing that he was here on instructions from department commissioner Ramender Jakhu, he said he would ask the police officials to explain why his office had not been informed.

Naresh Kadiyan, the wildlife activist, called up to tell HT that he had enough evidence to prove the complicity of both wildlife and police officials in "illegal activities". "Everyone in Jhajjar knows how commonplace and frequent poaching has become in the area and Pataudi's role in it. I can prove that the police are trying to shield Pataudi."

The carcasses have been sent for the post-mortem and primary examination of the arms has been done. The matching of the bullets fired and those that hit the animals, however, had still not been done, he said. Asked when this would be done, Rai refused to give it a timeframe. When a reporter asked Qureshi what Madan, the sole accused arrested since the incident, had told the police, the SP merely said, "The matter is still being investigated."

Rai and Qureshi said a team had been sent to Delhi to detain Naresh Kadiyan, the animal welfare activist, who had run away to Delhi with the carcasses, afraid that the local police would manipulate the case to let Pataudi go scot-free.

BLACKBUCK FOUND DEAD

FIR against Pataudi, seven others

7/6
Environment
10-1

The police are awaiting the post-mortem and forensic experts' reports to establish whether the animals killed, particularly the black buck, are categorised under Schedule I of the Wildlife Act.

Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Taking serious note of the recovery of the carcasses of a blackbuck and two rabbits from a vehicle near Dadanpur village in Jhajjar district of Haryana on Friday night, the Union Environment and Forests Ministry has asked the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State to submit a report at the earliest.

The former Indian cricket captain



Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi and seven others have been named in the first information report registered under the Wildlife Act, 1972. One person, Sumit Singh, has been arrested. The police have seized a rifle, a gun and some live cartridges from the impounded Maruti

Gypsy. They are awaiting the post-mortem and forensic experts' reports to establish whether the animals killed, particularly the black buck, are categorised under Schedule I of the Act. The reports will also establish whether the seized weapons were used to kill the animals.

Talking to reporters at Jhajjar on Monday, Superintendent of Police Hanief Qureshi said if post-mortem proved that the carcasses were of endangered animals, all those named in the FIR would be arrested. If proved guilty, they could face imprisonment up to seven years.

Others named in the FIR are Shashi Singh, Dayal Singh, Shaheed Ahmed and Ghaisuddin, all from Delhi, Mohd. Ayub Khan of Gurgaon and Madan Singh and Balwan of Jhajjar district.

The police have registered another FIR against Naresh Kadiyan of People for Animal, an animal rights group run by the former Environment Minister, Maneka Gandhi. He reportedly exhumed a carcass (believed to be that of the black buck) and brought it to Delhi. A hunt has been launched to trace him and recover the remains of the animal.

U.S. to aid Sri Lankan tsunami relief

Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON: The United States has said that it is committed to assist the Government of Sri Lanka as it recovers from the deadly tsunami and has said that it is "comfortable with the progress" made by that country as it recovers from the tragedy of last year.

The American sentiments

were conveyed during a meeting between the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar.

Mr. Kadirgamar who met media representatives here said that his talks with Dr. Rice were not structured but that much of the conversation had to do with the tsunami, including the plans for the future and the Joint

Mechanism in completing the massive task on hand.

The Sri Lankan Minister also had discussions with other senior members of the administration including the Deputy National Security Advisor and the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia.

According to a press release by the embassy of Sri Lanka here Mr. Kadirgamar briefed Dr. Rice

on the efforts made to evolve a consensus on the operation of Joint Mechanism for the "specific purpose" of dealing with the immediate humanitarian situation on the ground.

At the moment, Mr. Kadirgamar maintained, the focus is on the tsunami and there is a clear understanding of this situation in the international community.

05 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

Nuke leak found in British plant

Press Trust of India
London, May 29

IN BRITAIN'S worst nuclear accident in 13 years, about 83,000 litres of highly radioactive liquid leaked unnoticed for up to nine months from a ruptured pipe in the controversial Thorp reprocessing plant at Sellafield, a media report said on Sunday.

The leak, detected last month, was the outcome of a catalogue of human and engineering errors which resulted in a pool of nuclear liquor, half the volume of an Olympic swimming pool, being accidentally discharged, the *Independent on Sunday* reported.

The magnitude of the incident throws the future of the troubled reprocessing plant into doubt this weekend as copies of an internal investigation circulate among senior ministers and officials.

The report said British Nuclear Group, the company that runs the plant, admitted on Saturday night that workers failed to respond to "indicators" warning a badly designed pipe had sprung a leak as long ago as last August. The pool of nuclear liquor, 83,000 litres, was eventually discovered on April 19.

The company has ordered a review to check for other potential leaks caused by metal fatigue and an urgent drive against staff "complacency". But ministers privately concede that Thorp, now owned by a quango, may never re-open as a result of the incident, classified as "serious" by the International Atomic Energy Authority.

In a statement released on Saturday, the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency (NDA), the quango that inherited Thorp on April 1, said it needed time to assess the report's findings before "discussing their implications" with the company and the government, adding that "safety is the NDA's absolute priority".

The nuclear clean-up agency is thought to be fighting a battle with Downing Street to close the plant for good in a move that would cost taxpayers billions of pounds, the report said.

The leak comes just as ministers and nuclear firms are preparing to seek public support for a new generation of nuclear power stations to help meet climate change targets. It explains why Prime Minister Tony Blair and Alan Johnson, the new secretary of state for trade, have been so reluctant to start making the nuclear case, the paper said.

The company has stressed the leak was contained and that the incident did not pose a threat to the public. It may yet face a criminal prosecution. A spokesman for the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate said: "I can confirm we will be seeking to find out what monitors were in place, whether they were working and, if so, why they were not acted on."

Four inspectors have been on the Cumbrian site since the incident happened. In addition to human error, they are concentrating on why engineers failed to modify pipes leading to moveable tanks. Metal fatigue in the pipework was the principal cause of the leak, the report said.

30 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

আন্দামান-বাস্তালোর একটু কাছাকাছি ২৬শেের ভূকম্পে

দেবদূত ঘোষ্ঠাকুর

আন্দামান থেকে বাস্তালোরের দূরত্ব কমে গেল অস্তত আড়াই মিটার। কয়েক সেক্টমিটার সরে গিয়েছে ভারতের মতো বিশাল দেশ। কাছাকাছি চলে এসেছে আন্দামান ও মূল ভারতীয় ভূখণ্ড। বদলে গিয়েছে মানচিত্রটাই।

২৬ ডিসেম্বর সুমাত্রা-আন্দামানে যে ভূমিকম্প হয়, যার জেরে সুনামি, তাতে মোট সাত্বে চার হাজার কিলোমিটারের একটা বৃত্তাকার এলাকা পূর্ব, পশ্চিম, উত্তর, দক্ষিণ— সব দিকেই সরে গিয়েছে। বিভিন্ন দেশের সঠিক ভৌগোলিক অবস্থান জানতে অয়োজন হয়েছে নতুন মানচিত্রের।

ভূমিকম্পের পরে জলে, স্থলে, পাহাড়ের চূড়ায় বসানো কয়েক হাজার গ্লোবাল পজিশনিং সিস্টেম (জি পি এস) প্রযুক্তির পাঠানো তথ্য বিশ্লেষণ করে ভূ-বিজ্ঞানীরা পৃথিবীর এই অবস্থানগত ধল ধরতে পেরেছেন।

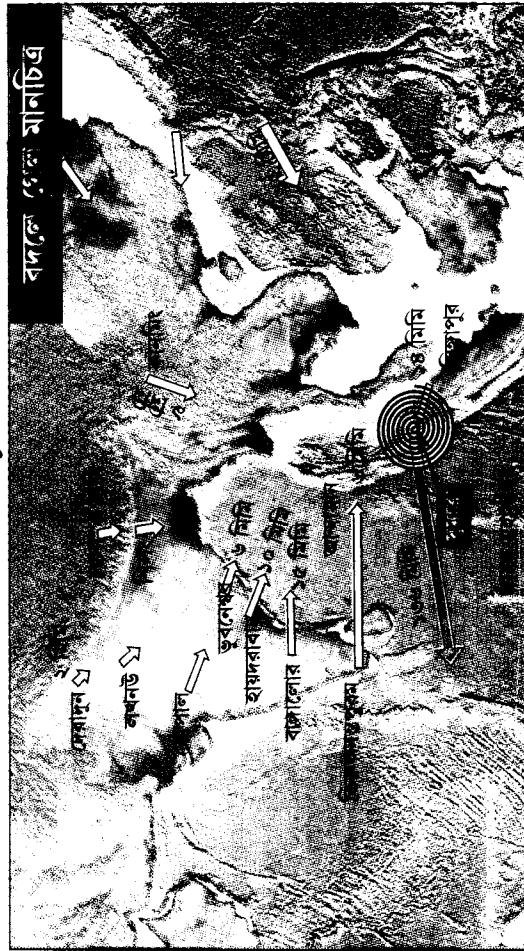
দেবাদুরের ওয়াদিয়া ইনস্টিটিউট অফ হিমালয়ান জিওলাজি, মার্কিন জিওলাজিক্যাল সার্ভে এবং

ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পৃথিবী ও মহাকাশ বিজ্ঞান বিভাগের তিন বিজ্ঞানীর গবেষণায় পৃথিবীর এই ভৌগোলিক অবস্থান পরিবর্তনের বিষয়টি ধরা পড়েছে। এ বিষয়ে 'সায়েন্স' পত্রিকায় সম্প্রতি প্রকাশিত হয়েছে তাঁদের গবেষণাপত্র। গবেষণার নেতৃত্ব দিয়েছেন এক বাঙালি বিজ্ঞানী—ওয়াদিয়া ইনস্টিটিউটের ভূ-পদার্থবিদ পরমেশ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়।

পরমেশবাবু জানান, "ভারতের যে সব জায়গায় জি পি এস বসানো রয়েছে, ২৬ ডিসেম্বরের ভূমিকম্পের পরে সেখান থেকে আমরা একের পর এক তথ্য সংগ্রহ করি। ইন্দোনেশিয়াকে ঘিরে যে সব দেশ রয়েছে, সেখানকার সব জি পি এস কেন্দ্রের পরিসংখ্যানও গবেষণার জন্য ব্যবহার করা।

অত্যাধুনিক প্রযুক্তির ফলে যে তথ্য আমরা পেয়েছিলাম, তা বিশ্লেষণ করে আমাদের বিশ্বয়ের অস্ত ছিল না।

কোনও ভূমিকম্পের ফলে বিভিন্ন ভূখণ্ডের ভৌগোলিক অবস্থানের কী পরিবর্তন হয়, তার পুঙ্খনুপুঙ্খ পরিমাপ সম্ভবত এই প্রথম সফল হল।"



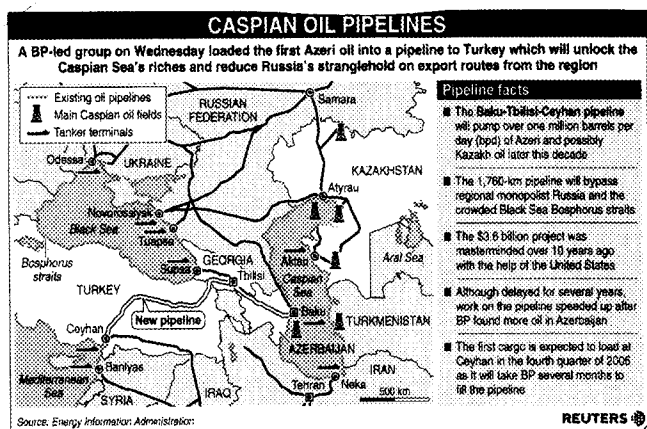
গবেষণাপত্রে তার চূলচেরা বিশ্লেষণ করা হয়েছে। জি পি এস থেকে পাওয়া তথ্যগুলি পর পর সাজিয়ে গবেষকেরা দেখেছেন, কম্পন সামান্য সময়ের জন্য অনুভূত হলেও, গোটা প্রক্রিয়াটা চলেছে দু'ঘণ্টা ধরে। ভূমিকম্পের ফলে তিরুঅনন্তপুরম পূর্ব দিকে ২৬ মিলিমিটার সরে গিয়েছে। বাস্তালোর ১৫ মিলিমিটার, হায়দরাবাদ ১০ মিলিমিটার সরে গেছে। ওই পূর্বাধিকেই পরমেশবাবু বলেন, প্রতি বছর গোটা ভারত উত্তর-পূর্ব দিকে গড়ে ৫৪ মিলিমিটারের মতো সরে যায়। এটা স্বাভাবিক। কিন্তু গত ২৬ ডিসেম্বর এক দিনে পুরো দক্ষিণ ভারত পূর্ব দিকে ১৫ থেকে ২০ মিলিমিটার সরে গিয়েছে। এটাই আমাদের অবাক করেছে। একই প্রক্রিয়া ঘটেছে ভূমিকম্পের কেন্দ্রের সাত্বে চার হাজার কিলোমিটার বেষ্টির মধ্যে থাকা ভূখণ্ডেও। এক দিকে চলে এসেছে মাটি। যার ফলে পৃথিবীর আকৃতিটাও পাল্টে যাবে বলে জানিয়েছেন পরমেশবাবু।

সুমাত্রার ওই ভূমিকম্পের জি পি এস বিশ্লেষণ মৈজ্ঞানিকদের নতুন

পথের সন্ধান দিয়েছে। পরমেশবাবুরা দেখেছেন, দু'টি গ্রেট সমুদ্রের নীচে পিছলে যাওয়ার পরে সমুদ্রতলের ৭০০ কিলোমিটার এলাকায় ফাটল ধরেছে প্রায় সঙ্গে সঙ্গে। কিন্তু পরবর্তী ৭০০ কিলোমিটারের ফাটল ধরেছে আন্তে আন্তে। দু'ঘণ্টা ধরে ফেটেছে সমুদ্রতল। ফাটল পৌঁছে গিয়েছে উত্তরে আন্দামান পর্যন্ত। পরবর্তী ৭০০ কিলোমিটারের ফাটল এত ধীরে ঘটেছে যে, তা বোঝাই যায়নি। কোনও কম্পনও অনুভূত হয়নি। মানুষ বুঝতেই পারেনি, কী হচ্ছে সমুদ্রের তলায়।

পরমেশবাবুর মন্তব্য, "এমনটা যে হতে পারে, আমাদের তা আগে জানা ছিল না। এটাও আমাদের একটা আশ্চর্য। ওই ভূমিকম্পে যতটা শক্তি নির্গত হয়েছে বলে আমরা প্রাথমিক ভাবে ভেবেছিলাম, হয়েছে তার দ্বিগুণ। সেই কারণেই ভূমির অবস্থানগত এতটা পরিবর্তন ঘটেছে।"

ভূখণ্ডের এই অবস্থানগত পরিবর্তন ভূস্তর বা পরিবেশের পরিবর্তন ঘটাবে কি না, তা নিয়ে গবেষণার সুযোগ করে দিল ভূবিজ্ঞানীদের ওই গবেষণাপত্রটি।



Pipeline opens new oil route to West

NICK Paton Walsh
 Moscow, May 26

ENVIRONMENT

A £2.2 BILLION pipeline that will deliver a million barrels of crude oil a day to the Mediterranean Sea, and is set to become a vital gateway for central Asian energy resources to the west, opened on Wednesday. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline will run for 1,100 miles from the Azerbaijani capital, through Georgia to the Turkish port, and through two of the most politically turbulent countries in the region.

Washington, uncomfortable at its reliance on oil from the Middle East, has long sought the BTC as a bridge for the massive energy resources of Kazakhstan, a country the size of western Europe.

The pipeline has stoked controversy on several fronts.

Apart from the environmental hazards (it passes close to a national park in Georgia and traverses highly seismic landscape throughout its route), the pipeline has brought western powers into partnership with governments with suspect human rights records.

Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Ahmet Sezer of Turkey, Mikhail Saakashvili of Georgia and Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev attended the inauguration on Wednesday at the Sangachal terminal, 25 miles south of Baku.

They were joined by the US energy secretary, Samuel Bodman, and Lord Browne, head of British Petroleum, the largest

shareholder in the project, with a 30.1 per cent stake.

Aliyev opened the tap permitting the first oil into his country's section of the pipeline, named after his father, Heydar Aliyev, whom he succeeded after an election marred by violence and fraud allegations. His government has a 25 per cent stake in the project that he expects to help the economy grow by 18 per cent.

"Some doubted the feasibility of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project, while others tried to raise obstacles," Interfax quoted him as saying. "The union of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia and the United States ... made this a reality."

Oil from the pipeline is not expected at the Turkish port of Ceyhan until August 15, and will supply 1 per cent of global demand. Many analysts see greater potential for the BTC as a conduit for central Asian oil, principally from Kazakhstan. Mr Nazarbayev unveiled plans this week to link the western Kazakh oil port of Aktau to the BTC.

The Bush administration first recognised the pipeline's potential when an energy policy review spearheaded by Dick Cheney, said the Kashagan oilfield in Kazakhstan was capable of exporting 2.6m barrels a day if pipelines like the BTC were operational.

GNS

27 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Red alert in tiger reserves



The forest minister has ordered patrolling in all tiger reserves during monsoon when the big cats are most vulnerable. — AFP

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 26. — The environment and forests ministry has issued a red alert and directives for monsoon patrolling in all tiger reserves in a bid to prevent any tiger deaths during the season when the big cats are most vulnerable.

“There is need to learn from the Sariska experience but I would categorically say the problem noticed there is neither identical nor universal to all other tiger reserves,” the environment and forests minister, Mr A Raja, today said at the end of a meeting with field directors of tiger reserves and chief wildlife wardens from all the states.

While the new country level census figures would be available after February 2006, there was a statistically valid correlation between tiger sighting frequency and estimation done over the years in most of the reserves.

There were site-specific problems in various tiger

reserves, Mr Raja said. “The IUCN study in 23 reserves has shown specific deficiencies in each and every reserve. We are committed to address these based on specific proposals received from the state governments.”

The meeting was also attended by two members of the Forum of Parliament Members and three members of the Tiger Task Force, which was set up by the Prime Minister to look into the tiger crisis.

The minister said almost all the states have made a demand for a special package of financial support to meet the immediate and timely needs of the national parks and reserves. Since the problems were specific to each reserve, the modalities would be devised in consultation with the Planning Commission.

He said today's meeting had decided to codify the problems of each and every reserve and their vulnerability to be presented to the Prime Minister to decide on future actions and what redressal could be given to the states.

27 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

93-6 295

Tiger's trail

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The prime minister has spoken. But the tiger needs more than soundbites

BY personally visiting India's largest and most high-profile tiger sanctuary — Ranthambhore — Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wished to convey the message that the Centre was very serious about addressing the crisis currently affecting the Big Cat in this country. He is by no means the first prime minister to express such concern. It is said that Salim Ali, the famous ornithologist, had commended Indira Gandhi's efforts in this direction because he believed that if the person at the top is responsive, it energises the entire system.

It is perhaps a sign of the times, however, that even the undoubted reassurance of prime ministerial concern seems pitifully inadequate in the face of what can only be termed a wildlife catastrophe staring the nation in the face. When a country that is home to an estimated 40 per cent of the world's tigers wakes up one day to find one of its "tiger sanctuaries" bereft of all traces of the animal, it is evidence of a well-entrenched poaching mafia that has been operating without let or hindrance for years. What happens then when the prime minister and his cavalcade of eager

forest officers leave the park? It is the answer to this question that will determine the impact of the prime ministerial visit because soundbites quite obviously no longer suffice.

Nobody seriously denies that it is the poachers that have done the major damage but nobody seems to agree on how the crime needs to be addressed. Some argue that stricter surveillance of sanctuaries is the answer, others believe that unless people in the area have a stake in protecting the tigers, the animals will continue to disappear. The second approach appears the more logical one, but it should not preclude the government's efforts to prevent poaching by tracking down the gangs — which are better networked internationally than ever before — cracking down on them and shoring up forest management, both financially and in terms of infrastructure. The task force set up by the prime minister has identified the monsoons as a period when the tiger is the most vulnerable to the wiles of the poacher. It has asked for a red alert during the coming season. This is a timely call. Let us see how effective it actually proves to be.

25 MAY 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Action plan for tigers on the anvil

Ranjeet S. Jaiswal
in Ranthambhore

May 24. — "All is not well with tigers. How will our future generations judge us if we don't protect tigers?" This is what Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, concerned over the "missing tigers", told top wildlife officials, directors of national parks and sanctuaries at a meeting that continued for over two hours. He said a comprehensive action plan for wildlife protection would be charted out in two months after the task force on tigers submitted its report. Dr Singh, who arrived here yesterday on a "learning mission", didn't hesitate to admit that "things are not the way they should be".

Concern over the decreasing numbers of tigers was quite palpable during Dr Singh's interaction with reporters. "This is a challenge. We have a problem at hand. If we don't tackle it, it will cause irreversible damage to our future. We should understand that the tiger is



A file photograph of a tiger in Ranthambhore National Park.

the central part of our habitat," he said.

Dr Singh said wildlife conservation faced the twin challenges of forest park management and human interference. Park management needs to be improved through physical, financial, managerial and technical resources, he said. The main issues raised before him included the shortage of funds, vehicles, equipment, ageing staff, amenities and the workload on forest guards, poaching and wildlife crimes. Human pressure

on forests and the need to involve people in forest conservation was also discussed. "They (people living in and around the forest area) need to be more involved in the forest protection and the sharing of the income derived from the forests," Dr Singh said.

Meanwhile, the Rajasthan government has asked the Centre for a grant of Rs 228 crore for the development and maintenance of the existing wildlife parks and sanctuaries, adds PTI from Jaipur.

Early success

RANTHAMBHORE NATIONAL PARK, May 24. — The Prime Minister was "lucky" enough to spot a tigress early this morning for the first time in his life. Even though employees and officials of this world-famous tiger reserve had worked overnight to ensure that Dr Manmohan Singh sighted a tiger, he didn't have to spend much time to spot one.

In fact, he managed to spot a tigress within half-an-hour of reaching the park. After arriving in the park at 6 a.m., he spotted the "Lady of the Lake" at 6.30 a.m. near the Maalghati. "I was lucky to spot a tigress called Lady of the Lake. This is the first time I have seen a tigress in my life," a visibly happy Dr Singh told reporters later. He was accompanied by his wife, the Rajasthan chief minister and a state minister among others.

A forest official who accompanied Dr Singh during his nearly one-hour visit to the park said they had tracked tigers at two other points but the Prime Minister was unlucky to miss them. — SNS

Another report on Kolkata Plus III

Rajasthan govt to blame for Sariska: Tiger panel

Times News Network

New Delhi: Tiger task force chief Sunita Narain has blamed Rajasthan for repeatedly failing to address issues in the Sariska reserve, which, by all accounts, has lost all its tigers. She, however, said that greater centralisation is not the answer and there are no quick-fix solutions, adding that there is no point to a numbers game, since it cannot be absolutely accurate.

Poaching is a big threat but it would take much more than guns and guards to save tigers, said Narain, virtually rejecting a member's suggestion of deployment of armed

men in 10 reserves during the monsoon.

It's clear that differences exist between the strong-willed members of the task force. There are also sharp differences between 'anti-people' and 'pro-people' activists, one of the members said.

As a group, said Narain, the task force just wants states to be on alert, deciding their own strategies for the monsoon. The Centre has already asked states to report back on site-specific monsoon strategies and has promised help where needed. However, it is yet to receive any responses.

Drafting issues after a two-day consultation with wildlife activists, experts and scientists, Narain voiced doubts about the shape of the government's proposed National Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, aimed at taking on organised gangs of poachers.

"We have yet to review the proposal on the table. There is a clear urgency for it but it's important to get the model correct," said Narain, who has been told a 'lean and mean' force focusing on investigation of big cases

might be better than an unwieldy unit. Some had a problem with the word 'national' being used for the bureau.

"We hope there will be clarity, not confusion about who does what," said Narain, addressing a news conference along with two other members of the task force - Samar Singh and H S Panwar. For the second time task force member Valmik Thapar has skipped a news conference.

Most vexed, perhaps, is the issue of Centre-state relations. In Sariska, the state 'failed repeatedly' to address issues.

Yet, you cannot bypass state governments and expect to run vibrant reserves, said Narain. Exactly how the Centre can intervene effectively is not clear.

Tigers face many challenges - extensive and organised poaching networks, lack of professional law enforcement, abysmally low conviction rates and 'most importantly', the increasing hostility of local communities because of 'years of mismanagement and conservation policies that exclude people from protected areas'.

Chiru numbers up

Times News Network

New Delhi: China said that the number of Tibetan antelope chiru seems to be going up from the last count of just over 35,000. Chiru's fine wool is used to weave the prized shahtoosh shawl. On Thursday, India, Nepal and China concluded a three-day meet of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Tiger Enforcement Task Force. Shahtoosh shawls continue to be woven in J&K illegally.

No quick solution to tiger row

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 19. — There can be no quick fix solution to the problems facing tiger conservation though it needs considered response, the Tiger Task Force concluded at its second meeting that ended here today.

"For the first time we have a data base in terms of the number of seizures and tiger deaths," the task force chairperson, Ms Sunita Narain, said.

Extensive, highly organised international poaching networks, lack of professional law enforcement to break through international crime, abysmally low conviction rate for poaching offend-



ers and most importantly, increasing hostility of local communities were the main issues flagged by the five member task force.

The task force appears to have made some headway with an overall strategy being discussed as well as a methodology for a stratified

sampling. Pointing out that it was difficult for an accurate count of wild animals, the task force said one must get out of the numbers system. "Perhaps what one needs is a different kind of assessment," Ms Narain said. It was time to look at the state of the tiger habitat, an assessment based on observation and a cross checking in terms of actual numbers, she added.

The task force also felt the need for refinements in the strategy to be adopted, which would be discussed over the next month and a half. Ruling out any short term strategy, the task force has, however, taken steps to counter any poaching during the coming monsoon months, when tigers are most vulnerable.

20 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Local communities must protect tigers: task force

Kerala approach stands as a model for all tiger reserves where Project Tiger shows excellent results

Staff Correspondent
NEW DELHI: The Tiger task force has recommended involvement of the local communities in the protection of tigers. The exclusion of the communities in forest management and wildlife resources affects the intelligence gathering critical to preventing poaching, the task force said at the end of the second round of deliberations spread over two days.

Talking to reporters here on Thursday, Sunita Narain, tiger task force, cited the example of Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala where Project Tiger had shown excellent results, primarily due to the involvement of local communities. "The task force believes that Periyar approach should be adopted as a model for all other tiger reserves," she said.

It was pointed out that in spite of the organised investigations and professional law enforcement, sandalwood smuggler, Veerappan, had flourished in the forests for many years because of the support he received from the local communities who had been denied access to benefits of forests. This is the case in tiger conservation also, she said adding that exclusion of the communities in forest management and wildlife resources affects that gathering of information.

According to the task force, the recent Ministry of Environment and Forests ruling that all rights and concessions (traditional

rights to collect minor forest product) could not be enjoyed in protected areas" had increased the conflict enormously. Under this direction, roughly 3.5 to 4 million people living inside and along the fringes of protected areas had lost all sources of livelihood and revenue that had exacerbated destitution and in turn anger against the tiger.

Claiming that tiger conservation strategies had failed in setting up enforcement networks capable of breaking organised wildlife crime to creating conditions, Ms Narain suggested a review of tiger conservation concept in the country. Indian tiger faces huge challenges; extensive, highly organised international poaching networks, lack of professional law enforcement to check international crime and abysmally low conviction rate for poachers. But most importantly, increasing hostility of local communities who share the tiger's habitat because of years of mismanagement and conservation policies that exclude people from protected areas," Ms Narain said.

Experts also voiced their disquiet over the Government's proposal to set up a national wildlife bureau to check poaching saying that while the bureau was necessary, the huge size was not required. Instead, they suggested a "lean and mean" organisational structure which could track crime, manage database and follow investigations.



COOLING OFF: An albino white tiger frolics in a pond in his enclosure at the Delhi Zoo on Thursday as temperatures spiralled to 43 degrees. - PHOTO: AFP

114 tigers poached in 5 yrs: Govt to SC

NANDINI R. Iyer
New Delhi, May 17

POACHERS KILLED 114 tigers in five years between 1999 and 2003. Another 59 tigers died of natural causes in the same period. These figures were part of an affidavit filed by the ministry of environment and forests before the Supreme Court last week. The ministry's official tiger count, announced in Parliament earlier this month, stood at 3,642 tigers for the last census conducted between November 2001 and Feb 2002.

What is cause for concern is the ministry's revelation that between 1999 and 2003, there were 411 cases relating to tiger deaths. The ministry contends that it can only confirm the

173 deaths mentioned above and categorises the remaining 238 as cases of seizures of tiger skins and body parts.

"In some cases, the seizure was a single tooth or claw while in others there were entire skins," explain senior ministry officials and argue that at present they are not aware how many tigers were killed. Their contention is that in many cases, tiger body parts seized from different persons could well belong to the same tiger. Of the 238 seizures, the ministry does not know how many tigers actually died.

Officials say accurate death figure would involve an elaborate and time-consuming exercise of extracting DNA from each seized body part and then mapping it.

What a dead tiger is worth

For poacher Rs 5,000

Local Indian dealer

Skin Rs 1 lakh

Skull, teeth, bones Rs 18-20,000 per kg

Each claw Rs 500

International market

Skin Rs 5 lakh

Bones, claws depends on negotiations

Hunting grounds: Centre's report in the Supreme Court says poachers most active in UP and Maharashtra

Contradiction: CBI claims that Sariska doesn't have any tigers left but report says only two tigers were killed in Sariska in last five years



Panna big cats dying now

SONI Sangwan
Panna, May 17

IF THE warning signs in Madhya Pradesh's Panna National Park are being read correctly, the tiger reserve seems to have gone the Sariska way.

An expanding prey base and an increase in leopard sightings are telltale signs pointing to a decline in the tiger population in Panna.

A growing tiger population would ensure that the prey base remains under control, and leopards generally avoid tiger terrain.

But concrete evidence comes from the police. In the first joint raids conducted by the police and the forest department in five years, the police recovered a clamp used exclusively for poaching tigers among other poaching implements, animal skins, bones, antlers, claws and teeth.

"We recovered a clamp favoured by tiger poachers because it ensures that the tiger is caught without damaging the skin," said R.K. Marathe, Panna SP. Most recoveries were made from near Katni, a hub of poachers.

But Panna authorities maintain the park is home to around 34-40 tigers.

In March, the forest department conducted an 'open census' where they had invited the media as well as wildlife conservators.

"Over seven days, we picked up tracings of tiger pugmarks from the forest. Our analysis shows that the number of tigers should be between 34 and 40," said Sanjay Mukheria, field director, Panna.

But conservationists put the total number of tigers at Panna at no more than 10.

Singh on Sariska missing tiger trail

151 5

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, May 14: After triggering a public debate on the tiger conservation crisis, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has decided to see things for himself with a visit to the heart of the controversy: Sariska in Rajasthan.

He will camp in the Sariska National Park (also called the Sariska Tiger Reserve) — all of whose tigers have apparently vanished — on the night of May 23.

Singh will be the second Prime Minister in recent memory to visit Sariska, which is 163 km from New Delhi. The first was Rajiv Gandhi.

While Rajiv Gandhi went there on a holiday with his family and the Bachchans,

Singh will be on an official mission. He will address forest officials and those engaged in Project Tiger on a subject that has become quite close to his heart: wildlife conservation.

His visit will be watched with interest by two groups: the "tiger brigade" and the tribal rights lobby. The battle between these two stalled the tabling of the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005, by the Union cabinet in the budget session.

The government was keen to introduce the bill but the sharp positions taken by the rival lobbies, which had articulate advocates in the political establishment, prompted it to keep the legislation on hold till a

"consensus" emerged.

Singh, the sources said, believes that while the rights of tribals over "heritable" (not alienable or transferable) forest land and minor forest produce in forest villages should be turned into law and made permanent, the "objections" of animal conservationists should also be taken into account. The government must see if the bill has loopholes that can be plugged with amendments.

The "save-the-tiger" lobby, led by Rajya Sabha member Karan Singh and backed by ministers K. Natwar Singh and Renuka Chowdhury, argues that legalising the land rights of tribals can make them "susceptible" to contractors and

businessmen who may exploit them and use the trees and other resources for commercial purposes. This group fears that once commercial interests enter their land, the tribals could even start poaching on wildlife.

The pro-tribal group, which includes tribal affairs minister P.R. Kundiah, has told the Prime Minister that tribals can be trusted with forests because they have a symbiotic relationship with their habitat.

The other argument cited in favour of the bill is a commitment in the UPA's common minimum programme (CMP). It says that lands classed as forests should be returned to the tribals and that states should be urged to pass laws conferring own-

ership rights on them.

Singh, sources close to him said, was caught between the need to carry out the CMP promise and his own pro-active intervention in the tiger conservation project after reports of the dwindling tiger count in Sariska were brought to his notice last September.

He revived the nearly defunct National Board for Wildlife, ordered a CBI probe into the disappearance of Sariska's tigers and set up a task force to look into conservation practices.

His government then announced it would constitute a special wildlife crime cell on the lines of the Narcotics Control Bureau to track down poaching and other wildlife-related crimes.

15 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

World Bank, ADB aid for post-tsunami recovery

Package for affected southern States works out to Rs. 3,191 crores

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday signed agreements with the Indian Government for extending an IDA credit of \$ 465 million from the World Bank and a total aid package of \$205 million from the ADB towards post-tsunami reconstruction and recovery efforts in the country.

Of the ADB assistance, \$100 million is to come as loan, another \$100 million as grant and the balance \$5 million is to be provided from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, according to a World Bank statement here.

Together with \$61 million as the reallocation financing within the existing IDA credits from the World Bank, and a special \$2.5-million grant from the multilateral agency, the total financing for tsunami reconstruction in the country from the World

• World Bank share \$465 million

• ADB to provide \$205 million

• U.N. to chip in with \$38.5 million

Bank and ADB works out to \$733.5 million (about Rs. 3,191 crores). The United Nations is also expected to provide a further sum of \$38.5 million.

This funding, the statement said, was being provided on the basis of a "Damage and needs assessment report" prepared jointly by the World Bank, ADB and the U.N. at the request of the Indian Government. The assessment report estimated the overall rehabilitation and reconstruction needs in the four mainland tsunami-affected States and territories of the

country at \$1.2 billion.

The total World Bank financing of \$528.5 million will support rural water supply rehabilitation in Kerala, livelihood restoration in Andhra Pradesh, and housing and transport infrastructure restoration in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

The financing will also support studies for longer-term coastal management. A sum of \$40 million is allocated to Andhra Pradesh, \$10 million to Kerala, \$42 million to Pondicherry and \$434 million to Tamil Nadu. The World Bank grant of \$2.5 million will support studies and training in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

As for the \$205-million ADB package, the funds are to be focused on rehabilitation of transportation infrastructure, village infrastructure and livelihood restoration in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. For these purposes, while a sum of \$143.75 million

has been allocated to Tamil Nadu, about \$56.25 million is being given to Kerala, and \$2.5 million to each of the two States from the Japan fund.

ADB will also set up extended missions in Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram to support the States with the implementation.

The agreement was signed by Ranjit Bannerji, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, on behalf of the Indian Government, while B. V. Selvaraj, Development Commissioner, Pondicherry; N. Sundaradevan, Revenue Secretary, Tamil Nadu; and Inderjit Singh, Secretary, Disaster Management, Kerala, initialled the accord on behalf of the State Governments. As for the funding agencies, Michael F. Carter, Country Director, India, World Bank, and Albab Akanda, of the ADB signed on behalf of the two multilateral institutions.

13 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Tsunami warning system soon for atomic power plant

Seismic output of the coastline will be monitored

Staff Reporter

CHENNAI: The Kalpakkam atomic power plant will soon have a dedicated tsunami warning system, said Baldev Raj, Director, Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR).

The indigenously-built system, costing around Rs 15 lakhs, would be installed in a fortnight and would monitor seismic output along 6-7 km of the coastline, he told reporters here on Wednesday.

"The system will monitor all earthquake sites in the region and if seismic output of more than 7.5 on the Richter scale was sensed, it will trigger an alarm system that will help us in evacuating the entire complex and put appropriate safety measures in place even before disaster strikes," Dr. Raj said.

A national committee comprising experts from the National Institute of Ocean Technology

and the Geological Survey of India visited the IGCAR's Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) and ratified a 4.5-metre margin for the reactor from the high-tide line.

The committee also investigated whether salt had penetrated the concrete raft around the reactor and the report was forwarded to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.

The Board suggested putting up of a double concrete barrier around the raft and work had already commenced on it.

"Due to tsunami, work on the PFBR was put four and a half months behind schedule but we are catching up now. The work will be completed by September 2011," Dr. Raj said.

Thirtyfive lives were lost and the complex suffered a loss of Rs.10-15 crores during tsunami.

The IGCAR would soon organise an international consortium on tsunami to create a pool

of expertise on how to tackle such disasters.

"India's safety record on atomic plants is one of the highest in the world. We have adequate technology to ensure that the impacts of accidents are kept to a bare minimum. Our plants are safe from radiation leaks and our release into the environment is only 5 per cent of what international regulatory boards recommend," Dr. Raj said.

Mapping human brain

The IGCAR was also collaborating with the National Institute of Mental Health Sciences, Bangalore, in a project to map the human brain.

"We have developed a superconductivity quantum interference device (SQUID) for research in non-destructive applications such as submarines, cardiography, mineral tracking and brain-mapping," Dr. Baldev Raj said.

13 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

World trade talks and the environment

Negotiators at the WTO could seek to trade reductions in environmental standards in industrialised countries for corporate access to more and cheaper natural resources in developing countries.

Tony Juniper and Ronnie Hall

IN A conference room on the shores of Lake Geneva, trade negotiators are drawing up plans that could eventually have a devastating impact on the global environment. The World Trade Organisation's member states are negotiating what they call "non-agricultural market access" or *Nama*, and have started compiling a wish list of national laws they would very much like to bury.

Analysis by Friends of the Earth has revealed nearly 200 challenges so far. They range from measures to fight climate change to protection of forests and fish stocks. Those labels that manufacturers have to put on freezers and fridges that state how energy efficient they are? South Korea wants them to go. American laws promoting fuel efficiency? They, too, are "excessive and unreasonable," says South Korea. Meanwhile, the U.S. wants to stop other countries promoting fuel efficiency, arguing that countries should not be giving tax breaks to people with smaller cars — as is done in the U.K.

Measures controlling the use of toxic chemicals are taking a hammering, too, with countries including Japan and Argentina challenging legislation that seeks to manage the environmental hazards posed by certain chemicals. Labels and regulations relating to the use of some dyes, mercuric oxide, nickel oxide and 1,2-dichloroethane are all mentioned specifically, even though they are hazardous chemicals that are carefully regulated under European law.

Even chemicals legislation that has been in place since the 1960s could be under threat. Japan is clearly intent on using the *Nama* negotiations to try to stop the EU introducing its proposed new *Reach* (registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals) legislation.

Forests and fish stocks are not being spared either. Challenges to eco-labelling and certification systems could dismantle the Forest Stewardship Council certification scheme, as well as government timber procurement schemes and EU illegal logging legislation, all of which will soon require certificates of legal origin from certain importing countries.

Egypt and Norway are objecting to labelling fish and fish products with information about where the fish were caught, despite the parlous state of fish stocks. These are among a range of challenges relating to fish products which when combined with the com-

plete liberalisation of this sector (also planned) puts fish and fish products right at the top of this corporate hit list.

The negotiators seem to be oblivious to the fact that three-quarters of the world's fish stocks have collapsed, are on the verge of collapsing or are just recovering. Nor do they appreciate that millions of artisanal fishing communities that rely completely on fish for food and income are finding it increasingly hard to secure a livelihood. The WTO approach seems clear: trade takes priority.

Even the simplest recycling measures could be under threat. Argentina is arguing that it is too expensive to label containers and products with symbols providing consumers with information on recycling possibilities. South Korea, meanwhile, is objecting to national requirements that manufacturers and retailers recycle scrapped automobiles — as European laws require.

The *Nama* negotiations also include proposals to liberalise and increase the trade in gemstones, precious metals and primary aluminium. If the U.S. gets its way, the same would apply to all natural resources. This could mean more raw materials on the market at ever lower prices, which might be good for some companies now, but is not good for the conservation of dwindling natural resources.

While there is a chance that some of these challenges will be quietly withdrawn because governments have not agreed to negotiate in some of the areas listed, most of them could stay the course as they are backed by powerful corporate lobby groups.

There is a real possibility, too, that negotiators will seek to trade reductions in environmental standards in Europe, and other industrialised countries, for corporate access to ever more and cheaper natural resources in developing countries. A preliminary deal could even be done by the end of December at the WTO's next ministerial meeting in Hong Kong.

The U.K. Government is an enthusiastic champion of free trade. The *Nama* negotiations show the dangers posed by this approach and highlight the urgent need for countries to develop alternative, fair and sustainable economies that combat poverty while respecting environmental limits. If this is to happen, the new Labour Government must do all it can to halt the *Nama* negotiations.

(Tony Juniper is the executive director of Friends of the Earth. Ronnie Hall is trade campaign coordinator Friends of the Earth International)

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THE ARMY

09 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Bengal drawing map of post-tsunami Andamans

Swaminathan T-13



An island swamped by the sea after the tsunami. File picture

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, May 8: Directed by the Centre, the state government has started preparing a satellite map to assess the damage caused by the Boxing Day tsunami in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The state science and technology department has already formed a team comprising scientists and geophysicists for the purpose.

A train of killer waves claimed at least 3,000 islanders on December 26. About 5,000 people reportedly went missing

and tens of thousands of buildings were demolished.

The worst affected areas were Car Nicobar, Mayabandar, Rangat, Diglipur and the Nancowrie group of islands.

Several agencies, from the state as well as the Centre, visited the islands after the disaster for an initial assessment of the damage and the Geological Survey of India is working to assess the land pattern after the tsunami.

"The Centre assigned us the task of preparing the map and has provided an initial fund of Rs 20 lakh. We've sta-

rted work and it is expected to be completed in six months," said the principal secretary of the science and technology department, Jawhar Sircar.

The move, according to Sircar, is aimed at identification of the locations where major damage was recorded and preparing a database. "This map and the data will help the government and other agencies to take up development projects to rebuild the islands. It will also help us take precautionary measures," he said.

Scientists in the department said remote-sensing meth-

ods would be used to prepare the map. It will help to assess change of land pattern, erosion of land and loss of property.

The map will also help to identify the low-lying areas of the Andamans.

"After completing the map, we will visit the islands for physical verification to confirm our findings. Besides, we will also see whether it is possible to prevent such disasters in future," said Partha Chakrabarty, the principal scientist in the department.

Government officials said they would also verify wheth-

er coastal regulations were followed while constructing buildings. According to the Coastal Regulation, 2001, permanent constructions are prohibited within 500 metres of the sea. There should not be any settlement in that belt, called the coastal regulation zone.

"A preliminary survey after the tsunami revealed that a number of constructions violated the regulations. Had there been no construction within 500 metres of the sea, the loss of lives and property would have been much less," said a scientist.



Zoellick in front of two ships swept ashore by the tsunami in Indonesia. (Reuters)

US to build tsunami road

Lhoknga (Indonesia), May 8 (Reuters): US deputy secretary of state Robert Zoellick signed an agreement today to build a \$245-million road along Aceh's western coast, one of the first of many huge projects to rebuild the Indonesian province after the devastating December 26 tsunami.

The 240-km highway will connect Aceh's provincial capital, Banda Aceh, with the city of Meulaboh, which was almost wiped out by the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and the biggest tsunami ever recorded.

"Our aid mission can offer patterns for private sector projects," Zoellick told foreign journalists under the shadow of a giant coal barge and a freight ship that were swept onto this beach from kilometres out to sea.

"We're talking under a big coal barge that was thrust onto the beach, so it's not your usual project," he said, adding

the construction will also feature 113 bridges and culvert crossings.

The international community has pledged an estimated \$9 billion for tsunami relief and reconstruction for the affected Indian Ocean nations, the bulk of that destined for Aceh. "There's been a problem in the past with corruption in Indonesia," Zoellick said. "The world's eyes are on Indonesia in the expenditure of funds. So far they have been extremely careful."

He especially praised the recent appointment of Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, a Stanford University-trained engineer and a former mines and energy minister, as the powerful new chairman of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency in Aceh.

Zoellick said the primary objective of the road is to improve employment and the local economy.

09 MAY 2005

TELEGRAPH

Adivasis can best protect tree cover

The draft tribal Bill provides ownership rights to adivasis staying on forest land since 1980. It is rightly based on the principle that adivasis rather than the state are the best custodians of forest tracts. The Indian Forest Act alienates the adivasi from his source of livelihood with the state regarding him as a criminal and non-citizen even as he picks twigs, branches and minor forest produce for a living. The forest Act shows virtually no concern for the symbiotic relationship of adivasis with forests. By vesting total power in the state, it allowed the British, and later the contractor-politician-forest guard nexus, to clean out entire tracts of forest. No matter what some young MPs and wildlife enthusiasts may say, we have had enough of all this. The Chipko movement was a watershed in India's environmental history, reminding us that conservation is effective if it is fused with local livelihood concerns. The people of Uttarakhand sought to realise their role as stakeholders in forest land, with the duties and rights associated with the relationship.

COUNTER VIEW

Environmentalism has come a long way from strictly naturalist concerns. The Forest Policy 1988 and later guidelines and orders of the government place communities at the centre of forest management. The Draft Environment Policy of 2004 suggests legal recognition of the traditional rights of forest-dwelling adivasis. Why does the ministry of environment and forests, by opposing the present Bill, want to turn the clock back 15 years? The Bill also provides checks against benami properties by ruling out commercial use and transfer. The use of forest rights has been restricted to subsistence and livelihood needs alone. There will always be law-breakers, but can their actions be an argument against the law itself?

May I dwell in the forest?

A SCARY draft bill that will decimate the paltry forest cover in India is doing the rounds in the capital, accompanied by furious lobbying, endorsed by the prime minister's office, all in the name of "returning forests to the tribals", lands that today, till the bill is passed, belong to the people of India regardless of class, caste or creed. This new "private ownership of national forests" bill is probably one of the most controversial since we gained independence. It endeavours to create yet another frightening divide in an already fragmented society. It is a desperate attempt to win over a hitherto neglected political constituency by "buying" their vote with a "valuable" bait — 2.5 hectares of forest will be parcelled out to 20 million nuclear families of four persons, who belong to the scheduled caste of tribals. Fifty million hectares of the 68 million will be handed over as the bill passes muster. The balance 26 per cent will be handed over by 2013, over the next eight years.

This is so typical of a flabby, failed and flaccid political leadership, devoid of intellectual creativity and energy to address the many issues of underprivileged communities, which plague this nation. Such politicians sit in both the opposition and treasury benches of our Parliament.

The UPA government seems to believe that private ownership of national forests must rest with 8 per cent of Indian citizens. Is this part of the economic restructuring that was begun a decade ago? Anyone who has raised questions on the validity of this draft bill is being branded babalog, elitist or royalist. That, alas, is the pathetic response — rather, retort — from the proponents of this draft, who appear intellectually inadequate to debate the issue. They do not want to hear, let alone listen to, any opposing view. These are



The proposed tribal bill will lead to immense division and strife

■ MALVIKA SINGH

shades of a "fascist" mindset. Why otherwise would they reduce the dialogue to class abuse? "Tribals or tigers" is their hysterical cry. But, they have conveniently forgotten that there are those who believe both are essential.

Tigers are already a species of the past. Another decade and we shall only see them in zoos around the world. We have deftly decimated the cheetahs, we skillfully killed off the Indian lion, and we have successfully brought tigers to near extinction. We should be proud of ourselves for having achieved a world record in the destruction of all

The proposed Scheduled Tribes, Recognition of Forest Rights Bill will hand over an exchequer of approximately thirty four lakh crores (if you can put the zeroes to it) of national wealth to the private ownership of 8 per cent of the population of the Union of India. This will lead to unimaginable and unparalleled civil strife, to put it mildly, between the beneficiaries and the non-beneficiaries along the fringes of forest areas. It does not require much acumen to comprehend the brutal and destructive repercussions. To add to the impending horror, there will be no ban on tree felling — the

The UPA is on the verge of dismantling all the forest and wildlife protection acts heralded by Indira Gandhi and fiercely protected by her and Rajiv Gandhi

that should have been nurtured and preserved, loved and cared for. We have destroyed our cities and towns, all of which are mired in filth, governed by corrupt and extortionist municipalities; we have degraded all habitats; we have contaminated our "holy" rivers starting with the Ganga; we have poisoned our drinking water; we have torn apart our culture, languages, values, ethics; we condone corruption; we have desecrated our historical monuments, our manmade legacies; we allow the authority that rules us, at our behest, to divide us, to label us, to exploit us, to damn us. We have abused our national pledge, satya mev jayati.

gram sabha will have the authority to impose a fine of Rs 1,000 per tree felled if they choose to! Which caste leads the gram sabha? Are they all squeaky clean or buyable? Happy days for the timber mafia — coming soon, cheap product, virtually free! The other great attraction for the land developers is the ability they will have to buy hitherto protected forests — it's all going to free up! The gram sabhas will be empowered to determine and decide rights including the ownership of land. This is a perfect structure for the exploitation of the national resource of India by land and timber "merchants".

If only this government was as

committed to providing potable water, health and education within the framework of a civil society operated by honest administrators. Rampant corruption and extortion, mal-functioning of administrations, is what dominates our lives today across the many divides, social and economic. The correctives to be made at those fundamental levels are neither being debated nor "pushed through" as is this tribal bill. Why? Are those issues tough to address and even tougher to deliver? Is it that the fruits of serious correctives will not be seen in the next few years, before the next election, and therefore are not a "priority"? Are quick political returns the only motivation?

As the attack builds and gains momentum, two things can happen. National parks and sanctuaries will be removed from the purview of land to the tribals. This will be another fraud, an eye wash, a dangerous game. All forests have to remain protected under the existing acts. It is interesting that the UPA, with the Congress as the single largest component of this coalition led by Dr Manmohan Singh, is on the verge of dismantling all the forest and wildlife protection acts that were heralded by Indira Gandhi and fiercely protected by her and Rajiv Gandhi. They understood the utmost importance of forest cover for scientific environmental reasons, for preserving and enhancing water catchment areas. If the draft bill goes through and becomes an act, this Congress-led government will be singularly responsible for the desertification, disease and brutal civil strife that will invade our patient, exploited polity.

To damn and ignore the opposing voices, to label them in class terms, to dismiss them, smacks of intellectual insecurity and a fear of debate. Dangerous.

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INDIAN EXPRESS

নদী-জল সমস্যা মেটাতে নতুন ভাবনা কেন্দ্রের

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

৪ মে: বাজপেয়ী জমানার নদী সংযুক্তি প্রকল্প পুরোপুরি খারিজ না করে তার খোলনালচে বদলের কাজে হাত দিতে চলছে মনমোহন সিংহ সরকার। সোমবার রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আব্দুল কালামের সঙ্গে এই প্রকল্প নিয়ে কেন্দ্রীয় জলসম্পদ উন্নয়নমন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুন্সির বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হয়েছে। মন্ত্রিসভা বিষয়টি নিয়ে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগে সংশ্লিষ্ট সব মহলের মত জানতে চায়।

১৫ মে বিজ্ঞান ভবনে নদী সংযুক্তির বিষয়টি নিয়ে একটি আলোচনা সভার আয়োজন করা হচ্ছে। এই সভায় রাষ্ট্রপতি নিজে থাকবেন। বিভিন্ন রাজ্যের প্রতিনিধিদেরও আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হচ্ছে। পাশাপাশি সনিয়া গান্ধীর নেতৃত্বে জাতীয় উপদেষ্টা পর্ষদ এ নিয়ে কী ভাবে, সেটাও জেনে নেওয়া হবে। প্রিয়বাবু বলেছেন, “পুরনো প্রকল্পটিকে আমরা খারিজ

করছি না। কিন্তু নদী সংযুক্তির বদলে প্রকল্পটির নামকরণ করতে চাই নদীর স্থানান্তর প্রকল্প।”

অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী প্রধানমন্ত্রী থাকার সময় ছয় লক্ষ কোটি টাকার প্রকল্প রূপায়নের জন্য প্রাক্তন মন্ত্রী সুব্রহ্মণ্য প্রভুর নেতৃত্বে যে টাস্ক ফোর্স হয়েছিল, প্রিয়বাবুর কাছে সম্প্রতি তারা চূড়ান্ত রিপোর্ট পেশ করেছে। রিপোর্টে ৩৮টি নদীর সংযুক্তির প্রকল্প শেষ করতে কুড়ি বছর লাগবে বলে ধরা হয়েছে। এ জন্য বিদেশি লাগির কথাও ভেবেছিল বাজপেয়ী সরকার।

ইউপিএ সরকার ক্ষমতায় আসার পরে প্রকল্পটির পর্যালোচনা শুরু হয়। বহু নদী বিশেষজ্ঞ এই প্রকল্পের বিরুদ্ধে রায় দেন। কেরল, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ, কर्নাটক, মহারাষ্ট্র, পঞ্জাব ও উত্তরপ্রদেশ আশের প্রকল্পের বিরোধিতা করেছিল, বাংলাদেশ নিজের বিরাধিতায় রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের এই প্রকল্পের বিরোধিতায় রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অভিযোগ তোলে। আর তামিলনাড়ু, অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ, মধ্যপ্রদেশ, হরিয়ানা

নদীসংযোগে আগ্রহী ছিল। প্রিয়বাবুর মতে, রাজ্যগুলির মধ্যে ঐকমত্য তৈরি করাই এখন সবচেয়ে আগে প্রয়োজন।

নদীর সংযুক্তি কতটা বাস্তবসম্মত তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠলেও ফেন সমগ্র পরিকল্পনা খারিজ করা হবে না সে ব্যাপারে প্রিয়বাবু বলেন, “মূল প্রশ্নটি হল যে নদীতে জল বেশি রয়েছে সেখানে থেকে যে নদীতে জল নেই আমাদের দেশে বেশ কয়েকটি নদী নিয়ে বিতর্ক চলছে। সেই বিতর্ক অবসানের জন্য ট্রাইবুনাল পর্যন্ত গঠন হয়েছে। এই নতুন প্রকল্পের জন্য আগে প্রয়োজন রাজ্যগুলির মধ্যে ঐকমত্য। রাজ্য সরকারগুলির সঙ্গে ইতিমধ্যেই আলোচনা শুরু হয়েছে।”

তবে পুরনো প্রকল্পটি সম্পূর্ণ খারিজ করে দেওয়ার বিপক্ষে স্বয়ং রাষ্ট্রপতি। তিনি বিষয়টি নিয়ে এর আগেও প্রিয়বাবুর সঙ্গে কয়েকবার বৈঠক করেছেন। সোমবার রাষ্ট্রপতি প্রিয়বাবুকে বলেন, যে সব নদীতে

নিয়মিত বন্যা হয়, সেখানে বন্যা নিয়ন্ত্রণের জন্য সরকার কোটি কোটি টাকা খরচ করে। কিন্তু তাতে সমস্যার স্থায়ী সমাধান হয় না। তার বদলে অনেক কম টাকায় বন্যার জল ধরে রাখার জন্য জলাধার নির্মাণ আশা করা

ওই সঙ্কট জল যেখানে জল নেই সেখানে পৌঁছে দেওয়া যায়। উদাহরণ দিয়ে রাষ্ট্রপতি জানান, ব্রহ্মপুত্র নদের বন্যা রোধে যদি ফি বছর প্রায় এক হাজার কোটি টাকা খরচ হয় তবে মাত্র সাতশো কোটি টাকাতে স্থায়ী ভাবে সেখানে একটি জলাধার নির্মাণ সম্ভব।

প্রাথমিক ভাবে কেন্দ্র ভাবে, রাজস্থান ও মধ্যপ্রদেশের তিনটি নদী (কারিসিন, পার্বতী ও চম্বল) নিয়ে পরীক্ষামূলক ভাবে জল স্থানান্তর করে দেখা যেতে পারে। এ জন্য রাজস্থানে একটি জলাধার তৈরি করা হবে। অন্য দিকে, শুধা মরসুমে চাষের জন্য জলের জোগান বাড়তে মজে যাওয়া জলাধারগুলির সংস্কারে জোর দেওয়া হবে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ

ছত্রীসগড়ে গিয়ে সম্প্রতি বলেছেন, এই প্রকল্পে ১৬টি রাজ্যে আগামী দু বছরে মোট ৩০০ কোটি খরচ করা হবে।

সরকারি সূত্রে এই সিদ্ধান্তের আর একটি ব্যাখ্যা দেওয়া হয়েছে। সেটি হল, রাজনৈতিক ভাবে এনডিএ-র যাতে সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে এটিকে হাতিয়ার করতে না পারে তাই প্রকল্পটি আমূল পরিবর্তন করে সেটিকে বাস্তবসম্মত করা হচ্ছে। সে জন্য কংগ্রেস মনে করিয়ে দিতে চায়, এন ডি এ জন্মগ্রহণের অনেক আগে ১৯৮০ সালেই ইন্দিরা গান্ধী এ ধরনের প্রকল্পের

প্রয়োজনীয়তার কথা প্রথম বলেছিলেন। প্রিয়বাবু বলেন, “আমরা সব পক্ষের সঙ্গেই কথা বলছি। কতটা ভৌগোলিক দুরত্বে কী কাজ করা সম্ভব সেটাও খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। এমন নয় যেটা দেশ জুড়ে সমস্ত নদীর মধ্যে এ কাজ এখনই করতে হবে। কিন্তু যে সব ক্ষেত্রে ভৌগোলিক দুরত্ব সমস্যা নয়, সে সব রাজ্যে আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সিদ্ধান্ত কার্যকর করা সম্ভব।”

05 MAY 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Punjab cancer alert

GAJINDER SINGH

Chandigarh, May 4: It's Punjab today, it could be the rest of India tomorrow.

Excessive use of pesticides can lead to epidemics of cancer, says a study by the Punjab Pollution Control Board and the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGI), Chandigarh. The board has warned the people of Punjab that they are at risk.

The **Telegraph** had on May 17, 2003, reported that the Punjab government had sought the PGI's help to probe the spurt in cancer in and around Talwandi Sabo in Bathinda. The victims had blamed the brackish water they had been drinking.

Board chairman Tripat Rajinder Singh Bajwa has now is-

sued a statement saying the study has revealed that pesticides were poisoning the state's environment, and that there is a close link between pollution and cancer.

"The crops absorb only 10 per cent of the pesticide sprayed on them; the remaining 90 per cent enters the soil or water or the air," a board official said. "Since these chemicals are used in huge amounts, they are everywhere in Punjab."

The study — in which the School of Public Health at the PGI's department of community medicine took part — was conducted across 36 villages in Talwandi Sabo and 93 villages in Chamkaur Sahib, Ropar, which too had reported a sharp rise in cancer. The PGI ran house-to-house surveys, interviewing thousands of people.

Its conclusion: The danger stems from not only the amount of pesticides used but also the manner in which they are sprayed (by hand) and stored (in the open) and the practice of washing the containers and spray pumps in canals.

The board wants the Punjab Agriculture University to educate farmers on the safe use of pesticides. It has requested the state health department to monitor the presence of pesticides and heavy metals in water, vegetables and fruits and sought a non-communicable disease control programme.

05 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Stop exploitation of ground water by MNCs: MP

Acute shortage of water in Plachimada

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Plachimada controversy involving allegations of over exploitation of ground water by the Coca-Cola Company came up in the Lok Sabha on Friday with the leader of the Janata Dal (S) Parliamentary Party, M.P. Veerendra Kumar, urging the Government to support the Perumatty Panchayat in its legal battle against the multinational company in the Supreme Court.

Raising the issue during zero hour, Mr. Kumar said: "The time has come to place restrictions on MNCs which use ground water as their sole raw material in large quantities to make aerated, mineral and sweetened bottled waters."

The MNCs, which sold water and made huge profits, were equated with the common man who demanded drinking water. "The individuals and the huge corporate are treated in the same level, which is unjust," he said.

Mr. Kumar drew the Government's attention to the "alarming situation" in Plachimada in the Perumatty Panchayat of Palakkad district where there was "acute shortage of drinking water" due to the over exploitation

of ground water by Coca-Cola.

In the area where the company was situated, the land was polluted and the water contaminated. The entire agricultural operations were at a standstill, he said.

"The struggle of the local people, especially the adivasis, has completed three years. The Perumatty Panchayat has gone on appeal to the Supreme Court against the decision of the Division Bench of the Kerala High Court. I would request the Government to support and help the Perumatty Panchayat, which is fighting to establish their constitutional rights. How can a small panchayat fight the mighty multinational company," Mr. Kumar asked.

"I urge the Government to direct the Ground Water Authority to conduct a study in Plachimada and also the adjoining Pudukkottai Panchayat where Pepsi is exploiting ground water so that safeguards can be taken to avoid the impending crisis. I also want the Government to reprioritise the allocation of water in order to protect the interest of the rural poor. It is equally important to have policy decisions and proper implementation of the same with regard to ground water exploitation," he added.

30 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Fugitive toxic ship in Indian waters

Environmental groups seek action against officials

Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Environmental groups have drawn Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's attention to the Government's "failure" to respond to the Danish Government's request for return of the fugitive toxic ship "Kong Frederik IX" alias Frederik, now renamed "Riky."

Basel Action Network, Greenpeace, Ban Asbestos Network, Centre of Indian Trade Unions and Corporate Accountability Desk said that stringent action should be taken against the officials concerned in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Central Pollution Control Board, the Gujarat Maritime Board, the Gujarat Pollution Control Board and the Indian Customs for allowing the ship to enter the Indian waters.

"This is an outstanding opportunity for India to demonstrate that it is not a dumping ground for toxic wastes from other countries. If the Government fails to act it will be a tragedy for the environment and workers' safety," Jacob Hartmann of Greenpeace in Denmark said in a statement.

"Unless contempt of court proceedings are initiated against those responsible, nothing will change and India will become

• **'India will become a toxic dumping ground'**

• **Supreme Court's directives violated**

• **Initiate contempt proceedings, say NGOs**

• **CITU supports demand**

the toxic dumping ground of the world irrespective of the Supreme Court's intent."

CITU leader P.K. Ganguly echoed the demands of the environment and labour groups.

The toxic ship-for-scrap escaped Denmark's clutches and headed for Alang yard in Gujarat, contravening Danish, European Union and Indian laws. Denmark had assured India that it would take action against the ship-owner and ensure that the ship was stripped of toxic substances if the Indian Government seized the ship and sent it back.

The ship was, however, allowed to beach despite notification of the illegality to all concerned authorities, including the Environment Ministry, Gujarat Maritime Board, Gujarat Pollution Control Board and the

Bhavnagar Customs, indicating the complicity of these agencies in violating the Supreme Court directives.

Ironically, in November 2003, the Gujarat Maritime Board and Coast Guard showed remarkable alacrity in harassing Greenpeace's flagship, the Rainbow Warrior, outside Alang and prevented its entry into the Alang waters.

"Despite advance notification of a fugitive ship's illegal entry into India by another Government, the Indian authorities chose to allow "Fredrik". Nothing more needs to be said about the Indian Environment Ministry's seriousness about protecting India from becoming the West's dumping ground," said Shailendra Yashwant of Greenpeace.

The environmental-labour coalition has been asking the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee to initiate contempt proceedings against the Ministry of Environment, the Gujarat Pollution Control Board, the Gujarat Maritime Board and Bhavnagar Customs. It also demanded that the ship be towed back to Denmark and criminal proceedings initiated under the Hazardous Waste Rules, 1989 against the ship-breaker.

30 APR 2005

THE HINDU

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Global warming rate discovered

Tim Radford

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LONDON: The world is getting warmer — and U.S. scientists now know precisely how much warmer. They calculated the radiation from the sun, the heat reflected back into space, and the rising temperature of the seas and say the extra warmth is equivalent to a one watt lightbulb shining constantly over an area of one sq metre everywhere on the planet. That would raise average temperatures by 0.6C before the end of the century, they report in the journal *Science* on Friday. Warming at that level, maintained over 10,000 years, would

melt enough ice to raise sea levels by a km. "This energy imbalance is the smoking gun that we have been looking for," said James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. "It shows that our estimates of the human-made and natural climate forcing agents are about right, and they are driving the Earth to a warmer climate."

Gas emissions

Most of the world — with the exception of the U.S. and Australia — has signed up to the Kyoto protocol to limit greenhouse gas emissions and further

global warming. The U.S. Government has repeatedly argued that scientific opinion about global warming is divided. With this new research, U.S. Government-funded scientists have once again told the U.S. administration that they believe global warming is real, and inexorable.

Computer models of future global warming suggest that planetary temperatures could rise by as much as 5.8C in the next century, with sea level rises of a metre. Since 1993, the world's oceans have risen at the rate of 3.2 cm per decade. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

30 APR 2005

THE HINDU

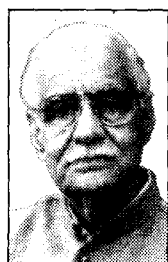
Sumitranandan Pant
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River sutras

WHILE India was busy watching the dismal performance of its over-rated cricket team, Dharaji — a small pilgrim town in Madhya Pradesh — was counting the dead. Nearly 70 bodies stuck in crevices between rocks and boulders were retrieved. But many were washed away by the torrent of water that the Indira Sagar dam of the Narmada series released to generate more power at peak hours. The dam authorities knew about the pilgrims bathing downstream. There was no warning system. Yet the turbines had to be run at full speed to meet the demand.

An inquiry has been ordered and the district magistrate transferred. The media has gone quiet because the tragedy has ceased to be news. Is it negligence or a part of pressure exerted all over to reap maximum benefits from government projects, whatever the costs? In such an atmosphere even normal safety precautions are not strictly followed. For the result-oriented end, the means do not matter. Maybe, the existing projects of the Narmada are working overtime because only a few days ago the Supreme Court observed in a judgment that no submergence of any area should take place unless the displaced were "completely" rehabilitated. In other words, the additional height to the main Narmada dam should be ruled out until the oustees were settled. True, people in Gujarat were anxious to have more water and more power. But they have always upheld the principle of rehabilitating the uprooted before moving them from their homes and lands. The Narmada Tribunal Award had laid down this many years ago.

Now that the myth of the Bhakra dam, an icon in the developmental history of independent India, has been exploded through a study it is time to find out how to



The river interlinking project is another disaster waiting to happen

■ KULDIP NAYAR

have more water and power from the Narmada without increasing the dam's height. The Bhakra dam study points out what really helped Punjab and Haryana was not the water from Bhakra but the groundwater systems and extensively developed agriculture. The dam commands only 20 per cent of the total cultivable area in Punjab and 31 per cent in Haryana. And even after 50 years, the displaced are "still struggling to put their lives back on line".

How will Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra take care of the backlog of the 50,000

uprooted families from the Narmada area when there is no extra land available in these states? The Tehri dam victims are the worst sufferers because neither UP nor the Centre is sympathetic to their cause. True, at the time of building Bhakra, we did not know how gigantic projects could cause more harm than good. But before embarking on the Narmada and Tehri, we should have learnt from our mistakes. Big dams were not necessary and we could have got water, power and controlled floods through smaller dams at a lesser cost. The Narmada has already cost Rs 17,000 crore and we still have a long way to go.

We should examine whether the projected deficit of a so-called water-deficit state is the result of bad water management and unsustainable demands

gives all the more importance to the meeting to discuss the river interlinking project at Delhi on May 11. President Kalam is going to be there when top engineers, specialists, scientists and civil servants will be debating the pros and cons of the project. Let us put our heads together to find out the pluses and minuses of the project. A consensus is important because hundreds of crores of rupees would be required if the government were to take up the project.

This takes me to a larger question: whether the cost of development is in proportion to the loss from deprivation. I do not want to sound negative. But every gain has to be judged from the larger good it

does. The touchstone should be how far a project thinks of the good of all. For example, displacing thousands from their homes to build plazas or malls cannot be termed as progress. There is also the question of environment that the Centre overlooks and which even the Supreme Court takes in its stride. How do the 90,000 families in Mumbai, still on the roadside, view the buildings that are going to come up at the expense of their houses? State power in a democratic system comes out of a process of competitive politics. Consequently, if it is identified too closely with narrow interests, it is bound to generate alienation and hostility in other groups.

It is no more a cliché that the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. The globalisation and economic reforms have primarily benefited the rich. The Manmohan Singh government should find out who has cornered the gains in the last one decade. In 1960, Jawaharlal Nehru appointed P.C. Mahalanobis, a Planning Commission member, to determine where the funds had gone and to ascertain the extent to which wealth and means of production had tended to concentrate. The Mahalanobis inquiry showed that companies having a paid-up capital of Rs 50 lakh and above constituted only 1.6 per cent of the total number of companies but accounted for 53 per cent of the total paid-up capital.

The remedy may well be in what Mahatma Gandhi suggested as far back as in November 1928: everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be.

21 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Interlinking, a long haul project

"It would not be feasible to complete the project in 10 years"

Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: The programme on the inter-linking of rivers is being pushed in the name of an order passed by the Supreme Court whereas the fact is that the apex court had not made any such pronouncement. This is coming to the fore with the growing realisation in the Union Ministry of Water Resources that it would not be feasible to complete the project — involving the construction of 30 river links — in 10 years. In the minimum, it would take 35 years.

On September 30, 2002, the Supreme Court observed: "We do expect that the programme when drawn up would try and ensure that the link projects are completed within a reasonable time of not more than 10 years."

No time-frame set

At no point of time did the court issue an order setting a

time-frame. But the National Democratic Alliance Government then and, the United Progressive Alliance Government now, are using the court observations as a reason for pushing the project.

The Congress claims the programme was conceived during its rule in the 1970s without conceding that both K.L. Rao's proposal for a 'National Water Grid' and Captain Dastur's 'Garland Canal' scheme were rejected as unfeasible at the time. The Rao proposal was abandoned as "economically unviable" and the Dastur proposal for being "technically unfeasible."

In various fora, the Water Ministry has taken the stand that it would take between 35 and 40 years to complete the major 30 links that have been planned at an estimated cost of Rs. 5,60,000 crores.

This was said so recently in a Parliamentary Standing Com-

mittee meeting, quoting a study done by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) for the Task Force on Rivers Linking, headed by Suresh Prabhu. The Task Force has since been dismantled.

The NCAER study said that with the use of remote sensing techniques, the programme could be aimed for completion in 25 years. The final report of the Council is awaited.

Although conservative estimates of funding were made by the NCAER and the ICICI group, there were no clear suggestions on raising funds. ICICI proposed that the funding be partly through public, public-private and private inputs and by the imposition of a cess and raising water tariffs.

Government pledge

On coming to power, the UPA Government pledged that it

would carry out a comprehensive review of the river-linking programme.

The exercise does not seem to have been completed yet, but the UPA will retain the Ken-Betwa (between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh) and the Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal links (between Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) as the priority links.

However, in view of the concern expressed by neighbouring countries in bilateral talks, the Government has decided to take the stand that it was too early to pursue the matter with them as it was still at a "conceptual" stage.

The recent study, "Unravelling Bhakra," which has debunked the mega dam's role in Punjab's prosperity, underscores the need for a review of the large dams oriented scheme such as linking of rivers.

Steering Committee makes little headway

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

ADMITTING that poaching was the main concern behind the dwindling tiger population, top officials today said more people would be deployed in problem zones and experts will work towards connecting fragmented reserves.

"Poaching is the main concern... Though it has been a problem since long, there were no trends available to ascertain whether it was on decline or rise... Besides working towards getting trends, the Department of Forests and Environment will deploy home guards, retired Army personnel and other staff to prevent poaching activities in problematic areas," said Environment Secretary Dr Prodipto Ghosh.

At today's steering committee meeting, Project Tiger Director Dr Rajesh Gopal said the Ministry has taken note of the suggestion to deploy more personnel to man the reserves. He also said there was a gen-

eral agreement on the new census techniques adopted for counting tigers, including pug-mark and camera-trap methodology. "This would give us a true picture and finding by March 2006," said Gopal. On Sariska Tiger Reserve, a decision was taken to start an ecological study to make a "scientific inference."

A second monitoring process, approved by the Supreme court, is on and this assessment of 28 tiger reserves would be ready by the end of the month, Gopal said, adding that the results would be analysed by a IUCN peer group and then sent to Parliament. Ministry officials said the meeting also focussed on problematic tiger reserves like Indravati, Nagarjuna Sagar, Valmiki, Manas and Palamu. Dr Gopal claimed that Palamu and Manas are showing



"signs of recovery in terms of tiger".

The committee also decided against approving new tiger reserves. Five states had sent in proposals for setting up new reserves, saying that there had been tiger sightings, but the committee today decided that existing reserves needed to be

strengthened first.

"We have decided to consolidate the existing ones first and will consider the enlargement of reserves. We will set up a committee that will come up with the norms which will be given to the Zoological Survey of India and the Botanical Survey," Dr Gopal said.

The steering committee also expressed concern over the fragmentation of tiger habitat and looked at an assessment done at the taluka-level, dividing the country into five

zones. Dr Ghosh said that the Ministry "will work towards linking protected areas so that tigers can move from one reserve to the other in case of any problem."

"There are gaps in Central India and Eastern Ghats and the Terai region. Tiger areas are becoming islands of particular gene pool, and to avoid this, we need to monitor the connectivity problem," Dr Gopal added. The non-government members of the committee requested the chairman in writing to

■ Fix responsibility within the MoEF for the debacle; * Order independent assessment of the role of the ministry in dealing with the tiger crisis; and

■ Immediate creation of a tiger task force under the Prime Minister's chairmanship

Member Valmik Thapar said: "It was agreed that the Steering Committee will meet at least every six month... Instead of only blaming the states, accountability must be fixed within the Union Ministry."

India to show its green face at next G-8 summit

**Srinjoy Chowdhury
in New Delhi**

April 10. — Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, may show India's 'green face' when he attends the next G-8 summit at Gleneagles, in Britain in early July.

Climate change could be one of the areas of discussion among the top leaders at the three-day summit beginning on 6 July. There is also the issue of cheap, renewable and largely pollution-free energy. Currently, the environment is a contentious subject among G-8 countries. Despite warnings about the greenhouse effect, many important countries haven't even signed the Kyoto Protocol.

Preparations for Dr Singh's inputs at the meeting have begun and the foreign secretary, Mr Shyam Saran, has recently written to top govern-

Some G-8 members believe India is a bio-mass-based energy leader. Many developed countries have not spent as much time developing such technologies as India, though even here, some of the successes are yet to create a mass-market or themselves

ment officials about the possibility of discussion on issues related to bio-mass. Apart from the G-8 countries (USA, Britain, Germany, Italy, France, Canada and Japan and Russia), several other countries (South Africa, Mexico, Brazil and China) will also be represented at the summit.

In his 25 March letter, the foreign secretary enquired about India's progress in the field of bio-mass based energy. Some G-8 countries believe that India is a leader in bio-mass based energy. Some developed countries have not spent as much time developing such technologies as India though even here, some of the successes are yet to create for themselves a mass-market. But as an official said, India's potential of emerging as a world-leader is very high.

India has a potential to produce a considerable amount of ethanol, mostly out of sugarcane waste. Then, there is the use of bamboo, which can be 'gasified' for fuel. Even the waste from the process is charcoal, which can be used in filtration processes in the pharmaceutical industry. Other possibilities include the efforts to use jatropa seed oil as fuel.

মেধাসম্পদ চুরি রুখে দিল ইউরোপ, নিমের স্বত্ব ভারতেরই

লন্ডন, ১ এপ্রিল: অবশেষে ইউরোপীয় পেটেন্ট অফিস 'নিম'গাছের মতো চিরাচরিত ভারতীয় মেধাসম্পদের স্বত্ব চুরি রুখে দিল। নিমের উপর পেটেন্টের অধিকার ভারতকে ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্তে তারা যে অটল, সে কথা আজ স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছে ইউরোপীয় পেটেন্ট অফিস। ইউরোপ এবং বিশ্ব জুড়ে ভারতীয় গাছ-গাছড়ার পেটেন্ট কৌশলে হস্তগত করার যে প্রবণতা দীর্ঘ দিন ধরে লক্ষ করা যাচ্ছে, এর ফলে তাতে ছেদ পড়বে বলে জানিয়েছেন বিশেষজ্ঞরা। এগারো বছর ধরে লড়াই করে ভারতের পরিবেশ আন্দোলনকারীরা নিমের ছত্রাকবিনাশকারী গুণের উপর পেটেন্ট নিয়ে এই লড়াইয়ে জয়ী হয়েছেন।

১৯৯৪ সালের ১৪ সেপ্টেম্বর ইউরোপীয় পেটেন্ট অফিস (ই পি ও) মার্কিন বহুজাতিক রাসায়নিক সংস্থা ডব্লিউ আর গ্রেস এবং মার্কিন কৃষি দফতরকে নিমের পেটেন্ট প্রদান করেছিল। পরে ২০০০ সালের ১০ মে অবশ্য ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের পার্লামেন্টের 'গ্রিন পার্টি'-র চাপের কাছে নতিস্বীকার করে ই পি ও আমেরিকার কাছ থেকে ওই পেটেন্টের অধিকার ফিরিয়ে নিতে বাধ্য হয়। তাদের অভিযোগ ছিল, ডব্লিউ আর গ্রেসের আবেদনপত্রটি জৈব

পেটেন্টের স্বত্ব চৌর্যবৃত্তিরই নামান্তর। পরিবেশবাদীদের ওই গোষ্ঠীতে ছিলেন ভারতীয় গবেষণা সংস্থা রিসার্চ ফাউন্ডেশন ফর সায়েন্স-টেকনোলজি অ্যান্ড ইকলজি (আর এফ এস টি ই)-র বন্দনা শিবা, বেলজিয়ামের স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রী মাগদা অ্যালেন্ডেট এবং জার্মানির ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ফেডারেশন অব অর্গানিক অ্যাগ্রিকালচার মুভমেন্টস।

কিন্তু ওই মার্কিন বহুজাতিক সংস্থা পেটেন্ট ফেরত পেতে মামলা করে ই পি ও-র নির্দেশের বিরুদ্ধে। গত ৯ মার্চ ওই লড়াইয়েও জয় হয় ভারতের। আর এফ এস টি ই-র দাবি ছিল: "নিমের গুণের কথা ভারতীয়রা ২ হাজার বছরেরও বেশি সময় ধরে জানেন এবং ব্যবহারও করে আসছেন। নিম থেকে তৈরি ফসলে ব্যবহার্য কীটনাশককে নিজস্ব উদ্ভাবন বলে বহুজাতিক সংস্থাটি যে- দাবি করে আসছিল, তা ঠিক নয়।" ই পি ও আজ ভারতীয়দের সেই সংজ্ঞাকেই মেনে নিয়ে গত মাসের ওই রায়কে বহাল রাখার স্পষ্ট নির্দেশ দিল।

লড়াইয়ের প্রধান সৈনিক বন্দনা শিবা আজ বলেন, "আমরা খুশি যে ই পি ও স্পষ্ট ভাবে জানিয়ে দিয়েছে পেটেন্ট বলতে কী বোঝায়।" অ্যালেন্ডেট বলেন, "চিরাচরিত জ্ঞানেরই এর ফলে জয় হল।" — পি টি আই

02 APR 2005

ANANDBAZAR PAPER

Aid begins to reach Indonesian island

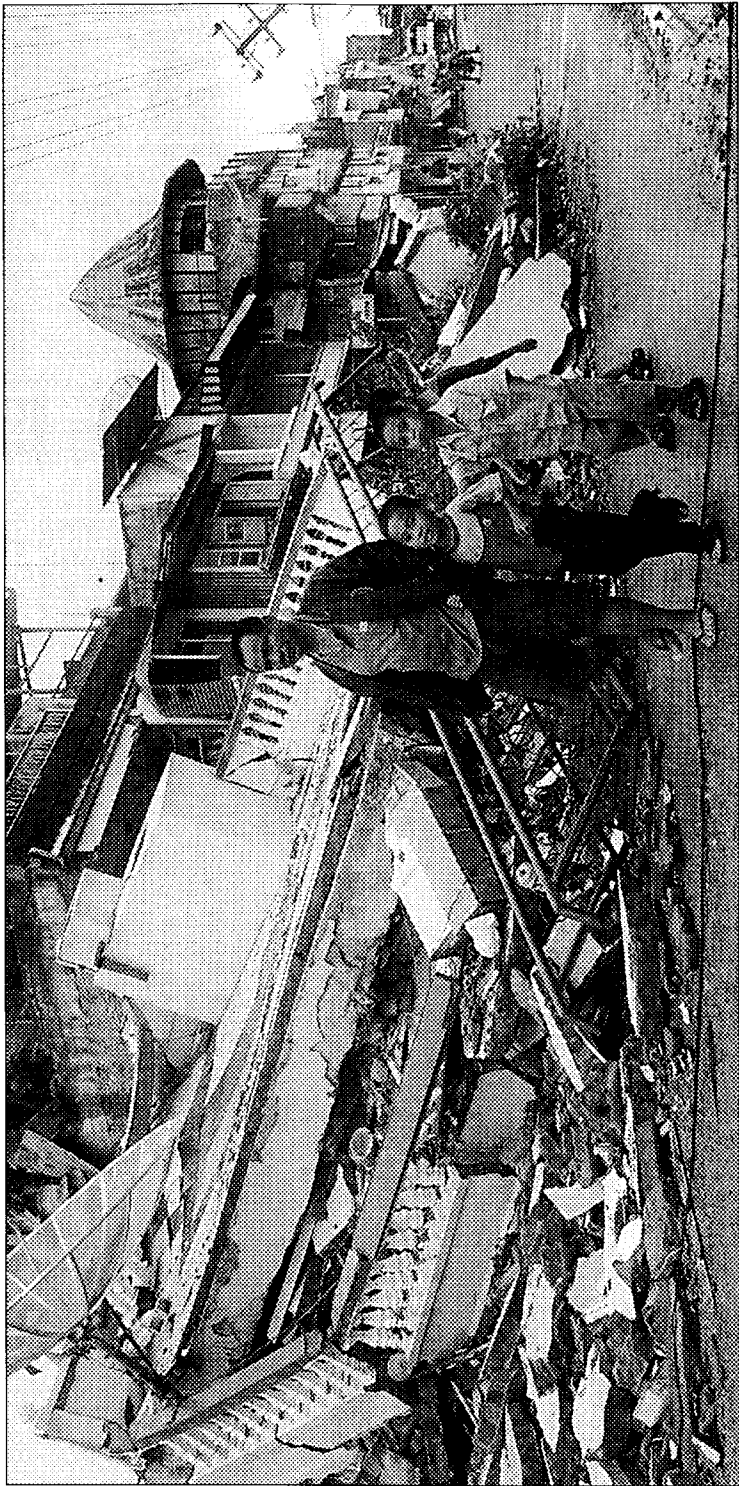
Reuters
Gunungsitoli, March 30

CRUCIAL AID began flowing into Indonesia's earthquake-devastated Nias island on Wednesday as survivors combed rubble of buildings for loved ones and some, driven by hunger, looted food.

In Nias, as many as 2,000 people are feared to have died and many more were believed to be trapped under the rubble. A United Nations statement said 500 people were confirmed dead on the island.

Injured survivors pleaded for help two days after an 8.7 magnitude earthquake destroyed large parts of the island. "Please sir, help us, we are starving," said a man in Gunungsitoli, the main town on Nias, as dozens of people looted a government store. Police looked on helplessly. "They drive us away like pigs. We came here because we are hungry," said Abdul Murah Tanjung (55) a Muslim resident of the mostly Christian island.

Emergency aid began reaching the victims as Indonesian troops arrived to help in rescue and clearing efforts. Singaporean military helicopters were flying in food, water and medical supplies and evacuating the injured, witnesses said. Vice presi-



A family walks past the ravaged neighbourhood of Gunung Sitoli on Indonesia's Nias island on Wednesday.

deal without food or water.

In Gunungsitoli, a town of about 30,000 people, survivors wept over the bodies of relatives brought to mosques, churches

and temples. The stench of death hung in the air. Officials said logistical problems were making it hard to help survivors on Nias, about 1,400 km northwest of

Jakarta. Relief agency SurfAid International spokeswoman Jude Barrand said hundreds of wounded were receiving no medical treatment as most doctors and nurses had fled fearing a tsunami. "It's like a ghost town. Most people have run for the hills. The ones who are left are trapped in the rubble," she said.

AP

Quake toll crosses thousand

■ NIAS ISLAND IN INDONESIA WORST HIT ■ WATER, ELECTRIC SUPPLY DISRUPTED

NIAS ISLAND (Indonesia), March 29. — Rescuers today said more than 1,000 people are feared to have died when a strong earthquake hit this north-west Indonesian island last night, triggering tsunami warnings which caused panic across the Indian Ocean nations.

The epicentre of the quake, measuring 8.7 on the Richter scale, was just 320 km from that of the 26 December one which spawned the tsunami that killed over 273,000 people in 12 nations.

"About a third of Gunung Sitoli, the main town in Nias, is reported to have undergone the heaviest damage. It is estimated that more than 1,000 people in Nias island died," the Indonesian Red Cross said in a statement. A team from Oxfam International reported widespread damage. "The devastation is obvious as soon as you land," said team member Ms Alessandra Villas-Boas. "Bodies are being pulled from the rubble as I speak."

Some 20,000 people in Gunung Sitoli were without water, the electricity grid was also out of order and roads were badly damaged, the team said. Presidential envoy Mr TB Silalahi, who flew there for a brief visit, estimated that around 25 or 30 per cent of the town was damaged.

Earlier, Indonesian officials said at least 430 people had been confirmed dead on Nias and Simeulue islands off Sumatra. But Vice-President Mr Yusuf Kalla told the BBC that reports from Nias indicated 1,000 to 2,000 people had died. Sweden's foreign ministry said two of its nationals were missing on Nias.

Last night's undersea quake prompted Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, among others, to issue warnings of imminent tsunami. Alerts rang out on TV and radio, while police tried to shepherd people to safety away from the coast towards high ground. But the giant tsunamis never materialised and three hours after the quake Indonesia and Thailand gave the all-clear.



An aerial view of the earthquake-hit area of Nias island, Indonesia, on Tuesday. (Below) Foreign tourists rush to Phuket airport in southern Thailand to catch flights back home. — AFP

Sri Lanka and India followed several hours later.

"There have been tsunamis recorded as a result of the quake but apparently they were not destructive," said Dr Laura Kong, director of the Hawaii-based International Tsunami Information Center which sent tsunami warnings to Asian countries.

Speaking after an emergency Cabinet meeting, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said he was exasperated by the timing of the quake. "We had just ended the emergency relief in Aceh and Nias, we were taken by surprise again by the earthquake in Nias and Simeulue."

Offers of help

■ India today conveyed its condolences to Indonesia over the loss of life and property following last night's earthquake, a report adds from New Delhi.

In a message to the Indonesian



President, Dr Manmohan Singh offered New Delhi's assistance and support that may be required

by Jakarta in the aftermath of the national calamity.

The Indian government has also announced assistance amounting to \$2 million for emergency relief supplies to the victims of the earthquake in Nias island off Sumatra.

Australia, Japan and Singapore today prepared to redeploy troops in Indonesia to help with that country's latest earthquake disaster, while Washington and other nations expressed condolences and a desire to help.

■ Prime Minister Mr John Howard said Australia would provide a field hospital and air medical evacuation team. He said he might order a navy transport ship that had been en route back to Australia after helping in the tsunami relief effort in Aceh to turnaround, and could send two military transport planes. He also pledged an additional AU\$ 1 million in aid to Indonesia.

■ Indonesian military chief Gen.

Endriartono Sutarto said the Singapore military had agreed to allocate three Chinook helicopters to help the relief effort. The Indonesian military was rushing four helicopters, two warships loaded with food, medicine and mater and two C-130 transport planes carrying military health teams to the region.

■ US embassies in the tsunami zone were put "in battle mode" so they could "act appropriately if and when it's necessary", State Department spokesman Mr Adam Ereli said.

■ Japan's defence chief, Mr Yoshinori Ono, said his country was ready to send additional troops to Indonesia if they were needed in the new aid effort. "We are on standby and ready to help at any moment."

■ President Vladimir Putin today sent his condolences and offered help to Indonesia. "With deep regret I learned of yet another deadly natural disaster in Indonesia," Mr Putin said in a telegram to the Indonesian President.

Timely alert

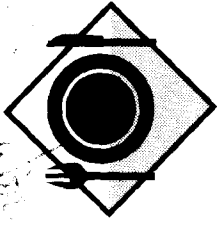
The initial parts of an Indian Ocean tsunami warning system that is not due until mid-2006 worked to alert governments in the region to the latest major earthquake and helped sound the all-clear ending fears of a killer wave, a UN specialist in Geneva said today.

Indian Ocean nations agreed in a Paris meeting earlier this month to establish the full warning system next year, but first steps were already under way, said Mr John Harding of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

Today was the deadline for governments to provide contact details to Japanese and US warning centres, and many had already provided the details, Mr Harding said. The contacts made it possible for word of the 8.7 magnitude earthquake off Sumatra to be relayed "to authorities in the region through a number of networks". — SNS & Agencies

কীটনাশক-সম্ভ্রাস থেকে মুক্তিতে টোটকাই সম্বল

মিলন দত্ত



কীটনাশক আর রাসায়নিক সারের ভয়ঙ্কর আবর্ত থেকে বেরোতে চাইছে বিশ্ব। আমেরিকা আর পশ্চিম ইউরোপের দেশগুলোতে ইতিমধ্যেই চাষ-আবাদ থেকে রাসায়নিক এবং কীটনাশক বাদ দেওয়ার তৎপরতা শুরু হয়েছে। তারা ডিডিটি-র মতো মারাত্মক ক্ষতিকর কীটনাশকের উপরে অনেক দিন হল চরম নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করেছে। এমনকী, কীটনাশক বা রাসায়নিকের অবশেষ রয়েছে, এমন খাদ্য আমদানিও বন্ধ করে দিয়েছে ওই দেশগুলো। খুব অল্প হলেও আমাদের দেশে জৈব চাষ করিয়ে আনার চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। জৈব চাষের আধুনিক পদ্ধতিগুলো চাষীদের শেখানোর ব্যাপারে উদ্যোগী হয়েছে কয়েকটি স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংস্থা।

কিন্তু কৃষি বিভাগের কতাবা মনে করছেন, এ দেশে রাসায়নিক সার ও কীটনাশক সুরিয়ে রেখে জৈব পদ্ধতির চাষ সম্ভব নয়। রাজ্যের অতিরিক্ত কৃষি অধিকতা ডুপেট্রকুমার মিশ্রের কথায়, “ইউরিয়াম থাকে ৮৫ শতাংশ নাইট্রোজেন আর গোবরে ৩ শতাংশ। জৈব চাষে গেলে প্রথমেই উৎপাদন ৪০ থেকে ৬০ শতাংশ কমে যাবে। ফসলের দামও যাবে বেড়ে। তা হলে ১১০ কেচি মুখে অল্প জুটবে কী করে?” অতএব আমাদের দেশের প্রেক্ষিতে কীটনাশক বা রাসায়নিক সারের ব্যবহার বন্ধের প্রশ্নই ওঠে না।

খাদ্যে কীটনাশক নিয়ন্ত্রণ করার জন্য একটা আইন আছে বটে, তবে তা কাগজে বলমেই। প্রিভেনশন অব ফুড অ্যান্ড ড্রাগস অ্যান্ড কনট্রোল অ্যাক্ট অব ইন্ডিয়া ১৯৫৪ নামে যে আইন এ দেশে রয়েছে, তাতে খাদ্যে কীটনাশকের নিরূপিত মাত্রা বর্ণনা দেওয়া হয়েছে। কিন্তু বিধানচক্র কৃষি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের কৃষি-রসায়ন বিভাগের গবেষণাগারের মূল্যায়ন অনুযায়ী দুধ থেকে শুরু করে ফুলকপি কিংবা খাসির মাংস—সব খাদ্যেই কীটনাশক আছে। অনিশ্চিত মাত্রার উপরে। কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের জীববিজ্ঞানের অধ্যাপক করে। “কীটনাশক এক ধরনের বিষ। ওই বিষ আমাদের শরীরে ঢুকে মায়ুতন্ত্রকে আক্রমণ করে। শরীরের প্রতিটি প্রত্যঙ্গ যে হেতু মায়ু দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রিত, তাই কীটনাশক আখ্যে যেতে পারে। ওই বিষ কখনও ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত করে।” কীটনাশকের প্রভাবের মানুষের আচরণ পর্যন্ত বদলে যেতে পারে। ওই বিষ কখনও ব্যাঙ্গারের মতো ভয়ানক রোগেরও সৃষ্টি করে। কেবল কীটনাশক নয়, সজি ভাজা রাখতে বিক্রোতার অনেক সময়েই তুঁত (কেপার সালফেট)—এর জলে ডুবিয়ে রাখেন। তুঁত মারাত্মক বিষ। এ হেন কাজকেও অপরাধ হিসেবে ধরা হয় না। ব্যবসায়ীরা প্রকাশ্যে এই কাজ করে চলেছেন।

কীটনাশক আর রাসায়নিক সারের লাগামছাড়া ব্যবহারের কীট ও পতঙ্গের প্রতিরোধ ক্ষমতা যাচ্ছে বেড়ে। ফলে ফল-শস্যের আরও শক্তিশালী, আরও তীব্র কীটনাশক আরও বেশি পরিমাণে ব্যবহার করতে হচ্ছে। কিন্তু চাষি কীভাবে জানতে পারেন যে, কোনও একটা ফসলে ঠিক কী পরিমাণ কীটনাশক কত

বার দিতে হবে? চাষির সহজ জবাব, “দোকানে গিয়ে বলি আগের বিষটা, দেওয়ার পরেও পাতায় গুঁড়ো গুঁড়ো পোকা হচ্ছে। কিংবা পাতা লাল হয়ে যাচ্ছে বা গাছের ভাল শুকিয়ে যাচ্ছে। তখন দোকানদার কোনও নতুন ওষুধ ধরিয়ে দেয়। যে ওষুধটা যত টুকু যে ভাবে দিতে বলে, ততটুকু সেই ভাবেই দিই। তাতে কখনও কাজ হয়, কখনও হয় না।” ডিলারদের কথা মতোই চলতে হয় চাষীদের। আর ডিলারেরা সেই কীটনাশকই বেশি বিক্রি করেন, যে কোম্পানি কমিশন বেশি দেয়। ফতুল্লাপুরের চাষি সিরাজুল ফকির বললেন, “দোকানদাররা যেমন বলে, আমরা সেই মতো চলি। তাতে চাষের খরচ দিনকে দিন বেড়েই চলেছে।”

অথচ এ রাজ্যে প্রত্যেক রকেই এক জন করে কৃষি উন্নয়ন অফিসার আছেন এই কাজটা করার জন্য। রাজ্যের কোনও কীটনাশক বা সার অফিস কিংবা ফসলের নতুন কোনও রোগ দেখা দিলে তিনি চাষির কাছে পৌঁছে যাবেন নিদান বাতলে দিতে। কিন্তু রাজ্য কৃষি দফতরের ওই অফিসারদের দেখা পান না চাষিরা। মাঝবয়সী চাষি সিরাজুল ফকিরের কথায়, “রকের কোনও অফিসার কোনও দিন আমাদের গ্রামে কীটনাশকের ব্যবহার-বিধি শেখাতে এসেছেন, এমনটা মনে পড়ে না।”

ফলে বেশির ভাগ সময়েই প্রয়োজনের তুলনায় অনেক বেশি পরিমাণে কীটনাশক ব্যবহৃত হচ্ছে, যার অধিকাংশই নিম্ন মানের। তা ছাড়া, ফ্রেক কোম্পানির ডিলারদের আশু পরামর্শ মেনে চাষিরা কীটনাশক ব্যবহার করেন বলেই খ্যাতি এত বেশি কীটনাশক অবশেষ থেকে যাচ্ছে—যৌথ সংসদীয় কমিটির রিপোর্টেও তা স্বীকার করা হয়েছে। ডুপেট্রকুমার মিশ্র অবশ্য আশার কথা স্তব্ধিয়েছেন, “কীটনাশকের উপরে নির্ভরতা কমাতে আমরা সংহত কীট নিবারণ কর্মসূচি নিয়েছি। সেখানে চাষীদের শেখানো হচ্ছে, কোন ফসল কোন সময় করলে ন্যূনতম নিয়ন্ত্রিত। তা ছাড়া, নতুন প্রজন্মের যে সব সবুজ-কীটনাশক এখন তিরি হচ্ছে, তার কীটনাশক কম। ফসলে ওই সব কীটনাশকের আয়ুও কম।” তবে নতুন প্রজন্মের কীটনাশকের দাম

অথচ ফ্রেক কীটনাশকের দৌরাতেই ভারতীয় খাদ্যসামগ্রী রফতানিতে মন্দা দেখা দিয়েছে। আমেরিকা ও পশ্চিম ইউরোপের দেশগুলো শুধু মাছ, টিংড়ি বা ফল নয়, মাত্রাছাড়া কীটনাশক থাকায় ভারতীয় চা পর্যন্ত কিনতে চাইছে না। চাপে পড়ে ইদানীং রফতানিযোগ্য ফসল তৈরি পদ্ধতিতে চাষ করার চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। তবে শৈব-সজি অশুভ দু'খটী জলে ডুবিয়ে রাখতে পারলে কীটনাশকের বেশি বলাহেন, রাসায়নিক সারের লাগামছাড়া ব্যবহারের কীট ও পতঙ্গের প্রতিরোধ ক্ষমতা যাচ্ছে বেড়ে। ফলে ফল-শস্যের আরও শক্তিশালী, আরও তীব্র কীটনাশক আরও বেশি পরিমাণে ব্যবহার করতে

কীটনাশকের সম্ভ্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে আপাতত এই টোটকা আর আশ্বাসটুকুই আমাদের সম্বল। (শেষ)

উপকারী কীট মেরে কীটনাশকের দুষ্টচক্রে

মিলন দত্ত

‘ফুল ছোঁয়ানো’। শব্দটি কাব্যিক হলেও এর পিছনে রয়েছে ভয়ঙ্কর এক বাস্তব।

নির্বিচারা কীটনাশক ব্যবহারের ফলে এমন অনেক কীটপতঙ্গ মারা পড়ে, যারা ফসলের ক্ষতি তো করেই না, বরং উপকার করে। কীটনাশক মৌমাছির সব চেয়ে বড় ঘাতক। মৌমাছি পরাগ মিলনে সাহায্য করে। যে সব ফসলে পরাগ মিলন দরকার, মৌমাছি কমে যাওয়ায় অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রে তাদের ফলনও কমছে। সব চেয়ে বড় ক্ষতি হয়েছে পটল চাষের। মৌমাছির আর পতঙ্গের কাজ করতে হচ্ছে মহিলা আর শিশু মজুরদের। পরাগ মিলনের এই কৃত্রিম পদ্ধতির নাম হয়েছে ‘ফুল ছোঁয়ানো’। পরাগ মিলনের জন্য পুরুষ ফুল আলাদা করে চাষ করা হয়। পুরুষ ফুলের পাপড়ি ছিঁড়ে ফেলে তার পরাগ বৃত্তি ছোঁয়ানো হয় ২৫ থেকে ৩০টি স্ত্রী ফুলে। সূর্য ওঠার আগেই শেষ করতে হয় কাজ।

উত্তর ২৪ পরগনায় হাবড়ার পর থেকে বনগাঁর দিকে যেখানে সজির চাষ বেশি, সেখানে কাকভোরের মহিলা আর শিশুদের জমির আল ধরে সার বেঁধে পটলের জমিতে ‘ফুল ছোঁয়া’-তে যাওয়ার দৃশ্যটি অতি পরিচিত। অদ্ভুত এই জীবিকা নিয়ে বাংলায় ছোটগল্পও লেখা হয়ে গিয়েছে।

বেড়াচাঁপা ব্লকের সরফরাজপুরের চাষি রবিউল ইসলাম গাজি অবশ্য তাঁর সাত কাঠার পটল চাষে ‘ফুল ছোঁয়াতে’ মজুর ভাড়া করেন না। বাড়ির লোকেরাই



আহারে বিষ/২

চাষে ব্যবহৃত কীটনাশক আর রাসায়নিক সারের বিষাক্ত অবশেষ মিশে যাচ্ছে সজিতে, ধানে, দুধে। বিষ আমাদের প্রতিদিনের আহারে। কীটনাশকের অবশেষ মায়ের দুধেও।

এই ভাবে বিষ ছড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে প্রকৃতিতে, পরিবেশে। কীটনাশকের বিষক্রিয়া নিয়ে বিশেষ প্রতিবেদন।

কাজটা সেরে নেয়। রবিউল বললেন, “ভোর বেলা মজুর পাওয়ার অসুবিধা বলে বড় চাষিরা পুরুষ ফুলের পরাগ জলে গুলে স্ত্রী ফুলের উপর স্প্রে করেন। তাতেই পরাগ মিলনের কাজটা হয়ে যায়।” মৌমাছি কমে যাওয়ায় বিপাকে পড়েছেন মধু-চাষিরাও। গোটা রাজ্যে বহু মধু-চাষি বেকার। কমছে মধু উৎপাদন।

এ ভাবেই কীটনাশক আর রাসায়নিক সার বিপন্ন করে তুলছে আমাদের এবং আমাদের পরিবেশ। হারিয়ে যাচ্ছে বেজি, সাপ, শিয়ালের মতো গ্রামবাংলার নিত্যসঙ্গী প্রাণীরা। আর দেখা মেলে না শকুনের। মৃত প্রাণীর বিষাক্ত দেহাবশেষ কিংবা বিষাক্ত কেঁচো খেয়ে হারিয়ে গিয়েছে বহু পাখি। কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের জীববিজ্ঞানের অধ্যাপক পুলক লাহিড়ি জানালেন, তাঁরা জীবদেহে কীটনাশকের প্রভাব নিয়ে নিয়মিত গবেষণা করেন। জানালেন, কী ভাবে গ্যামাসিনের মতো কীটনাশকের প্রভাবে পাখির ডিমের আকার ছোট হয়ে যাচ্ছে, জগ্ন মরে যাচ্ছে ডিমের ভিতরেই এবং ক্যালসিয়ামের অভাবে ডিমের খোলা যাচ্ছে পাতলা হয়ে। এতটাই পাতলা যে, মা পাখি তা দিতে বসলেও ডিম ভেঙে যাচ্ছে। তার ফলে প্রজনন প্রক্রিয়া ব্যাহত হয়ে হারিয়ে যাচ্ছে বিভিন্ন পাখি। পুলকবাবু বললেন, “খাদ্য-পিরামিড আঁকলে তার একেবারে উপরে রাখা হয় যে পাখিদের, তারাই সবচেয়ে দ্রুত নিশ্চিহ্ন হয়ে যাচ্ছে।”

হয় যে পাখিদের, তারাই সবচেয়ে দ্রুত নিশ্চিহ্ন হয়ে যাচ্ছে।”
এর পর সাতের পাতায়

কীটনাশকের দুষ্টচক্রে

প্রথম পাতার পর

রাজ্যের অতিরিক্ত কৃষি অধিকর্তা ভূপেন্দ্রকুমার মিশ্রের বক্তব্য, “ধান বা অন্য ফসলে কীটনাশকের ব্যবহার তত বেশি নয়। ফলে সেখানে সমস্যাটা অন্য। কিন্তু সজি চাষে খরচ যে হেতু বেশি এবং টাকাটা চাষি তাড়াতাড়ি ফেরত আনতে চান, তাই সেখানে কীটনাশকের ব্যবহার বেপরোয়া। আমরা তাঁদের জৈব কীটনাশক ব্যবহার শেখানোর চেষ্টা করছি।” সেই চেষ্টা যে স্রেফ কাগজে-কলমেই, তা চাষির কাছে গেলেই টের পাওয়া যায়।

কেবল সার বা কীটনাশক নয়, জমিতে নিড়োনোর খরচ বাঁচাতে অনেক চাষিই এখন আগাছানাশক রাসায়নিক ব্যবহার করছেন। চাষের মোট খরচের শতকরা ৪০ থেকে ৬০ ভাগই যায় জমি নিড়িয়ে আগাছা নির্মূল করতে। মজুর ভাড়া করে নিড়োনোর খরচ অনেক। সেই খরচ কমিয়ে কৃষিকে লাভজনক করতে আগাছানাশক রাসায়নিকের ব্যবহার বাড়ছে। ওই রাসায়নিকের বেশির ভাগটাই গাছে যায়। কিছুটা আলো হাওয়ায় মিশে নষ্ট হয়ে যায়। কিছুটা গড়িয়ে মাটিতে পড়ে ধীরে ধীরে মিশে যায় ভূগর্ভস্থ জলস্তরে। খানিকটা আবার বৃষ্টি আর সেচের জলে ধুয়ে নদী, পুকুর বা খালে গিয়ে পড়ে। এ ছাড়াও একই পদ্ধতিতে ভূগর্ভ এবং ভূপৃষ্ঠের জলে মিশে যাচ্ছে নানা রকম রাসায়নিক এবং কীটনাশক।

তার ফলে নদী বা পুকুরের বহু মাছ বিলুপ্ত হয়ে যাচ্ছে। বিলীন হচ্ছে সেই প্রজাতির মাছগুলিই, যেগুলির কৃত্রিম প্রজনন হয় না বা করা খুব কষ্টকর। কয়েক বছর আগে গোটা দেশের সঙ্গ এ রাজ্যেও জীববৈচিত্র্যের সার্বিক অবস্থা নিয়ে একটি বিস্তারিত রিপোর্ট তৈরি করা হয়েছিল। সেই রিপোর্টে নোনা এবং মিষ্টি জল মিলিয়ে বিপন্নের তালিকায় মোট ৪৯টি মাছ স্থান পেয়েছে। তালিকায় আছে চিতল, ফলুই, পাঙাস, বাচা, চাঁদা, পুটি, সরপুটি, ন্যাদোসের মতো বাঙালির অতি পরিচিত সব মাছ। কীটনাশকের দৌরাত্ম্যে তার অনেকগুলিই দ্রুত বিলুপ্ত হয়ে যাবে বলে আশঙ্কা করছে বিজ্ঞানী মহল।

কেবল মাছ বা পাখি নয়, গত পঞ্চাশ বছর ধরে কীটনাশক রাসায়নিক সার ও সজি রং করার রাসায়নিকের যথেষ্ট ব্যবহারের প্রভাবে মানুষ তথা সমস্ত জীবের শরীরে ও সার্বিক ভাবে পরিবেশে ওই ধরনের বিষ স্থায়ী জায়গা করে নিয়েছে।

কীট নাশ করতে গিয়ে ক্রমশ নাশ হচ্ছে আমাদের দৈনিক জীবনের স্বাভাবিক খাদ্যক্রমও। খাদ্যশৃঙ্খলের নিচু থেকে উপরের দিকে এই কীটনাশকের সঞ্চয়ের মাত্রা ক্রমাগত বাড়ে। খাদ্য-পিরামিডের সর্বোচ্চ আসনে সর্বভুক মানুষ থাকায় ‘বায়ো-অ্যাকুমুলেশন’ পদ্ধতিতে সব চেয়ে বেশি বিষ জমে আক্রান্ত হই আমরাই।

আর কীটনাশকের যথেষ্ট ব্যবহারে আক্রান্ত তারাও, যারা কেবল মৌমাছির মতো পরাগ মিলনের পতঙ্গ নয়, ফসলের বন্ধু পোকাও। নিট ফল, উৎপাদিত ফসল বাঁচাতে কীটনাশকের চাহিদা দিনকে দিন বাড়তে হচ্ছে আমাদেরই। অন্তহীন এক দুষ্টচক্রের আবর্তে আমরা। (চলবে)

WORLD WATER DAY / A REMINDER

Start acting, Government urged

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 22. Even as the Union Water Resources Ministry held an official meeting at the Vigyan Bhavan here today to commemorate World Water Day, several civil society organisations, environmentalists and non-governmental organisations working in the water sector took to the streets asking the Government to stop indulging in rhetoric and start acting. The groups were demanding clean water, quality water, better water supply and community rights over water.

"Availability or lack of water has now become a universally accepted indicator for development," the UNESCO Representative in India, M. Tawfik, pointed out at the meeting organised by the Water Resources Ministry.

He said the triumphs were still shadowed by a few "sordid" facts: There were more than 1.2 billion people without access to safe drinking water; 2.3 billion people without proper sanitation. And, according to him, more than 80 countries still did

not have a proper plan for water resource management and development and required help.

'Water as life'

World Water Day was earmarked as such by the United Nations in 1992. In December 2003, the U.N. General Assembly agreed to proclaim the years 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action. This year the theme is "Water as Life." The U.N.'s global agenda has underscored water issues as: provision of safe drinking water to all, implementation of integrated water resources management, strengthening water monitoring programme, meeting financial challenge and moving towards a framework of action.

Mr. Tawfik said attaining drinking water and sanitation goals would underpin other U.N. Millennium Development Goals, including economic poverty, health and education.

Stressing the need for water conservation and preservation, the Water Resources Minister, Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, said one of the potent difficulties in

managing the global water resources was uneven distribution with regard to the geographical size and the population. "India, with a share of four per cent of the world's water and 2.45 per cent of the world's land resources has to support about one-sixth of the world's population. In the face of rapidly dwindling per capita water availability, the country has little option other than to explore new avenues of development of utilisable water resources. Simultaneously the restoration of traditional water bodies also is a priority."

'Exciting possibilities'

Seeking the cooperation of from NGOs non-government organisations and water users associations, he said the interface between the government and the civil society offered "exciting possibilities" and if "handled properly" could yield rich dividends. "This is even more true in the case of water sector where the feedback from the end users are imperative for devising future planning and strategies," he said.

জলসঙ্কটের মূলেও গ্লোবাল ওয়ার্মিং

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: জলাভূমি বুজিয়ে নির্মাণকাজ চালানো শুধু নয়, গ্লোবাল ওয়ার্মিংকেও ভারতীয় উপমহাদেশে সম্ভাব্য জলসঙ্কটের কারণ হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করলেন বিজ্ঞানীরা। তাঁরা জানিয়েছেন, গ্লোবাল ওয়ার্মিং দ্বিমুখী প্রভাব ফেলেছে জলসঙ্কটের উপরে। এক দিকে হিমালয়ের হিমবাহগুলি দ্রুত গলছে; অন্য দিকে পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা বৃদ্ধিতে খুব দীর্ঘে দীর্ঘে হলেও শুকিয়ে যাচ্ছে জলাভূমি।

এই উপমহাদেশে জলের উৎস প্রধানত তিনটি। হিমালয়ের হিমবাহ, ভূগর্ভের জল আর জলাভূমি। অতিরিক্ত ব্যবহারের ফলে ভূগর্ভের জলে ইতিমধ্যেই টান পড়েছে। আর এর ফলেই জলে মিশে যাচ্ছে আর্সেনিক, গ্লোবাইডের মতো

বিপজ্জনক রাসায়নিক। জলাভূমিকে পানীয় জলের উৎস হিসাবে ব্যবহার করার পরিকল্পনা কখনওই ঠিকমতো কার্যকর না-হওয়ায় জলাভূমি সংরক্ষণে উদ্যোগী হয়নি কেন্দ্র ও রাজ্য।

হিমবাহ ও ভূগর্ভের জলে টান পড়ায় এখন জলাভূমির জল ব্যবহারের পরিকল্পনা চলছে সর্বত্র। আর তাতেই জানা গেল, জলাভূমির আয়তন কমে যাচ্ছে। উন্নয়নের পাশাপাশি গ্লোবাল ওয়ার্মিংও তার জন্য সমান ভাবে দায়ী।

মঙ্গলবার, বিশ্ব জল সংরক্ষণ দিবসে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের বিশেষজ্ঞেরা যে-রিপোর্ট পেশ করেছেন, তাতে জলাভূমি কমে যাওয়ার জন্য গ্লোবাল ওয়ার্মিংকে দায়ী করা হয়েছে।

রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের বিশেষজ্ঞদের রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, বিশ্বের তাপমাত্রা আর

তিন থেকে চার ডিগ্রি সেলসিয়াস বেড়ে গেলেই বিশ্বের ৮৫ শতাংশ জলাভূমি পুরোপুরি শুকিয়ে যাবে। বোজানোর প্রয়োজন হবে না। গ্লোবাল ওয়ার্মিংয়ের প্রভাব পড়বে বাংলাদেশ থেকে বতসোয়ানা পর্যন্ত। তার ফলে বহু প্রজাতির প্রাণী ও উদ্ভিদ প্রজাতি পুরোপুরি ধ্বংস হয়ে যাবে বলেও ওই রিপোর্টে আশঙ্কা প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে।

১০ বছর ধরে হিমালয়ের হিমবাহগুলি গলছে। এখন শীতকালেও তা গলে যাচ্ছে। শীতকালে তাপমাত্রা যথেষ্ট না-কমায় হিমবাহগুলি গলছে বলে পরিবেশ-বিজ্ঞানীরা জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন। তাপমাত্রা বাড়তে থাকলে ওই হিমবাহগুলি আরও দ্রুত গলবে বলে জানিয়েছেন বিজ্ঞানীরা। আর তাতে দেশে জলসঙ্কট অবশ্যম্ভাবী।

ANADARAZAR PATEKKA

23 MAR 2005

সজ্জি-মাছ তো বটেই, কীটনাশক মায়ের দুধেও

মিলন দত্ত

উত্তর ২৪ পরগনার মরা সোঁতা যমুনার পারে চারখাটে ভূমিতলার চাষি আবদুল কাদের তাঁর জমিতে ফলানো যে পটল হাটে বেচেন, তা ভুলেও নিজে খান না। মাথার ঘাম পায় ফেলে ফলানো সেই পটল, ট্যাডস, কিঙে কিংবা বেগুন মুখে তোলেন না তাঁর পরিবারের কেউই। “বাড়ির লোকের রোজকার খাওয়ার জন্য ঘরের কাছে একটু জমিতে খানিকটা তরকারি ফলিয়ে নিই বিষ কম দিয়ে”—কবুল করলেন আবদুল কাদের।

কেবল আবদুলই নন, গোটা রাজ্যেই একটু সচেতন চাষি মাত্রই একই কাজ করেন। যে শাক-সজ্জি তিনি বাজারে নিয়ে যাচ্ছেন বিক্রির জন্য, সেটা তাঁর নিজের হাঁসেলে ঢোকে না। চাষিদের এই আশঙ্কা যে কতটা সত্যি, তার প্রমাণ রয়েছে কৃষি বিজ্ঞানীদের নথিতে।

বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের কৃষি-রাসায়ন বিভাগের গবেষণাগারে খাদ্যে কীটনাশকের অবশেষ নিয়ে গবেষকেরা কাজ করে চলেছেন দীর্ঘ কুড়ি বছর ধরে। ওই বিভাগের প্রধান ও বিশিষ্ট কৃষি বিজ্ঞানী অঙ্কন ভট্টাচার্য জানানেন যে চাল, সরিষা, অড়হড়, ছোলা, ফুলকপি, বাঁধাকপি, বেগুন, পটল, ট্যাডস, উচ্ছে, লঙ্কা, শশা, বিঙে, কমলা লেবু, কলা, আম, পেয়ারা ছাড়াও মাছ, ডিম, মাংস, দুধ, মাখন এমনিই বোঝাচ্ছে। “বাড়ির লোকের রোজকার খাওয়ার জন্য ঘরের কাছে একটু জমিতে খানিকটা তরকারি ফলিয়ে নিই বিষ কম দিয়ে”—কবুল করলেন আবদুল কাদের।

ওই বিভাগের ২০০৪ সালের নভেম্বরে প্রকাশিত রিপোর্ট থেকে জানা যায়, তাঁরা বিভিন্ন রকম সজ্জির মোট ২৫৪টি নমুনা পরীক্ষা করেছেন। তাঁর মধ্যে ১২০টিই দুধিত। ৩২টি নমুনায় আবার কীটনাশকের অবশেষ রয়েছে সর্বোচ্চ মাত্রা (এমআরএল)-র উর্ধ্বে। বলাই বাহুল্য, কীটনাশকের ওই মাত্রা মানুষের শরীরের পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক।



আহারে বিষ/১

চাষে ব্যবহৃত কীটনাশক আর রাসায়নিক সারের বিষাক্ত অবশেষ মিশে যাচ্ছে সজ্জিতে, ধানে, দুধে। বিষ আমাদের প্রতিদিনের আহারে। কীটনাশকের অবশেষ মায়ের দুধেও।

এই ভাবে বিষ ছড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে প্রকৃতিতে, পরিবেশে। কীটনাশকের বিষক্রিয়া নিয়ে বিশেষ প্রতিবেদন।

কেবল সজ্জি নয়, ভাতেও রয়েছে বিপজ্জনক মাত্রায় কীটনাশক। রিপোর্ট

বলা হয়েছে, চালের যে ১৯টি নমুনা পরীক্ষা করা হয়েছে, তার সব ক’টিই দুধিত। তার ৬টিতে কীটনাশক আছে সর্বোচ্চ মাত্রার উপরে। মাছের ৭৮৭টি নমুনার ৪৬৯টিই দুধিত। এবং ৮০টি নমুনায় রয়েছে মাত্রাছাড়া কীটনাশক। মুরগি বা খাসির মাংসেও নমুনাতেও বিপজ্জনক মাত্রায় বিষ মিলেছে। মাংসের ৬৮টি নমুনা পরীক্ষা করে ৫৫টিতে দুধণ মিলেছে, আর ৯টি নমুনায় মাত্রাছাড়া কীটনাশকের অবশেষ মিলেছে। দুধ, মাখন ও বেকিফুডের পরীক্ষিত ৯১টি মধ্যে ৬৯টি নমুনাই দুধিত। তার মধ্যে ৩৩টি নমুনায় আছে মাত্রাছাড়া কীটনাশক।

এই সব নমুনা সংগ্রহ করা হয় রাজ্যের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চল থেকে। এ ছাড়াও আমরা প্রতিদিন যে রান্না করা খাবার খাই তাতেও রয়েছে মারাত্মক সব কীটনাশক আর ডিডিডি। অঙ্কন ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, “আমরা সারাদিনে আমিষ ও নিরামিষ মিলিয়ে দেড় কেজি

প্রথম পাতার পর তাজা কীটনাশকও। যে কীটনাশক ঢোকে আমাদের শরীরে। কেবল কীটনাশক নয়, জমিতে যে রাসায়নিক সার ব্যবহার করা হয় তার অবশেষ বিভিন্ন শস্য, শাক-সজ্জি এমন কী দুধেও থেকে যায়। বিধানচন্দ্র কৃষি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক্তন অধ্যাপক রাধাগোবিন্দ মাইতি বলেন, “ফসল তাজাতাড়ি বাড়িয়ে তুলতে ও নজরকাজা ঘন সবুজ করে তুলতে কীটনাশক ছাড়াও জমিতে বিপুল পরিমাণে নাইট্রোজেন-ঘটিত সার ব্যবহার করেন চাষিরা। ওই সারের অর্ধেকেরও কম কাজে লাগে। কীটনাশকও তাই। বিষ ও রাসায়নিকের একটা অংশ সেচের জলে মিশে শিকড়ের নাগালের নীচে নেমে যায়। কিংবা চলে যায় খাল, বিল, পুকুর, নদীতে। রাসায়নিক চুইয়ে নেমে গিয়ে মেশে মাটির নীচের জলে।” সেই কীটনাশকই মাছ বাহিত হয়ে আবার আমাদের শরীরে ঢোকে।

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

কীটনাশক মায়ের দুধেও

আর কার্বেফুরানের মতো দীর্ঘস্থায়ী কীটনাশক বাহিত হচ্ছে। কীটনাশক পানের গায়ে অবিকৃত ভাবে থেকে যায় যথাক্রমে ১২ দিন এবং ৩৩ দিন। পান পাতায় কীটনাশক পুরোপুরি সক্রিয় থাকাকালীনই তা বাজারে যাচ্ছে। চুন-সুপরি-এলাচের সঙ্গে আমরা চিবিয়ে খাচ্ছি ওই কীটনাশকও। কীটনাশক রয়েছে মায়ের দুধেও। ফলে জন্মের পরেই শিশুকে কীটনাশক খেতে হয় মায়ের দুধের সঙ্গে। মায়ের দুধে কীটনাশকের অবশেষ মেপেছেন কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের জীববিজ্ঞান বিভাগের অধ্যাপক পুলক লাহিড়ি। তিনি কলকাতার বিভিন্ন জায়গা থেকে ২৫ জন মায়ের কাছ থেকে বুকের দুধ সংগ্রহ করেন। পরীক্ষায় দেখা গিয়েছে, সেই দুধে রয়েছে মাত্রাছাড়া কীটনাশক। পুলকবাবু বলেন, “যে ২৫টি নমুনা আমরা পরীক্ষা করেছিলাম তার সব ক’টিতেই কীটনাশক ছিল। আমিষ-ভোজী ও নিরামিষাশি নিরপেক্ষ মায়ের দুধে কীটনাশক পাওয়া গিয়েছে। মায়ের দুধে পাওয়া গিয়েছে একাধিক কীটনাশক অবশেষ।” কীটনাশকের প্রভাব কত দূর পর্যন্ত পাতা। পানের বরজে কার্বেন্ডজাইম

প্রথম পাতার পর তাজা কীটনাশকও। যে কীটনাশক ঢোকে আমাদের শরীরে। কেবল কীটনাশক নয়, জমিতে যে রাসায়নিক সার ব্যবহার করা হয় তার অবশেষ বিভিন্ন শস্য, শাক-সজ্জি এমন কী দুধেও থেকে যায়। বিধানচন্দ্র কৃষি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক্তন অধ্যাপক রাধাগোবিন্দ মাইতি বলেন, “ফসল তাজাতাড়ি বাড়িয়ে তুলতে ও নজরকাজা ঘন সবুজ করে তুলতে কীটনাশক ছাড়াও জমিতে বিপুল পরিমাণে নাইট্রোজেন-ঘটিত সার ব্যবহার করেন চাষিরা। ওই সারের অর্ধেকেরও কম কাজে লাগে। কীটনাশকও তাই। বিষ ও রাসায়নিকের একটা অংশ সেচের জলে মিশে শিকড়ের নাগালের নীচে নেমে যায়। কিংবা চলে যায় খাল, বিল, পুকুর, নদীতে। রাসায়নিক চুইয়ে নেমে গিয়ে মেশে মাটির নীচের জলে।” সেই কীটনাশকই মাছ বাহিত হয়ে আবার আমাদের শরীরে ঢোকে।

এই সব নমুনা সংগ্রহ করা হয় রাজ্যের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চল থেকে। এ ছাড়াও আমরা প্রতিদিন যে রান্না করা খাবার খাই তাতেও রয়েছে মারাত্মক সব কীটনাশক আর ডিডিডি। অঙ্কন ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, “আমরা সারাদিনে আমিষ ও নিরামিষ মিলিয়ে দেড় কেজি

প্রথম পাতার পর তাজা কীটনাশকও। যে কীটনাশক ঢোকে আমাদের শরীরে। কেবল কীটনাশক নয়, জমিতে যে রাসায়নিক সার ব্যবহার করা হয় তার অবশেষ বিভিন্ন শস্য, শাক-সজ্জি এমন কী দুধেও থেকে যায়। বিধানচন্দ্র কৃষি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক্তন অধ্যাপক রাধাগোবিন্দ মাইতি বলেন, “ফসল তাজাতাড়ি বাড়িয়ে তুলতে ও নজরকাজা ঘন সবুজ করে তুলতে কীটনাশক ছাড়াও জমিতে বিপুল পরিমাণে নাইট্রোজেন-ঘটিত সার ব্যবহার করেন চাষিরা। ওই সারের অর্ধেকেরও কম কাজে লাগে। কীটনাশকও তাই। বিষ ও রাসায়নিকের একটা অংশ সেচের জলে মিশে শিকড়ের নাগালের নীচে নেমে যায়। কিংবা চলে যায় খাল, বিল, পুকুর, নদীতে। রাসায়নিক চুইয়ে নেমে গিয়ে মেশে মাটির নীচের জলে।” সেই কীটনাশকই মাছ বাহিত হয়ে আবার আমাদের শরীরে ঢোকে।

এই সব নমুনা সংগ্রহ করা হয় রাজ্যের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চল থেকে। এ ছাড়াও আমরা প্রতিদিন যে রান্না করা খাবার খাই তাতেও রয়েছে মারাত্মক সব কীটনাশক আর ডিডিডি। অঙ্কন ভট্টাচার্য বলেন, “আমরা সারাদিনে আমিষ ও নিরামিষ মিলিয়ে দেড় কেজি

No stopping global warming: Experts

Washington, March 17 (Reuters): Even if people stopped pumping out carbon dioxide and other pollutants tomorrow, global warming would still get worse, two teams of researchers reported today.

Sea levels will rise more than they have already risen, worsening the damage caused by extreme high tides and storm surges, and droughts, heat waves and storms will become more severe, the climate experts predicted.

That makes immediate action to slow global warming even more vital, the teams at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado report in the journal *Science*.

"Even if we stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations, the climate will continue to warm, and there will be proportionately even more sea level rise," said the NCAR's Gerald Meehl, who led one of the two studies. "The longer we wait, the more climate change we are committed to in the future."

Virtually no one disagrees

human activity is fuelling global warming, and a global treaty signed in Kyoto, Japan, aims to reduce polluting emissions.

But the world's biggest polluter, the US, has withdrawn from the 1997 treaty, saying its provisions would hurt the US economy.

Meehl's team ran two computer simulations of climate change — complex programmes, he said, that took months to run on supercomputers. Those models included as many variables as the researchers could think of, such as human carbon emissions, other pollution, current temperatures and their rate of change, emissions from volcanoes, changes in solar radiation and shifts in the ozone layer.

"Then we ran for the 21st century three different scenarios," Meehl said in an interview. One scenario assumed human production of carbon dioxide and other so-called greenhouse gases stabilised in 2000 and ran the model to the year 2100.

"We found that just based

on the ingredients that have already been put into the atmosphere in the 20th century, we already are committed to another half-a-degree (0.5 degree Celsius) of global warming," Meehl said.

"That's about what we saw in the 20th century. We are already committed to as much climate change in the 21st century as we saw in the 20th century."

That would mean more extreme weather and a rise in sea levels, not even accounting for melting ice, Meehl said.

Experts say sea levels have risen 9 cm already over the past century and could rise between 9 to 88 cm more in the next century.

In a second study in *Science*, the NCAR's Tom Wigley said he used a much simpler climate model to make a similar prediction.

He found it may not be possible to reduce emissions enough to stop the sea from rising. Even if all emissions stopped now, he calculated, changes were under way that would lead to a rise in sea levels of 10 cm per century.

নদী সংযোগ নিয়ে বৈঠক মুখ্যমন্ত্রীদের

নয়াদিল্লি, ১৪ মার্চ: নদী সংযুক্তিকরণ নিয়ে বিভিন্ন রাজ্যের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসবেন বলে জানিয়েছেন কেন্দ্রীয় জলসম্পদ মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাসমুন্সি। আজ লোকসভায় তিনি বলেন, “নদী-সংযোগ প্রক্রিয়াটি রাজ্যের বিষয়। তাই এ নিয়ে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীদের বৈঠক ডাকা প্রয়োজন।” তবে তার আগে তিনি নিজে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীদের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকে বসবেন বলে প্রিয়রঞ্জন জানিয়েছেন। তিনি বলেছেন, ইউ পি এ সরকার নদী সংযুক্তিকরণ প্রকল্প এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে বদ্ধপরিকর। কিন্তু রাজ্যগুলি এই ব্যাপারে একমত হতে পারেনি। তাই মৌ সই না-হলে কবে এই প্রকল্প রূপায়িত হবে সে সম্পর্কে নির্দিষ্ট ভাবে কিছু বলা সম্ভব নয়।

আজ লোকসভায় কर्नाটকের একটি জলবিদ্যুৎ প্রকল্প নিয়ে কर्नाটক এবং অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশের সদস্যদের মধ্যে তর্কাতর্কি হয়। অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশের তেলুগু দেশম পার্টির সাংসদ এম জগন্নাথ বলেন তুঙ্গভদ্রা নদীর উপর তৈরি ওই বাঁধটি অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশের পক্ষে ক্ষতিকর। অবিলম্বে এই বাঁধ তৈরি বন্ধ করা হোক। কर्नाটকের বিজেপি ও কংগ্রেস সদস্যরা এই বক্তব্যের তীব্র প্রতিবাদ করেন। এ নিয়ে কर्नाটকের সাংসদদের কাল মতামত জানানোর সুযোগ দেওয়া হবে বলে স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় জানান। — পি টি আই

Warning: Himalayan glaciers melting

Surajit Dasgupta
in New Delhi

March 14. — Climate change is causing Himalayan glaciers to retreat rapidly, threatening water shortages for hundreds of millions of people who rely on glacier-dependent rivers, conservationists, through the forum, WWF (World Wildlife Fund) in a report to be published soon, warned of water shortages for people in China, India and Nepal.

The report indicates glaciers in the region, which represent the greatest concentration of ice on the planet after the poles, are now receding at an average rate of 10 to 15 metres a year.

"The rapid melting of Himalayan glaciers will first increase the volume of water in rivers, causing widespread flooding," says Jennifer Morgan, director of WWF's global climate change programme.

"But in a few decades this situation will change



LOST TREASURE?

and the water level in rivers will decline, meaning massive economic and environmental problems for people in western China, Nepal and northern India."

Himalayan glaciers feed into seven of Asia's greatest rivers: the Ganga, Indus, Brahmaputra, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow rivers.

This ensures a year-round water supply to hundreds of millions of

people in the Indian sub-continent and China.

The conservationists' gatherings, a ministerial roundtable of the 20 largest energy using economies in the world, and then a G-8 meeting of development and environment ministers focusing on climate change, are taking place this week.

A study commissioned by WWF shows that dangerous levels of climate change could be reached

in just over 20 years and that if nothing is done, the Earth will have warmed by 2°C above pre-industrial levels by some time between 2026 and 2060.

As glacier water flows dwindle, the energy potential of hydroelectric power will decrease, causing problems for industry, as well as agriculture, as reduced irrigation means lower crop yields, WWF says.

The environmental watchdog's report shows that three of Nepal's snow-fed rivers have shown declining discharge. Nepal has an annual average temperature rise of 0.06°C a year.

In northwest China, the Qinghai Plateau's wetlands have seen declining lake water levels, lake shrinkage, the absence of water flow in rivers and streams and the degradation of swamp wetlands, the report says. India's Gangotri glacier, which supports one of the country's largest river basins, is meanwhile receding at an average rate of 23 metres a year.

Accord on tsunami warning system

9/3
PARIS, MARCH 8. Experts from the United Nations and Indian Ocean countries agreed on Tuesday to set up an Indian Ocean tsunami warning system by the end of 2006 to prevent a repeat of the catastrophe that struck on Dec. 26.

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As a stopgap measure, Japan and the United States are to begin providing alerts on seismic activity to the region starting April 1, said Patricio Bernal, executive secretary of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

The two countries have the world's most advanced tsunami

environment
warning systems, and a U.N.-coordinated network based in Ewa Beach, Hawaii, issues alerts for 26 Pacific Ocean nations.

Work will also begin on installing systems that detect changes in sea level around the Indian Ocean basin.

Six new systems are to be installed, mostly monitoring the coasts of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, while 15 existing stations will be upgraded by November, Bernal said.

The decisions were announced at the close of a five-day meeting in Paris to discuss putting an effective tsunami

LD-15
warning system. The U.N. Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation has pressed for a warning system.

Experts say that such a system would have saved numerous lives in the disaster that struck 11 nations in southern Asia. At least 173,000 persons across Asia died in the tsunami, mostly in Indonesia. More than 125,000 are still missing and presumed dead. Officials hope to extend the Indian Ocean system globally to cover other regions at risk, such as the Caribbean, the Mediterranean and the southwest Pacific. — AP

THE HINDU

09 MAR 2005

9/3

Tsunami: 'shared experiences have brought India, Sri Lanka closer'

By V.S. Sambandan 10-12

COLOMBO, MARCH 8. Two visiting Indian officials today shared with their Sri Lankan counterparts their experiences of post-tsunami relief and rehabilitation work.

The two officials — Shantha Sheela Nair and J. Radhakrishnan — made a detailed presentation on the efforts taken in Tamil Nadu in the wake of the December 26 tsunami and the policy issues involved in disaster management. Emphasising the importance of empowering district administrations, Ms. Nair, Tamil Nadu's Secretary for Rural Development, who was in-charge of the overall supervision of relief operations in Nagapattinam, said that "enhanced powers and responsibility" to the district administrator was a crucial element in speedy redress.

Nagapattinam model

An instance of administrative devolution was apparent in the Nagapattinam model, where co-ordination work was devolved to 11 sub-districts, with an IAS official heading a team comprising a political representative and government officials.

"We all joined together in a moment of sadness," Mr. Radhakrishnan, the Collector of Nagapattinam, said.

Outlining the similarities of experiences in Tamil Nadu and Sri

Lanka's southern and eastern coast, he said that focusing the efforts on creating a "spirit of growth," would be the "best tribute to those who lost their lives."

Ms. Nair said the intensity of the disaster was "100 thousand times more than anything we would have ever imagined. Compared to the 3,000 lives lost in natural disasters in Tamil Nadu since 1952, in 20 minutes, 8,000 lives were lost." In Nagapattinam, about 4,000 to 5,000 deaths occurred within a 5-10 km range and the intensity was about 425 deaths/sq.km.

Accompanied by the Indian High Commissioner, Nirupama Rao, and Sunjay Sudhir, First Secretary, Indian High Commission, the two officials visited Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka and Matara in southern Sri Lanka on Monday.

Referring to the Sri Lankan experience, the Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lalith Weeratunga, said that an "important lesson is that district collectors should be totally empowered."

In Sri Lanka, he said, government agents were empowered to carry out the relief work and were officially notified as 'competent authorities' immediately after the tsunami, "but you have done much more." The "entire effort centred on the district collector," for which empowerment was crucial, he added.

Sudan I fears fail to affect Indian meals

HT 13
23/2

Vijay Dutt
London, February 22

TOXIC FOOD SCARE

AS THE scare over the Sudan I dye-contaminated food deepened and the number of banned products touched 419 by Monday, catching up over 300 food companies in the scare, the leading Indian readymade meals maker and supplier, Sir Gulam K. Noon, removed fears about Indian dishes.

"None of the Indian restaurants or manufacturers of readymade Indian meals are affected by the Sudan dye scare. In Indian meals chilli powder is not being used for colouring and hence its use is very limited." Sir Gulam K. Noon told *HT* in an exclusive interview.

He explained that the Sudan I is apparently used to enhance the colour of the chilli powder. He pointed out that no Indian food item has been named amongst tainted products. Sir Noon, whose state of art Noon Products factories make 300,000 meals (100-odd different dishes) a day which are supplied to major supermarket chains like Sainsbury's, iterated that very small amount of chilli powder is ever used for Indian meals in the country.

His statement was supported by the fact that no Indian restaurant contacted by *HT* in London, Birmingham and Manchester showed any concern over the scare nor they reported any decrease in the number of customers.

"I am not suggesting that one should not worry about Sudan I, but nevertheless it has all been blown out of proportion. A person has to eat half a kilo of chilli a day for him to fear cancer. Who does or can eat that much of chilli," said Sir Noon while pointing out that in the US the dye, used to enhance the colour of chilli powder, was banned in 1918. He criticised the loose manner of allowing spices to be exported from India.

Other manufacturers of readymade Indian meals also pointed out that most of their self-imported spices after careful testing. Sir Noon's clarification would help remove any possible fear in millions here addicted to curry meals.

But with 100 more products likely to be withdrawn from sale after being contaminated with the dye linked to an increased risk of cancer, the cost to the UK food industry of the crisis was expected to go over £100 million. The families who have apparently eaten the tainted products for over 10 months are scared stiff, despite assurances by cancer experts that there is no need to panic. More tests are needed to find out the depth of the effect and the amount of the dye needed to cause cancer.

Late on Monday, it emerged all food companies had been advised by the FSA to test for Sudan I on February 1. But Premier Foods, which used the rogue chilli powder to produce the Worcester sauce, which sparked the scare, allegedly did not carry out its own tests but relied on assurance from its supplier. The supplier Essex-based Unbar Rotherham had conducted tests over six months earlier when technology was not advanced enough. The batch of rogue chilli powder on arrival from India in September 2002 was thus traded through three different companies within a month.

The Food Standards Agency had announced on Friday last that 359 products containing the illegal Sudan I dye had been withdrawn, has now admitted that it could be Thursday by which time all contaminated products could be identified. Stores across the country have been working to clear their shelves of suspect items.

The globe breathes

518
22/2
Kyoto Protocol comes into effect ^{Environment}

It is February and the mercury is rising. In a few years Kolkatans will be discussing cold spells as something in a bygone age — climate changes continue as they have been. Global warming and toxic emissions have affected the world's environment raising temperatures, melting glaciers and raising oceans. Even after a seven-year wait, the globe cannot breathe more easily, thanks to the Kyoto Protocol. The global warming pact requires participating countries to cut back emissions of carbon dioxide and five other gases by 2012 to 5.2 per cent of the 1990 levels. The agreement was delayed by a requirement that countries accounting for 55 per cent of the world's emissions ratify it. The goal was reached last year when Russia decided to approve it.

While the Kyoto Protocol's finally comes into effect, it is very welcome. A main culprit is the United States of America which has refused to ratify the Protocol. The excuse that superpower is using is that the cutback clause does not apply to India and China. US scientists are building up evidence against developing countries, particularly South Asian ones, for the global climate changes. This is ridiculous. The US alone releases more than one quarter of the world's toxic emissions, while India and China does not emit even a half of the US figure. In fact, America is the biggest culprit in industrial pollutants and may refuse to recognise this, but endeavours to stop it too. As usual for the US, the domestic market comes first, and any economic slow-down that may take place if industrial emissions were cut down within American industrial lobbies. The US government is not ready to ask their citizens to stop using big cars or energy-guzzling appliances and finds scapegoats in the more rural economies of developing countries, far more environment friendly like India, which has a tradition of recycling energy conservation and is lauded for consciously reducing industrial emissions by promoting green practices. It is hoped that big polluters like US and Australia realise the gravity of the situation and fall in line. Global warming will reach them also and it will be too late.

THE STATESMAN

22 FEB 2005

US faces global warming threat

Washington, Feb. 20 (Reuters): Global warming could stifle cleansing summer winds across northern parts of the US over the next 50 years and worsen air pollution, US researchers said yesterday.

Further warming of the atmosphere, as is happening now, would block cold fronts bringing cooler, cleaner air from Canada and allow stagnant air and ozone pollution to build up over cities in the northeast and midwest, they predicted.

"The air just cooks," said Loretta Mickley of Harvard University's Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences. "The pollution accumulates, accumulates, accumulates, until a cold front comes in and the winds sweep it away."

Mickley and colleagues used a computer model, an ap-

proach commonly used by climate scientists to predict weather and climate changes.

She told a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science that the model predicted a 20 per cent decline in summer cold fronts out of Canada.

"If this model is correct, global warming would cause an increase in difficult days for those affected by ozone pollution, such as people suffering with respiratory illnesses like asthma and those doing physical labour or exercising outdoors," she said.

Earlier this week 141 nations signed the UN Kyoto Protocol aimed at cutting greenhouse gas emissions that fuel global warming. The US, which produces the most pollution of any country, has refused to sign it.

Kyoto to New Delhi

It makes economic sense for India to shape up environmentally

THE Kyoto Protocol, the first legally binding environmental treaty committed to reducing greenhouse emissions, took effect on Wednesday. It has two great flaws. The world's largest polluter, the US, has boycotted it. And although two of the most dynamic emerging economies, India and China, have signed on, they were not required to cut their share of emissions until 2012, the argument being that they should not pay the penalty for being late industrialisers. Tactically, this was a good compromise from India. But it should now see the treaty as an opportunity to set its own house in order.

The most important arguments for taking the Protocol seriously are pragmatic. India and China together already account for 14 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. With the explosive growth in their economies, the day is not far off when there will be more pressure on them to reduce their emissions. A country that is better prepared will find it economically easier to adjust to a new regimen when it comes into force. Higher regulatory standards up front can be an immense economic advantage in five respects. First, the costs they impose on society are far outweighed by their benefits. Lower environmental standards have

huge costs — from bad health to polluted water. There is no escaping that we pay for pollution. Second, higher regulatory standards can contribute to the competitiveness of an economy. Such standards ensure that industry will not have to absorb hidden costs later. Third, stringent regulatory standards can lead to the diversification of an economy. It can act as a catalyst for investment in alternative sources of energy. A society with a more diversified energy base is likely to have a more secure future. Fourth, India should leverage good environmental citizenship to gain concrete technological help. In exchange for reducing emissions, we might be able to get cheaper access to desirable technologies.

Finally, the reputational pay offs of being a good environmental citizen of the world can be considerable. It signals that India is ready to be a modern, cutting-edge economy, not just a fossilised relic of older technologies. In the long run, a country that acquires the reputation of being both low cost and environmentally clean will have an edge over one that is merely low cost. Better environmental regulation is not incompatible with economic reform. On the contrary, economic reform will require better environmental management.

The heat is on

JAMES GUSTAVE SPETH outlines a 10-point agenda, suggesting what US businesses, state and federal officials, and ordinary citizens can do to support the Kyoto mission

POTTED HISTORY

1827: French scientist Jean-Baptiste Fourier is first to consider the "greenhouse effect".

1896: Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius blames the burning of fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) for producing CO₂.

1958: US scientist Charles David Keeling detects yearly rise in atmospheric CO₂ as use of fossil fuels surges in post-WW II boom.

1970s: European and US scientists identify other gases (chlorofluorocarbons, methane, nitrous oxide) as greenhouse gases.

1979: Landmark report by US National Academy of Sciences pins greenhouse effect to climate change and warns: "a wait-and-see policy may mean waiting until it is too late."

1988: Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change is set up under UN auspices.

1992: UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, popularly called the Rio Summit, calls for voluntary cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions.

1997: UNFCCC countries sign the Kyoto Protocol, which requires industrialised countries to reduce emissions of six greenhouse gases by 5.2 per cent by a target of 2008-2012 compared with their 1990 levels.

2001: (Jan-March): The IPCC issues three reports, declaring the evidence for global warming to be incontrovertible although the consequences for climate change are difficult to pin down.

(March): The USA, the biggest single CO₂ polluter, abandons Kyoto. President Bush questions the scientific evidence for global warming and says Kyoto is unfair and too expensive for the US economy.

(November): Kyoto signatories, minus the USA, agree on the treaty's rulebook.

2002: Flurry of scientific studies fuels concern that global warming is accelerating, with dangerous and irreversible effects on the climate. Poor tropical countries will be affected most.

(April): US pressure forces out IPCC chair Robert Watson, a leading scientist warning about climate change.

(December): Insurance giant Munich Re puts the cost of climate-related disasters in 2003 at \$60-billion.

2004 (October): After several years' hesitation, Russia moves to ratify Kyoto.

(November): In a ceremony in Nairobi, Russian officials hand the legal instruments to UN chief Kofi Annan, who says the protocol can now enter into force in 90 days, on 16 February 2005.

"CLIMATE change is the most severe problem that we are facing today - more serious even than the threat of terrorism." That is how UK's chief scientist Sir David King stated the problem. Yet, the dual threats of terrorism and climate disruption have received incomparably different treatment in US policies. As the Kyoto Protocol goes into effect, the US absence is both conspicuous - and tragic.

Since 9/11, advocates of preventive action on climate change have had to struggle harder than usual for public and political attention. Neglect of other issues has been part of the collateral damage of the war on terror.

Will the Bush administration's positions change for the better - or at all? In addition to shunning the Kyoto Protocol, it has opposed the McCain-Lieberman climate Bill and parts of the Clean Air Act. The USA has failed to strengthen vehicle mileage standards, while resisting international efforts to frame renewable energy goals.

Due to past US negligence, irreparable damage will unfold in the decades ahead. The priority now should be to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. Therefore, concerned parties must develop a strategy that does not depend on Washington's cooperation, but makes the administration's opposition increasingly difficult to maintain.

- Engage both state and locality in action.** With the path forward blocked in Washington, states and localities nationwide have moved to fill the breach. Twenty-eight states have developed or are developing action plans to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These include GHG reductions in power plants in Massachusetts and Oregon, renewable energy plan in New York, overall emissions reduction legislation in Connecticut and New Jersey, as well as progressive vehicle regulations in California. Every state should be pushed to adopt an overall GHG reduction plan, a renewable energy portfolio standard, the California plan for vehicles, and a broad-based energy efficiency programme.
- Use carrots and sticks with business.** Despite federal inaction, many corporations are taking significant, voluntary initiatives. The anticipation for more stringent carbon regulation, shareholder and consumer pressure, the threat of eventual liability for damages, as well as public perception issues can all make great contributions. The strategy regarding private corporations should involve efforts to recognise and reward positive business performance.
- Push greening of the financial sector.** The financial and insurance sectors are waking up to climate risks. Institutional investors, large lenders and insurers are becoming increasingly sensitised to financial risks (and opportunities) presented by climate change.

THE globe will not notice Kyoto - but we will notice, because it will cost us a bomb. What is the collective noun for environmental modellers? Try a catastrophe.

The "scientific consensus" on global warming is not only that it's occurring, and that heavy use of fossil fuels is mainly to blame, but also that the impact on the Earth will be catastrophic unless the trend can be slowed or reversed by dramatic - and dramatically expensive - policies to curb greenhouse gas emissions. This progression moves from established fact to reasonably high level of probability to the realm of guesswork - and the farther into the future, the wilder the guesses.

A recent scientific conference at Exeter University, summoned to provide Tony Blair with environmental ammunition for the G8 summit, became like a contest between horror stories - the Vanishing Gulf Stream, Millions Dead of Malaria in the Midlands, the Parboiled Polar Bear - that would do the best job of making the public's flesh creep. As spin for the government's case that climate change is a threat greater than terrorism, this was all no doubt effective.

But these scenarios are what scientific insiders know as "computer-aided story lines", not reliable predictions. To base decisions on them would be not only absurd, but pernicious. For example: a shut-down in the thermohaline circulation that produces the Gulf Stream would indeed



Greenpeace activists protest outside the US Embassy in Mexico City. - AFP

These developments should be encouraged. The Securities and Exchange Commission should require companies to disclose fully the financial risks of global warming. Investment managers should be pressed to develop climate-risk competence and to support climate-risk disclosure and action.

4. Urge adoption of a sensible national energy strategy. National energy legislation will be on the Congressional agenda in the coming session. Congress should scrap last term's stalled energy Bill and write a new Bill based on the several recent bipartisan efforts to build consensus on national energy policy to move the USA toward a low-carbon economy.

5. Pass the McCain-Lieberman Bill. The McCain-Lieberman Bill seeks only to cut US greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2010. It is the best hope of getting the USA on the path to emissions reduction. The Bill garnered 43 Senate votes in 2003, but requires broader public support.

6. Extend hands across the seas. The Kyoto Protocol signatories, now including Russia, represent an international coalition that can press the USA to start a credible GHG emissions reduction programme and join the treaty process. The EU could also invite US states to participate in its cap-and-trade GHG market. If it is too late for the USA to comply strictly with the Kyoto Protocol, it is certainly not too late to begin rapidly down that path - and catch up during the post-2012 phase of GHG reductions.

7. Promote climate-friendly cooperation with developing

countries. With China's emissions now already half those of the USA and Asian emissions almost equal to US levels, future agreements under the climate treaty should provide for developing country commitments on climate and GHGs. Such agreements need not seek (yet) actual reduction in GHG emissions from the developing world as a whole. They should, however, vigorously promote measures to achieve rapid decreases in developing-country GHG releases per unit of GDP. International efforts on multiple fronts are needed to meet these goals.

8. Encourage climate-friendly consumers and institutions. Local groups such as educational institutions, religious organisations, and medical centres can make a big difference by establishing specific targets in reducing GHG emissions. Local initiatives can then expand regionally and nationally to support broader climate-friendly measures.

9. Impose limits on coal. Plans are being laid to construct 118 coal-fired power plants in 36 US states, and American coal use is projected to increase more than 40 per cent over the next 20 years. A combination of national, state and local efforts will be necessary to ensure that environmental risks are taken into account. Environmental and public health groups can collaborate in such a strategy. In Congress, the prospect of all these coal plants should spur the so-called "four-pollutants" Bill, which would regulate not only sulphur, nitrogen and mercury but also CO₂.

10. Build a movement of concerned citizens. More than anything else, the USA needs a new citizens movement - one that brings together all concerned parties to take steps as individual citizens and communities to realise sustainability in everyday life. For example, scientists should no longer content themselves with publishing and lecturing. Only the scientific community has the credibility to take the climate issue to the public and to the politicians, but it has not been as outspoken as it should be. A media-based public education campaign on climate could learn from earlier efforts on drugs, smoking, AIDS and drunk driving. Initiative should be built among those who voted for Bush to communicate to the President that they did not vote for his energy or climate policies. And, the US foreign policy community - which has given the climate threat very little attention - needs to move this issue front and centre.

A concerted and spirited effort by American citizens and public officials is necessary not only to correct the US absence from the Kyoto camp, but also to avert a danger that is worse than the threat of terrorism.

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The end is not nigh...

...but Kyoto will cost us dear. Is this value for money, asks ROSEMARY RIGHTER

be disastrous for Europe but it is what scientists call a "low-probability high-consequence event".

Climate change modelling involves assumptions - about population levels, energy efficiency and the weight of fossil fuels in future energy production - that are hard to forecast over an extended period. These assumptions are then fed into models that predict how the climate would react in the future. Uncertainties abound.

But the phrase "scientific consensus" produces a tremor of doubt among people who admire scientists for their inherent distrust of received wisdom. And that tremor becomes an apprehensive shudder when these speculative "images of alternative futures" come to be thought of as "the latest scientific evidence" and work their way into the decisions that politicians take and taxpayers pay for.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has drawn up scenarios of mean temperature rises from 2000 to 2100 of between 1.5C and 5.8C above



1990 levels. The difference between these two guesstimates is, baldly, from inherently manageable to seriously alarming. The top-end IPCC scenario, codenamed A1FI, assumes that per capita carbon emissions rise to four times current levels (they have been stable since the early 1970s) and that methane concentrations more than double (they are currently declining). Another high-end scenario, A2, puts the world population in 2100 at 15.1 billion, half again as high as the 10.4 billion projected by the UN. Both scenarios artificially inflate the magnitude of the challenge of climate change.

These top-end 5.8C scenarios are constantly cited and are distorting policy. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol already has "Past sell-by date" stickers all over it. The argu-

ment is that Kyoto does not go far enough. The proposed remedy is "Kyoto plus" - more stringent emissions cuts applied to more countries. But this would compound the deleterious consequences of a product so flawed that it should never have been put on the market.

It isn't necessary to go very far to see that in cost-benefit terms Kyoto is inherently inefficient. It obliges industrialised nations to cut their greenhouse gas emissions to 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012. Along with other developing countries, India and China are permitted unlimited emissions. Instead of going for emissions cuts with the lowest marginal cost, Kyoto imposes reductions on those countries that have already taken the "easy" steps to less carbon-intensive growth.

Energy conservation makes sense for many reasons. If Blair and Gordon Brown were serious they would levy standard 17.5 per cent VAT on domestic gas and electricity bills, offer tax breaks for solar panels and replace the Millennium Dome with one of China's pebble-technology nuclear reactors!

But cost-benefit analysis should still apply to energy conservation. Last week the National Audit Office pointed out how the UK's Renewables Obligation - which compels electricity suppliers to buy

people&places

Suds and all

ROME - Put it down to machismo, resistance to change or a simple love of suds, but Italians remain wedded to the ritual of washing up and many would refuse to have a dishwasher in the home even if it was free. According to a survey commissioned by Italy's white goods manufacturers, only 31 per cent of Italian households have a dishwasher. This compares to more than 70 per cent in the USA, 50 per cent in Germany and 40 per cent in Britain. Close to 20 per cent said that if they were given a dishwasher they would send it back. - The Times

He's done it again!

WELLINGTON - An environmental protestor facing indecent exposure charges arrived at Auckland's District Court naked - but dressed before he entered the courtroom. Computer technician Simon Oosterman was charged during the Auckland Naked Bike Ride, an event he organised to protest society's dependence on the car. When Oosterman was stopped by police, other protest riders covered the lower parts of their bodies to avoid arrest. - AP

Abuse and pay

WASHINGTON - Using obscenity on television or radio in the USA will be punished with a half-million dollar fine, under a bill passed in the House of Representatives. Both the station which broadcast the offensive utterance, and the announcer or performer who spoke it, could be forced to pay that amount if the Bill becomes law. - AFP

Studying Satan

ROME - Worried about the lure of the devil, a Vatican-linked university debuted its latest course offering: a class on Satanism, black magic and exorcism. The class for clergy and seminarians at Rome's Pontifical Academy "Regina Apostolorum" has arisen from alarm about Satanic practices among young people, especially in Italy. - AP

Hail, chief!



Sherry Lansing (centre) poses with Diane Keaton and Morgan Freeman in Hollywood. - AFP

LOS ANGELES - Hollywood's first female studio chief, Sherry Lansing had her hands and feet immortalised in concrete alongside movie legends Marilyn Monroe to Bette Davis. Lansing, the outgoing head of Paramount Pictures, won a coveted spot on the forecourt of the famed Grauman's Chinese Theatre, one of Tinseltown's best-known landmarks and tourist attractions. - AFP

quotas from wind farms and other renewable sources of power at nearly three times the market rate of £25 per megawatt hour - will add more than £1 billion a year to consumers' bills within five years.

A conservative estimate of the cost of meeting the Kyoto target is £150 billion. Britain's bills will be disproportionately high, since Blair has decreed Britain shall exceed the target by cutting carbon emissions by 20 per cent by 2010 and 60 per cent by 2050.

It is legitimate to ask whether this is value for money. The targets penalise economic success and reward failure. Spain would have to cut emissions by 40 per cent to meet the Kyoto target, whereas Russia, where economic collapse has helped to reduce emissions to 38.5 per cent below the 1990 baseline, stands to profit from selling emissions quotas.

Kyoto will not "save the planet". Even if the USA signed up and Kyoto were implemented in full. By 2100, Kyoto may shave a little off the expected increase in global temperatures. But what it will undoubtedly do is take a chunk off the GDPs of industrialised nations.

Money might be better spent on global water conservation than global warming, since water scarcity will affect more than six billion people by 2080. We should question the claim that there is no time to lose. We should go with what we know, not with inaccurate, long-range scenarios. - The Times, London.

বাগলিহার প্রকল্প প্রসঙ্গে তাড়াহুড়ো চায় না ভারত

সীমা সিরোহি • ওয়াশিংটন ১৪/২

১৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি: বাগলিহার বিতর্কের সমাধানে 'ধীরে চলো' নীতি নেবে নয়াদিল্লি।

এই প্রকল্পের খুঁটিনাটি নিয়ে পাকিস্তানকে আরও আলোচনার প্রস্তাব দেবে ভারত। তবে এ বার সরাসরি নয়। পাকিস্তান গত সপ্তাহেই এই প্রকল্পের ব্যাপারে বিশ্বব্যাঙ্কের কাছে নালিশ জানিয়েছিল। তাই ভারতও এ বার যা জানানো: বিশ্বব্যাঙ্কেই জানাবে। ফলে বিতর্কের নিষ্পত্তিতে বাড়তি কিছু সময় লাগবে পারে। আর নয়াদিল্লি ঠিক সেটাই চাইছে।

২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারির মধ্যে ভারতকে তার মতামত জানাতে বলেছে বিশ্বব্যাঙ্ক। ২৯ তারিখেই ভারত বিশ্বব্যাঙ্কের মাধ্যমে ইসলামাবাদকে আলোচনার প্রস্তাব দেবে বলে খবর মিলেছে। ভারতের বক্তব্য পাকিস্তানকে জানিয়ে তার প্রতিক্রিয়া পেয়ে বিশ্বব্যাঙ্কের আরও কিছুটা সময় লাগবে বলে নয়াদিল্লির আশা।

১৯৬০ সালের 'সিন্ধু জল চুক্তি' ভেঙে ভারত বাগলিহার, কিমানগঙ্গা প্রভৃতি জলবিদ্যুৎ প্রকল্পের কাজ চালাচ্ছে বলে পাকিস্তানের অভিযোগ। পাকিস্তানে ইতিমধ্যেই এ বিষয়ে যথেষ্ট উত্তেজনা তৈরি হয়েছে। পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আইএস আই-এর প্রাক্তন ডিরেক্টর জেনারেল ও বর্তমান শিক্ষামন্ত্রী আশরাফ কার্জী সেনেটে মন্তব্য করেছেন বাগলিহার সমস্যার সমাধানে 'যুদ্ধই একমাত্র উপায়'। বাগলিহার প্রকল্প বানচাল করে দিতে পাক সরকার ব্যর্থ হয়েছে বলে বিরোধীরা সরব হন। তাঁদের নিরস্ত করতে এই কটরপন্থী সুপারিশ করতেও পিছপা হননি কার্জী। অবশ্য, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে পাক রাষ্ট্রদূত জাহাঙ্গির কারামত বাগলিহার সমস্যার সমাধানে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া বিঘ্নিত হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা খারিজ করে দিয়েছেন।

পাকিস্তানের দাবিমতো বিশ্বব্যাঙ্কের প্রেসিডেন্ট জেমস উলফেনসন সপ্তাহদুয়েকের মধ্যেই নিরপেক্ষ পর্যবেক্ষক নিয়োগ করবেন বলে পাক সংবাদমাধ্যমে যে খবর প্রকাশিত হয়েছে, তা-ও হেসে উড়িয়ে দিচ্ছেন ভারতীয় কূটনীতিকেরা। বিশেষ সূত্রের খবর, এ বিষয়ে দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনার সব দিক ভাল ভাবে খতিয়ে দেখা হয়েছে কি না বিশ্বব্যাঙ্ক ইতিমধ্যে পাকিস্তানের কাছেই সে কথা জানতে চেয়েছে। ভারতীয় কূটনীতিকদের বক্তব্য, এ ব্যাপারে সব আইনি খুঁটিনাটি খতিয়ে দেখছে নয়াদিল্লি। পাকিস্তানকেও বিষয়গুলি ভাল করে খতিয়ে দেখতে চাপ সৃষ্টি করা হবে।

Commitment
HD-12

Kyoto Protocol comes into force

By Our Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 16. The Kyoto Protocol, which requires industrialised nations to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHGs), came into force today. India ratified the protocol in 2002.

The industrialised countries would need to accelerate the introduction of renewables to

meet these requirements and reduce energy consumption by promoting efficiency of energy end use, and enhance the absorption of carbon dioxide through greater afforestation. They are required to reduce emissions of GHGs by an average of 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012.

The protocol was adopted in 1997 by the countries that rat-

ified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Convention seeks to stabilise GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would minimise interference with the climate system.

One of the provisions of the Protocol, the Clean Development Mechanism, establishes a framework within which the industrialised nations can meet a

part of their carbon dioxide emissions reduction requirements by purchasing Certified Emission Reductions (CERs) from India and other developing countries. The CERs are generated through an international process that monitors and verifies that clean energy projects in developing countries are indeed leading to lower carbon dioxide emissions.

THE HINDU

17 FEB 2005

Feted and hated, Kyoto comes into force

Reuters
Oslo, February 16

A WORLD plan to fight global warming went into force on Wednesday, feted by its backers as a lifeline for the planet but rejected as an economic straitjacket by the US, the world's top polluter.

After years of delays, the Kyoto Protocol on curbing human emissions of heat-trapping gases by 2012 took effect amid muted celebrations including a ceremony in the ancient Japanese city of Kyoto where the pact was signed in 1997. "Climate change is a global problem. It requires a concerted global response," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in a pre-recorded remarks aired in Kyoto. "I call on the world community to be bold, to adhere to the Kyoto Protocol, and to act quickly in taking the next steps. There is no time to lose," he said.

Environmental group Greenpeace flew a hot air balloon over Kyoto, emblazoned with the message: "New dawn for the climate." It said it held other celebrations from Bonn to Bangalore.

Supporters of the 141-nation pact say it is a first step to slow global warming. Climate experts fear temperature increases could lead to rising sea levels, extreme weather patterns and wipe out thousands of animal and plant species by 2100. But the US pulled out in 2001, saying Kyoto was too costly, based on unreliable science and unfairly excluded big developing nations India, China and Brazil, which account for a third of the world's population. Among major developed nations, only Australia has joined the US in refusing to cap emis-

sions of gases like carbon dioxide emitted mainly by burning fossil fuels in cars, factories and power plants.

"Climate change is happening already...but we know Kyoto is only a first step," European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said. He called Kyoto a cause for "sober celebration," noting that the World Health Organisation believed climate change was already killing 150,000 people a year.

Sydney meltdown

In Sydney, ice sculptures of kangaroos and koalas melted during a protest by green groups over Australia's refusal to ratify the pact.

The Kyoto pact is the first legally binding plan to tackle climate change. It requires developed nations to cut emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide, by 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2008-12. Its fate beyond 2012 is unclear because of Washington's decision to stay out of the plan Bush has called fatally flawed. His administration once denounced it as "an unrealistic and ever-tightening regulatory straitjacket." The US accounts for almost a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions.

Kyoto backers say rich nations are the main cause of a 0.6°C rise in world temperatures since the Industrial Revolution and should take the lead by cutting use of fossil fuels and shifting to cleaner energy such as wind and solar.

But Australia's Prime Minister John Howard says Kyoto unfairly exempts India and China. "Until such time as the major polluters of the world, including the US and China, are made part of the



A Chinese Greenpeace activist dressed as a polar bear cuddles a child at an information stand to promote the Kyoto Protocol, in Beijing, on Wednesday.

Kyoto regime it is next to useless and indeed harmful for a country such as Australia to sign up to the Kyoto Protocol," he told parliament on Wednesday.

In Russia, whose ratification last November gave Kyoto enough weight to enter

into force, the government expressed hopes of selling spare carbon dioxide quotas abroad after the collapse of Soviet-era smokestack industries.

Even if fully implemented, Kyoto would cut a projected temperature rise

by just 0.1°C by 2100, according to UN figures, tiny compared to forecasts by a UN climate panel of an overall rise of 1.4-5.8°C by 2100.

Remote South Pacific islands fear they are already seeing the future of

global warming, as extreme high tides crash over crumbling sea-walls and flood their homes. In Suva, Fiji, a protest placard read: "Bush: Do you have a spare room at the White House—mine got taken away by the sea!!"

Story of warming planet

1750 Before Industrial Revolution, the atmosphere held 280 parts per million of heat-trapping carbon dioxide, later research determines.

1898 Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius warns carbon dioxide from coal and oil burning could warm the planet.

1955 US scientist Charles Keeling finds atmospheric carbon dioxide has risen to 315 parts per million.

1988 Nasa scientist James Hansen tells US Congress global warming 'is already happening now.'

1992 Climate treaty sets voluntary goals to lower carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.

1995 UN-scientific panel

finds evidence of man-made emissions affecting climate.

1997 Treaty parties approve Kyoto Protocol mandating emission cuts by industrial nations, an approach rejected in advance by US Senate.

1998 Warmest year globally since record-keeping began in 19th century.

2001 UN scientific panel concludes most warming likely due to man-made emissions; President Bush renounces Kyoto Protocol.

2004 Carbon dioxide reaches record 379 parts per million; Russia gives crucial ratification to Kyoto Protocol.

2005 Kyoto Protocol takes effect on February 16.

"Treaty benefits the rich"

By Our Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 15. As the Kyoto Protocol came into force across the world tomorrow, representatives of several social and environmental organisations, communities and movements alleged that the 1997 climate treaty not only failed to reduce greenhouse climate catastrophe but stole from the poor to give to the rich.

The Durban Group, a conglomerate of concerned parties, pointed out that the Kyoto Protocol stipulates that the industrialised country signatories must reduce their emissions by 5.2 per cent from their 1990 levels by 2008-2012.

However, the scientific community has called for global reductions of over 60 per cent below 1990 levels, a statement issued by the Group said here today.

What is more, the carbon trading promoted by the Protocol has handed over to governments and corporations, lucrative tradable rights to use the Earth's natural carbon-cycling capacity,

effectively stealing a public good away from most of the planet's inhabitants, the statement said.

India, though it contributed less than 50 per cent of the world's total green house gas emissions, is fast emerging as a major playground for emission traders engaged in Clean Development Mechanism projects that allow them pollution rights in exchange for investing in or setting up "carbon-saving" plants.

With the Kyoto Protocol coming into force, it is expected that these "nefarious investments" in India could significantly increase at great costs to environment and also to the people.

Members of the Durban Group today sent an open letter to the U.N. Secretary-General pointing out the United Nation's failure to take constructive action and giving notice of their intention to build independent alliances to "press governments to limit fossil fuel extraction and use while supporting grassroots alliances struggling against fossil fuel exploration, extraction and use and against unjust climate mitigation projects."

16 FEB 2005

Kyoto protocol comes into force

OSLO, FEB. 15. The world's plan to combat global warming goes into force tomorrow amid scant fanfare and the U.N. warnings that it is only a tiny first step.

The 141-nation Kyoto protocol aims to brake a rise in temperatures widely blamed on mounting human emissions of heat-trapping gases that could trigger droughts and floods, raise sea levels and wipe out thousands of species by 2100.

Yet even some backers of the pact, which will be feted tomorrow mainly in the Japanese city of Kyoto where it was signed in 1997, seem to be lacking enthusiasm.

Many nations, including Spain, Portugal and Ireland, are far above targets for cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases. Britain is in a legal dispute with the European Commission over London's easing of goals for industry and Italy is fretting about costs.

Hard slog

And the United Nations says that fighting climate change will be a long, hard slog.

"Kyoto is without doubt only the first step," Klaus Toepfer, head of the U.N. Environment

Programme, told Reuters. "We will have to do more to fight this rapid increase in temperature on our wonderful blue planet earth. It will be hard work."

"But if you calculate the cost of acting against the cost of not acting you will see this is the best return on investment you ever had," he said.

Kyoto sets legally binding goals of cutting rich nations' emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide emitted by burning fossil fuels in power plants, factories and cars, by 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12.

But some are unconvinced that investments, for instance to shift to clean energy like solar or wind power, are well spent.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, pulled out the United States, the world's top polluter, in 2001 saying it was too costly and wrongly excluded developing nations from goals for 2012. Australia has also withdrawn.

"Even if the Kyoto protocol were extended forever it would have no measurable effect on the climate," said Bjorn Lomborg, Danish author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist."

— Reuters

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2005

KYOTO — JINXED AT BIRTH?

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL on reduction of emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) comes into force on February 16 under circumstances that do not reflect well on policy-makers in many countries. They swear by a 'globalising world' when it comes to economic phenomena but are hesitant to recognise the common threat to humanity from global warming, the causative factors behind which do not respect national borders or customs gateways. The United States, which has four per cent of the world's population but contributes one-fourth of the emission of all heat-trapping GHGs, including carbon dioxide, withdrew from the protocol during the first term of President George W. Bush. China and India, which are expected to play the role of engines of economic growth in the 21st century and contribute to accelerated GHG emission, have been exempted from the obligation of targeted reduction in the first phase of the treaty, running up to 2012. Thus the burden of carrying the Protocol — a child of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — rests largely on the shoulders of the European Union, Canada, Japan, and Russia.

The Bush administration, which sees threats to U.S. economic growth from emission reduction targets and objects to the exemption of potentially large economies such as India and China from targets, ignores the fact that such exemption is nothing but a form of "special and different treatment" of developing countries that has been enshrined in the Uruguay Round of negotiations, which led to the creation of the World Trade Organisation. It is doubtful if the WTO would have seen the light of day if the special and different treatment

principle had not been written into the Marrakesh agreement. The WTO's stature as the forum for future trade negotiations would have been undermined had the principle not been reiterated in the Doha Development Agenda. By ignoring this reality and keeping itself out of Kyoto, the U.S. has not only weakened a global effort at tackling what is perceived as a major factor behind desertification, floods, and other disasters but has also impaired its own capability to intervene in a positive and desirable manner in the implementation of the Protocol.

India and China are likely to face mounting pressure to undertake reduction targets in future despite their stance (never stated in unequivocal terms) that the U.S., as the biggest polluter in human history, should first accept such an obligation. Although this looks like a principled defiance of a hegemonic attitude, in effect it may amount to a confession that U.S. leadership is required for any worthwhile global endeavour. Australia has so far chosen to follow the U.S. example while the European Union's own commitment seems to have weakened, with Italy saying it will review its membership if the U.S. does not join by 2012. Tony Blair is reported to have declared his intention to do his "damndest" to ensure that Washington joins the treaty. What is lacking in all these pulls and counter-pulls is a recognition that in general, environment-friendly policies tend to be pro-poor by protecting the access of the poor to natural resources; and that if nation states continue to define economic growth in terms of the inevitability of the depredation of natural resources, the underdogs of the world may one day reject the very concept of economic growth as understood at present.

Tsunami throws up priceless gifts

Waves unearth precious relics

Agence France Presse
Mahabalipuram (TN), February 12

THE DEADLY tsunamis that crashed into southern states have unearthed priceless relics, including two granite lions, buried under sand for centuries, archaeologists say.

The towering waves that killed over two lakh people also appear to have swept a bronze Buddha to Indian shores from Thailand in a basket attached to a bamboo raft, they say.

Experts from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have descended on Mahabalipuram, famed for its rock carvings dating back to the great Pallava dynasty, to see the objects.

"The sea has thrown up evidence of the grandeur of the Pallava dynasty. These have been buried for centuries," ASI's superintending archaeologist, T. Sathiamoorthy said.



BAY WATCH: Tsunami waves exposed two granite lions buried under the sand for centuries.

The Pallava dynasty dominated much of South India from the first century BC to eighth century AD.

Among the relics found in Mahabalipuram, 70 kilometers south of Chennai, are the remnants of a stone house and a half-completed rock elephant. There are also two giant granite lions, one seated and another poised to charge. The statues are each carved out of a single piece of granite stone.

The objects were uncovered when the towering waves withdrew from the beach, carrying

huge amounts of sand with them. The archaeologists are also excited about a report that just before the waves struck on December 26, the sea withdrew baring a temple structure and rock sculptures on the seabed.

Experts are also examining a six-inch tall bronze Buddha found inside a bamboo basket attached to a raft to determine its age and origin. The figure has Myanmarese writing on its back. "It seems the statue might have been taken to Thailand from Myanmar at some point and



LONG JOURNEY A Buddha statue (above) was recovered from a basket on a raft that was swept to the Tamil Nadu coast, possibly from Thailand

then was carried out to sea by the tsunami," B Sasisekaran, said a scientist at the National Institute of Ocean Technology.

While Myanmar suffered some damage from the tsunamis, oceanographers believe the way the waves travelled east to west suggest the Buddha came from the coast of Thailand which is a Buddhist country.

New anti-global warming tool

By Kate Ravilious

EARTH LOOKS as if it is about to overheat. Temperatures are rising, ice sheets are melting and all the evidence points to a greenhouse future. But what if we could reduce the planet's temperature? Would that give us some time to wean ourselves off fossil fuels and find alternative sources?

This is what a group of eminent atmospheric physicists and an engineer are proposing, and they have come up with an idea to halt the Earth's warming. Using nothing more than salt water and wind power, they have designed a device that will increase the reflectivity of some of the Earth's clouds, bouncing more incoming sunlight back into space. They argue that this natural heat shield could be turned on and off at will, giving us a vital extra few decades to sort out the mess we are in.

John Latham, an atmospheric physicist based at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado, first came up with the idea about 15 years ago. "I outlined my idea in *Nature*, but at that time there wasn't a strong awareness of the global warming problem and so there wasn't a big response," he says. But more recently, the idea of a greenhouse world has become a dinner-party conversation topic and suddenly everyone is interested in ways of preventing the Earth from turning into a sauna. Together with colleagues, Latham has resurrected the idea and this time people are starting to take it seriously.

Clouds come in different colours,

shapes and sizes and occur at various altitudes; not just any old cloud will do. An increase in the high-level, wispy, cirrus clouds would actually have the opposite of the desired effect: making the Earth warmer as they trap more heat in. It turns out that the low-level, lumpy grey clouds, known as stratocumulus, are the best for the job, bouncing sunlight back into space, off their bright, shiny tops. Which is all very well, but how

that they tend to last for longer, reflecting more sunlight back into space, before they disperse.

To produce this fine mist of sea spray artificially, Mr. Salter envisages thousands of unmanned yachts zig-zagging across the sea, carrying equipment to make very choppy waves, known as Faraday waves. A high-frequency ultrasonic generator would spin seawater around inside a grooved drum, producing tiny waves

multus clouds could be modified.

But would it really work? If calculations and computer models are to be believed, then yes, the physics of this idea is sound. Working together with British scientists Tom Choullarton of Manchester University and Mike Smith of Leeds University, Mr. Latham has done extensive calculations to make sure he has got his sums right. In addition, they have tested the idea using the British Meteorological Office's Global Climate Model and shown that increasing the droplet numbers in marine stratocumulus clouds could have a significant effect. "Modifying an area covering around 3% of the Earth's surface produced a cooling that more or less balances the warming from doubled carbon dioxide levels," says Mr. Latham.

Now the scientists are looking for funding to take their idea to the next stage, testing it with a small-scale pilot project over the oceans, using natural stratocumulus clouds. If they find that the extra cloud brightness would do its job and that there would be no adverse effect to rainfall on land, then Mr. Latham's original idea may begin to make good sense. Nonetheless, all the scientists stress that increasing cloud brightness is not a long-term solution to global warming, but a stopgap. "Our endeavours are directed towards buying time," says Mr. Latham. If recent reports of the melting of the Antarctic ice cap are anything to go by, we may need to start buying time very soon. — © *Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005*

By bouncing more incoming sunlight back into space we could buy time to sort out global warming.

do you go about making stratocumulus cloud more reflective?

Stephen Salter, the innovative Edinburgh University engineer, (known best for his invention of Salter's duck — the 300-tonne floating canister designed to drive a generator from the motion of bobbing up and down on waves) thinks he has the key. "We need to atomise seawater and throw tiny droplets into the air," he says. The idea is that this fine mist of sea-spray evaporates, leaving tiny particles of sea salt that get sucked up into marine stratocumulus clouds on rising currents of air. These little particles act as centres for extra droplets to form. "Clouds become more reflective if you increase the number of droplets in them," explains Mr. Latham. A bonus of filling the clouds with smaller droplets is where the most effective stratocumulus clouds are thinner than a human hair. "It looks a bit like a cup of coffee on a rattling train, but it would be nearly vertical," says Salter. Once the waves are steep enough, drops of water are thrown up from their crests. "All we need to do is try and get these fine droplets into the first few metres of air, and meteorology will do the rest," says Mr. Latham.

To remain truly environmentally friendly, the yachts would be driven by wind acting on the spinning drum, like a sail. Movement of the boat through the water would drive propellers acting as turbines, to produce the electrical power for spinning the drums and driving the ultrasonics. Meanwhile, satellites would direct their movements, placing the yachts in the areas of ocean where the most effective stratocumulus clouds are.

New dawn with Kyoto

By Michael Meacher

HERE IS a widespread view that with George W. Bush now ensconced in his second term in the White House, and with his sights fixed on his so-called "war on terror," the rest of the world's agenda has, for the time being at least, been hijacked. However, the forces now confronting the world are increasingly likely to impose their own solution that even U.S. power cannot ignore or override.

Those forces are driven by over-exploitation of natural resources, over-population of a finite planet and over-warming of the global atmosphere by greenhouse gases. Together, these will, within a decade or two, enforce a fundamental change in the world economy and in human societies.

Irrespective of who controls Iraq or Saudi Arabia, global peak oil production will be reached around 2010-15, with half of the Earth's available 2 trillion barrels already consumed by then. But escalating demand for oil from the fast industrialising third world economies, especially China and India, will outstrip supply by almost double within three decades.

Even more serious than the shortage of oil is the looming shortage of water.

On land, degradation and pollution annually take an increasing toll. Nearly half a billion people live in

countries that no longer have enough healthy cropland to grow their own food. Each year, more than 5 million people die — including 2 million children — from diseases caused by drinking contaminated water.

This whole process is driven by a widening and deepening industrialisation across the world and ever more rapacious technologies of in-

son to sustain us at present — the world average footprint — is estimated at about 2.85 hectares.

This 30 per cent overshoot leads inevitably, to depletion of the planet's natural capital stock. As WWF has noted in its Living Planet report, at this rate in 50 years' time we will be exploiting natural resources equal to two Earths. But we have only one.

The Kyoto climate change treaty, coming into force next week, is a start to realising Earth's limits.

plex international treaty ever negotiated.

Since it will achieve at best only a cut of about 2 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions of the industrialised country participants by 2010, compared to the baseline in 1990, its targets now need to be substantially raised if it is to achieve what the scientists say is necessary to arrest global warming — a 60 per cent cut by 2050. But at least an enforceable goal has been set on which to build.

Now, further international treaties aimed at preserving the biosphere within the limits of the capacity of the planet are needed.

At present, the dominant *realpolitik* within the world economy gives ever-greater freedom to trans-national companies on the premise that there are few or no limits to the potential for exploitation of the Earth's resources.

This capitalist model is not sustainable. The necessary new global agenda is to recognise the limitations and to act, with enforceable international law, to keep within those limits. If the new U.S. presidency is unwilling to accept this, and if the rest of the world fails to take the lead, the Earth will exact its own price in securing those limits — only it will be a lot more painful. — ©Guardian

Newspapers Limited 2005
(Michael Meacher MP was U.K. Environment Minister 1997-2001.)

On top of this is steadily worsening climate change, threatening to make parts of the globe uninhabitable. This prospect is exacerbated by new evidence. First, that the rate of increase in greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere — the main cause of global warming — is gradually rising.

Second, more worrying, is the risk of runaway feedback effects from the die-back of forests (predicted for the Amazon by 2050), the collapse of continental ice-sheets (Greenland and Antarctica), the release of methane hydrates trapped in the oceans, or the loss of ocean sinks.

This catalogue of evidence, and of future risks, may seem intimidating but it is not inevitable. The Kyoto protocol comes into force next week, representing perhaps the most com-

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10-11

Tamil Nadu seeks 562 tmcft of Cauvery water

10/2

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, FEB. 9. The Tamil Nadu Government has urged the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal to pass a final award allocating 562 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) of water as its share from the Cauvery to meet the irrigation, domestic and industrial requirements in the State.

This demand was made during the final stages of arguments before the Tribunal, comprising its Chairman, Justice N.P. Singh and Members N.S. Rao and Sudhakar Narain.

Detailed chart

Submitting a detailed chart on the availability of water in the Cauvery river basin and the requirement of each State in the basin, Tamil Nadu said that the available waters were not sufficient to meet the demands of all the States and that the Tribunal should prioritise the demand. While doing so the Tribunal must take into consideration the irrigation area developed up to 1924; the area developed between 1924 and 1974 as per the agreement; the area contemplated by the agreement but developed after 1974 and before 1990; and the potential irrigation area created thereafter.

If these factors were taken into consideration, the projected total requirement of Tamil Nadu would be 562 tmc ft of water. (The Tribunal in June 1991 passed an interim award of 205 tmc ft of water as Tamil Nadu's share.)

For Karnataka, the demand based on scientific assessment had been shown to be 175 tmc ft, which would include the requirement of water for irrigation, drinking purposes, domestic and industrial use. Similarly, for Kerala the requirement would be 8.32 tmc ft and 7.266 tmc ft for Pondicherry.

Tamil Nadu has made it clear that the two agreements of 1892 and 1924 were valid and binding, just and reasonable and should form the basis of apportionment. It pointed out that the Indus Commission, Krishna and Narmada water disputes tribunals had all protected the existing irrigation and had applied the principle of equitable apportionment and the Cauvery Tribunal should follow the same principle.

Charge against Karnataka

Tamil Nadu alleged that all the ongoing projects in Karnataka were without the concur-

rence of the riparian States as well as the Centre. It had resorted to indiscriminate increase in the area under paddy and perennial crops.

Further, these projects were in utter violation of not only the valid and binding agreements of 1892 and 1924 but also in utter disregard to the principles of equitable apportionment.

Karnataka had conceived the various projects to utilise the entire yield at the dam site so that no water would flow to the main river to meet the age-old irrigation.

Moreover these projects had been planned for paddy in areas not suitable for paddy cultivation.

Tamil Nadu wanted the Tribunal to prevent Karnataka from expanding minor irrigation areas and to evolve a suitable mechanism to regulate the main irrigation areas. The State should also be asked to avoid growing summer paddy and rabi semi dry crops.

Though Tamil Nadu was to conclude its final arguments tomorrow, the Tribunal said it would be sitting only in the forenoon tomorrow and hence Tamil Nadu is expected to wind up its arguments on February 21.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2005

9/12 **GROWING AND YET GREEN** *Commitment 10-10*

IF MANY THEORISTS are convinced that economic growth is impossible without making compromises on environmental policy, those who hold a counterview can draw support from the recently released Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI) of nations. Without claiming to be an absolute or unquestionably accurate measure of national performance, the ESI postulates that good economic performance must lead to a better environment. It rates governments on how judicious they are in using their natural resources and in protecting citizens from environmental stresses. The 2005 ESI, produced by the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and the Center for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, is based on a stronger statistical foundation compared with those in past years and this gives the conclusions greater validity. To environmental activists, the report would appear to be a re-confirmation that India, with an ESI rank of 101 among 146 countries, is in peril of further endangering the environment with its development policies. The Central and State Governments have an opportunity here to respond to the bleak assessment constructively and introduce correctives to policy and practice. Indeed, the aim of the exercise is to enable countries to strengthen their policies using a reliable analytical framework built on a base of 76 data sets and 21 indicators. The data range from air quality and biodiversity protection to effective governance and global stewardship. Finland and Norway score high, way above the United States and several other industrialised nations.

The ESI report effectively widens the debate on India's draft National Environment Policy (NEP) and focuses on the central question of compatibility between economic growth and environmental sustainability. By emphasising the importance of open debate in policymaking and producing a less than impressive score card on air pollution, biodiversity conservation, water quality, and water

quantity, the study has placed the onus on the proponents of the NEP to establish that their far-reaching proposals are backed by equally precise documentation. There has been considerable opposition from various quarters to the NEP's 'soft' approach to threats to biodiversity in the name of development. The patent anxiety to speed up the grant of permission to exploit non-renewable natural resources also worries many environmentalists. Considering the irreversible impact of many policy decisions, the mediocre ESI rating secured by India (the national score is even below the average for countries with comparable income levels) should lead to a review of all the controversial processes contained in the draft policy, notably those relating to environmental impact assessment, public hearings, criminal liability of violators, and grant of permissions within protected areas.

India scores high in global stewardship as a partner of the international community. In several other spheres, though, it falls disturbingly short of desirable benchmarks: measures relating to environmental systems, social and institutional capacity, human vulnerability, and ecological stresses are doing badly. Few will disagree that policy initiatives in critical areas fall woefully short of what is needed; the most significant shortfalls pertain to pollution control, water quality and equity, waste management, and eco-efficiency. The exploitation of resources by those with the means to do so has resulted in an anomalous situation where the less influential are deprived of their immediate as well as future entitlements. State Governments have generally failed to respond with alacrity to the challenges posed by greenhouse gas emissions, unplanned urbanisation, and waste generation in the cities. They tend to act, as does the Central Government, only when judicial reprimands and ultimata leave them with little choice. The ESI ratings now offer another opportunity to heed the evidence in progressive spirit and adopt correctives to a range of policies affecting the environment.

THE HINDU

09 FEB 2005

THE HINDU

তপ্ত পৃথিবী, দুষ্ট বাতাস

পৃথিবী ক্রমশ গরম হইতেছে, ইহা এখন কেবল আর বিজ্ঞানী ও পরিবেশবিদদের চর্চার বিষয় নয়। যে হারে এই গ্রহের বায়ুমণ্ডলের তাপ বাড়িতেছে, তাহাতে অনেক বিজ্ঞানীর আশঙ্কা, আগামী পঞ্চাশ বছরে পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা প্রায় কুড়ি ডিগ্রি ফারেনহাইট বাড়িয়া যাইতে পারে, যাহার ফলে দুই মেরুপ্রদেশে সঞ্চিত বরফ গলিয়া সমুদ্রপৃষ্ঠ উচু হইয়া যাইবে, বাপক জলপ্রাবন সৃষ্টি হইবে, আবহাওয়ার আমূল পরিবর্তন ঘটিয়া যাইবে। পরিস্থিতি এতটাই উদ্বেগজনক যে দাভোস-এ অনুষ্ঠিত বিশ্ব অর্থনৈতিক ফোরামে তাহা সবিস্তারে আলোচিত হইতেছে। এই তাপবৃদ্ধির মূল কারণ বায়ুমণ্ডলে ছড়াইয়া পড়া 'গ্রিনহাউস গ্যাস', যাহার প্রধান উপাদান কলকারখানা ও যানবাহন হইতে নিঃসৃত কার্বন-ডাই-অক্সাইড। এই গ্যাস সূর্যকিরণকে ভূপৃষ্ঠে আসিয়া ফেরত যাইতে দেয় না, বায়ুমণ্ডলেই তাহাকে শোষণ করিয়া লয়, ফলে তাপবৃদ্ধি। স্পষ্টতই শিল্পায়ন এবং অর্থনৈতিক বিকাশের সহিত গ্রিনহাউস গ্যাসের প্রত্যক্ষ সম্পর্ক রহিয়াছে। শিল্পবিপ্লবের আগের পৃথিবীর তুলনায় এখনকার পৃথিবী এ জনাই অনেক বেশি তপ্ত। এখন তৃতীয় বিশ্বের যে সব দেশ অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নে অগ্রগণ্য সেই চীন ও ভারতকে তাপবৃদ্ধির জন্য দায়ী করা হইতেছে।

উন্নয়নের ফলে তাপবৃদ্ধি নিশ্চয়ই সত্য। কিন্তু সেই কারণেই, বায়ুমণ্ডলে দীর্ঘ কাল ধরিয়া কার্বন-ডাই-অক্সাইড সহ অন্যান্য দূষণকারী গ্যাস ছড়াইয়া পৃথিবীকে উত্তপ্ত করার মূল দায় তো মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, কানাডা এবং ইউরোপের শিল্পোন্নত দেশগুলির। তাহার তুলনায় তৃতীয় বিশ্বের উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলির ভূমিকা নগণ্য। কিন্তু শক্তির এবং আর্থিকভাবে সমৃদ্ধ এই সব দেশ নিজেদের দায় পালনে পরাঙ্ঘ, ভারত ও চীনের মতো দেশগুলিকে চাপ দিয়া দূষণের মাত্রা হ্রাস করাই তাহাদের লক্ষ্য। ইতিপূর্বে বায়ুমণ্ডলের ওজোন স্তরে সৃষ্ট ছিদ্রের বিপন্নতার জন্যও উন্নত দেশগুলি তৃতীয় বিশ্বে রেফ্রিজারেটরের ব্যবহার সঙ্কচিত করার জন্য চাপ সৃষ্টি করিয়াছিল। পরিবেশ দূষণ ও তাহার প্রতিকারের আন্দোলনেও অতএব পূর্ব-পশ্চিম কিংবা উত্তর-দক্ষিণের দ্বন্দ্ব-বিরোধের রাজনীতির খেলা স্পষ্ট। ভারতের মতো দেশ যদি বায়ুমণ্ডলে কার্বন-ডাই-অক্সাইডের ক্ষেপণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ করিতে পারে, তবে তাহাকে সেই অনুপাতে 'ইউরো' দান করার প্রকল্পও গৃহীত হইয়াছে। অথচ দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণে প্রয়োজনীয় উন্নত প্রযুক্তি তৃতীয় বিশ্বে হস্তান্তরের বেলায় পশ্চিমের ধনী দেশগুলি আদৌ দরাজ নয়। এ ক্ষেত্রেও এক ধরনের উপনিবেশিকতা ক্রিয়াশীল।

এ কথা বলার অর্থ এই নয় যে সুভাষ চক্রবর্তীর মতো দূষণপন্থীরা পৃথিবীর বর্ধমান তাপের বিপদের দিকে চোখ বুজিয়া থাকিতে পারেন। কারণ 'গ্রিনহাউস এফেক্ট' কেবল উন্নত পশ্চিমী দুনিয়ার ক্ষতি করিতেছে না, তাহার চেয়ে বেশি ক্ষতি করিতেছে তৃতীয় বিশ্বেরই। বায়ুদূষণজনিত ফুসফুসের অসুখে কলিকাতায় যত বেশি শিশু আক্রান্ত হইতেছে ও মারা যাইতেছে, ভারতের অন্য অনেক শহরের সহিত তাহার তুলনা চলে না। নয়াদিল্লির মতো যানবহন শহরে দৃঢ়ভাবে যানদূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ করিয়া সেখানকার সরকার নাগরিকদের যে শুদ্ধ পরিবেশ জোগাইতে পারিয়াছে, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকারের গাফিলতি এবং পরিবহন-লবি প্রভাবিত সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রীর পরিকল্পিত অন্তর্ঘাতের ফলে এ রাজ্যে তাহার সম্পূর্ণ বিপরীত চিত্র। ইউরোপের তুলনায় চীন ও ভারতের দূষণমাত্রা যেমন, দিল্লির তুলনায় কলিকাতার দূষণমাত্রাও তেমনই ভয়াবহ। এই একটি ব্যাপারে কেন্দ্রের অসহযোগিতা কিংবা বঞ্চনা ও 'উপনিবেশিক শোষণ'-এর বানপন্থী তত্ত্বও প্রযোজ্য নয়। বরং কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণে যে সব কড়াকড়ি করিয়াছে, সুপ্রিম কোর্ট পর্যন্ত যে সব আইনি অস্ত্র সরকারের হাতে তুলিয়া দিয়াছে, সেগুলি ইচ্ছাকৃতভাবে উপেক্ষা করিয়া সুভাষ চক্রবর্তীরা রকমারি ফাঁকফোকর খুঁজিয়া বাহির করিয়াছেন। পরিণাম— কলিকাতা ও শহরতলিতে ত্রিশ বছরেরও পুরানো ট্যান্ডি দিবা কালো ধোঁয়ায় বাতাস আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া যাত্রী বহিতেছে, রাষ্ট্রীয় পরিবহণের জুরাসিক যুগের নমুনাগুলি 'জ্যাপ' লোহার দরে বিক্রয় না-হইয়া নিত্য টার্মিনাস হইতে পথে নামিতেছে। শহরে শ্বাসপ্রশ্বাস লওয়া ক্রমে দুর্কহ হইতেছে এবং জন্মের পর পরই শিশুরা হাঁপানিতে আক্রান্ত হইতেছে। বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের সরকার যে-শিল্পায়নের নব আনন্দে বঙ্গবাসীকে জাগাইতে চাহিতেছেন, তাহাতেও কোথাও দূষণমুক্ত পরিবেশের উচ্চারণ নাই। একজন পূর্ণাঙ্গ পরিবেশমন্ত্রী অবশ্য রাজ্য-মন্ত্রিসভায় ঘটা করিয়া বিরাজ করিতেছেন, যিনি আবার আধুনিক তথ্য-প্রযুক্তির আরাধনায় বেশি উৎসাহী।

Global temperatures may rise by 11°C

Increased Level Of Greenhouse Gases Set To Impact World Climate Study

London: Greenhouse gas emissions could cause global temperatures to rise by up to 11 degrees Celsius (20 degrees Fahrenheit), according to first results from the world's largest climate modeling experiment.

The top end of the predictions, which range from 2-11 degrees, is double the estimates produced so far and could make the world dramatically different in the future.

"Our experiment shows that increased levels of greenhouse gases could have a much greater impact on climate than previously thought," said David Stainforth, the project's chief scientist, from Oxford University.

Without significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, scientists estimate the earth's temperature and sea level will rise, leading to increased flooding and drastic climate changes.

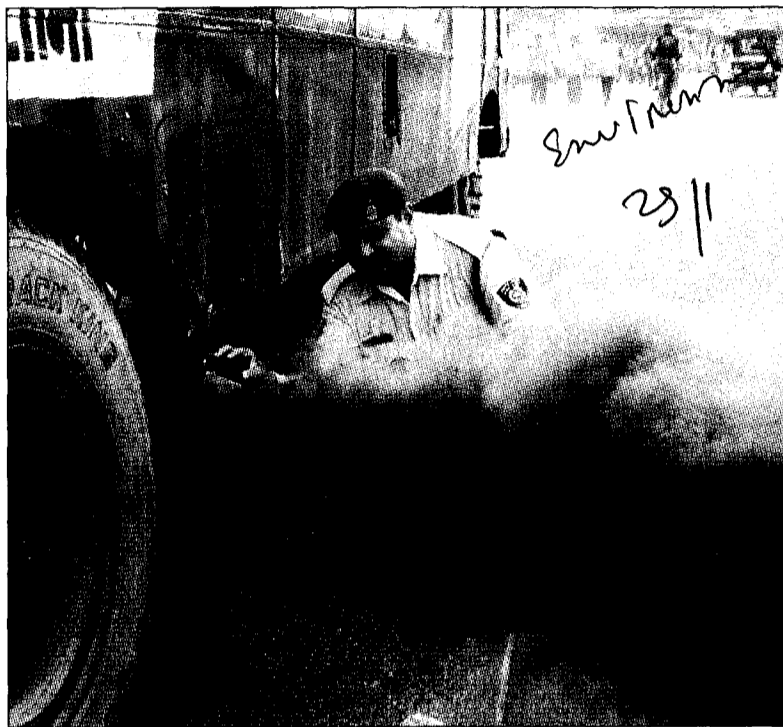
The temperature range predicted is based on assumptions of carbon dioxide levels double those found before the Industrial Revolution. Scientists estimate these levels will be reached by the middle of this century if greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced.

"This is really just the beginning of the process to try and understand the uncertainty and predictions of climate change," Stainforth added.

From Uruguay to Uzbekistan and Sierra Leone to Singapore, 95,000 people from 150 countries are taking part in the climateprediction.net experiment to explore the possible impact of global warming.

By downloading free software from the website on their personal computers, participants run their own unique version of Britain's Met Office climate model.

While their computer is idle, the program runs a climate simulation over days or weeks and



India among top polluters

Brussels: India is among the world's top polluters, according to the Environmental Sustainability Index presented to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

In a list comprising 146 countries, India occupies 101st position. But China (133) and Pakistan (131) are even worse environmental offenders. The results are based on an analysis carried out by American universities Yale and Columbia.

Finland, Norway, Uruguay and Sweden have been found to have the best environmental track records in the world.

The lowest ranking countries are North Korea, Iraq, Taiwan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. INEP

Bihar more polluted than Los Angeles

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Those who consider Bihar a blot on the Indian landscape will have something to talk about. Turns out it looks that way from outer space too.

Scientists studying satellite data have discovered an immense wintertime pool of pollution over the benighted state. Blanketing around 100 million people, primarily in the Ganges Valley, the pollution levels over Bihar are about five times larger than those typically found over Los Angeles, according to a study by the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.

The discovery was made by researchers analysing four years of data collected by the Multi-angle Imaging Spectro-Radiometer (MISR)

onboard the Terra satellite. Lofted into orbit in December 1999, Terra is the flagship of NASA's Earth Observing System Programme.



According to the study, while high pollution levels were found over much of India, the concentration of particles was particularly high over Bihar. Researchers attributed it largely to the inefficient burning of

a variety of biofuels during cooking and other domestic use in an area with high population density. Particles in the smoke remain close to the ground, trapped by valley walls, and unable to mix upward because of a high-pressure system that dominates the region during winter.

"The result is a pollution episode that can affect both human health and local climate," said Larry Di Girolamo, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a co-investigator on the MISR mission.

"The airborne particles can damage delicate lung tissue, and by altering the radiative heating profile of the atmosphere, they may change temperature and precipitation patterns."

automatically reports the results to Oxford University and other collaborating institutions around the world.

Together, the volunteers have simulated more than 4 million model years, donated 8,000 years of computer time and exceeded the processing power of the world's largest supercomputers.

The first results of the continuing experiment are reported in the latest edition of the science journal Nature.

"...it is entirely possible that even current levels of greenhouse gases, if stable and maintained for a long period of time, could lead to dangerous climate change," Stainforth told reporters.

The Kyoto protocol, the main UN scheme to reduce greenhouse gases, aims to cut emissions of carbon dioxide by 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12.

"The danger zone is not something we are going to reach in the middle of this century. We are in it now," said Dr Myles Allen of the Met Office. Reuters

সতর্ক না-হলে তাপেই বিপর্যয় বিশ্বের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: বিপর্যয় আর বর্তমান অবস্থার মধ্যে ফারাক মাত্র ১.২ ডিগ্রি সেলসিয়াস। পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা ওই স্তরে পৌঁছে গেলেই ছছ করে গলতে শুরু করবে মেরু অঞ্চলের বরফ, মহাসাগরগুলিতে জলোচ্ছ্বাস হবে, ব্যাপক পরিবর্তন হবে কৃষি ক্ষেত্রে, অরণ্য ধ্বংস হয়ে যাবে, কোনও কোনও দেশ প্রচণ্ড খরার মুখে পড়বে। পৃথিবীর পরিবেশই আমূল বদলে যাবে। এখনই সতর্ক না-হলে ১০-১৫ বছরের মধ্যে পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা পৌঁছে যাবে বিপর্যয়ের স্তরে।

মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, ব্রিটেন ও অস্ট্রেলিয়ার তত্ত্বাবধানে দেশ-বিদেশের বিজ্ঞানী, শিল্পপতি ও রাজনীতিকদের নিয়ে গঠিত টাস্ক ফোর্স গ্লোবাল ওয়ার্মিং নিয়ে যে-রিপোর্ট তৈরি করেছে, তাতে এমনই আশঙ্কা করা হয়েছে। 'মিটিং দ্য ক্লাইমেট চ্যালেঞ্জ' নামে ওই রিপোর্টটি আজ, মঙ্গলবার প্রকাশ করা হবে। আর সভ্যতা বাঁচাতে প্রতিটি উন্নত, উন্নয়নশীল ও অনুরত দেশের পরিকল্পনা-প্রণেতাদের কাছে তা পাঠানো হবে, যাতে বিপর্যয় এড়াতে তাঁরা নির্দিষ্ট ব্যবস্থা নিতে পারেন। লন্ডনের ইন্ডিপেন্ডেন্ট পত্রিকায় রিপোর্টের মূল অংশগুলি তুলে ধরে আশঙ্কা প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে। ১৭৫০ সালকে ভিত্তিবর্ষ ধরে পরিবেশের

পরিবর্তন নিয়ে সমীক্ষা করেছেন বিজ্ঞানীরা। শিল্পবিপ্লবের আগে পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা যা ছিল, সেটাকেই প্রাথমিক তাপমাত্রা ধরা হয়েছে। তার পর থেকে কী ভাবে পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা বাড়ছে, তা রেকর্ড করা হয়েছে। ওই সময় থেকেই বাতাসে কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের পরিমাণ বাড়তে শুরু করে। টাস্ক ফোর্সের রিপোর্টে কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের ক্ষতিকর দিকটি ব্যাখ্যা করে বলা হয়েছে, কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইড সূর্যের তাপ ধরে রাখে। ফলে তাপমাত্রা বৃদ্ধির সঙ্গে সঙ্গে বাড়তে থাকে পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রাও।

বিপর্যয়ের জন্য ১০-১৫ বছরের সময়সীমা কী ভাবে নির্ধারণ করা হল? বিজ্ঞানীরা ব্যাখ্যা দিয়ে বলেছেন, বাতাসে কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের পরিমাণ যখন ৪০০ পি পি এম (পার্টস পার মিলিয়ন)-এ পৌঁছবে, তখন পৃথিবীর তাপমাত্রা নির্দিষ্ট স্তরে অর্থাৎ ১৭৫০-এর তাপমাত্রার থেকে দুই ডিগ্রি সেলসিয়াস উপরে চলে যাবে। বাতাসে এই মুহূর্তে কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের পরিমাণ ৩৭৯ পি পি এম। এখন বছরে দুই পি পি এম-এর বেশি কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইড বাতাসে গিয়ে মিশছে। যদি এখনই কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের উদ্ভিদগণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা না-যায়, তা হলে ১০-১৫

বছরের মধ্যেই কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের মাত্রা ৪০০ পি পি এম-এ পৌঁছে যাবে।

কোনও ভাবেই কি এই বিপর্যয় থেকে মুক্তি পাবে না পৃথিবী? টাস্ক ফোর্সের সদস্যদের পরামর্শ, পরিবেশে কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের পরিমাণ আর বাড়তে দেওয়া যাবে না। অপ্রচলিত শক্তির ব্যবহার বাড়লে কমবে কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইডের পরিমাণ। জি-এইট সদস্যভুক্ত দেশগুলির কাছে টাস্ক ফোর্সের আর্জি, অন্তত ২৫ ভাগ ক্ষেত্রে ব্যবহার করতে হবে অপ্রচলিত শক্তি। ২০২৫ সালের মধ্যে এই লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ করার পরামর্শ দেওয়া হয়েছে ওই সব দেশকে।

এর পাশাপাশি কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইড প্রশমিত করতে পারে, এমন প্রযুক্তি উদ্ভাবনের উপরে জোর দিতে বলা হয়েছে উন্নত দেশগুলিকে। ১৯১০ সালের মধ্যেই ওই সব প্রযুক্তি বাজারে এলে বাতাসের কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইড অনেকটাই নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা যাবে বলে মনে করছে টাস্ক ফোর্স।

ব্রিটেনের দ্য ইনস্টিটিউট অব পাবলিক পলিসি রিসার্চ, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের দ্য সেন্টার ফর আমেরিকান প্রোগ্রেস এবং অস্ট্রেলিয়া ইনস্টিটিউটের বিজ্ঞানীরা টাস্ক ফোর্সের তরফে সমীক্ষার কাজ চালিয়েছেন।

25 JAN 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

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HD-13

'River interlinking plan a conspiracy' 19/1

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, JAN. 18. Water Resources Ministry officials today heard the "other side" of the controversial rivers interlinking programme during the first meeting of the newly constituted Committee of Experts.

Alwar's "waterman" Rajinder Singh was upfront in telling senior water resources and other government officers that the interlinking programme was not one for management of floods or drought but was a "conspiracy to privatise the water sector". Ashok Khosla of Development Alternatives did not attend the meeting.

The chairman of the Committee and Water Resources Secretary, V.K. Duggal, explained the genesis of the interlinking programme. The National Water Development Agency made a presentation on the programme. The Committee has been asked to look into the environmental and socio-economic aspects in the Detailed Project Reports prepared by the Task Force

on Interlinking. It will also suggest a rehabilitation and resettlement package for the people to be displaced. The Committee will also suggest the additional strategy needed for assessing any other issue concerning the rivers linking programme.

Later speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Singh said he told the meeting that he was not sure whether the opinion of the NGOs would be included in the minutes of the meeting. But he knew that there was no consensus on the programme. "The issues put forth before us only raised the apprehension that they would create a stir within communities. This is only a method for privatisation," he added.

Official sources said the experts were requested to deliberate on the issues and come back to the Committee in two months. It is proposed to take up the Ken-Betwa link between Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh as an example and get the views of experts.

Fears follow fury

Shut traffickers from tsunami widows & orphans

A new insecurity has emerged from the ocean of destitution. Children orphaned by the tsunami and young women who lost their husbands are feared to be under the rapacity of society. The chairman of National Human Rights Commission, a former chief justice of India, who has seen society through its swirl of crime and violation, has urged the government to set up a system tasked to prevent children and young widows from being exploited by "vultures looking out to fish in troubled waters." Pointing out the scale of the trade of trafficking, which reduces humans to "cattle or commodity," he has asked the government and non-governmental sectors to work on a war footing. While food, tents and blankets are what occupy the attention of relief-givers and state agencies, this new menace has to be factored in while looking after the vulnerable. Hundreds of thousands of people must have lost their homes, a large section of them being adult male members, and tens of thousands children may well be without natural guardians. Derangement of social security is the consequence of such calamities.

Turning down the offers of international aid for the disaster marks a watershed in how India cope when in difficulty. This economic self-assurance of the country should also be matched by its advanced social concerns. Gone are days when human trafficking was unorganised and could not have thought to prey on the victims of natural disasters. Pointers to such possibilities of exploitation in other tsunami-hit parts of the world are notable. In Sri Lanka reports have emerged from refugee centres about people seeking to buy children from centre supervisors; Aceh similarly reports people falsely claiming to be relatives of such destitute children. India is no stranger to unscrupulous vultures who prey on social derangement that follows calamities. Increased trafficking in humans bears out the fears of the NHRC chairman. Protection from the sea will take fresh foray into our lackadaisically applied science of warning and evacuation, but prevention of further and worse damage to human lives must be immediate. The sea has already inspired deep fear. The psychological devastation which requires, more than psychiatric counselling, needs building up an atmosphere of security for the already battered psyches. Building a whole system to such ends means walking a long way — a small fraction of which is preparing computerised lists of orphans and widows.

19 JAN 2005

THE STATESMAN

India slams Pakistan's move on Baglihar

SNS & PTI 19/1

NEW DELHI, Jan. 18. — India today criticised Pakistan's decision to refer the dispute over Baglihar hydro-power project to the World Bank as unjustified. It also asked Pakistan for detailed talks to clear the issue.

"Our view is that there had been detailed discussions at the level of secretaries of water resources. There had been some convergence and we believe that through continued technical discussions, further

convergence would be promoted," an external affairs ministry spokesman said.

On the other hand Pakistan today justified its move to approach the World Bank by saying that bilateralism had failed to settle the issue.

"We have decided to approach the World Bank under Article 9 (2)(a) of the 1960 Indus Water Treaty for appointment of a neutral expert," Pakistan foreign office spokesman Mr Masood Khan said.

Pakistan's Ambassador to the USA, Mr Jehangir Karamat, was scheduled

to approach World Bank president Mr James D Wolfenson with the plea today, he said. Islamabad's decision came 11 days after talks between the two countries failed in Delhi with Pakistan insisting that its concerns were not addressed by India.

"India has violated the treaty," Mr Khan said and alleged that India had given no positive response to Pakistan's objection over the height of the dam. Asked if the decision would affect the ongoing CBMs, Mr Khan said: "It is not a good omen."

ভারতের সুনামি কূটনীতি

পরিণত বুদ্ধির সুলক্ষণ

সি রাজা মোহন

বিচক্ষণ সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার ব্যাপারে ভারতীয় কূটনীতির যে খুব সুখ্যাতি আছে, এমনটা বলা যাবে না। কিন্তু সুনামি বিপর্যয়ের পর মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র এবং প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রগুলির সঙ্গে একযোগে ত্রাণের কাজে নেমে নতুন দিল্লি রাজনৈতিক বিচক্ষণতার একটি বিরল নজির গড়ল। তারই পাশাপাশি, সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলিতে ত্রাণের কাজে দেশের নৌবাহিনীকে ব্যবহার করে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার বুদ্ধিতে দিল যে, ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে ভারতের কূটনৈতিক অবস্থানে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পরিবর্তন ঘটেছে।

কোনও রাষ্ট্রই নিজের রাজনৈতিক সীমানার মধ্যে বিদেশি সৈন্যের অনুপ্রবেশ সহজে মেনে নেয় না। অসম্ভব বড় মাপের বিপর্যয়ের মধ্যেও যে কোনও দেশ নিজের সার্বভৌমত্ব সম্বন্ধে সচেতন থাকে। মার্চ মাসের মধ্যে সমস্ত বিদেশি সেনাকে ইন্দোনেশিয়া ছেড়ে চলে যাওয়ার যে দাবি জাকার্তা জানিয়েছে, তা আসলে রাষ্ট্রের এই সার্বভৌমত্ব রক্ষার চেষ্টারই প্রতিকলন।

লক্ষণীয়, এই দাবি কিন্তু মুখ্যত ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় ত্রাণকার্যে রত মার্কিন ও অস্ট্রেলীয় সেনাবাহিনীর উদ্দেশ্যই। ভারত সম্পর্কে জাকার্তার সন্দেহ অনেকটাই কম। আর, ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীর জওয়ানদের রেখে দেওয়ার কোনও দীর্ঘমেয়াদি পরিকল্পনাও নতুন দিল্লির সতাই নেই। মলদ্বীপ, শ্রীলঙ্কা, এবং ইন্দোনেশিয়া যে ভারতীয় নৌবাহিনীর উপস্থিতিতে ভাল মনে মেনে নিয়েছে, তা কেবল সুনামির ভয়াবহ অভিঘাতের কারণেই নয়, ভারত মহাসাগর অঞ্চলে ভারতীয় নৌ

নীতির পরিবর্তনও এর পিছনে বিশেষ ভাবে কাজ করেছে।

মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের যৌথ ত্রাণের প্রস্তুতি হাওয়ায় ভাসতে আরম্ভ করার চকিৎস ঘণ্টার মধ্যে ভারত সরকার সে জোটে যোগদান করার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিল। এই ব্যাপারটা ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে ভবিষ্যৎ সমীকরণের ক্ষেত্রে অত্যন্ত তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। প্রস্তাবিত এই জোটে যে চিনকে রাখা হয়নি, তার একটি নিজস্ব কূটনীতি রয়েছে। তবে, অবশ্যই, চিনের অনুপস্থিতি এবং ভারতের উপস্থিতি এ কথা বোঝায় না যে ভারত চিনের

কাউকে শত্রু হিসেবে চিহ্নিত না করে সবার সঙ্গে কাজ করতে পারাটা কূটনীতিতে খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, এ জন্য বিশেষ দক্ষতার দরকার হয়। ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে ভারত বড় দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে যে ভাবে কাজ করছে, তা এই দক্ষতার পরিচয় দেয়।

বিপক্ষে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সাথে কোনও জোট গড়ার রাস্তায় হাঁটছে। মনে রাখতে হবে, যখন ভারত সরকার সুনামি ত্রাণে মার্কিন জোটে যোগ দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়, তখনই ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীর প্রধান জেনারেল এন সি ভিজু বেজিংয়ে বসে ভারত ও চিনের মধ্যে আরও বেশি সামরিক বিনিময়ের চুক্তি পাকা করছিলেন।

কাউকে শত্রু হিসেবে চিহ্নিত না করে সবার সঙ্গে কাজ করতে পারাটা

কূটনীতিতে খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, এ জন্য বিশেষ দক্ষতার দরকার হয়। সুনামি পরবর্তী সময়ে ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে ভারত বিশ্বের বড় দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে যে ভাবে কাজ করছে, তা এই দক্ষতার পরিচয় দেয়। ঠাণ্ডা লড়াইয়ের সময় ভারতীয় নৌবাহিনী একেবারে একা পড়ে গিয়েছিল, সে তুলনায় ভারতের আজকের অবস্থান প্রায় বিপরীত মেরুতে। সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়নের সঙ্গে ভারতের ঘনিষ্ঠতার জন্য মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ভারতীয় নৌবাহিনীকে প্রতিপক্ষ হিসেবেই দেখত। কিন্তু শুধু তা-ই নয়, আশির দশকে দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়া এবং পারস্য উপসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে ভারতের অনেক পুরনো মিত্র রাষ্ট্রও ভারতীয় নৌশক্তি সম্পর্কে গভীর সন্দেহ পোষণ করত। অথচ, অস্ত্রের জন্য মস্কোর ওপর নির্ভরশীল হলেও ঠাণ্ডা লড়াইয়ের যুগে ভারতীয় ও সোভিয়েত সেনাবাহিনী কখনও যৌথ সামরিক মহড়ায় যোগ দেয়নি। ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে ভারত ছিল কার্যত একক শক্তি।

কিন্তু সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়নের পতনের পরে ভারত মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, তার মিত্রশক্তি এবং দক্ষিণ ও দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ার বিভিন্ন দেশের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনার সূত্রপাত করে। পুরো নব্বইয়ের দশক জুড়ে সম্ভ্রাসবাদ আর উগ্রপন্থা দমন করতে, উপসাগরীয় অঞ্চল থেকে তেলের সরবরাহ অব্যাহত রাখতে এবং ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে নৌ-বাণিজ্য মসৃণ করতে নতুন দিল্লি ও ওয়াশিংটন দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের গুরুত্ব বুঝতে পারে। যদিও এই বৃহত্তর স্বার্থরক্ষার জন্য সম্পর্কে উল্লসিত ঘটানোর প্রয়োজন দুটি দেশই অনুভব করেছিল, তবু ভারত মহাসাগর অঞ্চলের সুরক্ষার জন্য একসঙ্গে কাজ করার কোনও উপলক্ষ ছিল না। সুনামি এই সুযোগটাই নিয়ে এসেছে।

অতীতে, ভারত মহাসাগর অঞ্চলে

মার্কিন নৌসেনার উপস্থিতি ভারত খুব সোজা চোখে দেখত না। একান্তরে মার্কিন বিমান বাহিনীর বসোপসাগরে যুদ্ধবিমানবাহী জাহাজ 'এন্টারপ্রাইজ' পাঠানোর ঘটনা ভারতের পক্ষে ভোলা কঠিন ছিল। ঠাণ্ডা লড়াই চলাকালীন ভারত সক্রিয় ভাবেই প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলিকে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সাথে দীর্ঘমেয়াদি কোনও সামরিক চুক্তিতে যেতে নিরুৎসাহ করেছিল। আশির দশকের শেষ দিকে ভারত শ্রীলঙ্কাকে দেশের মাটিতে বিদেশি শক্তিকে ঢুকতে না দেওয়ার জন্য একটি আনুষ্ঠানিক অঙ্গীকারে আসতে প্রায় বাধ্যই করে। অথচ, সুনামি বিপর্যয়ের পরে শ্রীলঙ্কায় যখন মার্কিন সেনা ত্রাণের কাজে পৌছোয়, নতুন দিল্লি তা নিয়ে বিশেষ বাক্যব্যয়ের প্রয়োজন বোধ করেনি। ইতিমধ্যে শ্রীলঙ্কাও ভারতকে সে দেশের বন্দর ব্যবহার করার ঢালাও অনুমতি দিয়েছে, সে দেশের জল ব্যবহার করে গবেষণার কাজে ভারতকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছে। অথচ, ভারতের একাধিপত্য সম্বন্ধে শ্রীলঙ্কা এক সময় বেশ সদিহান ছিল।

দক্ষিণ ও দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়া অঞ্চলের বহু দেশই এখন জলপথে ভারতের সঙ্গে সহযোগিতার জন্য তৈরি, শ্রীলঙ্কা এবং সিঙ্গাপুরের সঙ্গে প্রতিরক্ষা বিষয়ক কিছু গুরুত্বপূর্ণ চুক্তি ইতিমধ্যেই স্বাক্ষরিত হয়ে গেছে। এর ফলে ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে ভিয়েতনাম থেকে সেশেলস পর্যন্ত বহু দেশেরই সামরিক সহায়তা পেতে সুবিধে হবে। বলা চলে, নয়াদিল্লির সুনামি-কূটনীতি ভারত মহাসাগর অঞ্চলে ভারতকে একটি নির্ভরযোগ্য এবং গ্রহণযোগ্য শক্তি হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করল। এর ফলে ভারতের সামরিক একাকিত্বের অবসান ঘটবে।

লেখক কূটনীতিবিশেষজ্ঞ, দিল্লিতে জওহরলাল নেহরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে দক্ষিণ ভারতীয় চর্চা বিভাগে শিক্ষক

ANADABA

19 JAN 2005

Arsenic contamination of groundwater

VENOMOUS EARTH — How Arsenic Caused the World's Worst Mass Poisoning: Andrew A. Meharg, Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010. £ 16.99, \$ 29.95.

"BANGLADESH IS grappling with the largest mass poisoning of a population in history because groundwater used for drinking has been contaminated with naturally occurring arsenic," observed a paper that appeared in the Bulletin of the World Health Organisation in 2000. "The scale of this environmental disaster is greater than any seen before; it is beyond the accidents at Bhopal, India, in 1984, and Chernobyl, Ukraine, in 1986."

'Devil's water'

In this book Andrew Meharg, Professor of Biogeochemistry at the University of Aberdeen in the United Kingdom, provides a readable account of the catastrophe. In the 1970s, nearly a quarter of a million people died each year in Bangladesh through waterborne diseases and supply of clean drinking water became a necessity, he points out.

In 1972, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched a massive programme for digging tube wells in Bangladesh, and infant and child mortality dropped sharply thereafter. The author recounts how local lore held that water from the ground was tainted by the devil. Tragically, the "devil's

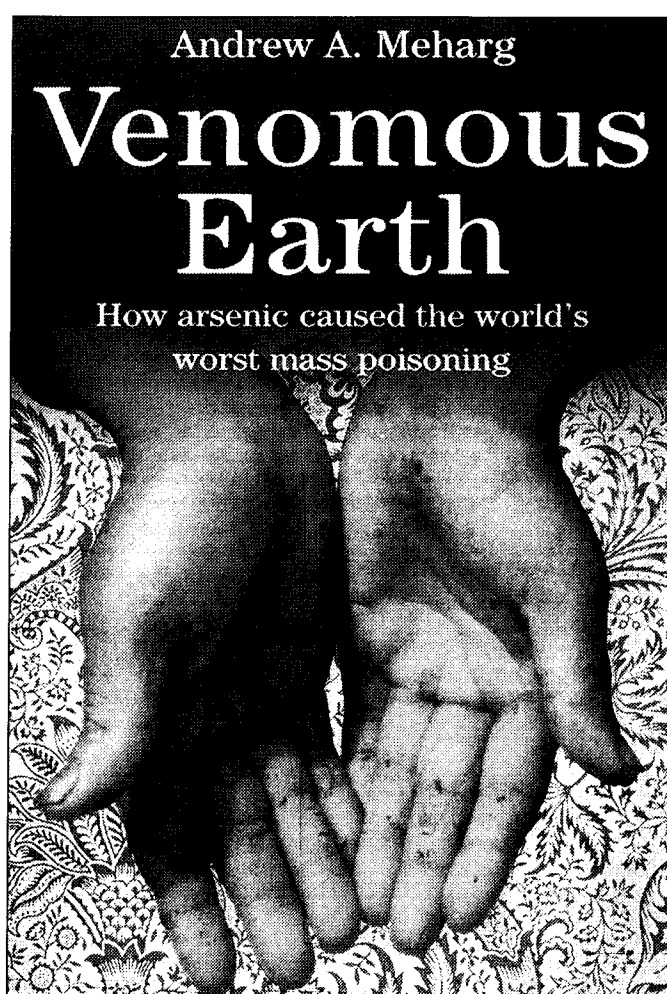
water" is indeed what the tube well water turned out to be.

The presence of arsenic in groundwater in the region is thought to have been detected as early as 1978. It was doctors in Kolkata who first noticed the problem, after seeing villagers with skin ailments and other medical problems characteristic of arsenic poisoning. The first published report appeared in the Indian Journal of Dermatology in October 1984. But this and subsequent papers in medical journals did not set alarm bells ringing either in the subcontinent or elsewhere. Only after a conference held in Kolkata in 1995 did the extent of the calamity become more widely known.

Arsenic release theories

"There is no precedent for aquifer systems like those in the Bengal Basin leaching arsenic," says Meharg in the book and, "Speculation was the order of the day." Initially, it was thought that the Ganga was picking up arsenic-rich minerals upstream and depositing them in the Bengal delta. But the presence of arsenic-tainted wells in northeastern Bangladesh, which was fed by River, Meghna, showed that this theory could not be correct.

It had been found elsewhere in the world that arsenic was released into the groundwater when sulphide-bearing minerals reacted with oxygen. Researchers thought something similar might be happening in the Bengal Basin, with pumping



of water from the aquifers lowering the water table and exposing formerly oxygen-starved sediments to air. But a survey revealed that Bangladesh's aquifers were starved of oxygen, according to the author. The alternative explanation put forward was that arsenic was locked up in iron oxy-

hydroxides. These minerals were stable when there was plenty of dissolved oxygen in the water. But when bacteria digested organic matter and used up the oxygen, the minerals dissolved and released the arsenic they held. This explanation has been accepted by most scientists as the means by which arsenic is released into aquifers in India and Bangladesh, says the author.

Historical themes

After two well-written chapters, the book veers off at a tangent. The next five chapters and more than half the pages of the book explore a range of historical themes concerning arsenic. Its uses (such as in producing high-quality bronzes), abuses (the Roman Emperor Nero may have used arsenic to remove a rival to the throne, but Napoleon did not die of arsenic poisoning), myths (that it could be transmuted into a precious metal) and medicinal applications are explored in rich detail. All of it is quite fascinating, but has little to do with arsenic in groundwater.

The author returns to the central theme of the book in the last two chapters. The last but one chapter looks at arsenic-contaminated groundwater in the Americas. The reluctance of the U.S. Government, especially the present administration, to set strict standards for arsenic levels in drinking water and how that attitude may have led to the World Health Organisation's failure to specify safe lev-

els of arsenic in food and water in its revised Environmental Health Criteria of 2001. Options for Bangladesh, where it is hoped that piped water will be able to provide clean drinking water, form the last chapter.

Extent of contamination

All in all, this is a book that makes the scientific issues underlying a major human tragedy accessible to the average reader. But one puts down the book wishing that the author, instead of getting sidetracked, had written more about some of the other issues directly related to arsenic-contaminated well-water.

For instance, he points out that one in every 60 people on the planet (some one hundred million people) is living in an area where they may be exposed to drinking water with dangerous levels of arsenic. Two to three times as many, may be getting water with lower but still undesirable levels of arsenic.

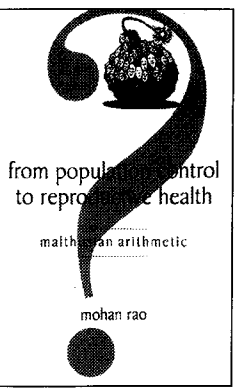
Enormous tracts of North and South America have arsenic-rich groundwater, and it has recently been discovered that groundwater in Vietnam, Nepal, Pakistan, Iraq, China, Laos and Myanmar may also be contaminated with arsenic. The situation in the Americas is dealt with cursorily and the rest barely mentioned in passing. A detailed account of the global experience would surely have added considerable educational value.

N. GOPAL RAJ

FROM THE BLURB

• **From Population Control to Reproductive Health** — Malthusian Arithmetic: Mohan Rao; Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., B-42, Panchsheel Enclave, New Delhi-110017. Rs. 380.

One of the largest public health initiatives in the world, the family planning programme in India has adopted various strategies since its inception. However, they have not yielded the desired results. The book seeks to critically evaluate the family planning programme in India by addressing the reasons for not achieving success and why large sections of the elite blame the population explosion for all the social and economic problems that India faces. It argues that neo-Malthusian ideology has profoundly influenced not only demographers but also policy planners, the medical profession, and the middle class and the elite as a whole. Strongly critical of the



impact of neo-liberal economic policies on the already ailing public healthcare system in India, the author argues that the recent emphasis on health and reproductive rights adopted by the government has done little to improve the health of women. Contextualises the debates concerning population and development in a broader socio-historical and political framework highlighting new empirical findings and policy implications.

• **Sri Sathya Sai Baba** — A Life: Bill Aitken; Rs. 450. The author, a well-known travel writer and a self-described "spiritual nomad" in this biography of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who has millions of followers worldwide, attempts to unravel why so many — royalty, wealthy industrialists, influential politicians, as well as the poor — flock to Puttaparthi. Sai Baba's message, he reveals, can be summed up in one word: love. It is as simple as it is profound, not unlike how his devotees see him — the embodiment of deep spirituality wedded to simplicity, elegance and grace. This study purports to be neither a hagiographic exercise in myth making nor a dry, objective account of the Sai's life. The result of many years of inquiry and research, the biography bears testimony to the enduring relevance of the sacred in our times.

• **Swami Chinmaya Reader**: Anita Raina Thapan — Editor; Rs. 395. One of the most influential interpreters of Vedantic phi-

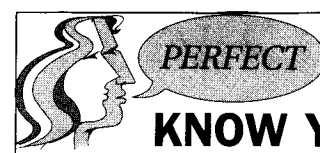
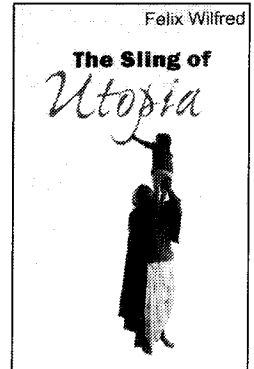
losophy in modern times, Swami Chinmayananda touched the hearts and minds of millions with his message of social and religious harmony. The Chinmaya Mission established in 1953 continues to spread his message of universal brotherhood and seeks to realise through spiritual and secular activities the wisdom embedded in the teachings of Vedanta. This collection of Swami Chinmayananda's discourses brought together by his disciple and active member of the Mission represents the seminal teachings of this spiritual master. From the relevance of religion to the significance of appropriate spiritual practice and the true meaning of faith, his discourses span a whole range of issues that are vital to the well-being of society. Emphasising above all the common essence of all religions, he speaks of the values that one needs to live by in order to become a self-reliant individual with the motivation and the means to help fashion a better society.

Both the books have been pub. by Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 11, Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110017.

• **The Sling of Utopia** — Struggle for a Different Society: Felix Wilfred; Pub. by ISPCK, Post Box 1585, 1654, Madarsa Raod, Kashmir Gate, Delhi-110006. Rs. 275. The book is a contribution towards keeping alive the

utopias of the oppressed and their struggles. Utopia the author says is not an unreal figment of imagination or a chimera we chase in futility. It is the projection of another real order of things, a different set of values and a new shape of the world and society. The suppressed identities — women, minorities, Dalits and tribals and all those who are marginalised — in any way project their utopias.

An insatiable greed and callous individualism that neglect the poor and the weak, a concentration of power that refuses to accept democracy and participation, a homogenised order that denies pluralism, difference and minorities, a patriarchal culture that fails in gender justice, a nationalism that discounts the poor, a religious system that legitimises inequalities, a consumerism that is pursued at the cost of the poor and nature — all these are brought under critical scrutiny in this book.



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

What is the meaning and origin of "ringside view"? (T. Manoharan, Chennai)

When you have a "ringside view" of an event, you have an excellent view of it. It is also possible to say "ringside seat". "Sheel was sitting on the terrace and had a ringside view of the accident."

There are many idioms that come from the sport of boxing, and "ringside view" is one of them. The "ring" refers to a "boxing ring". If during a boxing bout you are lucky enough to have a seat close to the ring, you can see all the action very clearly.

What is the difference between "sob" and "weep"? (P. Raman, Trichy)

In both cases, tears flow from the eyes. "Weep" is mostly used in writing, and is considered a literary word. When you say that someone is weeping, you are focussing on the tears, and not on the sounds that accompany it. Weeping is usually done silently, which is why you never talk about a baby weeping. Babies cry — a lot of noise accompanies the tears that flow from their eyes. One can weep with sorrow, and we can weep with joy. Sobbing is always done loudly; it is accompanied by a lot of noise. The heroines in our films sob a lot. Sobbing involves gasping for breath and this results in a lot of chest heaving. The word is usually associated with misery; unlike "weep", one cannot "sob" with joy.

What is the meaning of "on the qui vive"? (K. Vaithinathan, Kumbakonam)

First, let's deal with the pronunciation. The first word "qui" is pronounced like the word "key", and the "i" in "vive" is like the "ee" in "fee", "bee" and "see". The final "e" is silent. The main stress is on the second word. I understand that soldiers in France who were on duty during the night used this expression. Whenever they saw

a figure approaching or heard some noise, they used to shout "qui vive", meaning, "Who goes there?" or "Long live who?" The person approaching was expected to respond by saying, "vive le roi", meaning, "Long live the king". Since the sentinel on duty had to be alert, the expression "on the qui vive" is used to mean, "watchful" or "alert".

*With the elections around the corner, the police have been asked to be on the qui vive.

How is the word "scourge" pronounced? (B. Gauri, Bangalore)

The "sc" is like the "sk" in "skin", "skip", and "skill". The following "ou" is pronounced like the "er" in "her", "nerd" and "herd". The "g" sounds like the "j" in "jam", "jazz" and "jump", and the final "e" is silent. A "scourge" is a whip normally used to flog people. The word can also be used to refer to a person or a thing. When you refer to an individual as a "scourge", what you mean is that he is someone who causes a lot of suffering for others — just like the whip!

*The President wants to put an end to the scourge of terrorism.

What is the meaning of "shimmy"? (Vinod E. Kumar, Secunderabad)

Some people when they walk, shake their hips and shoulders side to side. This is what we mean by "shimmy"; it is a word that is normally associated with dancing.

*As the singer shimmied across the stage, the audience went wild. In American English, the word is also used in informal contexts to mean, "vibrate or shake".

*The front wheel of Velu's scooter shimmied.

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OPEN PAGE

Freedom to women — what does it mean?

IT DID make me disturbed to read the article 'Freedom to women — blessing or blemish?' by G. Rajasekaran (Open Page, January 4), not because of the contents, but the way the writer had sought to define 'freedom' for women.

Does he mean that wherever they go, girls need to be escorted, not by their he-buddies, but by their brothers?

What the writer depicts as freedom for women is in effect applicable to everyone in our society irrespective of gender and age. The unlimited and uncensored exposure to views, visuals and culture that are very much alien to the Indian ethos is common to all and not merely to women. Our boys are equally exposed to picking up undesirable habits as our girls. This is a problem that has to be treated as something affecting the youth of today, irrespective of gender.

Freedom for women as conceived by thinkers like Bharathi is about allowing and enabling the girl to have access to education, have equal say in domestic affairs and to contribute to nation building. When avenues

are opened up to enable her to rise in these areas, she is automatically exposed to the hazards of society. It is precisely for this reason the women of yester-decades were not allowed to venture out.

The hazards had been there in those days and would continue to be there in future also. It depends on how well women are prepared and guided to tackle them and come out unscathed.

Mind pollution

As Mr. Rajasekaran has said mind pollution is what we have to guard against and we have to understand the fact that both boys and girls are exposed to this hazard. Mind pollution behaves like any physical affliction, in that it strikes only the vulnerable mind and takes time to incubate before emerging into a full-fledged affliction. So the basal mind and how it is groomed in the early years are important factors. I do not think the parents of today and the school authorities are lax in paying due attention to grooming their wards in a proper value system. Wherever mind pollution has taken place, we can find that the 'chem-

istry' between the parents and their straying ward is not of a right mix. Either the parents are in the dark — unwittingly and unknowingly allowing the pollution to engulf their wards — or they are overly strict which also has its repercussions.

Therefore the need of the hour is to have family counsellors to educate and guide the parents in handling their adolescent and teenage wards. Behavioural education needs to be imparted to parents at clinics or at home. Bringing up the teenager is the most challenging task. Today every school is arranging for personality development classes for the wards. It is time parents were also exposed to and educated on how to help their wards in developing their persona.

Erik Erikson's model of stages of psychological development of a person addresses this problem of adolescents and early teenagers. While the adolescent is swayed between an identity crisis and a role confusion, the early teenager, if not guided well, is likely to oscillate between getting too intimate with someone or too isolated, an extreme condition. Step-

ping out of established values takes place when they lack guidance in these spheres. But how many parents are well informed of such behavioural sways and come to the rescue of their wards is what determines the extent of mind pollution.

In today's hazard-ridden world, there is enough probability for the boy or the girl who steps out of the house to step into a different type of shoe. But behind this boy or girl, there is certainly a closely held mother or father whom he or she would not like to hurt but rather would revere wholeheartedly. Only this person can make a difference to the life of the teenager. The father, friend, philosopher and guide for the teenager can be found in this person, or at home only.

With immense support and guidance coming from this friend at home, the teenager, be it a boy or a girl, is sure to walk with adequate protection against the hazards of society. No escort is needed for such a person. And any escort as seen by others may not be a hazard to him or her or to our cultural values.

• JAYASREE SARANATHAN

Falling ethos

THIS POINT of view is in reference to the article "Freedom to women — blessing or blemish?"

Before venturing on this journey of writing, I spent quite a lot of quality time contemplating the pros and cons associated with it. It is always very demanding for a person to write about women's cause and not be branded as a feminist, especially so when the person is a female. There lies a thin line that separates 'feminism' from 'social reform'. Wondering how the likes of Raja Rammohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi were spared such monstrous titles, I dared to venture because the issue concerned was greater than a mere women's cause. It is about 'whether generation next' and who is responsible for it?

At the very outset I would like to clarify that neither do I belong to the social reformers' creed of the 21st century who are all set to 'liberate women', nor do I with sincere apologies and due respect to G. Rajasekaran, the author of the aforesaid article belong to the creed of those who ring alarm bells about 'mind pollution' and 'cultural degeneration'.

As a great admirer of the Hindu

tradition but a woman myself, I fear that 'what woman has made of herself today' was and is never the prerogative of woman. It would be pertinent to recall the very recent episode of the sexual escapade of two schoolgoers in Delhi. Who would take the onus of the act — the participants, the parents, the school administration or society? It would be instinctive for many esteemed citizens to blame the 'fallen angel' for the act. And that is where our judgment fails us.

What type of freedom?

Is it justified that the 'whole' blame be thrown on women for not knowing what to do with their new found 'freedom'? Before musing over this question we need to stop for a while and think — which freedom is it we are talking about? Are we referring to the freedom to have 'mandatory boyfriends' or becoming 'roadside Juliets'? If this is freedom we should shun it immediately. But if the freedom is about recognising the fact that women are also as much a part of the human species as men are, then we are far from having attained the freedom.

It is my strong conviction that when a girl is '...Adam teasing,' the reason is that Indian society is at a crossroads and the very astronomical speed with which it is being exposed to the 'global' culture has brought a transition in the mindset of one and all. The stark reality is that not women alone but men too are losing the insight into what constitutes 'right and wrong.' 'Mind pollution' is not woman's domain alone, it is as much a male's too. It is in fact a human attribute! When girls are going for 'instant marriages and faster divorces...' the boys too have their share. The culprit thus is the 'crossover culture.'

Rather than being escorted by fathers and brothers as was done 40 years ago, or by the 'he-friends' as today, why cannot people (both sexes) dream of going alone? Why should the question of 'escort' for girls arise in the first place?

Let us not therefore be lost in the blame game, and the clarion call of 'awake and arise' be sounded not to rescue and redeem the 'falling angels' but to our falling ethos caught in the transition.

• D. CHANCHALA DEVI

WHEN I first heard about the tsunami disaster, my mind went back to the floods of nearly four decades ago with which I was involved.

I was posted as sub-collector of Gudur in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh in September 1958. I had not been there for a month yet when for four days and nights, it rained incessantly. It was past midnight on the fourth day when I received a telegram from the government at Hyderabad that two trains viz., the Madras Mail and the G.T. Express (as they were then called) were held up in my jurisdiction near Nayudupeta and Sulurpeta respectively and that I should arrange to provide necessary relief to the passengers. My residence had no phone so I sent a message to the deputy superintendent of police and the tahsildar and we decided to leave straightaway.

Out of the town, we saw a sheet of water as far as we could see. We could not therefore drive any further. The general opinion was that it was too risky to try to go further. That was the first time I realised that a leader has to sometimes overrule seemingly wise counsel. As I pushed into the

chest-deep water, others soon followed suit. After crossing the inundated area, we got hold of a lorry which had been stalled on the other side and drove up to Nayudupeta. There we met some of the local officials who briefed us about the situation around the area. Railway officers had also reached there and we were able to coordinate with each other.

Our first priority was to reach some succour to about 900 passengers of the stranded train. A kitchen was organised and food was carried to the site on railway trolleys.

Amusing incidents

When we started serving food to the passengers of the first train, some amusing incidents occurred. There was a group of Rajasthanis in a compartment who said that they would eat only rotis made with jaggery. I told them that this was not a feast but an emergency and our aim was to save them from starvation. A young man from Delhi protested that he was not a rice eater. He also asked for a sweet dish. I told him that he was not in a restaurant or on a picnic and so had to make do with whatever was available. After a while,

overtaken by hunger, both relented. We commandeered some bicycles and started off for Sulurpeta, which was about 12 km away. Luckily, the train there was stranded at the station. Amongst its passengers was a Union Minister, the late K. Raghuramaiah. An old irate passenger asked me why boats could not be arranged to ferry the people across the breached portion and another train brought from Madras to pick them up. I told him that we were trying to do that. He thought I was mocking him and he complained to the Minister. Luckily, the Minister showed better appreciation and asked him to learn to be grateful. That boosted our morale.

The magnitude of the floods was so much that in one single night 57 deaths had occurred. The Swarnamukhi river had overflowed into various tanks and they had breached. The water level had risen on the national highway at some places to a height of 21 feet. People started pouring in hordes from the affected villages to Sulurpeta. I ordered all schools closed and set up refugee camps there. I asked the tahsildar to buy rice and other essential commodities needed by the refugees. Some of the refugees, particularly women, also needed some clothes. Disasters reveal the best and the worst in human nature. As soon as the tahsildar went to buy rice in the market the merchants increased the price. I was enraged and instructed the tahsildar to seize all the stocks with the shopkeepers without payment and give them only acknowledgment. We also got saris and dhosis from the market and had them distributed to the needy. Imagine my frustration when I was told that the beneficiaries had sold those saris and dhosis back to the shopkeepers at half the prices! Meanwhile, the railway officials had been busy repairing the tracks at an impressive speed. Soon the trains

Tsunami: a flashback

Bungalow into a dormitory and all slept on the floor.

By then the situation had improved and the Collector was able to reach Sulurpeta. The venerable old gentleman, Mohibullah, was very pleasantly surprised to see the arrangements and was so overcome with emotion that he embraced me and complimented me profusely.

The government sanctioned some modest relief and loans were also sanctioned to the cultivators. Complaints reached me that the special tahsildar appointed for the disbursement of financial relief was taking a cut. I suspended him. The Collector told me that though I meant well, I had no powers to suspend a tahsildar. He reinstated him and immediately suspended him himself.

The media at that time consisted only of newspapers and radio. Most of the papers had stringers but the news made it to the national level. There were no correspondents to seek interviews. It was called the worst tragedy in that area in living memory.

After the whole thing was over, the government issued a gazette extraordinary notification placing on record

its appreciation of the outstanding flood relief work undertaken by Anandram, the then Superintendent of Police and me at grave risk to our lives.

Human factor

Listening to the news about tsunami now I cannot help wondering at the enormity of change, particularly in communications. But some things never change and amongst them is the human factor. You see rare dedication amongst officials, sympathy amongst the general public and NGOs on the one hand, and unscrupulousness, greed, avarice and corruption amongst the same categories on the other.

• NARENDRA LUTHER

Announcement

Contributions to the Open Page will be considered for publication only if they are in electronic form and emailed. The length of the article should not exceed 800 words. It may be addressed to the Open Page desk at openpage@thehindu.co.in

Global hard talk to cash in bio-diversity

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By Chandrika Mago/TNN

New Delhi: When developing nations meet here this week, they hope to frame a common bargaining position for a resource they have in abundance and hadn't valued till now—biological wealth and a knowledge of how to use this, two assets which can yield millions of dollars in development of medicines, cosmetics and herbal products. "There was such a premium on technology that biodi-

versity was taken almost for granted," says an environment ministry official. No longer. The global market for medicinal aromatic plants is \$68 billion a year, and growing. India and others now want to cash in. Over the past couple of years, 17 countries which have knitted into a grouping called the Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries have

been discussing how to tackle the multinational company raiders who pick up medicinal plants and the knowledge handed down over generations on using these to develop new drugs, patent these and pocket millions of dollars. It can be anything from the common turmeric, or hal-di, to neem, even karela. Now, the aim is to have a common strategy ready for a February meeting in Bangkok to discuss the frame-

Green Zone

- India has more than 8,000 species of medicinal plants.
- There are 1.5 mn practitioners of traditional medicines, about 8,000 registered pharmacies of Indian systems of medicine and homoeopathy.
- Nine-tenths of the plants are collected from the wild, generating about 40 million man-days of employment.

(Source: Planning Commission report, 2000)

work for an international regime to regulate access to this wealth and share the benefits. With India holding the presidency of the group, meetings begin in Delhi on Monday with the ministerial discussions scheduled over January 20 and 21.

This group includes developing country biggies such as India, China, Brazil and South Africa, which have been getting together in other fora, too. It's got Mexico, which first

came up with the idea, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Congo, Ecuador, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Peru, Philippines and Venezuela. The group rules over nearly 60-70% of all biodiversity. India, like others, has realised it needs to regulate two aspects if it doesn't want to lose this war.

One, access to these resources, through a national law. Two, ensuring communities or countries which held the basic knowledge on use of plants benefit and get royalty.





Nicobarese tsunami survivors at a relief camp.

Andaman tribals accept aid but not intrusion

Rajnish Sharma
New Delhi, January 14

AS IT tries to reach relief to the reclusive tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the government is forced to walk the tightrope between aid and intrusion. The tribals have been ready to accept food provided no one got too near to hand it over; and now, they are willing to have building materials sent to them but will not let the outside world's builders on to their islands.

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has informed the Union home ministry that the aboriginals, despite losing their homes to

the tsunami waves, are opposed to any reconstruction by government agencies on their islands. They are ready to accept "construction material", but will do all the building themselves.

The issue was discussed today at a ministry review of relief and rehabilitation, chaired by home minister Shivraj Patil. The minister and home secretary Dhirendra Singh agreed that the "privacy of the tribes and their reluctance to mix with the outside world must be respected", a source said.

"The aboriginals (Onges, Jarawas, Sentinelese, Shompen and Andamanese) have

been extremely reluctant to accept any intrusion. Even food had to be sent to them on floats from a safe distance," a senior ministry official said.

The ministry, however, will make one last attempt to convince the tribals that only the government's builders can ensure that the tribes' new homes are sturdy enough to withstand future tremors.

The home ministry has asked the local administration to establish contact with the aboriginals through "intermediaries", who would try to persuade the tribes to accept a limited number of outside builders.

Government

FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 2005

TSUNAMI'S CHILDREN

More than any natural disaster before it, the December 26 tsunami was especially cruel on children. Large numbers of children perished because they could not run away from the waves quickly enough or were unable to reach out to life-saving objects. Children account for 40 per cent of those who died in Tamil Nadu. Across the countries affected by the tsunami, they are nearly one-third of the total number of dead. But it is not just the dead. Children have also emerged as the most vulnerable and helpless of the survivors. With a death toll in excess of 150,000, several thousand boys and girls have been orphaned. Many are separated from their families. Reports speak of children in shock and denial after the trauma of seeing one or both parents swept away by the waves — and in many cases, too young even to comprehend either the events of that day or their profoundly altered life situation. The immediate priority has to be to provide for their security, protection and basic needs. The risks of leaving defenceless children uncared for — to market forces, as it were — would be horrifying.

To their credit, the Governments of the affected countries have been quick to grasp their responsibility. Sri Lanka, long a haunt of paedophiles, at once put in place checks at airports to prevent child trafficking. In India, in a socially and morally exemplary move, the Tamil Nadu Government announced within days of the disaster that it would adopt all the children orphaned by the tsunami; the administration has already begun acting upon the decision by opening homes for the children. But as the focus shifts from relief and immediate rehabilitation to ultimate rehabilitation, the Government will soon need to think of long-term plans to rebuild the lives of these boys and girls. Some experts argue that the first option must be to reunite them with their relatives so that they can con-

tinue to grow up in a familiar community and environment. But in a situation where entire communities are affected, placing the children in the care of relatives whose own lives may be in ruins, might not be the answer. The best solution appears to be to consult the local communities, people close to the orphaned children and, where applicable, the children themselves about their future. Where appropriate, the search must be for families that can legally adopt the children, and are well-equipped to bring them up. India, like Sri Lanka, has long had stringent procedures to screen prospective adoptive parents. In the wake of the tsunami, these procedures are likely to be tightened. If the prescribed rules are observed strictly and there is transparency and monitoring, there is no reason why adoption should not be an option in a reasonable proportion of cases. The President of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Kumaratunga, has shown the way by her inspiring decision to adopt a Tamil child from the country's badly affected North-East.

For the immediate term, one of the best ways of giving the affected children a sense of continuity and normality, as the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) has pointed out, is to get them into a school routine as soon as possible. Many schools have been damaged by the tsunami, delaying their reopening in several places, but classes can be held even in temporary structures. The secure environment of a school will help children cope with the trauma by giving them activities that can rekindle their optimism. Importantly, it will also help to keep them out of the reach of unscrupulous adults. One of the best things altruistic individuals and organisations with a social conscience can do for rebuilding the lives of the children of the tsunami is to fund and support their schooling and college education in well-conceived, effective, and sustained ways.

U.N. agency favours global warning system

By Shigeo Arata, 10-19
GENEVA, JAN. 10. A U.N. organisation will propose a worldwide warning system for natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and typhoons, an organisation official said over the weekend.

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) will present the idea at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe from January 18 to 22.

Augmenting networks

The ISDR, along with two other organisations, will propose measures to augment and unify warning networks already in place.

The two other groups are the World Meteorological Organisa-

tion and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the official said.

The Pacific Rim already has

set up a tsunami warning system, while the Caribbean has a hurricane warning system.

In the Mediterranean, some countries have detection net-

works in place for earthquakes and tsunami.

By improving those systems and coordinating them into a global network, the ISDR aims to reduce the victims of natural disasters by half within 15 years.

The need to expand disaster warning systems has been raised by the United Nations before.

As early as 15 years ago, U.N. experts urged countries on the Indian Ocean to establish a tsunami warning system.

The Kobe conference is expected to adopt an action plan that would provide \$8 million for the first stage, which would include an advance survey for a tsunami warning system around the Indian Ocean. — *New York Times News Service*

Relief chopper crashes

BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA), JAN. 10. A U.S. helicopter with 10 persons on board crashed in a rice field as it was trying to land at the Banda Aceh airport on Monday while on a tsunami-relief operation, injuring at least two U.S. servicemen, a U.S. military spokesman said.

The injured men, along with eight other Navy personnel, were being flown back to their ship in Medan, 400 km south-east of Banda Aceh. The U.S.

military suspended helicopter flights for about two hours after the crash. U.S. authorities said there was no indication the helicopter had been shot down.

There was a shooting incident close to a U.N. compound in Banda Aceh on Sunday that local police blamed on separatist rebels.

Authorities quickly cordoned off the area and U.S. officials began searching the field around the crash site. — AP

40-11
10/1

States request more stringent Coastal Regulation Zone guidelines *Commitment*

By Our Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 9. Following the tsunami disaster, some coastal States have unofficially approached the Centre to seek the strengthening of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification that regulates human activity within 500 metres of the High Tide Line.

A demand for "enhancing the capabilities" of the notification is also likely to be made by the Swaminathan Committee, formed last year to examine the existing CRZ norms. The committee had its final round of discussions here over the weekend and the report is awaited by the Union Environment and Forests Ministry.

While the Swaminathan Committee report may not come as a surprise to the Ministry, a demand for more stringent CRZ regulations by the States has surprised the Centre. Almost all the coastal States had opposed the norms and described them as an "infringement" on their powers. Now, at least two of the States affected by the tsunami are thinking in terms of making the regulations more stringent. The Ministry officials de-

scribe enhancing the capabilities of the notification as stricter guidelines and stringent punishments to check violations, and believe that the demand for strengthening of guidelines by the States will also ensure better enforcement.

Enforcement problems

There have been several problems in enforcing the CRZ guidelines since these were notified in February 1991. Apart from the State Governments, the opposition has come mainly from private developers and tourism promoters, leading to the relaxation of the original notification through about a dozen amendments. The major amendment was pushed through for the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) by allowing beach resorts and tourism-related recreational facilities.

As per the notification, the entire coast is divided into four zones depending on the density of the population and the ecology. In zone I fall most of the sensitive areas with mangroves and corals where no development is permitted up to 500 metres from

the High Tide Line (HTL) and the land between the Low Tide Line. The HTL means the position on the land up to which the highest water line reaches during high tide.

Zone II includes town and cities where buildings are already touching the sea and this zone permits maximum development, while zone-III includes under-developed areas and tourist places where permission for development is allowed on a case-to-case basis. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands fall in zone IV.

The Ministry also amended the notification to allow developmental activities for tourism on seven islands of the Andaman and Nicobar group and some in the Lakshadweep. The proposal is pending with the Union Tourism Ministry.

To enforce the provisions of the notification, the Ministry constituted a national and 13 State Coastal Zone Management Authorities that were entrusted with the work of enforcing the notification, though most of them had been "going slow" on enforcement and there were rampant violations.

10 JAN 2005

THE HINDU

Swaminathan 1/9/05 "Strategies to be evolved for coastal eco-security" 10/1

By G. Venkataramani

CHENNAI, JAN. 9. Multiple sustainable strategies to provide short, medium and long-term relief to the tsunami-hit coastal ecosystems and their population will be drafted by the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) at a special meeting to be convened here tomorrow, according to M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman of the Commission.

"It will be a special meeting to look into the distress of the fishing community in the context of the tsunami tragedy and it will discuss issues relating to the ecological and economic rehabilitation of the tsunami-hit coastal regions and their population. Senior representatives of various governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations and all stakeholders will participate in the meeting to be held at the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation," said Prof. Swaminathan in an interview today.

Recalling the earlier governmental steps to protect the coastal ecosystems, he said: "The serious loss of life and property caused by the tsunami highlights the vision and wisdom of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, when nearly 24 years ago she took steps to ensure that no permanent construction is permitted within 500 metres of the high tide line. It is our duty to ensure that short-term and commercial interests do not undermine the ecological security of the coastal areas. Good ecology will also be good business in the future, considering the prospects of sea level rise caused by global warming. India should become a world leader in the environmentally



M.S. Swaminathan

sustainable management of the coastal zone."

Bio-shields

On the key issues to be taken up for discussion, Prof. Swaminathan said the strengthening of the ecological foundations for sustainable livelihood security in coastal areas would be given priority. The rehabilitation of the degraded mangrove forests and erection of "bio-shields" along the coastline would get due attention. The unique "bio-shields" will consist of planting appropriate mangrove species as well as other salt-tolerant plants, including *Salicornia atriplex*, *Casuarina*, *Thespesia* and some species of bamboo.

The "bio-shields" programme will include raising community nurseries of these plants to provide livelihood security to the coastal population. Other strategies such as setting up coastal bio-villages, based on the princi-

ple of social inclusion, to ensure multiple livelihood options to the community and establishing a network of coastal village knowledge centres to provide early warning and location-specific information on health, water, sanitation, market and weather will also be looked into by the Commission.

Knowledge centres

"The village knowledge centres will be set up under the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy. From each village, a man and a woman will be trained and elected as a 'fellow' of the academy. The Commission will train the local communities in disaster preparedness and management. NCF will also recommend the organisation of food-for-eco restoration and livelihood revival in the tsunami-affected areas," said Prof. Swaminathan.

He commended the dedicated efforts of the Governments, societal groups and philanthropic agencies in providing immediate relief to the tsunami victims.

The medium and long-term strategies for rehabilitation should be commissioned and executed in a mission mode.

The NCF has recently submitted its first report to the Union Minister for Agriculture, the Deputy Chairman and members of the Planning Commission.

The report has dealt with the short and long-term measures to address the farmers' distress that occasionally led to suicide.

It has also recommended the introduction of a multi-purpose insurance scheme to include health cover for the farming community, Prof. Swaminathan said.

10 JAN 2005

THE HINDU

MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2005

Minimum

ON WITH THE RELIEF *49-10* *10/1*

THE EXTRAORDINARY JAKARTA summit on the tsunami disaster has provided the launch pad for a massive, coordinated international relief effort to help the victims of Nature's fury across the Indian Ocean — from Indonesia to Somalia. With the United Nations taking the lead and the United States announcing the disbanding of an egregiously constituted 'core group', the decks have been cleared for an effective pooling of resources, expertise, and solidarity by the international community. The death toll is estimated to be in excess of 150,000, and as many as five million families may have been displaced by the giant waves that struck on December 26. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan was spot on when he asked donors who have pledged relief funds to meet their commitments here and now — so that the victims can be helped before it is too late, and past experience of failure to honour pledges is not repeated. Indians can feel proud that their country has risen spiritedly and resourcefully to the challenge, deciding to take care of its own relief and immediate rehabilitation needs while joining in U.N.-led international solidarity. Partly in consequence, international assistance can now be directed to where it is needed most at this juncture: Indonesia and Sri Lanka above all.

Although there have been abundant offers and pledges of aid — the estimates range from \$2 billion to \$5 billion — the U.N. needs at least \$1 billion in hand to get seriously started. Mr. Annan has indicated that \$229 million will go towards food and agriculture, \$122 million for health care, \$61 million for basic amenities, \$222 million for shelter and non-food items, and \$110 million for early restoration of livelihoods. Japan has emerged not just in its traditional role as leading donor, but also as a regional leader in providing logistic support and expertise, along with India, Australia, and the U.S. The Indian Navy has ventured out to Sri Lanka and Indone-

sia to offer immediate relief and mobile health services. What the international community needs to do is to rush the equipment required to clear the mountains of debris, provide income-generating employment to the affected families, rebuild the social infrastructure, and enable the coastal communities to restart livelihood activities. All this must be done in partnership with the national governments so that the exercise is seen not as an intrusion, not as patronage, but as an essay in unprecedented international solidarity.

Now that a Special Commissioner, an Emergency Relief Coordinator, and a U.N. Development Group are in place, multilateral agencies and donor countries must keep their word in pooling contributions and kick-starting relief work without ifs and buts. In addition to providing food, water, and temporary shelter, aid agencies must take preventive action to ensure that no epidemic breaks out anywhere and that basic health and sanitation are taken care of. Transport and communication constitute another imperative and wherever they have been ruptured, they must be restored on an emergency basis. The fate of the thousands of orphaned children poses the biggest challenge of all. Social activists and non-government organisations have warned of the risk, in certain tsunami-hit areas, from paedophiles on the hunt for vulnerable children and stressed the need to exercise utmost vigilance in processing applications for adoption. National and local governments as well as international organisations bear the heavy responsibility of securing the lives, well-being, and future of defenceless children in areas targeted by paedophiles and also organisations such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam that are on the lookout for under-age recruits to their depleted military ranks. The U.N., donor countries, and citizen sector organisations certainly have their work cut out.

Govt to set up disaster management authority

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The government on Sunday secured broad support for its rescue and relief efforts mounted in the wake of the tsunami disaster at an all-party meeting, when it announced that a National Disaster Management Authority would be set up soon.

It accepted a number of suggestions, including one for installing an early warning system for taking precautionary measures. Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said a committee of ministers would be formed to select the best system available.

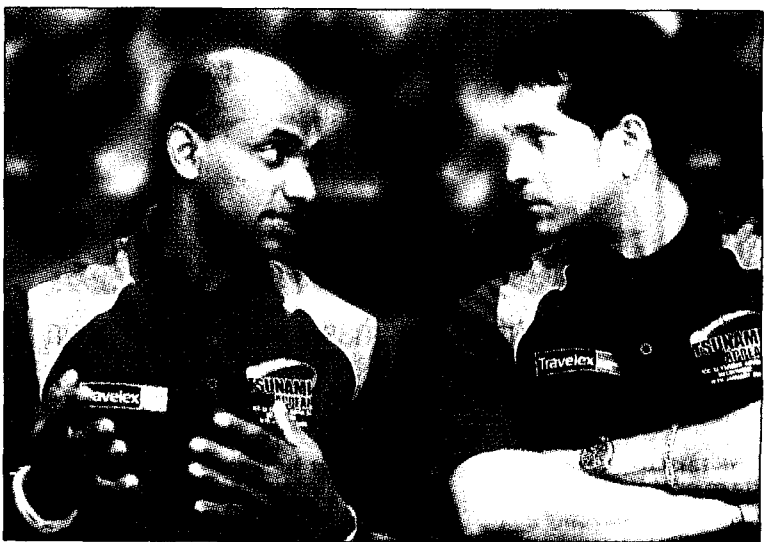
Mukherjee, who briefed reporters along with home minister Shivraj Patil and agriculture minister Sharad Pawar, said leaders of all political parties "appreciated the prompt action" taken after the disaster and assured full cooperation in the relief and rehabilitation exercise undertaken by the government.

A Bill would be brought in the budget session of Parliament, beginning next month, to give effect to the proposed authority, Patil said after the over three-hour-long meeting convened by PM Manmohan Singh.

The government indicated that there was no change in the decision not to receive government-to-government disaster aid from abroad. Mukherjee said the World Bank and other multilateral lending agencies are "different entities" of which India has been a founding member.

It was also made clear that there would be no relaxation in the present policy on child adoption by foreigners in the wake of the disaster.

The meeting, attended by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, former



Sanath Jayasuriya and Sachin Tendulkar at a function in Melbourne before the Asian XI takes on the 'Rest of the World' team in a tsunami relief match

No scaling down of R-Day function

New Delhi: Both the government and the opposition on Sunday appeared unanimous on not scaling down the Republic Day celebrations on account of the death and devastation caused by the tsunami. "It is not correct to say any political party suggested any scaling down of the Republic Day celebrations. This is an observance of national day and achievements of the nation and not associated with festivities," defence minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters here after an all-party meeting convened by the PM.

PM Atal Behari Vajpayee and BJP chief L K Advani, saw PM Manmohan Singh give a brief account on the death and devastation caused by the December 26 tsunami disaster.

Though the government made no reference to it, BJP spokesperson Sushma Swaraj said the government had agreed that India would join the international tsunami warning system. The major points which emerged from the meeting were: all future house-building should be at a distance from the sea shore; special care should be taken of women and children orphaned by the disaster; adequate arrangement should be made for trauma treatment and relief; rehabilitation of fishermen should be a priority; and ecological balance should be maintained in the worst-hit Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

11 killed as gales blow across northern Europe

SIMON JOHNSON
STOCKHOLM, JANUARY 9

ELEVEN people were killed and at least four were missing after gale-force winds battered northern Europe over the weekend, causing flooding and transport chaos and leaving hundreds of thousands without electricity.

The worst-hit was southern Scandinavia. In Sweden, *TT news agency* said seven people died, including three motorists whose cars were hit by trees, as winds of up to 67 mph hit the country.

Winds left 4,00,000 Swedes without power and forced the closure of two nuclear power stations. Sturup Airport, near Malmö, was briefly closed and ferry traffic stopped.

Across the Baltic Sea, Latvia's state power company, *Latvenergo*, said 60 pc of the country's population was without electricity on Sunday.

"The Prime Minister has announced this is an elec-



tricity crisis," Arno Pjaktins, spokesman for Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis, said. The military had evacuated people from districts in the Capital, Riga, because of flooding, he said.

Danish news agency *Ritzau* said more than 15,000 households were without power, and the Meteorological Institute issued a severe storm warning for the country as high winds caused widespread disruption to

A rescue operation in England's Carlisle. Reuters

trains and ferry transport.

Danish police said on Saturday two men were killed when they were struck by a roof on the Island of Funen, while two others were killed by falling trees.

A blackout hit 20,000 households in southern Norway on Saturday night, but power had been restored to most homes by Sunday morning, Norwegian rescue services said.

In Britain, police searched for two men swept away by overflowing rivers, after heavy rain and 90 mph gales ripped through many parts of the country.

The north-western English county of Cumbria was the hardest hit, with emergency services rescuing hundreds of people from flooded homes after a river burst its banks. The town of Carlisle was swamped with its worst floods for 40 years and electricity was cut to 76,000 homes. —Reuters

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বিপর্যয় মোকাবিলায় কমিটি রাজ্যেও সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকে কেন্দ্র : সুনামি পূর্বাভাসের প্রযুক্তি আনা হবে

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ৯ জানুয়ারি— সুনামির মতো প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয় সামাল দিতে কেন্দ্র ও রাজ্য স্তরে একটি করে বিপর্যয় নিয়ন্ত্রণ পর্যদ গড়া হবে। এই পর্যদের হাতে প্রয়োজনীয় ক্ষমতা তুলে দিতে একটি আইন তৈরি করা হবে। এর খসড়া প্রস্তুত করে ফেলেছেন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল। সংসদের বাজেট অধিবেশনে বিল পেশ হবে। প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয়ের আর্থিক ক্ষয়ক্ষতি সামাল দিতে রাজ্যগুলির হাতে প্রয়োজনীয় অর্থ দেওয়ার বিষয়েও দ্বাদশ অর্থ কমিশন যে-সব সুপারিশ করেছে তাও কার্যকর হবে। সুনামি নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ডাকা সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকের পর স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল এ কথা জানান। অন্য দিকে আজকের বৈঠকে রাজনৈতিক দলগুলির সঙ্গে সরকারের লক্ষ্য বৈঠকে ঠিক হয়েছে, সুনামির পূর্বাভাস ও সতর্কবার্তা জারির জন্য অত্যাধুনিক প্রযুক্তি আনা হবে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখার্জি এই সিদ্ধান্তের কথা জানিয়ে বলেন, এই প্রযুক্তি আনার জন্য স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক একটি পৃথক কমিটি গড়বে। কমিটির সদস্য-মন্ত্রীরা বিজ্ঞানীদের সঙ্গে কথা বলে ঠিক করবেন কী ধরনের প্রযুক্তির প্রয়োজন হবে। আজকের বৈঠকে ঠিক হয়েছে, মৎস্যজীবীদের পুনর্বাসন দেওয়ার সময় দেখা হবে তাদের ঘরবাড়ি যেন সমুদ্রতীর থেকে একটি নির্দিষ্ট দূরত্বে গড়া হয়। পুনর্বাসন ও পুনর্গঠনের কাজে সরকার বিশ্ব ব্যাঙ্ক বা এশিয়ান ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাঙ্কের মতো আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থার কাছ থেকে আর্থিক সাহায্য নেবে বলে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী ঘোষণা করেন। এ প্রসঙ্গে বিভিন্ন প্রশ্নের জবাব দিতে গিয়ে প্রণববাবু জানান, এই দুটি সংস্থার প্রতিষ্ঠাতা-সদস্য হল ভারত। তাই এ দুই সংস্থার কাছ থেকে আর্থিক সাহায্য নিতে দ্বিধা নেই।

সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকে আজ ঠিক হয়েছে, অনাথ শিশু ও বিধবা মহিলাদের কল্যাণের দিকে বিশেষ নজর দেবে সরকার। অনাথ শিশুদের দত্তক নেওয়ার বিষয়ে নানাধরনের আগ্রহ দেখা যাচ্ছে। এ প্রসঙ্গে এক প্রশ্নের জবাবে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বলেন, অনাথ শিশুদের রক্ষা ও কল্যাণের প্রধান দায়িত্ব সরকারের। সরকার সে-দায়িত্ব পালন করবে। তবে কোনও ব্যক্তিবিশেষ যদি কোনও শিশুকে দত্তক নিতে আগ্রহী হন, তাহলে দেশের প্রচলিত আইন অনুযায়ী সেই আবেদন খতিয়ে দেখা হবে। বিশেষত দেখা হবে শিশুটির ভবিষ্যৎ কতটা নিশ্চিত হচ্ছে। এ নিয়ে বিদেশীদের আগ্রহকে সরকার খুব বেশি গুরুত্ব দেবে না। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বলেন, শারদ পাওয়ারের নেতৃত্বে একটি কমিটি বিপর্যয় সামালানোর জন্য ৯৭টি সুপারিশ করেছিল। এর মধ্যে ৬৪টি সুপারিশ ইতিমধ্যেই সরকার কার্যকর করেছে। এবার গ্রুপ অফ মিনিস্টার্স গড়া হয়েছে। সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকের শুরুতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী সুনামির ক্ষয়ক্ষতি ও উদ্ধার ও ত্রাণের কাজের একটি হিসেব রাজনৈতিক দলের নেতাদের সামনে পেশ করেন। তাঁদের এ সব নিয়ে আধ ঘণ্টার স্লাইড শো দেখানো হয়। প্রণববাবু প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দেওয়া তথ্য থেকে উদ্ধৃতি দিয়ে জানান, সুনামিতে মৃতের সংখ্যা ১০,০১২, নিখোঁজ ৫,৬২৪ জন। এঁদের মধ্যে আন্দামান-নিকোবর দ্বীপ থেকেই নিখোঁজ ৫,০৩১ জন। আশঙ্কা, এঁদের সবার মৃত্যু হয়েছে। এর অর্থ, মৃতের সংখ্যা ১৫ হাজার ছাড়িয়ে যাবে। সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকে হাজির ছিলেন কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সোনিয়া গান্ধী, প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী এবং বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক দলের প্রতিনিধিরা।

সুনামির দাওয়াই প্রবাল-প্রাচীর আর ম্যানগ্রোভ

সুনামির প্রকৃতিবিজ্ঞানীরা অধিশেষে প্রাকৃতিক দাওয়াই খুঁজে পেয়েছেন।

গত ২৬ ডিসেম্বরের প্রলয়কাণ্ডের ময়না-তদন্তে নেমে প্রকৃতিবিজ্ঞানীরা দেখেছেন, ম্যানগ্রোভ বা লবণাশু উদ্ভিদ যে-সব জায়গায় সমুদ্র আর তটভূমির মধ্যে প্রাচীর তুলে দাঁড়িয়েছে, সেখানে ধ্বংসলীলা একেবারেই কম। কংক্রিটের দেওয়াল টুকরো টুকরো হয়ে ভেঙে গিয়েছে জলোচ্ছ্বাসে। কিন্তু ম্যানগ্রোভের জঙ্গল অটুট। যে-সব জায়গায় ওই প্রাকৃতিক দেওয়াল সুনামি বাধা পেয়েছে, সেখানেই মানুষ বেঁচে গিয়েছে। একই ভাবে যেখানে জলের তলায় সুদীর্ঘ, পুরু প্রবাল-প্রাচীর আছে, সেখানে তা শক অ্যাবজরবার বা আঘাত-শোষণের কাজ করেছে।

আর যেখানে ম্যানগ্রোভের জঙ্গল কেটে পর্যটন কেন্দ্র তৈরি হয়েছে, সেখানেই ৫০ ফুট চেউ গ্রাস করেছে সব কিছু। পর্যটক-সহ ভেসে গিয়েছে অত্যাধুনিক রিসর্ট। যেমন তাইল্যান্ডের ফুকোত। তামিলনাড়ুর পিচাভরম, মুথুপেটের মতো যেখানে ম্যানগ্রোভের ঘন জঙ্গল আছে, সেখানে প্রাণহানি

অনেক কম। সুনামি সেখানে থমকে গিয়েছে তীরের কাছে গড়ে ওঠা গরান, গৌমো, সুন্দরী গাছের জঙ্গলে।

শ্রেণি আদ্যমান, লিটল আদ্যমান বা সেন্টিনেলিজ দ্বীপকে

রক্ষা করেছে ওই লবণাশু গাছের জঙ্গলই। পোর্ট ব্লোয়ার সংলগ্ন সমুদ্রে সূচাম প্রবাল-প্রাচীর থাকায় তা চেউয়ের তাণ্ডব অনেকটাই কমিয়ে দিতে পেরেছে। তবে এই প্রক্রিয়ায় ব্যাপক ক্ষতি হয়েছে প্রবাল-প্রাচীরের। মলদ্বীপের একই নিচু এলাকা আর্চিপেলাগোতেও সুনামির ধাক্কা তেমন লাগেনি। কারণ, সেখানে সমুদ্রতলে প্রবাল সংরক্ষণ করা হয় বিজ্ঞানসম্মত ভাবে। ব্রিটেনের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সমুদ্রবিজ্ঞান কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে যুক্ত বিজ্ঞানী দুগ ম্যাসন, ডব্লিউ ডব্লিউ এফ ইন্টারন্যাশনালের সমুদ্রবিজ্ঞান দফতরের অধিকর্তা সাইমন ক্রিপস, বিশ্ব সংরক্ষণ ইউনিয়ন

বা আই ইউ সি এন-এর মুখ্য বিজ্ঞানী জেফ ম্যাকনিলির সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রীয় রিসোর্স

ন্যাচারাল অধিকর্তা সুরত

ম্যানগ্রোভের ঘন জঙ্গল আছে বা সূচাম প্রবাল-প্রাচীর রয়েছে, সুনামি সেখানে তীরে আঘাত করার আগে অনেকটাই দুর্বল হয়ে গিয়েছে। সম্ভবত ওই প্রাচীরে ধাক্কা খেয়েই। আর যে-সব জায়গায় ম্যানগ্রোভের জঙ্গল কেটে চিংড়ি চাষ বা পর্যটন কেন্দ্র তৈরি হয়েছে, সেখানে নিশ্চিহ্ন হয়ে গিয়েছে সব। মলদ্বীপকে আরও বড় বিপদ থেকে বাঁচিয়ে দিল সম্ভবত প্রবাল-প্রাচীরই। অন্য দিকে, ম্যানগ্রোভ জঙ্গল সাফ করে রিসর্ট গড়ে নিজেদের বিপদ থেকে আনল ফুকোত।

ম্যাসনের কথায়, "তামিলনাড়ু উপকূলের পিচাভরম ও মুথুপেটের সমুদ্রতীরে ঘন জঙ্গল তৈরি করেছে ম্যানগ্রোভ। তাই তামিলনাড়ু উপকূলের অন্য অঞ্চলের তুলনায় ওই দুই এলাকায় ধ্বংসের তাণ্ডব ও জীবনহানি অনেক কম।" আদ্যমানের ক্ষয়ক্ষতি সরেজমিনে দেখেছেন সুরত, যোষাল টৌধুরী। নিকোবরের তুলনায়

আদ্যমানের দ্বীপগুলিতে ক্ষতির পরিমাণ কেন কম, তা ব্যাখ্যা করতে গিয়ে সুরতবাবু ম্যানগ্রোভ অরণ্যের প্রসঙ্গ তুলেছেন। তাঁর কথায়, "আদ্যমানের দ্বীপে ম্যানগ্রোভের জঙ্গল আছে বা ছিল, তাই সেখানে ক্ষতি অনেক কম।" অন্য দিকে, নিকোবরে তটভূমি থেকেই শুরু হয়েছে সমুদ্র। সেখানে সুনামির আঘাত সরাসরি এসে পড়েছে স্থলভূমিতে।

সুনামির পরে আলোচনার কেন্দ্রে চলে এসেছে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের দিয়া উপকূল আর সুন্দরবনের নামও।

সুন্দরবনে ম্যানগ্রোভের অরণ্য থাকায় ১৯৭৪ সালের ভয়াল ঘূর্ণিঝড় ক্যানিং পেরিয়ে স্থলভূমিতে ঢুকতে পারেনি। ঘূর্ণিঝড়ের সামনে তা ঢালের মতো দাঁড়িয়ে ছিল বা আছে। অন্য দিকে, পর্যটন কেন্দ্র গড়ে দিয়ার সমুদ্রতীরে প্রাকৃতিক চেহারাটা পাল্টে ফেলা হয়েছে। তাতে ভূমিক্ষয় হচ্ছে ব্যাপক ভাবে। সমুদ্র ও তটভূমির মধ্যে কোনও বাধা নেই সেখানে। বস্তুত নেই প্রাকৃতিক কোনও দেওয়ালই। তাই প্রবল ঘূর্ণিঝড় কিংবা সুনামি সরাসরি আছড়ে পড়তে পারে দিয়ার স্থলভূমিতে। আগে থেকেই সতর্ক করে দিয়েছেন প্রকৃতিবিজ্ঞানীরা।



যোষাল টৌধুরী ম্যানগ্রোভ অরণ্য ও প্রবাল-প্রাচীরের ভূমিকার ব্যাপারে একই মত পোষণ করেছেন। তাঁদের পর্যবেক্ষণ ও সমীক্ষায় সুনামির প্রাকৃতিক দাওয়াইটা আসলে কী, তা পরিষ্কার হয়ে গিয়েছে।

ক্রিপস তাঁর সমীক্ষায় দেখেছেন, "যেখানে সমুদ্র ও তীরভূমির মধ্যে

Emitted
- 12

Tsunami toll crosses 1.5 lakhs 9/1

BANDA ACEH, JAN. 8. The official death toll from the Asian tsunami climbed past 150,000 on Saturday, as Indonesian authorities increased their tally by nearly 3,000 while adding tens of thousands to their count of the number left homeless from the disaster. Officials expect the toll to rise further still.

Indonesia's toll has risen sharply in recent days as teams of rescuers recover corpses from remote regions near the epicentre of the magnitude-9.0 quake that spawned a tsunami affecting 11 countries in Africa and Asia.

Aid workers struggled on Saturday to reach the survivors — and provide for their needs. Staggered by the scale of the disaster, aid officials described plans to feed as many as 2 million survivors a day for six months.

"I must say, the World Food Programme is in the disaster response business ... and this truly is the most extraordinary physical natural disaster I have ever seen," World Food Program Executive Director, James Morris, told reporters after viewing the battered coast. "The damage is overwhelming, the loss of property, the loss of life, injury to people and the risk going forward is enormous."

The increase in number of dead came even as authorities held out little hope for the tens of thousands still missing. Officials in Sri Lanka and Thailand, which were also hard-hit by the killer waves, say thousands were unlikely to be found alive.

Sweden, Britain and France have warned they feared that nearly 1,100 of their citizens missing in the disaster were dead.

List of missing

Nearly two weeks after huge waves struck, the lists of missing were still rising. Sri Lanka, with more than 30,000 known dead, added 528 names to its ranks of missing on Friday, for a total of 4,984. Indonesia, the worst hit country, estimates 104,055 dead and just over 10,000 missing.

Aid groups complained that dignitaries flying in to visit the tsunami-devastated coast in recent days have choked the region's tiny main airport and hampered relief supplies.

Visits by the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, have shut provincial capital Banda Aceh's only airport temporarily for security reasons. That has clogged incoming shipments. — AP

SP saved 3-yr-old, now cops look for him again

PARUL
CUDDALORE | JANUARY 8

LUCK seems to have given up on this three-year-old boy. Rescued twice from being swallowed by the hungry sea at Silver Beach on Black Sunday, G S Thalha from Ooty, remains untraceable to this day.

The boy was pulled out from a floating car in the nick of the time by the District Superintendent of Police S Paneer Selvam.

Thalha had gone to the Silver Beach with his father Safiyullah, mother Parveen, brothers Thanveer (8) and Bhilal (1) and uncle Nawaz on the fateful day. Sensing trouble, Safiyullah immediately pushed his second son into the car and locked it up before calling up a friend, Fhareed, in Ottacamand to inform him about the disaster. All that Fhareed heard was a loud splash of water and the line went blank.

The strong waves washed away Safiyullah, Parveen and Bhilal. Thanveer and Nawaz were rescued by locals but Thalha was still missing.

Anxious relatives lined up at the Cuddalore SP's office to obtain some information about the boy. SP Paneerselvam had saved the boy from car when the tsunami hit Silver Beach. "I had handed over the boy to someone who was standing next to me," he recalled. In the commotion that ensued, the boy vanished.

Since then, Thalha's family has been frantically looking for him. The state government has also alerted the police personnel in Cuddalore and neighbouring districts for any information on the missing boy. S P Paneerselvam has set up a special unit to track Thalha.

PM promises relief, Rs 200 crore, a new pattern of life...

SOURAV SANYAL
PORT BLAIR | JANUARY 8

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh today prescribed a Rs 200-crore package for the tsunami-ravaged Andaman and Nicobar Islands, for "immediate rehabilitation measures".

After a day-long trip to the devastated Car Nicobar and Campbell Bay islands, the PM said Rs 200 crore would be released to the Andaman and Nicobar administration. Singh visited relief camps in Port Blair in the evening.

"These beautiful islands have undergone an unprecedented wave of death and destruction. I can see sorrow and pain written

on the faces of so many citizens. The Government of India will spare no resources to come to the aid of all families which have been affected," he said.

The package will include the provision of food for affected families, at a cost of about Rs 60 crore, construction material for temporary houses, the allocation of Rs 10 crore for wage employment programmes and a grant of Rs 10 crore to tribal councils to restore social infrastructure and a telemedicine programme by the Space Department. About 10,000 houses will be built, at a cost of about Rs 25 crore.

Singh also said mobile telephone connectivity would be provided in major islands. "There is



an urgent necessity to provide immediate relief including rebuilding schools, ensuring adequate relief material and provision of health care facilities to prevent the possible outbreak of an epidemic. I also urge the school boards to postpone the Class X and Class XII board examinations by two months and give a chance to children to take the examinations later if they opt so. Pawan Hans will be asked to provide additional helicopter services," he said.

"The government will immediately constitute a team of scientific experts to study the submergence, tidal patterns and seismic patterns

to help locate places for resettlement," Singh said. "For the long term, the Central Government will focus on a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for the islands to be implemented in a project mode," he said. Singh could not lay down a timeframe for the completion of the rehabilitation work, but said housing needs would be met before the next monsoon.

"We will build a new pattern of life which would be both environment and economy-friendly. If there are any areas where we need international aid, we will take help," said the PM. At the ITF relief camp, he said Rs 1 lakh would be provided to each of the families where deaths have been reported.

At a Port Blair camp on Saturday

School reopens on Jan 17, fisherfolk forced back to dilapidated houses

JAYARAJ SIVAN
MANAKKUDI (KANYAKUMARI)
JANUARY 8

BUCKLING under pressure to vacate educational institutions for schools to reopen, relief camp managers in parts of tsunami-affected Kanyakumari district have forced many fisherfolk back to their dilapidated houses.

A corporation bus carrying some fisherfolk reached Mela Manakkudi, one of the worst-hit fishermen villages, on Friday morning. "Alighting from the bus, the first thing I saw was the four pillars, the only remains of the bridge that connected our village with Keezha Manakkudi. After that I could not believe that my aunt's house would have survived the onslaught of the sea.

"I kept telling my aunt, Swarnam, that we should go back to the camp at Assisi Church, Nagercoil. Reaching her house she asked me 'Who will take us back? Didn't you hear the conductor say that we cannot enjoy a free return trip?' We were forced out of the camp. When we approached a priest to permit us to stay back, another priest said something in English and we were given the marching orders," lamented 22-year-old Arokiyam.

More than 300 families have been sent back to the village since Friday morning. Swarnam (60), whose son Selvaraj sustained severe in-

Exiled to home



Reuters

days, Manakkudi priest Rev. Benoraj has been asking us to send back people whose houses are safe. The government have stopped supply of food after December 30. Officials said it was for the people to manage on their own as the government had given them an interim relief of Rs 4,000. We are running the show here with donations from NGOs and some locals."

Rajan added that on a daily basis, they spend Rs 2,400 on shamianas and cooks. "Despite all that we have done, officials are blaming us. They say people will leave only if we stop providing them food."

District Collector Ramesh Chand Meena chose to differ. Talking to *The Indian Express*, he said no government official was forcing people back to their houses. Asked what the administration could do when most of the camps were being run by private agencies, he said: "Now that it has been brought to my notice, I will make alternative arrangements. We have to shift people before the schools reopen on January 17. Fire-proof huts are being set up in various parts of the district for the purpose. Till then we will accommodate them in some marriage halls."

juries, said: "I am waiting for my son to return from the hospital. Unless he ventures out into the sea, we will die of starvation." She had only a little gruel in the morning and nothing thereafter. "People in other camps were given some rice as they left. But we got nothing."

Pushpakala (30) kept staring at the sea, while making an effort to scrape the coconut she was given at

Carmel School. Every other building around her house has vanished into thin air. "Sir, do you believe we are safe here? This is a graveyard. Will anybody come forward to rehabilitate us?"

LAST DAY TODAY

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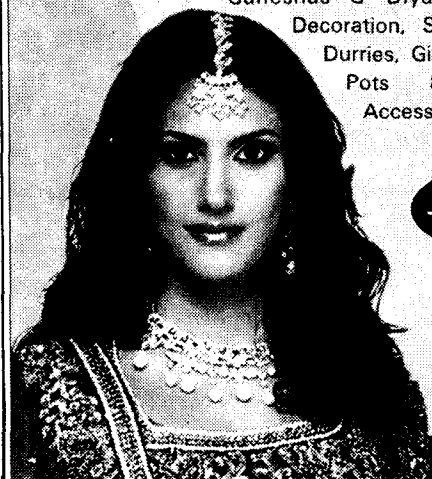
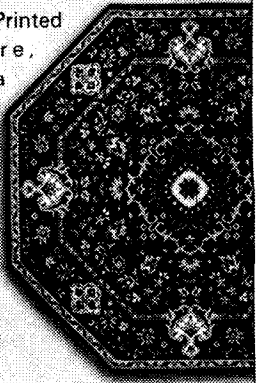
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ALL YOU NEED IS COMPASSION

Not cast-offs or cold charity. Not essential supplies or hand-outs. Aid is not about air-dropping food packets or even rebuilding a house or a community. It's about rebuilding a sense of self. **Sunday Times** takes a look at aid in the time of competitive compassion

By Jug Suraiya & Vikas Singh

The piles of discarded clothing and thrown-away food packets said it all. The tsunami survivors did not want cast-offs or cold charity. What they wanted was the most valuable thing that the catastrophe had robbed them of: their dignity as autonomous human beings. In the wave of competitive compassion sweeping the world, with nations outbidding each other to see who can be more generous, this basic fact is lost sight of — the survivor is not a passive recipient of aid, but should be made an active agent in her own rehabilitation.

Unless individuals participate in putting together their shattered lives, they will remain faceless statistics on a bureaucratic graph. Those who've been working on the front-line of the tragedy bear witness to this. Author Amitava Ghosh, who participated in the relief effort in the Andamans, says, "Trauma counselling is essential. At one of the relief camps I visited, there was a virtual uprising. The people there have nothing to do. And they're absolutely powerless and have no idea of what's happening. The government, of course, is notable for its absence. There is nothing worse than a feeling of disorientation and uncertainty. Someone has to talk to these people and help them regain a semblance of control over their lives."

What Ghosh is describing is the soul-numbing inertia that is the aftermath of disaster. When all sense of a cohesive and coherent world has been stripped away, when let alone the future, even the

past seems a distant mirage. What needs to be rebuilt is not just a house, or even a community, but much more basically, a sense of one's own self. What survivors need is a project. As actor Vivek Oberoi, who adopted Thevanampattinam, a coastal village in Tamil Nadu, told the media, "The villagers were hurt when they were given used clothes. 'We aren't beggars,' they said. Their dignity was wounded. Food was being thrown at them from moving

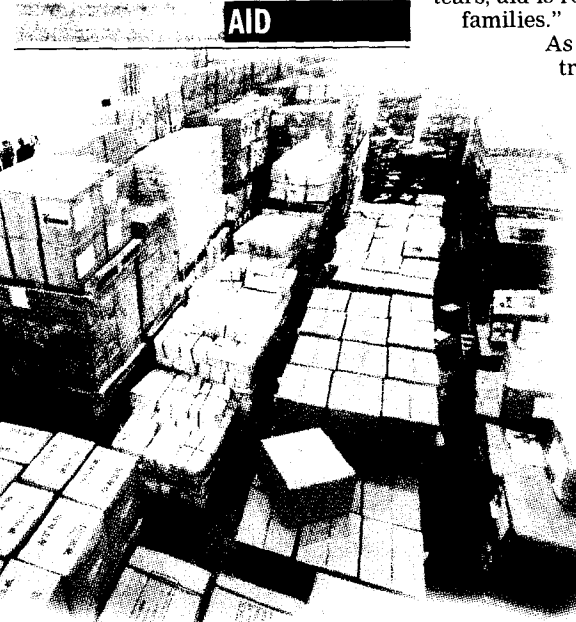
Aid is not a salve for our conscience; aid is that which eases the victim's pain. Actor Rahul Bose, who is also involved in the relief effort, says, "Aid in most cases goes beyond providing people with essential supplies. The fishermen I spoke to want to resume their lives as soon as possible. Aid for such souls is constant encouragement and a push in the right direction. For the women and children shaking with a mixture of anger, frustration and tears, aid is reuniting them with their families."

As the contours of the tragedy become clearer, it will be possible to see just who needs what, when and where. This is not a static, but a dynamic situation, which will need close monitoring and constant fine-tuning. The most important way to help is to enable those who need help to help themselves.

Aid should not be seen as a ghettoisation of victims. Donors, whether individuals, organisations or countries, have to realise that the aid they offer is not a one-way process but a two-way trade: in a world full of victims, just how secure and stable can you be? Restoring the equilibrium is necessary for global society as a whole.

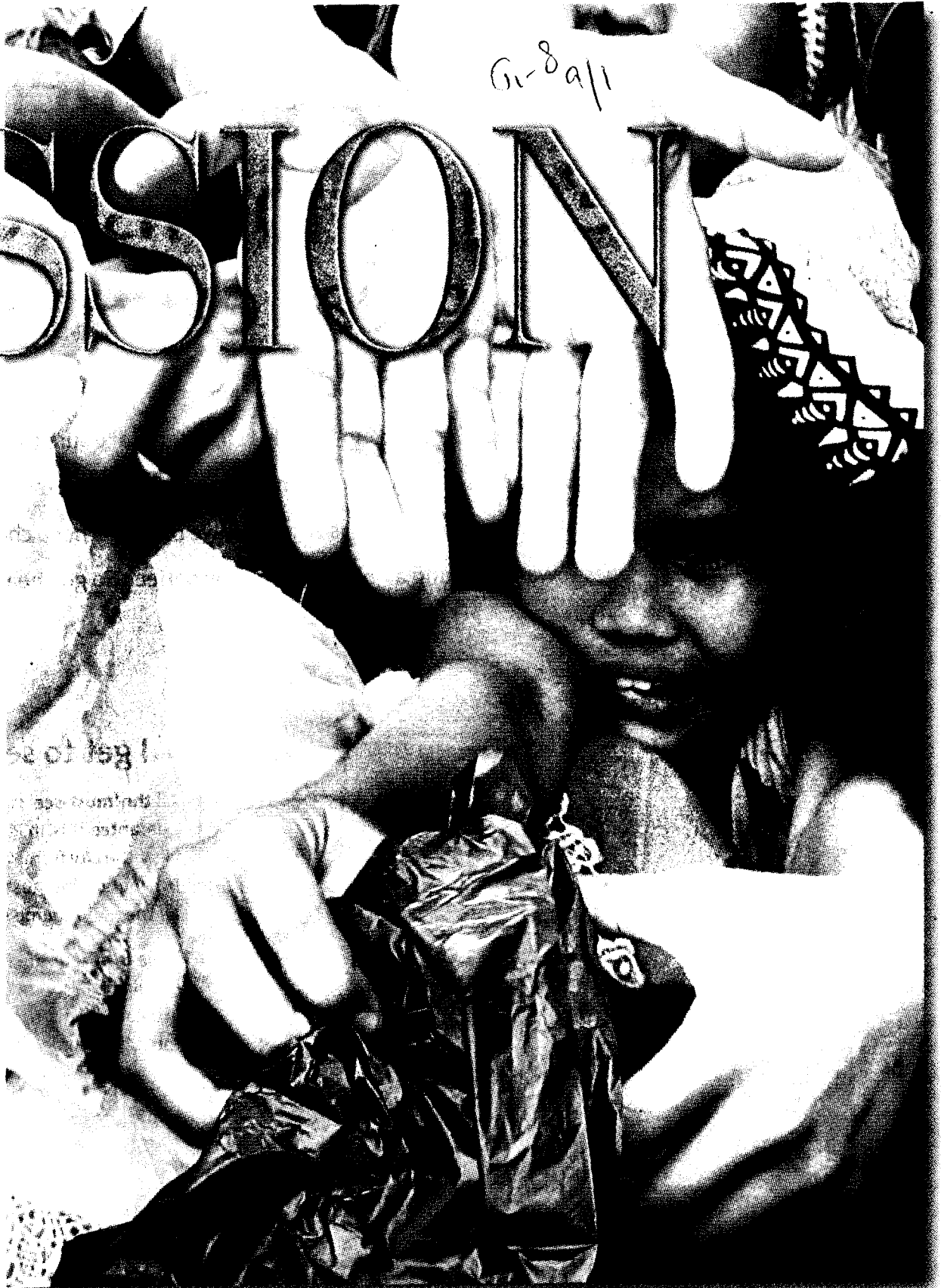
If the refugee loses his humanity, can you preserve yours? So when you reach into your pocket, remember it's not a hand-out that you're going to give, but a helping hand.

Both the philosophy and the actual delivery system of aid have been called into question, most notably by Graham Hancock in his book, *Lords Of Poverty*. The subhead, *The Power, Prestige, And*



trucks as though they were dogs. The first thing we did was to start five community kitchens. Up to 700 meals are being served every time in every kitchen. The women are all busy cooking instead of beating their chests. It's cathartic."

As most relief workers and counselors soon realise, it is far more important to listen rather than talk. Because it's only by listening that those who would help can figure out just how the help can be given, and in what form.



Corruption Of The International Aid Business says it all. Hancock contends that the chief, if not sole beneficiaries of foreign aid, are local elites in recipient countries, special interest groups in developed countries, and the aid bureaucracy itself. The biggest losers are First World taxpayers and, ironically, the very people for whom aid was actually intended.

Typically, such jamborees are held in venues such as super deluxe hotels. Participants are taken by air-conditioned coach to inspect rural poverty from behind a tinted bus window, and then ferried back to the hotel for a meal comprising exotica like Norwegian smoked salmon and Scottish steak — the price of a single plate of which could support an entire family for a couple of months. Philanthropy never felt so good. No

wonder the most prized job in countries like Bangladesh is that of aid broker. Obviously, poverty and its symbiotic counterpart, organised charity, are big business. So what's the answer? Inescapable cynicism? Some would suggest an even harder option: compassion. Not soft sentimental pity, but a hard and focused realisation that the face of the victim is the same as that you see in the mirror, except for a trick of light called chance.

Don't forget to read the small print, honey

By Chirdeep Bagga

Even 'aid' comes with its fine print. Donors these days want to be doubly sure that funds given are specifically targeted and well spent: they often explicitly state the gains expected and regularly monitor these. And in the rare cases when they are not satisfied with the working of an agency, money can even be asked back.

Once aid is committed, implementation is consistently reviewed and donors usually have total access to records on the money spent. For example, the PM's relief fund, the depository of largest relief aid

in the country, maintains accounts to the minutest detail of how and on whom each and every rupee is spent. "Most donors are sensitive about upholding the dignity of individuals and cultural considerations have to be taken quite seriously," says Bijoy Patro, regional humanitarian values coordinator, Red Cross. Red Cross has its own code of conduct: it specifies certain minimum standards (water, food, nutrition, healthcare) for people affected by a disaster to satisfy their basic right to life with dignity.



Donors are also more interested in working with agencies having strong grassroots presence — as it usually ensures better implementation of programmes and hence a stronger impact on the community. "The credibility of aid agencies — and the kind of relief and char-

itable work it has previously been associated with — is closely evaluated," says Patro. Peter Berger, technical associate, European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) for South Asia, one of the world's leading donor bodies, says they have a 'Framework Partnership Agreement', based on which request for funds are made. "Of course, the capacity and quality of work of agencies is continuously evaluated. We can monitor through spot checks but also work closely with NGOs to build a positive partnership."

In most cases, funds are granted on a periodic basis: after implementation, it is re-

viewed. In some cases, the impact is not immediate and donors need to focus on sustaining the initiative for a reasonable period of time. According to an Oxfam report, in order to guarantee a complete primary education for one generation of children, funding would be required for a minimum six years. But 70% of donors committed funds for a period of only three years, which can greatly hamper the effectiveness of such a programme. Increasingly, donors are adopting a sectoral approach: programmes are tailored to local circumstances involving maximum community participation.

GIVE & TAKE

UN recommends allocating 0.7% of national income to development assistance. Of 22 major donors only five countries — Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden — have ever met the target.

BIGGEST DONORS (2003)

Country	Total Aid (\$bn)	% of GNP*
USA	15.79	0.14
Japan	8.91	0.2
France	7.34	0.42
Germany	6.69	0.28
UK	6.17	0.34

RECIPIENTS (2002)

Country	Total Aid (\$bn)	% of GNP*
Pakistan	2.14	3.6
Mozambique	2.06	57.2
Palestine	1.62	47.6
China	1.48	0.1
India	1.46	0.3

* gross national income

TOP US DONORS (2000-04)

Given or Pledged (in \$bn)
1. Bill & Melinda Gates 10.1
2. Gordon & Betty Moore 7.0
3. Warren Buffet 2.7
4. George Soros 2.3
5. James & Virginia Stowers 1.3

TSUNAMI DONORS

TOP FIVE (\$ million)

Australia	764
Germany	661
Japan	300
US	390
Norway	181

TOP CELEBS (\$ million)

Michael Schumacher	1.5
Bill Gates	3
Steven Spielberg	1.5
Sandra Bullock	1

CAUSES: Health, education, information access, environmental conservation, science, reproductive choice, reducing nukes, open and free societies, bio-medical research

The mathematics of giving

By A Srinivas

Why couldn't the world's richest country just bring itself to contribute generously to the tsunami tragedy? Even as it was ridiculed by the rest of the world, the US failed to stretch its offer beyond \$350 million, or about 10% of the international community's contribution. Why is it acting the insular, peevish and tightfisted moneylender? Because the neo-Cons don't know the world they want to rule. Asia is for them a land of brown-skinned people — the guys who busted the World Trade Centre. As US Secretary of State Colin Powell could not help noticing, some of the countries affected were Muslim. That the US hiked its contribution despite this knowledge shows the extent of its forgiveness, Powell explained.

But this bias does not fully explain the modest donation. Countries that house two thirds of the world's poorest people receive about a third of world aid; the rest is directed towards pliant regimes, including those in West Asia, which manage

the interests of the US and other donors. The US takes a cynical view of aid, lending in situations where the quid pro quo is obvious. The tsunami does not seem to lend itself to this framework.

Yet, it is surprising that a forever calculating US does not realise the gains to be had from tsunami. The world, to use a hackneyed expression, is a global village — which is why the tsunami killed 2,500 Swedes holidaying in South East Asia and wrecked holiday schedules the world over. A catastrophe in Phuket could affect Texas, where George W Bush prefers to lo-



cate himself in the winter. With Thailand off the tourist map, US business interests such as travel agencies, hotels and airlines are hit.

The world order has changed since the late eighties, with a marked shift in FDI flows from Europe to Asia. The affected countries are not dark anthropological curiosities, but markets on the edge of prosperity. Aid to such societies to develop their infrastructure and achieve a greater measure of social and economic equity will not only help them but also the donors. The developed countries, having reached consumption sat-

uration point, must look for new markets in the developing world. The UN cries itself hoarse over stagnant levels of aid or 'overseas development assistance' to little effect. Only four of the 22 industrial nations — Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands — meet the UN norm of putting aside at least 0.7% of their gross national product for aid. These countries cough up about \$55 billion each year or 0.4% of their GNP on an average. The US is the largest donor in absolute terms, but by contributing about 0.2% of its national income or \$15 billion, ranks

last in this respect. The ODA kitty rose to \$68 billion in 2003, but the increase was largely on account of US aid to Iraq, where the US has spent close to \$200 billion since the war. The tsunami should provoke donor nations to redefine the parameters of aid. Once freed of its links to political and economic subjugation, aid can benefit both donor and recipient. Aid reform should be seen in the context of a globalising vision that recognises the essential sameness of all peoples and yet respects their distinct economic and cultural differences.



It's a long and lonely wait for new parents

By Saibal Sen/TNN

Port Blair: Two-and-a-half-year-old Sita Laxmi is waiting for a new parent. So is her brother, 12-year-old Balamurugan. They speak little. The terror of the tsunami has numbed them.

It was a bright sunny Sunday. Balamurugan remembers, when the sea rose and swept away their parents. A few days ago, he went to identify them in a heap of rotting bodies. Sita was at his side. She had nowhere else to go.

For a fortnight, they clung to each other for support. On Thursday, however, Balamurugan was sent to a children's home by the Directorate of Social Welfare. And Sita was put under the care of the Mother Teresa Home in Port Blair. The siblings will be united when their tribe assigns new parents to them. The same goes for the 13 other kids of Nicobar orphaned by the killer waves. These 15 are in the first lot identified for rehabilitation in a first-of-its-kind survey by the administration.

"We are not worried about the



A doll is all this Nagapattinam girl has for company

Nicobari children. On Wednesday night, the tribal chieftains assured me that these kids were their responsibility," said R K Majhi, superintendent (Juvenile Home). At the ITF ground relief camp in Port

Blair, one-year-old Prerna is the darling of survivors and rescuers alike. Prerna and her six-year-old sister Litveena lost their parents but the extended family has rallied around them. Benedict and Gloria (the aunt of the kids father) never let them out of their sight for a while. "They are our blood. As long as we are alive the children need not worry," said Gloria. "If the government helps, it is all right. But the kids will definitely stay with us," said Judith Nelsa, their aunt.

Sabira Daud, 17, says she has been orphaned twice. Her parents were killed in the tsunami and now her brother Ahmed (24) is missing too. She has only aunt Nasima to lean on.

Kids like Sabira, Prerna and Sita are the lucky ones. There are some who lost all their immediate kin. Little Thomas, just two-and-a-half-years old, has no one to turn to, said Vasanti, a distant relative.

"If people are willing to adopt these kids, they can come forward," says Majhi. "But that seems a bleak hope. The average adoption rate here is not even one per year."

Navy makes a blue-water mark

By Rajat Pandit/TNN

New Delhi: Like it or not, India's rapidly expanding role as a super regional power is here to stay. This was the subtle message being conveyed by Indian warships as they streamed to the shores of Sri Lanka and Maldives with much-needed help within hours of the tsunami disaster, much before anyone else.

The subsequent dispatch of hospital ship INS Nirupak and corvette INS Khukri to Indonesia under Operation Gambhir, even as India itself battled the disaster on its own coast, only embellished this tsunami diplomacy.

With two warships now on their way back from Maldives after successfully completing their first-aid mission code named Operation Castor, Navy officers on Thursday exuded satisfaction at the way their blue-water force has proved to be a versatile and effective instrument of India's foreign policy.

"We have proved the Navy can be used as a diplomatic instrument in support of our political and geo-strategic objectives. Unlike the Army and Air Force, the Navy is a trans-national force, not circumscribed by a country's international boundaries or airspace," said a senior officer.

Added a Vice-Admiral, India is now being viewed as a regional power, with strong claims to a permanent UN Security Council seat, which can look after itself as well as others in the region.

"The five warships, including a hospital ship, deployed for Operation Rainbow in Sri Lanka have proved very useful. We have car-



A shocked survivor waits for medical aid at Banda Aceh in Indonesia

ried out extensive diving operations for salvage, debris clearance at the Galle and Trincomalee, said an officer.

INS Sarvekshak and INS Sutlej were, in fact, the first ships to enter the Galle port after it was reopened for traffic on Tuesday. In Indonesia, the two Indian ships are now anchored off Meulaboh and are disembarking relief stores using local boats.

Car Nicobar airbase not for families

Chandigarh: IAF families are likely to experience the after-effects of the tsunami disaster for a considerable length of time. The Car Nicobar airbase flattened by the tsunami may not be a family station for the next four years, even though the IAF is straining its sinews to make it fully operational within six months.

Air Marshal (retd) P K Jain, who supervised the IAF's housing project at the air base in the late 1980s while serving as Air Officer in charge Administration, said ferrying construction material from the eastern coast and finding contractors to execute the project would be a formidable task.

He said the fact that construction activity cannot continue for more than three to four months in a year in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands due to rains would further hold up reconstruction. TNN

Army leads scared fishermen into the sea

By K R Sreenivas/TNN

Nagapattinam: It could be many more weeks before fishermen could go out to the sea. In their post-tsunami fear, some don't mind taking up other work. But by and large, they feel fishing is all they can do. To help them overcome their newfound fear, the Army presented a new outboard motorboat to Shekar of Akkarapetti village on Tuesday, venturing out into the sea. It has also repaired three boats.

Brig Jose Manavalan, MEC, Ban-



Fishermen carry an anchor recovered from the sands in Nagapattinam galore, and his team accompanied the fishermen into the Bay of Ben-

gal. An excited Shekar landed his first catch and the smile and confidence returned slowly, but surely. "Today, we went 2 km into the sea. Normally, fishermen go about 3 km to 4 km," said Brig Manavalan. The Army will shift to another beach on Wednesday to encourage more fishermen to venture out. However, fishermen in several villages don't seem inclined to do that right away. The loss of family and friends, houses, property, money and jewellery has shaken them so badly that many don't even want to look at the sea.

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India best equipped to handle tsunami relief: PM

Rs 200 cr aid for Islands

Commitment
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PORT BLAIR, Jan. 8. — Announcing an immediate grant of Rs 200 crore for tsunami-hit Andaman and Nicobar islands, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today said there was no resource constraint as India is best equipped to handle the relief and rehabilitation operations in the country.

The Prime Minister, who made a whirlwind tour of the tsunami-hit areas in the island territory, said that the immediate task was to provide relief and work for the rehabilitation of the homeless.

Ruling out any international assistance in this regard, he said: "I think we are best equipped to handle relief and rehabilitation operations...if there is need to talk to the international and financial institutions, we

Protecting women, kids

PORT BLAIR, Jan. 8. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today said the Centre was committed to working out a plan to protect the future of women and children who were the victims of tsunami disaster. "I am deeply pained to see those children who have lost their parents and women who lost their husbands. I commit that the Centre would work to protect them," he said. — PTI

can do that." To a specific question if India would seek the help of international agencies like OXFAM and other NGOs, Dr Singh told reporters here that in case of long-term rehabilitation and if there were areas where there was need for help "we

will take assistance. Our efforts are to identify the priority areas and then proceed systematically." The Prime Minister said the government would provide additional funds for various employment programmes, adequate grants for tribals, health programmes and infrastructure-building. Dr Singh also said that a team of scientific experts would be constituted to look into the tsunami and related phenomenon so as to create an effective strategy to protect the country against a future disaster of this magnitude.

Air Force base status

Dr Manmohan Singh today said the defence ministry would decide on the future status of the Air Force base at the Car Nicobar islands which has been completely destroyed by the tsunami.

Indian toll 9,995

NEW DELHI, Jan. 7. — India today confirmed that 9,995 people were killed in tsunami and 5,689 are still missing.

Tamil Nadu accounted for 7,941, followed by Andaman and Nicobar (1,196), Pondicherry (583), Kerala (170) and Andhra Pradesh (105), officials said. Of the 7,941 deaths in Tamil Nadu, 6,035 were reported from Nagapattinam. A total of 6,42,297 people from coastal areas were shifted to safer places while 3,82,586 people are still in 630 relief camps in Tamil Nadu, Andaman and Nicobar, Kerala, Pondicherry and Andhra Pradesh.

The worldwide toll is close to 155,000. The toll in Indonesia climbed to 101,318, while in Sri Lanka, 30,615 were confirmed dead. Thailand reported 5,288 dead. — SNS & AFP



Used coffins being burnt at a Buddhist temple in Khao Lak in southern Thailand on Friday. — AFP

Annan shocked by devastation

Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Jan. 7. — UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan described the devastation on Indonesia's tsunami-battered Sumatra island today as the worst he's ever seen, while authorities there pulled out 7,000 bodies from the rubble.

Mr Annan and World Bank president James Wolfensohn flew over the island's west coast and then drove to the shattered coastal town of Meulaboh, where families picked through piles of rubble six feet high.

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

Mr Annan's visit came after he attended a summit of world leaders in Jakarta yesterday on how to turn one of history's largest-ever aid packages — nearly \$4 billion in pledges, into food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless. He urged nations to come up immediately with their promised aid, and to break with past practices of pledging much and delivering little.



Mr Kofi Annan in Banda Aceh on Friday. — AFP

PM sees opportunity in calamity

CHENNAI, Jan. 7. — Holding out an assurance of all help to Tamil Nadu to recover from the tsunami disaster, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today said the calamity should be turned into an opportunity for rebuilding the coastal and fishing economy in the affected areas.

"We must convert the disaster into an opportunity to rebuild and modernise the fishing and coastal economy," he told chief minister Miss Jayalalitha, when she called on him at the Raj Bhavan here.

Welcoming induction of new technology for better boats and safer housing along the coastline, Dr Singh said that the Tsunami Early Warning System would be put in place. While immediate priorities were on temporary housing, medicines and restarting their livelihood, long-term measures include permanent housing and modern harbour and jetties, he said.

The Centre would come out with assistance to the state once the Central team, which had assessed the damage, prepared a plan for rehabilitation, Dr Singh said. Miss Jayalalitha, after the meeting with Dr Singh, said that the state government had sought an additional Rs 5,000 crore for construction of walls along the 1,076 km coastline between Chennai and Kanyakumari for protection against tsunami. — PTI

India open to aid: PC

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI, Jan. 7. — The Centre today said it was open to overseas financial assistance for carrying out rehabilitation work in the tsunami-affected areas in the country.

"Primarily, India has refused overseas financial assistance for relief operations in tsunami-affected areas," finance minister Mr P Chidambaram said while addressing delegates at the Third Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas function here. "(But) it is not true that India has taken an isolated stand on receiving foreign aid."

India in the long-term would be open to overseas financial assistance for rehabilitation programmes which would include rebuilding destroyed structures, infrastructure and cleaning up coastal areas, he said.

The minister pointed out that the country was capable of meeting the challenge of immediate relief operations without overseas financial assistance.

Moreover, it has extended relief assistance to tsunami-hit countries, including Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the finance minister said.

Praise from Indonesia

Indonesia today praised New Delhi for dispatching quick relief to tsunami-affected countries, another report adds from Jakarta.

India has offered concessional credit to Indonesia for reconstructing roads, buildings and its harbour.

"India's offer of assistance to tsunami-affected nations has been met by surprise mixed with admiration by other countries and organisations," external affairs minister Mr Natwar Singh, who was here to attend the day-long emergency summit on tsunami relief, said today. Since India was also badly hit by the tsunami "they were lumping us with the others but now we are seen as separate," he said.

QUAKE BRIEFS

Orphans of the globe launch fund-raiser

Agence France Presse

TOKYO, Jan. 7. — Children orphaned in tragedies from diverse corners of the globe came together today to launch a fund-raising campaign for Asia's tsunami orphans, saying they understood the trauma of suddenly losing parents.

Fifty-three children, between 10 and 18, whose parents died in war, attacks, natural disasters or from AIDS are gathering in Japan for 13 days of rallies, meetings and a camp to share their experiences.

The gathering was originally aimed at commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Kobe earthquake, which killed more than 6,000. But in the wake of the tsunami, the participants decided to turn the event into a drive to raise donations for newly-orphaned children.

"We can understand their sadness and difficulties," Ammar Nima Farhar, an 18-year-old high



Kids orphaned by the tsunami play at a shelter in Nagapattinam. — AFP

school student who lost his father in Baghdad in March 2003, said.

"We would like to offer support to tsunami orphans," he said. "I hope to visit the affected areas, meet them and share my experiences so that we can strengthen our solidarity."

At the opening ceremony, the children, some carrying their countries' flags and others in ethnic clothes — offered a silent prayer

Tsunami could not kill their dreams

NAGAPATTINAM, Jan. 7. — For the 32 children, who have been accommodated at the government-run orphanage at Sikkal, 10 km from here, life will never be the same again.

Just two weeks back, these kids, aged between 5-16, were leading a normal, happy life. Then the tsunami struck and many of them lost one or both parents.

Yet, despite the tragedy, these kids are determined to fight back. "I wanted to study and do well," Arpitham (12), the eldest of three siblings at the Sathya Memorial Government Orphanage, Sikkal, said. — PTI

for the tsunami victims.

"It is horrible, but cannot be helped because no one can predict a natural disaster," Chan Kai-Chun (13), a Taiwanese boy who lost his father in the island's 1999 quake, said.

'Mangroves could have reduced damage'

GENEVA, Jan. 7. — Damage from the tsunami could have been reduced if more coastal areas had maintained their mangrove swamps and coral reefs, a UN official said today. Pasi Rinne, who is heading the UN Environment Program's response, agreed with conservation groups that the swamps and reefs not already destroyed by humans may have reduced some of the damage. They "have protected coastal zones from this kind of tidal waves" in previous natural disasters, Rinne said. Mangroves grow along tropical coastlines and their complicated root systems help to bind the shore together, providing a shield against destructive waves. — AP

THE STATESMAN

Jarwas survive, refuse to say how

Associated Press

JIRKATANG (Andaman & Nicobar), Jan. 7. — Armed with bows and arrows, seven men from the ancient Jarwa tribe came out of the forest for the first time since the Andaman and Nicobar islands were battered by the tsunami.

In a rare meeting with outsiders, the men said today that all 250 members of the tribe had escaped inland and were surviving on coconuts. He, however, did not elaborate on how they managed to escape.

"We are all safe after the earthquake. We are in the forest in Balughat," Ashu, one of the men, said. Even though the Jarwas sometimes meet local officials to receive government-funded supplies, the tribe is wary of visitors.

"My world is in the forest," Ashu said through an interpreter in a restricted forest area at the northern end of South Andaman Island. "Your world is outside. We don't like people from outside."

Anthropologists estimate that the island's more primitive tribes — Jarwas, Great Andamanese, Onges, Sentinelese and Shomp-

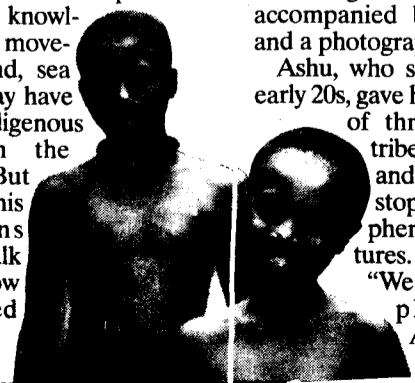
ens have dwindled to between 400 and 1,000.

Government officials and anthropologists have speculated that ancient knowledge of the movement of wind, sea and birds may have saved the indigenous tribes from the tsunami. But Ashu and his companions refused to talk about how they avoided the waves.

The seven Jarwa men — wearing only underwear and amulet — emerged from the forest to meet government officials accompanied by two reporters and a photographer.

Ashu, who said he was in his early 20s, gave his name and those of three others of his tribe — Danna, Laf and Tawai. The men stopped the photographer from taking pictures.

"We fall sick if we are photographed," Ashu said.



4,000 more bodies found in Indonesia

Associated Press
Banda Aceh, January 7

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Kofi Annan described the devastation on Indonesia's tsunami-battered Sumatra island on Friday as the worst he's ever seen, while authorities there pulled 4,000 new bodies from the rubble, bringing the confirmed overall death toll to nearly 145,000.

Twelve days after the tsunami hit, Annan and World Bank President James Wolfensohn flew over the island's west coast and then drove to the shattered coastal town of Meulaboh, where families picked through piles of rubble six feet high. "I have never seen such utter destruction mile after mile," a shaken Annan told reporters afterward. "You wonder where are the people? What has happened to them?"

With tens of thousands and still missing and threatened by disease from the December 26 earthquake and killer waves that hit 11 nations, the United Nations said the death toll 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," UN 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 was Sumatra, which was closest to the 9.0 magnitude quake, and where officials on Friday said they'd uncovered an

additional 4,289 bodies — mostly in Meulaboh, which had been cut off by washed-out roads — raising Indonesia's toll to 98,489. Officials had briefly raised the toll to 113,306 on Friday but scaled it back later, blaming the inaccuracy on poor radio links with remote officials.

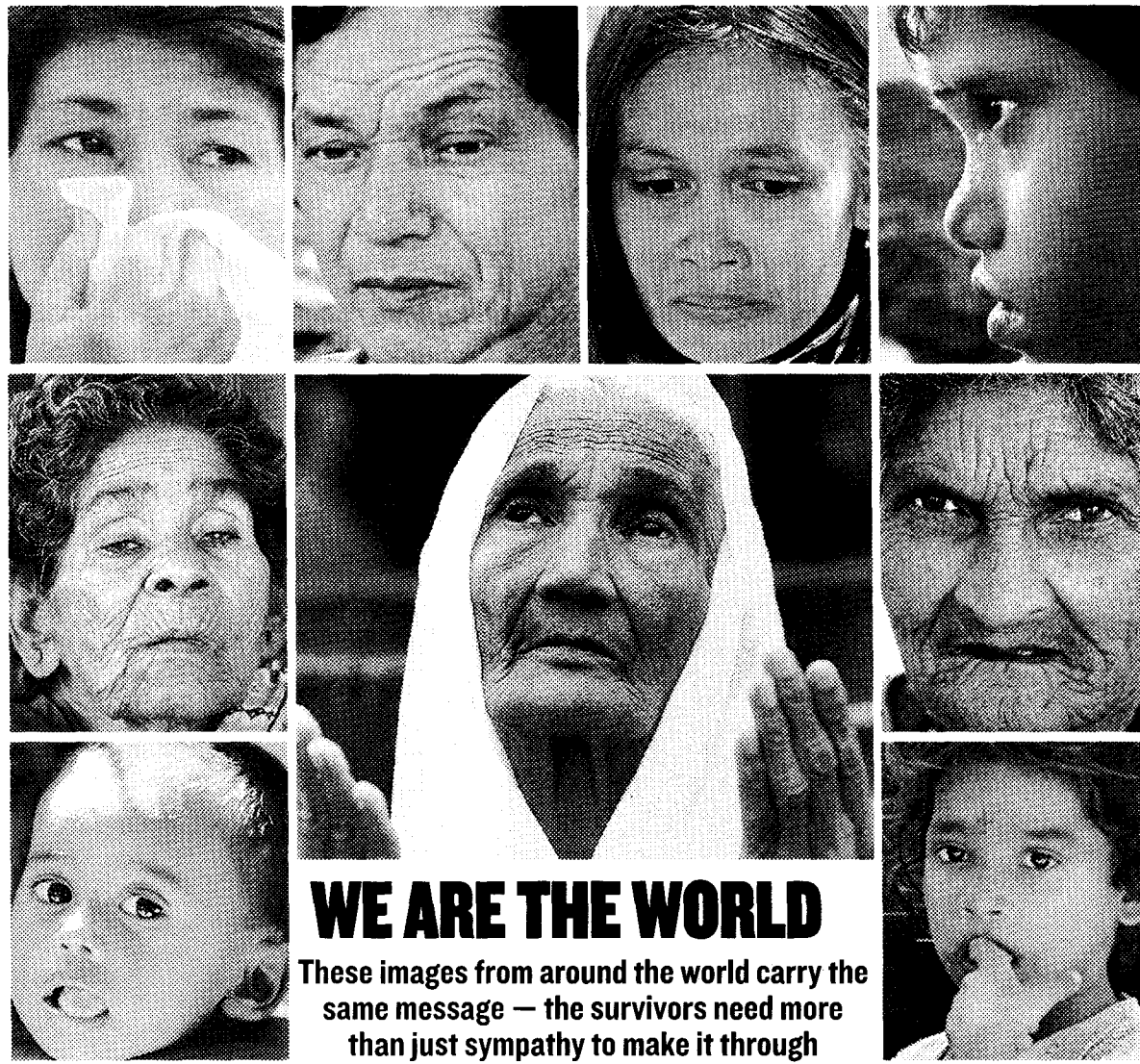
Security concerns for foreign aid workers emerged. The South Korean government asked its aid workers, some of them affiliated with Christian groups, not to engage in religious activities that could provoke Islamic radicals.

Also, in an apparent sign that American relief agencies want to keep a lower profile, several trucks delivering aid for USAID removed large banners marking the shipments as American.

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 in pledges — into food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless. The UN chief urged nations to come up immediately with their promised aid, and to break with past practices of pledging much and delivering little.

Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in Sri Lanka, where more than 30,000 people died, to inspect tsunami-devastated areas in the south and hold talks on relief efforts.

"I had a chance to witness the destruction firsthand, and only by seeing it on the ground can you really ap-



WE ARE THE WORLD

These images from around the world carry the same message — the survivors need more than just sympathy to make it through

preciate what it must have been like on that terrible day," he said. "But I am impressed to see people clean-

ing up, helping their neighbors."

While some areas in Thailand remained scenes

of total devastation, other Thai resorts were looking to the future. Cleanup on several beaches is almost

complete and four operators were eager to get back to business.

"It's amazing how fast

things have gone back to normal. The Thais have done a brilliant job of organizing disaster efforts and getting things cleaned up," said Peter Elsey, 48, an English tourist who lives in Singapore and owns a house in Phuket.

Elsewhere in Thailand, though, officials said more than 500 migrant workers were being deported for looting tsunami-damaged buildings. Maj. Vachara Sangvorayothin said an "army of Burmese workers are on a stealing spree."

In Indonesia, some aid officials were reviewing their security precautions after the arrival of some 80 members of a radical Islamic group. The group, Laskar Mujahidin, accused of taking part in Muslim-Christian fighting in another part of Indonesia between 1999 and 2001, has set up a relief camp — but said it was only there to help. "We are not here to fight, we've come to help. We've got no problem with the foreigners as long as they have no hidden agenda," said group leader Salman Alfarizi.

Indonesian military spokesman Ahmad Yani Basuki said the group was not seen as a threat. "There is no need to keep a special eye on them," he said. While armed guards have been posted at a UN compound in Banda Aceh, officials said they were part of normal security for such a relief operation. But a US official in Aceh said American forces helping the relief effort were aware of Laskar Mujahidin's presence and were keeping a close eye on it.

Jarawas come out of hiding

Associated Press
Jirkatang, January 7

ARMED WITH bows and arrows, seven men from the Jarawa tribe came out of the forests on Thursday for the first time after the Andaman and Nicobar islands were devastated by the tsunami.

In a rare meeting with outsiders, the men said all 250 tribe members were alive and surviving on coconuts. "We are safe. We are in the forest in Balughat," one of the men, Ashu, said.

Though the Jarawas sometimes meet local officials to receive government-funded supplies, they are wary of visitors. A sentiment repeated by Ashu: "My world is in the forest. Your world is outside. We don't like people from outside".

The seven men refused to speak of how they had escaped the devastating waves and refused to be photographed, saying this would make them sick. However, they asked for "khamma" — water in their dialect — and drank from bottles offered to them. When asked about their diet, Ashu said they mostly ate pork and fish, which they hunted. "And we like honey," he added.

He said that tourists sometimes threw cookie packets at them from their buses, adding: "We don't like it when tourists throw things at us. They should give it in our hands. Besides, packaged food upsets our stomachs." "We prefer to eat green and roasted bananas. Ripe bananas make us sick."

The Jarawas didn't have any contact with the government until 1996. A year later, some tribesmen stormed a police outpost and killed a guard.

Adoption meet on tsunami's children soon

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 7

AN INTER-MINISTERIAL meeting is likely to be called shortly to chalk out guidelines on how to deal with adoption issues for children orphaned by the tsunami and also to come out with a comprehensive strategy to battle Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in children.

Senior officials from the HRD Ministry's departments of education as well as women and child development and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment are likely to meet next week to sort out on an interim basis, long pending issues like an upper age limit for children who could be adopted by foreign nationals.

"Although no specific assessment reports have arrived yet about child victims who have PTSD, it would be a natural conclusion after a disaster of this scale. There are a considerable number who have lost both parents and some who don't have any relatives who've come forward to claim responsibility for these children," a senior official said. "While an effort is being made to first identify all those orphaned children who are under the age of six for immediate absorption in Shishu Bhavans, there are older children who also have to be given support and protection," he added.



Prince William helps with the packing of aid items for the tsunami victims of Madives at a Red Cross depot near Bristol on Friday.

Key buildings to be quakeproof

Rajnish Sharma
New Delhi, January 7

IN AN ambitious move the Centre has decided to make important buildings in seismic zone earthquake resistant. Known as the "Earthquake Mitigation Project" the Rs 1132-crore project will initially cover 38 cities in seismic zones III, IV and V.

Sources in the Home Ministry's Disaster Management division pointed out that discussion with the World Bank were at an "advanced stage" for funding the project.

The ministry has initially identified some important buildings called "lifeline buildings" in these cities whose structures will first be strengthened. These buildings include — hospitals, schools, water and power supply units, telecommunication buildings, airports and control towers, railway stations, bus stands and important administrative buildings.

Some of the important cities that fall in seismic zone III, IV and V are Delhi, greater Mumbai, Surat, Pune, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Cuttack, Patna, Ahmedabad, Agra, Amritsar, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram. "Apart from the respective state governments, ministries of civil aviation, Railways, Telecommunication, Power and Health and Family Welfare have been asked to carry out an extensive survey of unsafe lifeline buildings," a senior ministry official said. Once the survey is completed the task of strengthening these structures will start.

PROJECT will approximately cost Rs 1,132 crore

SEISMIC ZONES include Delhi, Greater Mumbai, Surat, Pune, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Cuttack, Patna, Ahmedabad, Agra, Amritsar, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram

The Home Ministry has requested the Ministry of Finance to advise financial institutions to give loans for strengthening the unsafe buildings on easy terms. This plan has also been spelt out in a status report prepared by the MHA on "Disaster Management in India." The Planning Commission has already given "in-principle" clearance to the project.

The Ministry is of the view that crisis management in case of an earthquake becomes much more efficient if the basic infrastructure like health services, water, power, communications and transportation remains intact. The nodal agency for the projects will be MHA's Disaster Management division. Once the project is completed in the 38 cities it will be extended to the entire country. In order to make new structures earthquake resistant, the Home ministry in consultation with the Ministry of Urban Development and Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) will soon lay down new building byelaws and construction norms.

ঋণ মকুব করে নজির গড়ল চিন

লন্ডন, ৭ জানুয়ারি: জি-৭ ভুক্ত ধনী দেশগুলি যখন সুনামি বিধ্বস্ত দেশগুলিকে অর্থসাহায্যের জন্য ঋণশোধের মেয়াদ বাড়িয়ে দিতে রাজি, তখন চিন একধাপ এগিয়ে ঋণ মকুব করার সিদ্ধান্ত নিল। বেজিংয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী ওয়েন জিয়াবাও ঘোষণা করেছেন, সুনামি বিধ্বস্ত শ্রীলঙ্কাকে সাহায্য করতে চিন যাবতীয় ঋণ মকুব করে দিচ্ছে। এ ছাড়া রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের ত্রাণ তহবিলে আগের ছয় কোটি ডলারের সঙ্গে আরও দু'কোটি ডলার দিতে চেয়েছে। চিন এ বার দক্ষিণ পূর্ব এশিয়ায় আরও অগ্রণী ভূমিকা নিতে ২৫-২৬ জানুয়ারি বেজিংয়ে সুনামি নিয়ে আসিয়াথন বৈঠক ডেকেছে। কাল জাকার্তায় সুনামি-বৈঠকেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী এ কথা জানিয়েছেন বলে চিনা কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির মুখপত্র পিপলস ডেইলিতে

সংবাদ বেরিয়েছে।

কাল জাকার্তা বৈঠকে বেলজিয়াম যখন সুনামিতে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত দেশগুলির বৈদেশিক ঋণ মকুবের প্রস্তাব করেছিল, তখন জাপান সহ জি-৭ সদস্যরা কেউই তাতে সায় দেয়নি। তারা পাল্টা প্রস্তাব হিসাবে ঋণশোধের দায় থেকে দেশগুলিকে সাময়িক ছাড় দেওয়ার কথা বলে এবং পরে সেই মতোই সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়। জি-৭ গোষ্ঠীর বর্তমান সভাপতি ব্রিটেন শীঘ্রই এশীয় উন্নয়ন ব্যাঙ্কে জরুরি ভিত্তিতে অর্থসাহায্য দিতে বলবে বলে ঠিক হয়েছিল। একই সঙ্গে বিশ্ব ব্যাঙ্ক ও আইএম এফকেও জি-৭ চলতি মাসের মধ্যেই ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত দেশগুলির জন্য দীর্ঘমেয়াদি অর্থবরাদ্দের সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত করতে বলবে। এ ডি বি জানিয়েছে, ইন্দোনেশিয়া, শ্রীলঙ্কা ও মলদ্বীপ—

সবচেয়ে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত তিন দেশকে তারা মোট ৫০ কোটি ডলার অনুদান ও কম সুদে ঋণ দেবে। আরও ১৭.৫ কোটি ডলার দেওয়া হবে অন্যান্য প্রকল্প থেকে বরাদ্দ সরিয়ে এনে। এই আশঙ্কাই কাল জাকার্তায় করেছিলেন রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের মহাসচিব কোফি আন্নান। তিনি চেয়েছিলেন, সুনামিতে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত দেশগুলিকে সাহায্য করতে অন্য চালু প্রকল্পের অর্থ সরিয়ে আনা যেন না হয়। আন্নান আজ বিশ্বব্যাঙ্ক, আন্তর্জাতিক অর্থভাণ্ডার ও এডিবি-র শীর্ষকর্তাদের সঙ্গে নিয়েই শুক্রবারে ইন্দোনেশিয়ার বিধ্বস্ত এলাকাগুলি ঘুরে দেখলেন। ত্রাণ শিবিরগুলিতে কোনও মতে দিন গুজরান করছেন, তাঁদের খাবার-পানীয় জল-ওষুধ, ন্যূনতম রসদ জোগানোর দায়িত্ব রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জেরই। কিন্তু সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত দেশগুলির পরিকাঠামোগত

ক্ষয়ক্ষতি বিপুল। সেই পরিকাঠামো ফের গড়তে প্রয়োজন সময় ও প্রচুর দীর্ঘমেয়াদি ঋণ। কাল শীর্ষ সম্মেলন শেষে গৃহীত প্রস্তাবে এ বিষয়ে আন্তর্জাতিক ঋণদাতাদের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা নেওয়ার কথা বলা হয়েছিল।

কিন্তু আন্তর্জাতিক ঋণের হাত ধরে কী শর্ত আসছে বা আসতে চলেছে সে দিকে নজর রাখতে সতর্কবাণী জানাতে শুরু করেছেন বিশেষজ্ঞরা। সুনামি ত্রাণে এ পর্যন্ত সবচেয়ে বেশি অর্থ দিতে চেয়েছে অস্ট্রেলিয়া। ইন্দোনেশিয়ার জন্য প্রায় ৭৬ কোটি ডলার ত্রাণ বরাদ্দ করলেও সেই অর্থ কোথায় কী ভাবে খরচ হবে, সে ব্যাপারে প্রশ্ন উঠতে শুরু করেছে। অস্ট্রেলিয়ার প্রধানমন্ত্রী জন হাওয়ার্ড বলেছেন, কোন প্রকল্পে কত টাকা খরচ করা হবে তা ইন্দোনেশিয়ার সঙ্গে কথা বলে ঠিক করা হবে।

ধ্বংসের মধ্যে চলছে দুর্কম

ওয়াশিংটন, ৭ জানুয়ারি (সংবাদসংস্থা)—
সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত কয়েকটি দেশে বিশৃঙ্খল
পরিস্থিতির সুযোগ নিচ্ছে দুর্কতীরা।
সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠেছে নারী ও শিশু
পাচারচক্র। ঘটেছে ধর্ষণ, শ্রীলতাহানির
ঘটনা। আমেরিকা যেখানে যেখানে
ত্রাণশিবির করেছে সেখানে কড়া
নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা নিতে বলেছে
আমেরিকা। আমেরিকার বিদেশ দপ্তরের
মুখপাত্র অ্যাডাম এরিলি বলেছেন, ভয়ঙ্কর
প্রাকৃতিক দুর্ঘটনা থেকে ফায়দা লুটতে
চাইছে এই দুর্কচক্র। সুনামিতে হাজার
হাজার শিশু অনাথ হয়ে পড়েছে, এটা
দেখে কুমতলবের খাবা বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে
পাচারচক্র। একাকী মহিলারা লক্ষ্য
অপরাধীদের। শ্রীলঙ্কা থেকে মহিলা ও
শিশুকন্যাদের ধর্ষণ, শ্রীলতাহানির খবর
স্বীকার করেছেন রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের ইউ এন এফ
পি এ-র একজিকিউটিভ ডিরেক্টর
ধোরাইয়া আহমেদ ওবাইফ। সুনামির
জলোচ্ছ্বাসের পরেই শ্রীলঙ্কার গল শহরে
এমনই লুটপাট শুরু হয়েছিল যে সেখানে
কাঁফু জারি করতে হয়েছিল। শিশু
পাচারচক্রের কৌশল রুখতে আজ
শ্রীলঙ্কা সরকার সুনামির কারণে অনাথ
হয়ে পড়া শিশুদের দত্তক নেওয়ায়
নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করেছে। শ্রীলঙ্কা
মন্ত্রিসভার এই সিদ্ধান্তের কথা জানিয়ে
সরকারি মুখপাত্র মঙ্গল সমরবীরা
বলেছেন, ত্রাণ ও পুনর্বাসনের বিষয়টি
সম্পূর্ণ না হওয়া পর্যন্ত এই নিষেধাজ্ঞা
জারি থাকবে। আমেরিকার মায়ামির
খবর, টেলিফোন, ই-মেলে সুনামির জন্য
অর্থসাহায্য চাওয়া হচ্ছে বহুজনের কাছে।
এইভাবে কোনও চক্র পকেট ভরতে
চাইছে কিনা, তদন্ত চালাচ্ছেন ফ্লোরিডার
গোয়েন্দারা। ফ্লোরিডার আইন দপ্তরের
প্রধান ব্রিডেন বলেছেন, একটি সংস্থা
সাহায্য চাইছে 'দ্য ফাউন্ডেশন ফর
ডিকটিমস অফ ফ্লাড অ্যান্ড
অর্থকোয়েক', অন্যটি 'সুনামিস
ডিজাস্টার হেলফ ফান্ডস'। ইন্টারনেটে
ত্রাণসাহায্য নিয়ে বড় ধরনের
ক্লেঙ্কারির আশঙ্কা করছে মার্কিন
গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা এফ বি আই। ত্রাণসাহায্য
চাইতে ব্যাণ্ডের ছাতার মতো গড়ে উঠেছে
অজস্র ওয়েবসাইট। এগুলির কোনওরকম
অনুমোদন নেই। বেশ কয়েকটি
ওয়েবসাইটে নির্দিষ্ট ফি-এর বদলে
নিখোঁজ ব্যক্তিদের খুঁজে দেওয়ার
আশ্বাসও দেওয়া হয়েছে। এ ধরনের
কয়েকটি ওয়েবসাইট মারফত ছড়ানো
হচ্ছে কম্পিউটার ভাইরাস। এ ব্যাপারে
সাধারণ মানুষকে সতর্ক থাকতে বলা
হয়েছে। কুমতলবীদের নজর পড়েছে
সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত তামিলনাড়ুর
নাগাপত্তিনমেও। সেখানকার দরিদ্র
মৎস্যজীবীদের প্রায় সকলেই কোনও না
কোনওভাবে মহাজনদের ওপর
নির্ভরশীল। এখন তাঁদের জন্য আসা
ত্রাণসাহায্যের ওপর খাবা বসাচ্ছে সেই
মহাজনরাও। নাগাপত্তিনম মৎস্যজীবী
সংগঠনের সভাপতি এ জয়বল
জানিয়েছেন, জলোচ্ছ্বাসে তখনই হয়ে
গিয়েছে ওই গ্রামের মোট ২১৩টি মাছ
ধরা ট্রলার। এগুলি একেকটির দাম প্রায়
১৫ লক্ষ টাকা। নতুন করে কিনে দেওয়ার
প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছে সরকার। নষ্ট হওয়া
ট্রলারগুলির একটির মাত্র বিমা করা ছিল।
বাকিগুলি কেনার জন্য নাকি টাকা দেয়নি
স্থানীয় কোনও ব্যাঙ্কও। প্রশ্ন, দরিদ্র
মৎস্যজীবীরা এগুলি পেয়েছিলেন
কীভাবে? ট্রলারগুলি কেনা হয়েছিল
তাঁদের নামেই। জানা গেছে, মৎস্যজীবীদের
নামে ট্রলার কিনে সেগুলি নিয়ে ব্যবসা
করত প্রভাবশালী মহাজনরা। সামান্য
বেতন পেতেন মৎস্যজীবীরা। বেআইনি
ব্যবসার এই দিকটি স্পষ্ট হওয়ায় এখন
সরকারের সামনে প্রধান সমস্যা; ক্ষতিপূরণ
পাবে কে? সমস্যা অন্যদিকেও। বিধ্বস্ত
এলাকাগুলিতে হঠাৎই ছেয়ে গিয়েছে
পর্যটকদের সংখ্যা। এঁদের নিয়ে রীতিমতো
বিপাকে উদ্ধারকর্মীরা। বিভিন্ন স্বেচ্ছাসেবী
সংগঠনের অসংখ্য প্রতিনিধির ভিড়ে
তামিলনাড়ু, আন্দামান নিকোবর দ্বীপপুঞ্জ,
কেরল, পণ্ডিচেরি, অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ কার্যত
বিপর্যস্ত। বহু মানুষ প্রচুর ত্রাণসামগ্রী নিয়ে
এইসব এলাকায় এলেও এঁরা এক্ষেত্রে ঠিক
কী করণীয় সেটা জানেন না। সুনামির
ধ্বংসরূপ দেখতে আসছে অসংখ্য মানুষ।
উদ্ধারকর্মীরা এই অব্যাহিত পর্যটনের নাম
দিয়েছেন 'ডিজাস্টার টুরিজম'।
স্বেচ্ছাসেবীদের অনেকেই যে শুধু উদ্ধারের
কাজ জানেন না তাই নয়, নিজেদের
নিরাপত্তা নিয়েও তাঁদের স্পষ্ট ধারণা
নেই। সম্ভাব্য মহামারীর প্রতিষেধক হিসেবে
প্রয়োজনীয় টিকা নেননি অনেকেই। এর
ওপর সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত এলাকাগুলিতে দেখা
যাচ্ছে বিভিন্ন স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংগঠনের ব্যানার
ও পোস্টার। তারা ওই সব এলাকায় কী
কাজ করেছে তার লম্বা ফিরিস্তি। অনেকে
শরণার্থী শিবিরের পাশে ত্রাণসামগ্রী
নামিয়ে রেখেই চলে যাচ্ছে।

ANKAL

8 JAN 2005

SURVIVING TSUNAMI

Rumour ruffles comeback crawl

TREMORS

Song and dance for laughter

■ Colachel (PTI): It is a herculean task that Blossom, a non-government organisation based in Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu, has taken up.

The Blossom team has been asked, without adhering to any written script, to enthrall tsunami survivors of the coastal hamlets in the area. They sing, dance and try to make the survivors participate in their programmes.

They seem to be succeeding. For the survivors from Kottilpattu, camping inside a marriage hall here, a vaudeville performed by Ishanulah and Muthulakshmi on Thursday came as a comic relief amid the tragedy all around.

The duo stopped the performance for a while and asked the attentive audience, consisting mostly of women and children, to sing. Initially, there was no response. The two started singing again and a little girl began to dance to the tune, lighting up the faces of all the children there. "It is for the first time that I am seeing them laugh like this in the last few days," a volunteer said.

LONG WAIT



Children wait for their parents to return with food at a village near Nagapattinam on Friday. (AFP)

Student fate

■ Nagapattinam (PTI): The future of a 17-year-old student from Akkaraipet village looks gloomy after he lost all his textbooks in the tsunami. Balamurugan, a Class-X student, lost his books and certificates when the waves lashed his fishing hamlet. "I lost all my text and note books. I don't know whether I will be able to appear for the public exam," he says. The tsunami has also destroyed his family's only boat.

Statue spirit

■ Bangkok (AFP): Two Thai naval officers have credited the spirit of a late prince with saving them when the tsunami struck a naval base, the Bangkok Post reported on Friday. They clung to the statue of Prince Chumphon Khet Udomsak, the founder of the royal Thai navy, as tsunamis swept the Phangnga naval base. "I did not know where to run. Then I saw the statue of Sadej Tia (the prince)... So I climbed up and held his left leg as firmly as I could and prayed for his help," petty officer Thananchai Phaweket told the paper. He believed he would be safe as he was wearing an amulet of the prince. His colleague Withawin Manapattanawong soon joined him and clung to the statue's right leg until the water receded.

Mild tremors

■ New Delhi/Dhaka (Agencies): An earthquake jolted the border areas of Myanmar and India on Friday, less than 14 hours after a similar tremor shook the region. The quake measured 4.5 on the Richter scale. An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale also jolted southeastern Bangladesh on Friday.



WHAT NEXT? A woman leads her children past burning debris of houses in Nagapattinam. (AFP)

Lab-on-wheels brings water

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Nagapattinam, Jan. 7: As Tamil Nadu grapples with the curse of water, villagers have finally got a clean drop to drink from faraway Rajasthan.

The defence ministry's mobile lab, which is based in Jodhpur and falls under the purview of the Defence Research Development Organisation, is providing clean water to tsunami-hit villages through its Nuclear Biological and Chemical Water Purification System.

The system, which uses the reverse osmosis process, has been fitted to an army truck and is essentially meant to provide potable water during defence operations.

The lab has been provided on the state government's request and has travelled across three villages near Nagapattinam, converting raw water into potable water.

"Our system has a suction capacity of 7,000 litres and we can convert 3,000 litres of raw water per hour into drinkable water," said Sushil Kumar, a scientist leading a seven-member team.

"We were in Sirdhur for two days and in Kameshwaram for a day before moving to the Akkaraipet coastal hamlet near here, one of the worst-affected areas," he added.

At Akkaraipet, the lab has already supplied 26,000 litres of potable water, Kumar said.

Raw water from the village's main water source is first chlorinated and then drawn into a "flexible rubber pond" which can hold up to 5,000 litres of water," explained

S.P. Bairwa, a technical officer with the lab. The treated water is then filled into tanks kept nearby, which were installed by the Unicef after the tsunami strike.

This is a tested technology and the chemicals required for purification, including alum, sodium hexametaphosphate, sodium meta-bisulphite and hydrochloric acid, are being sourced from Pondicherry, the scientists said.

In Akkaraipet, the lab has been parked in the centre of the village opposite the local Durga temple so that villagers have access to it.

"We provided the same service at Latur and Bhuj in Gujarat after the great earthquakes there... and spent 12 days at Erasma near Paradip in Orissa after the super cyclone hit that state in 1999," said Sridhar, a member of the team. "We are only doing our duty and trying to help the people to the extent we can."

Not only water, Rajasthan is also providing medical assistance to the state. A team of doctors from the Gandhi Vidhya Mandir Sardar Shar Deemed University is helping out in Akkaraipet.

However, Nagapattinam relief commissioner Vivek Harinarayan today said voluntary organisations and NGOs should avoid supplying medicines to relief camps.

"We are getting third-generation and fourth-generation antibiotics, the efficacy of which cannot be tested in Nagapattinam," Harinarayan said, adding that this posed a "huge logistical problem" as the medicines had to be sent to Thiruvannamalai, 25 km from here.

M.R.VENKATESH

Nagapattinam, Jan. 7: The veneer of normality in Tamil Nadu's worst-hit district was ripped apart today when a rumour of another tsunami triggered a scramble to safety, throwing relief operations into disarray.

As a wave of people, including members of the security forces, began to flee after rumours of "dark waters" approaching the battered shore of Nagapattinam, Thanjavur collector J. Radhakrishnan attempted a solo salvage operation.

The collector appealed for calm, urging people not to panic and stay put, to ensure that officials and volunteers involved in relief and rehabilitation in the fishing hamlets of Akkaraipet and Keechankuppam were not disabled from working.

"We cannot stay here any more as the whole place has become a graveyard. My stom-

ach gurgles even if there is a strong breeze," said a traumatised Nagammal, wife of a Keechankuppam fisherman.

"We will not have peace of mind here and most people want to move out to a safer place," fisherman Nagaraj said.

The third panic run in the district since the killer waves struck on December 26 came as an anti-climax of sorts, just as the district administration and aid agencies were getting people to return home and take stock of their ravaged life to make a fresh beginning.

Some of them, whose concrete houses remain intact, had even started cooking today.

But the women are dead against resettling in the ravaged hamlets, particularly Keechankuppam and Akkaraipet.

"The majority of the people here want to resettle in alternative sites, in pucca concrete multi-storied tenements like in Chennai" and use the hamlets at best as a

"workplace", said Radhakrishnan, who is coordinating relief work in Nagapattinam. Two or three places west of Nagapattinam town, he said, have been earmarked for temporary shelters.

Today's panic run clearly revealed that the people are still gripped by fear of the giant waves that killed many and destroyed hundreds of houses and fishing boats and nets.

Harried residents and officials were seen running towards Radhakrishnan as he quickly set about installing a public address system — on the advice of an official — at the "mouth" of these worst-hit hamlets, close to the fishing harbour, to help police to dispel rumours and calm people.

One casualty of the rumours was the pep talk by Ravi Shankar of the Art of Living Foundation, scheduled today at the Muthumariamman temple at Akkaraipet.

Scores of people who had

gathered for psychological succour returned disappointed as the spiritual guru could not reach the place. They had just returned home after 12 days.

M. Balan, a fisherman, refuted the impression that the hamlets were "back on their feet". He said that at the stroke of dusk, "nobody stays here and everyone troops back to their relief camps in *kalyana mandapams* (marriage halls) as tsunami and death-related fears continue to haunt us."

"Many of us come here in the mornings to collect the dole and ensure our names are taken down by government survey agencies so that we do not miss out on any relief material or ex gratia payments."

The livelihood of over 4,200 fishermen's families — most of whose houses have been washed away — in the two hamlets alone hangs in the balance. This is despite the clearing of roads, removal of debris and damaged boats and res-

oration of power that have been done quickly with the help of the army, the police's special task force and the state electricity board.

The partial restoration has enabled the people to return to their localities but they are surviving on the immediate relief the state government has provided, such as Rs 4,000 cash and 60 kg rice per affected family.

Many others are queuing up before autos that bring cooked rice and *sambhar*, organised by NGOs active in the region, or depending on another organisation's identity cards that double as a relief coupon.

"It will take at least six months for fishing operations to resume as not even 10 of the damaged 1,000 boats are seaworthy," said Sundar, a fisherman of Keechankuppam.

The district administration has urged fishermen not to go out to sea for at least three months.

Caution call on adoption

MONOBINAGUPTA

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Non-government organisations across the world have advised against hasty adoption of children orphaned by the tsunami.

Many people have come forward with offers to provide a home for the children who find themselves alone after the calamity. But aid workers are advising families that want to adopt children to go slow to avoid complications in future.

"In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, it is often difficult to ascertain that a child is truly an orphan," said an aid worker.

Aid workers said parents may have been separated from their children and may be staying in another refugee camp or just across the border. It is not ethical to place a child for adoption unless it is clear that no parent able to care for a child will be found.

Ethical adoption practice requires that a child be considered "legally abandoned" before being adopted by a family other than its own. The argument against hasty adoption rests on the ground that the governments of the tsunami-ravaged countries are in disarray. The courts and other institutions that handle adoptions may be in a shambles.

"Adoption," said an aid worker, "cannot take place in such an environment."

The government today said efforts are underway to look for parents or extended family members of the children. "The district magistrates are compiling lists of orphans. Efforts should be made to see

that the child is not traumatised any further," said Naveen Chawla, a secretary in the information and broadcasting ministry.

Sri Lanka, one of the worst-affected countries with 42,000 dead, has banned adoptions for the time being. There is widespread apprehension that gangs of traffickers are on the lookout for vulnerable children.

In such a situation, governments and NGOs believe, it is better to wait till they are sure about the status of the families of the children. The search for family members may take months in the aftermath of a disaster.

According to aid workers, the first priority is to treat the children's post-traumatic stress disorders. Adoption by families from foreign countries may not be in their best interest now.

Adoption guidelines differ from country to country. In Indonesia, couples wishing to adopt have to be residents of the country for at least two years. Sri Lanka does not allow a single parent to adopt. In Malaysia, adoptions are not common and non-Muslims are not allowed to adopt Muslim children.

Indian law has no provision for foreigners to adopt children from the country but, under the Guardian and Wards Act, foreigners may petition an Indian district court for legal custody of a child to be taken abroad for adoption. Non-Indians are required to work through a licensed Indian adoption agency following a Supreme Court decision in 1984.

ISLANDERS FIGHT TO REACH OUTSIDE WORLD

Courage links three survivors

BAPPA MAJUMDAR

Port Blair, Jan. 7: One drifted, two others walked; but all survived.

Avanthi Alya, 52, drifted more than 50 km in a crude boat for four days and four nights without food or water after the tsunami crashed on Pipilow, a hamlet on Comorata island, about 400 km from Port Blair.

Life in the hamlet was wiped out on December 26 but for Avanthi. The first few days, she hung around, expecting help to arrive. But she soon realised that survivors would have to live on their own as the Nancowrie group of islands was almost out of bounds for the rest of humanity.

"Waiting did not make any sense. So I decided to take the plunge. Either way, I knew I would be dead," Avanthi said. "Luckily, I found a crude boat, which somehow did not go adrift as it was several metres inside the coast, now flooded," she recalled.

Overpowered by the need



Nicobari children play at a relief camp in Port Blair on Friday. (Reuters)

to survive and find land, Avanthi cut the rope of the boat on December 29 and set sail. "The water was several metres high, the boat was crude and I feared I would be thrown overboard. But I held on to it somehow."

Once adrift, Avanthi was at a loss. She could not understand where she was heading in the expanse of water. Hours later, she lost consciousness.

On January 2, the woman was noticed by a ship near Tarasa island, almost 50 km from where she had set out.

"When I saw her, I could not believe it. This was an amazing display of human courage," V.B. Bellary of the ship, LCU 34, said. "She said she wanted to be at a relative's place in Tarasa. We asked her about the fate of her family but she kept mum," Bellary added.

Like Avanthi, two of a group of 19 Nicobaris on Katchal island decided not to wait but go out and find help. "We walked 16 km while our friends stayed at a makeshift camp. We ate coconuts and bananas but were starving most

of the time," said Nathalian, one of the duo. He is now at a Port Blair hospital.

They finally reached a makeshift helipad, where air force personnel on a rescue mission had almost given up hope of finding life.

"They (the personnel) immediately informed us and we sent the specially requisitioned Mi-8 helicopter to rescue the Nicobaris," a defence spokesperson said.

The entire group was airlifted in two batches and taken to safer ground.

Woman claims crown of century saviour

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Nagapattinam, Jan. 7: An alert woman, a television set and a spilt of social service — the three together made for a life-saving combination in Tamil Nadu's worst-hit district.

Manimegalai, president of the Poompur village panchayat in Nagapattinam district, claims to have "saved over 100 lives" with her presence of mind.

On December 26 around 8.15 am, the 50-year-old woman noticed two unusual occurrences.

She saw the water in her well "bubbling" when she went to fetch a pail of water and, shortly after, observed "wave-like formations" in the local pond.

Manimegalai said she immediately alerted the local police.

Then she rushed to her television set and switched it on, only to notice the scrolling news on the screen about tremors that were felt in Chennai early that day — the first ones around 6.33 am.

Some regional television channels were already flashing the news of water enter-

ing several houses in the Tamil Nadu capital.

The first of the waves had crashed on the Chennai coast between 7.30 am and 7.45 am and the Marina beach was flooded.

Manimegalai said she sensed something was seriously amiss. She then ran out of her house and started shouting, asking the people of the village to immediately move to safer ground.

She then rushed to the Poompur beach to pull out some children playing there.

By the time the tsunami hit Poompur and other coastal villages of Nagapattinam after 9 am, Manimegalai had that little lead-time to forewarn the people. This, she claimed, helped her "save more than 100 lives".

Poompur village panchayat reported 123 deaths, but Manimegalai says the toll could have been considerably higher if not for her "warning that day".

The news of her saving act, in what is called the "golden hour" of a crisis, came to light 12 days after disaster struck the tourist spot of Poompur. Washed by the Bay of Bengal, it is an

ancient port of the early Chola dynasty and was once a flourishing commercial hub.

Manimegalai belongs to the fisherfolk community and had won a National Award in the category of "Best Panchayat President" in 1998.

Her saviour act notwithstanding, the toll in the tsunami disaster is poised to climb much higher in Nagapattinam district.

This evening, collector Veera Shanmugha Mony put the toll at 6,036 people, which includes 1,875 men and 2,400 women; the rest are children.

This number, however, could go up, with the district officials declaring that 1,626 people are reported missing till this evening.

Velankanni, a pilgrimage centre about 10 km from Nagapattinam town, alone has reported "943 missing persons", the district collector said.

The final toll in Nagapattinam district could cross 7,660 since in a natural calamity of this scale, the missing persons are "presumed dead" if they are not traced in a week, according to government norms.

Moneylenders & relief

When the compensation is doled out, it may eventually find its way not to the poor fishermen or even the registered owners but to these shadow figures.

"We have taken note of this. The idea is that the affected fishermen should benefit. We will do the needful after the enumeration," says M Veera Shanmugha Moni, Collector of Nagapattinam.

This is not this town's only dilemma though. Many of the 45,000 poor families no longer want to return to the areas where they lived earlier.

This comes from a mixture of fear and sentiments burning deep. "When the waves struck, they had to carry off, burn or bury their kin where their homes used to be. They say they can't live over the remains of their own dead," says a revenue official. "Some 7,000 families have already told us that they don't want to go back to their old villages. We expect as many more to say that by the end of our survey," said Shanthaseela Nayar, state secretary for rural development, who is heading relief operations here.

Even Govt divides victims on caste

significant Meenavars had their "exclusive" relief camps. The equally battered Muslims, Dalits, Nadars, Pillais, Devars and other lower castes— mostly non-fishermen— were shunted into camps of their own. This has since been accomplished in most parts of this district. When asked how the Government could endorse this discrimination, Nagapattinam Sub Collector Dr Umanath said that this was a conscious decision and a practical one. "There are the real divisions and distrust among the communities," he told *The Indian Express* today, "a crisis like this is no time to experiment with casteist and religious amity." The Government, Umanath said, just could not risk putting them up all together. When asked what the risk was, Umanath declined to comment.

His defence that this is a "practical" decision has few takers. "This is sad. The Government is actually re-enforcing the ancient divides and hatreds. Until the tsunami, they could at least tolerate each other. See what happens when this whole thing gets over, now," says Father Gunalan, pastor of Asia's first Protestant Church, the 298-year-old New Jerusalem Church in Tarangambadi, one of the worst-hit coastal villagers.

Gunalan said it was appalling to see those belonging to different communities stopping relief trucks on the road and diverting them to the relief camps of their own community. The camps of the powerless denominations bore the brunt of this.

Another fallout is that villages in neighbouring coastal stretches that the waves spared now have bargain deals. "Relief is now being virtually dumped in some of the camps here. So even the kids carry a few stoves, mats, vessels and other relief material to sell in other villages." The pastor says some Muslim homes were looted in the area soon after the waves struck. "That was ironic. The first people who went around helping survivors of all communities and rushing people to hospitals were men of the Tamil Muslim Munnetra Kazhakam," he said.

Many Muslim families had fled their homes, but are now coming back. "We have now our own security system in place. Our men take turns to guard our area day and night," says Abdul Haleem, president of the Tarangambadi Muslim Jamaat. He said seven looters were caught and handed to the police, on Tsunami day. "We foiled an attempt even last night."

One of the relief camps that the Government gave to the non-Meenawar communities here was the local Jnanapoo I-lam School. Most of its occupants had lost their homes to the waves. This morning, officials came knocking with the District Collector's order asking them to vacate, and they meekly did.

With nowhere to go, to plead, they trudged to the Tehsildar's office, a few kilometres away in Porayar. A few hours later, officials there said all of them have been asked to go to the village's only movie hall, converted into a camp. At this Ganapathi movie hall, a few Meenawars at its entrance said they had asked these people to go away to a neighbouring marriage hall. But they were not allowed in there, either. And no one claimed to know where these 180-odd men women and children eventually went.

3 JAN 2005

Even Govt divides victims on caste, says it's practical

■ Powerful Meenavars have own camps, not the time for social amity experiment, says official

RAJEEV P I
NAGAPATTINAM, JANUARY 7

DOORS are being slammed in the face of Dalit survivors here—and the Government is quietly doing some of the slamming.

Yesterday, *The Indian Express* reported how Dalits from 63 affected villages are facing the brunt of the powerful Meenavar fishermen (a Most Backward Class): being thrown out of relief camps, pushed to the rear of food and water lines, not being allowed to take water from UNICEF facilities and in some cases not even being allowed to use the toilet.

Now it's been learnt that the Government, instead of ensuring justice, was reinforcing this divide—both caste and communal.

In fact, a day after the killer waves struck and thousands began pouring into these camps, revenue officials were asked to quietly go about dividing the victims and report to their superiors.

They were asked to see that the numerically powerful and politically

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Dalits settle down outside the Namblanagar camp

On the ground, they say: handle with care

DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 7

TAKING note of *The Indian Express* report on the way Dalit survivors are being ostracised, chairman of the National Commission of Scheduled Castes said here today that the panel's director in Chennai has been asked to visit the areas and take action.

Said chairman Suraj Bhan: "I have prepared a note for the commission's Tamil Nadu representative, Kannagi Packianathan. We shall ask our director in Chennai tomorrow to her-

self visit the spot and take necessary action."

In Chennai, too, NGOs and relief agencies met today to grapple with a problem that's not only hampering relief but undermining the credibility of the official establishment.

Sources who attended the meeting in Chennai told *The Indian Express* that caste confrontations came up for discussion when John Kurien from the Thiruvananthapuram-based Centre for Development Studies explained the "peculiar aspects" of relief

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Moneylenders muddy waters in relief payouts for fishermen

RAJEEV P I
NAGAPATTINAM, JANUARY 7

THE smashed trawlers at Akkaraipettai are slowly beginning to tell a tale of hidden ownerships, which can complicate the compensation package being planned by the Tamil Nadu government.

The government's promise is simple: it will compensate the fishermen who have lost their fishing craft and equipment.

But when you try to find out who actually owned the vessels that the waves destroyed, a strange truth emerges.

Some 213 mechanised trawlers—each cost around Rs 15 lakh—were destroyed according to A Jaybal, chairman of the Nagapattinam Fishermen's Panchayat Union. Only one of them was insured for Rs 15.16 lakh by the New India Assurance



Owner is likely to be moneylender. Mahendra Parikh

Company. And banks say they did not give any loans for boats.

So how did the poverty-stricken residents of this area raise the money for the 212 uninsured boats? Where did the money come from?

From powerful men who sit in Chennai, Tuticorin and elsewhere.

In other words, the men whom the government first thought it was

helping are just labourers who are given about 20 per cent of their catch. And the registered owner, officials say, is usually a former fisherman too poor to own the boat but is running it on behalf of the real bosses—some had as many as five vessels registered in their names.

The real bosses, meanwhile, run their businesses from a distance.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

JAN 2005

Make Relief Mechanism Transparent: India

Keep Your Promises, Annan Tells Nations

Jakarta: World leaders on Thursday pledged to work together to help tsunami-shattered regions recover from the worst natural disaster in living memory, but warned it was a race against time to get aid to survivors before they succumbed to disease.

Emphasising the need for having long-term warning systems for natural calamities, India suggested putting in place an effective relief distribution mechanism which is "transparent and sustained". Addressing an emergency summit of tsunami-hit nations and aid donors here, external affairs minister K Natwar Singh said India could deal with challenges affecting it with its own resources and asserted that it would be "appropriate" that international relief was directed where it was most urgently required.

In case India required any specialised needs it would be in touch with "our friends", Singh told the day-long conference of 26 countries, attended among others by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

Singh said India whole-heartedly supported the efforts of the United Nations. "The presence of the UN Secretary-General here today is a testimony to the UN's important role in coordinating international relief and in finding ways and means to address the gaps in the relief process. Equally important are steps to ensure a long term coordinated and sustained response and an effective relief distribution mechanism which is transparent and sustained," he said.

As the world addressed current disaster relief priorities, he said,



Survivors of a holiday school in Thailand on December 26. This picture is among a set of photographs sent to PTI's Bangalore office by an unknown source. More photographs on P 9

Atop a tree for 10 days without food & water

Car Nicobar: It may sound incredible but a 14-year-old boy survived on a tree-top for ten days without food or water in this tsunami-hit island.

The boy, Muralidhar, who is from Tamil Nadu and studying in standard VII, climbed a tree when the killer waves lashed the island. He did not get down from the tree for ten days out of fear, Dr C B Sathaye, who treated him, said on Thursday. Sathaye, who was a member of the 12-member medical team sent by Maharashtra government to this island, said defence personnel spotted him on Wednesday lying on the ground with severe dehydration. PTI

"It is time to look at medium to long-term objectives. An evaluation is needed of the various long-term warning systems for different disasters that we need to put in place."

Annan urged nations to immediately come forward with the aid they'd promised. While nearly \$4 billion has been pledged worldwide, the UN has warned that—as in previous disasters—some of the promises might not be honoured.

Annan called upon nations to channel \$1.7 billion of the funds to the UN for relief, including \$977 million for emergency aid. He said the number killed across Asia and Africa in the tragedy exceeded 150,000 but the exact figure would never be known. "Whole communities have disappeared," Annan said, calling for the establishment of a tsunami warning system in the Indian ocean.

Singh said India was committed

TO THE WATER
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to providing trained search and rescue teams, setting up web-based disaster management information systems and human resources development for disaster management. He said, "This community of grief is not and must not become a community of despair." The year 2004 ended in unparalleled tragedy, 2005 begins with collective hope and sustained action.

The external affairs minister told the meeting at length about the steps taken by the Indian government in dealing with the colossal crisis in South India and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He said until January 4, the government had incurred an expenditure of \$250 million on relief and rehabilitation efforts.

As the conference ended, delegates issued a declaration pledging to work together to help the devastated regions recover and to set up a warning system to ensure that coastal residents would have time to flee to safety in case of another tsunami. Agencies

Jarawa tribe safe...



Jirkatang (Port Blair): Members of the ancient Jarawa tribe emerged on Thursday from their forest habitat for the first time since the December 26 tsunami rocked the isolated Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and in rare interaction with outsiders, said all 250 tribe members survived.

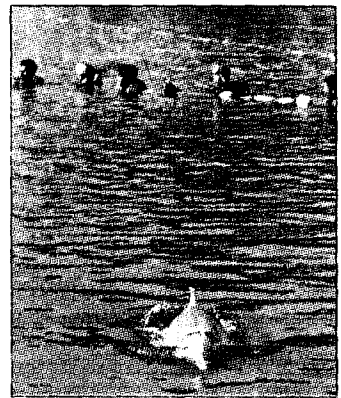
"We are all safe after the earthquake. We are in the forest in Balughat," Ashu, an arrow-wielding Jarawa, said in

broken Hindi and through an interpreter in a restricted forest area in the northern reaches of South Andaman island.

...So is this Thai dolphin

Khao Lak (Thailand):

Rescuers have saved a dolphin swept over a Thai beach by the tsunami that devastated shores around the Indian Ocean, but failed on Wednesday to find her calf in a filthy lake left behind by the giant wave. After two days of bickering between Thai and foreign experts over how to save the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, the adult animal was finally plucked from the lake in a net and released into the sea more than one km away.



"She swam away like a rocket. It was fantastic," said animal rescue expert Edwin Wiek. "I thought she was going to be a lot weaker." However, rescuers failed to locate her calf which had been dumped in the same fetid lake by the wall of water that smashed over Thailand's Andaman Sea coastline on December 26. Watchmen were told to monitor the tiny lake through the night in the hope of spotting the small calf.

"I'm afraid she's probably dead," said Wiek, a Dutch national who has worked in Thailand for more than a decade. The rescue of the adult female, which had a distinctive pink and gray fin, represented a triumph for the Thai authorities who shunned advice from international experts and devised a scheme with local fishermen to catch the dolphin. Agencies



Pictures of tsunami waves about to inundate a Thai holiday resort on 26 December. They were sent to the PTI Bangalore office by an unidentified source.

26 DEC 2004

JAN 2005

Put your money where your mouth is, Annan tells world leaders



HELL AND HIGH WATER: This photograph sent to the PTI's Bangalore office on Thursday by an anonymous person shows people fleeing as tsunami strikes a Thai resort in Jakarta on Thursday, the UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, said that aid offers (about \$4 billion) must become a reality soon. — PTI/ANN (Details on page 4)

S E 3 Y L S 3 2 0 4 1

ভূপ্রকৃতির ব্যাপক বদল, দ্বীপ বাঁচবে কীসে, চিন্তায় বিজ্ঞানীরা

পার্থসারথি সেনগুপ্ত •
পোর্ট ব্লেয়ার

৪ জানুয়ারি: উপগ্রহ থেকে তোলা কার নিকোবর আর ত্রিকোটের ছবি দেখে মাথায় হাত দিয়েছেন ভারত সরকারের বাঘা বাঘা বিজ্ঞানী।

ছবির এত দিনকার রংটা যেন বদলে গিয়েছে। লালের জায়গায় পড়েছে সবুজ ছোপ। ভূপ্রকৃতির বদলে যাওয়ার ইঙ্গিত। অর্থাৎ সুনামি শুধু মানুষ মারেনি, জনপদ ধ্বংস করেনি, এক ধাক্কায় ওলটপালট করে দিয়েছে আন্দামান-সুমাত্রার ভূপৃষ্ঠেরও। নইলে উপগ্রহের তোলা ছবিতে এত দিনকার লাল মুখে গিয়ে সবজের্তে কেন! লাল রং বোঝায় সবুজ জঙ্গল। সবুজ নির্দেশ করে অগভীর জলের অবস্থান, কালো মানে গভীর জল। এক কথায়, উপগ্রহ-ছবিতে লালের উপরে সবুজ ছোপের অর্থ, জঙ্গল ভুবে গিয়েছে জলে। উপগ্রহ-ক্যামেরার ঈগল-চোখ আন্দামান-নিকোবরের তটরেখায় মাইলের পর মাইল এক মৌলিক পরিবর্তনের ইঙ্গিত দিচ্ছে।

পরিস্থিতি এতটাই গুরুতর যে, সেন্ট্রাল এগ্রিকালচারাল রিসার্চ ইনস্টিটিউট মঙ্গলবারেই বিজ্ঞানীদের জরুরি বৈঠক ডেকেছিল। পরিবর্তিত পরিস্থিতিতে আন্দামান-নিকোবরের মানুষজন কী ভাবে যুববেন, ওই বৈঠকে সেই কৌশল নির্ধারণের বিষয়ে আলোচনা হয়েছে। বিজ্ঞানীদের একটি সিদ্ধান্ত থেকেই স্পষ্ট, যে-জমি সাগরে ভুবে গিয়েছে, তা ফিরে পাওয়ার তেমন আশা রাখেন না তাঁরা। নইলে পোর্ট

ব্লেয়ারে ভারত সরকারের ন্যাচারাল রিসোর্স ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিভিশনের কর্তা সুরত ঘোষাল রায়চৌধুরী ওই বৈঠকে কেন রায় দেবেন, আন্দামানে সোনার ধান চাষের দিন শেষ! কারণ, এগিয়ে আসা সমুদ্রের জলে মাটি লবণাক্ত হয়েছে। তাই ধানের পরিবর্তে এ বার কৃষিতে বৈচিত্র্য আনতে হবে।

‘অ্যাকশন প্ল্যান ফর লো-লাইং প্যাডি ফিল্ড’ শীর্ষক এক রিপোর্টে বিজ্ঞানীরা উপায় বাতলেছেন যে, চলতি বছরের জানুয়ারি থেকে মে— এই সময়ের মধ্যেই ভূট্টা, সূর্যমুখী, নানা ধরনের তৈলবীজ, পাট ইত্যাদির চাষ করতে হবে। রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী, ‘বিজ্ঞানীদের সামনে আশু কর্তব্য, নিচু জমিতে সমুদ্রের জল ঢুকে যাওয়ার ফলে মাটিতে যে-রাসায়নিক পরিবর্তন হয়েছে, তা খতিয়ে দেখা।’

এই পরিবর্তন কতটা গভীর, তার কিছু বস্তুগত উদাহরণ দেওয়া যেতে পারে। উপগ্রহ-ছবি বিস্তীর্ণ এলাকায় তটরেখার পরিবর্তনের দিগ্বিদর্শন করছে। আর অপেক্ষাকৃত নিচুতে উড়ে যাওয়া কপ্টারে বসে নীচে চোখ রাখলেই আন্দামান-নিকোবরের দ্বীপ-ভিত্তিক পরিবর্তনটা স্পষ্ট চোখে পড়ে। যেমন নিকোবর এলাকায় কাছাল দ্বীপ। আকাশ থেকেই বোঝা যায়, দ্বীপের মধ্যে সমুদ্রের জল ঢুকে ভূখণ্ডকে দু’ভাগে ভাগ করেছে। সমুদ্রতট থেকে বেশ কয়েক কিলোমিটার ব্যাসের এক অর্ধচন্দ্রাকৃতি জলাশয় বা হ্রদ বা খাঁড়ি তৈরি হয়েছে। সমুদ্রের ঢেউ তোড়ে বেশ কিছুটা ঢুকে যাচ্ছে জলাভূমিতে। অজস্র দ্বীপে এই একই ছবি।

ছবিটা কি বদলাবে না? দ্বীপগুলির টুকরো টুকরো অংশ চিরতরে হারিয়ে যাবে সমুদ্রের অতলে? চিন্তার কথা, জলের স্তর নামছে না। ত্রাণ ও উদ্ধারের কাজে যারা ওতপ্রোত ভাবে জড়িত, সেই সেনাবাহিনীর কর্তারা বারবার এই কথাই বলছেন। যেমন কার নিকোবরে আন্দামান-নিকোবরের কমান্ডার-ইন-চিফ ঠাকুর যা বলেন, কামোটা দ্বীপে নৌ-ঘাঁটির কমান্ডার এস এস মানও বলেন সেই কথা। তা হলে জলের স্তর বেড়েছে বই কমেনি। মানের হিসাব অনুযায়ী, নৌ-ঘাঁটির হেলিপ্যাডের খাড়াই দেওয়াল ধরে মাপলে তিন ফুট জল বেড়েছে। তিনি বলেছেন, “বেশ কয়েক মাইল ঢুকে পড়া সমুদ্রের জল তো আর পাম্প করে ফের সমুদ্রে ফেলা সম্ভব নয়। তাই যা হয়েছে, তার পরিশ্রমিক্তেই আমাদের বাঁচার নতুন প্রকৌশল খুঁজতে হবে।”

তবে বিজ্ঞানীরা এত সমস্যার মধ্যেও একটি সুসংবাদ দিয়েছেন। তা হল, উপগ্রহ-চিত্র থেকে পরিষ্কার, ম্যানগ্রোভ অরণ্যের ঢাল অনেকাংশেই সাগরের মধ্যে ঢুকে গিয়েছে। অস্তিত সাগরের প্লাবন ঠেকাতে এটা জরুরি। আর নোয়া-কথিত মহাপ্লাবন হলে? বিজ্ঞানীরা কেউ নিকুন্তর, কেউ বা ঈশ্বরের দোহাই দিয়েছেন।

সুত্রতবাবুর শেষ কথা, “আপনাদের দিবা শহরটার দিকে একটু নজর দিন। ওখানে যে-ভাবে ম্যানগ্রোভ সাফ করে মরুভূমি করা হয়েছে, ওটা যে-কোনও দিন সাগরের বানে ভুবে যেতে পারে।” প্রশাসকেরা এই সাবধানবাণী নিশ্চয়ই উড়িয়ে দেবেন না!

Must summit for worst disaster

WORLD LEADERS HUDDLE TO COORDINATE TSUNAMI AID, SET UP WARNING SYSTEM

The Jakarta Post/ANN & AP

JAKARTA, Jan. 5. — World leaders and aid workers today prepared to coordinate distribution of billions of dollars in aid to countries hit by the worst natural disaster in decades.

They also will discuss setting up a warning system so a future tsunami won't leave tens of thousands dead on the Indian Ocean's shores.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and US Secretary of State Colin Powell were among the officials expected in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, for a summit tomorrow on tsunami relief.

Indonesian minister of foreign affairs Mr Hassan Wirayuda said that 14 heads of government as well as ministers from several countries and international organisations would be attending the one-day emergency summit.

Already more than \$3 billion has been pledged from around the world to help millions of victims recover from the 26 December killer tsunami.

Before departing for the summit, Mr Koizumi said Japan would provide both financial assistance and aid supplies. Tokyo leads the world in aid pledges, having committed up to \$500 million.

The United Nations has performed rapid assessments in countries hit by the tsunami, and tomorrow's meeting aims to get donors to commit to specific aid



Mr Powell at the Banda Aceh airport on Wednesday. — AFP

and reconstruction projects, said Mr Bo Asplund, UN representative in Indonesia. Topping the list of demands is Indonesia, Mr Asplund said, with some \$450 million required under a UN appeal for the country that suffered at least 94,200 deaths — the most of any nation.

Bringing together representatives of all the affected countries will allow aid officials to get commitments for relief for at least the next six months, said Mr Michael Elmquist, who is heading the UN aid efforts in

I've been in war and I've been through a number of hurricanes, tornados and other relief operations, but I've never seen anything like this.

— Gen. Colin Powell after flying over apocalyptic landscapes on Indonesia's Sumatra island

Indonesia's hard-hit Aceh province. The countries also hope to prevent similar disasters in the future by creating a warning system for tsunamis in the Indian Ocean.

"The best way of serving the memory of those who perished in the tragedy is to make sure that future generations are in safer hands," said Mr Ignacio Bunye, spokesman for Philippines President, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was attending the summit.

Leaders of nations in the

A LOOK AT MAJOR PLEDGES

■ AUSTRALIA	: \$764 million
■ GERMANY	: \$674 million
■ JAPAN	: \$500 million
■ UNITED STATES	: \$350 million
■ NORWAY	: \$183 million
■ FRANCE	: \$103 million
■ BRITAIN	: \$95 million
■ SWEDEN	: \$75.5 million
■ SPAIN	: \$68 million
■ CANADA	: \$67 million
■ DENMARK	: \$75 million
■ CHINA	: \$60 million
■ SOUTH KOREA	: \$50 million
■ TAIWAN	: \$50 million
■ NETHERLANDS	: \$32 million
■ EUROPEAN COMMISSION	: \$31 million
■ SWITZERLAND	: \$23.5 million
■ UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	: \$20 million

regional Asean will also talk about establishing a quick-response system to assist each other if a member country is hit by a natural disaster, said Indonesian foreign ministry spokesman Marty Natalegawa.

Another issue on the agenda will be possible debt relief to affected countries, many of which are developing nations that rely on international assistance.

Britain's top treasury official has said the world's richest nations are likely to freeze debt repayments and may even forgive debts to countries hit by the tsunami.

6 JAN 2005

Tsunami redefines island people's ties with the sea

AMY WALDMAN & DAVID ROHDE
HAMBANTOTA, JANUARY 5

ACEMETERY," R.G. Jayadasa said, explaining what he sees when he looks out at the sea.

Jayadasa, 52, had come, like many others, to the edge of this southern town on Tuesday to stare at the waves rolling in. But between him and the water there was a new, studied distance that was more than just physical.

He pointed to where the tsunami had redrawn the coastline, creating curves in place of a straight edge. It seemed to reflect the way the murderous surge also rewrote, perhaps permanently, the relationship between the people of this island nation and the sea that surrounds it.

"Now people hate the sea — they hate it," said Dudley Silva, an irrigation engineer in Matara, of a population who until the tsunami liked nothing better than a sea bath on a Sunday. On Monday, he said, he had seen a woman standing and cursing the ocean, waving her arms in fury.

Of the countries affected by the

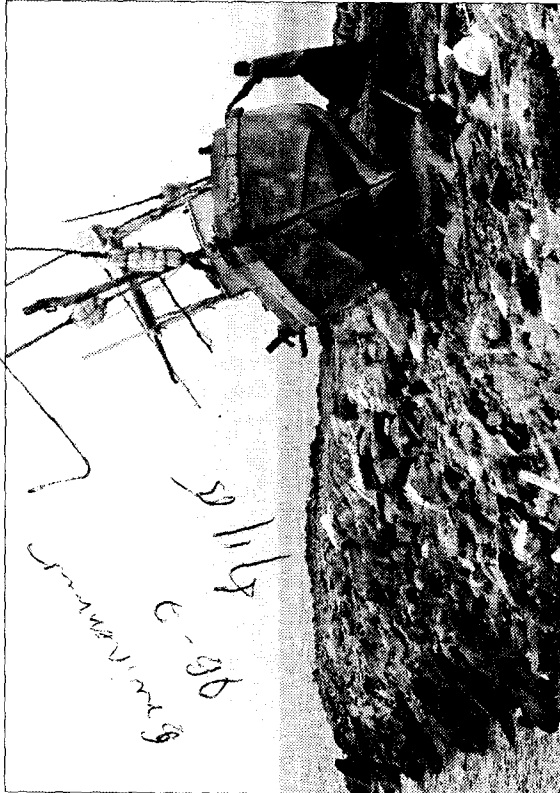
tsunami, none has suffered proportionately more devastation than Sri Lanka, with 30,000 people reported killed out of a population of just 19.5 million. (Indonesia has three times as many dead, but it has more than seven times the population.) Seventy per cent of Sri Lanka's 830-mile coastline was devastated.

For fishermen, hotel keepers and all

NEW YORK TIMES

the others who live and work along the coasts, there is a toll beyond lost lives, homes and livelihoods. There is the new psychological strain of being surrounded by, and dependent on, a force that proved itself so merciless. Subakean Albino, a fisherman, first heard the ocean's calming rhythm when his mother gave birth to him in a beachfront house 70 years ago. Throughout his adult life, he rose at 3 am and paddled out across the sea's inky surface, hoping it would provide.

In Mullativu, his fishing town on the northern coast, home to roughly 5,000 people, Hindus worship the sea as a god-



Rich Flower. "We loved the sea."

The deep familiarity with the sea is one of the reasons many people remain so bewildered by the tsunami. Sellakandu Selvanayagam, a 71-year-old matriarch, said she could sense when the weather shifted and the ocean became dangerous. But she and other longtime coastal residents said they had no inkling that Sunday that a tsunami was approaching. "This time we were taken by surprise," she said.

Selvanayagam was swept away by the first wave and managed to survive by clinging to a mango tree. Her brother and all seven of his children died.

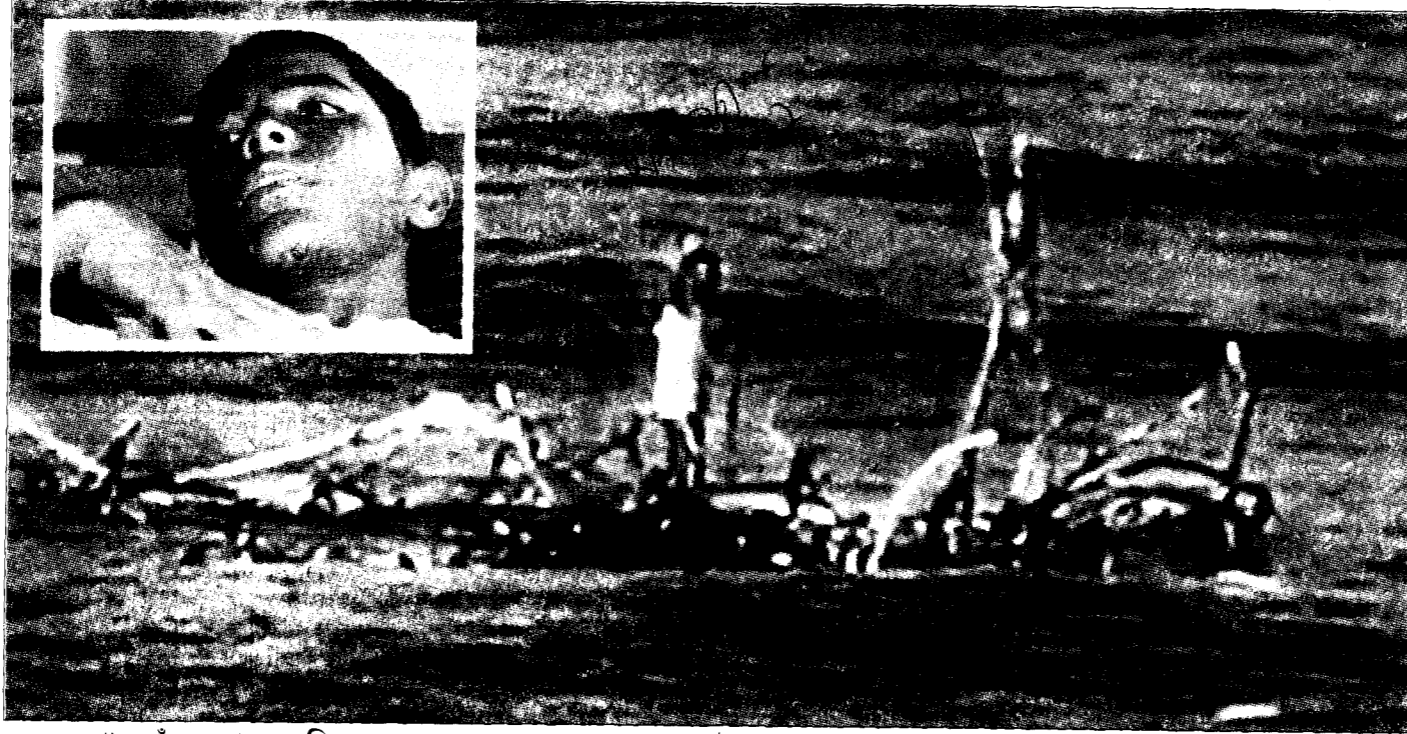
In other parts of the town, entire families were wiped out, with one man losing 25 relatives, according to survivors. On other parts of the coast, whole villages disappeared. In all, 3,000 people are believed to have perished in a matter of minutes in Mullativu and in surrounding villages.

Albino talks of the sea as if it were part person, part god. "We see it as a mother," he said of the force that has been his lifelong companion. "Our mother has punished us."

along the shore, allowing people to create milestones like birth, marriage and death as the surf rolled in. Young people recall frolicking in the waves. "We played in the sea, we bathed in the sea," said Selva Malat, a 23-year-old whose name means

Churches and temples were built to have the power to ward off ship wrecks. Christians like Albino dab sea water on their foreheads and eyelids and pray to the Virgin Mary and St. Anthony, who is believed to provide for her people. Ctriss

ত্রাণের নামে মার্কিন গোয়েন্দাগিরি!



গাছ আঁকড়ে ভাসছেন রিজাল শাহপুত্র। বান্দা আচে থেকে ১০০ মাইল দূরে মাঝ সমুদ্রে। এম ডি ডারবান ব্রিজ জাহাজ থেকে তোলা ছবি। ইনসেটে, কুয়ালালামপুরের কাছে হাসপাতালে চিকিৎসাধীন রিজাল। ছবি: এ এফ পি

গাছ আঁকড়ে ৮ দিন সমুদ্রে দুর্দম তরুণ

কুয়ালালামপুর, ৫ জানুয়ারি (সংবাদসংস্থা)— ধুংসের আট দিন পর ভারত মহাসাগরে জীবিত পাওয়া গেল এক ইন্দোনেশিয়াকে। স্রোতের টানে গাছ ধরে ভেসে গিয়েছিলেন। সেই অবস্থাতেই ৮ দিন ধরে জলে ২৩ বছরের তরুণ রিজাল শাহপুত্র। বান্দা আচের বাসিন্দা। বৃষ্টির জল আর ভাসন্ত নারকেল ভেঙে খেয়ে কাটিয়েছেন। পায়ে কিছু কাটাছড়া ছাড়া শরীরদ্বারা মোটের ওপর ঠিকই আছে। আজ মালয়েশিয়ার রুগ বন্দরে আনা হল তাঁকে। দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা থেকে ফেরার পথে রিজালকে প্রথম দেখতে পান মালয়েশিয়ার এক মালবাহী জাহাজের নাবিক, হুয়াং। তট থেকে জাহাজ তখন প্রায় ১০০ নটিক্যাল মাইল দূরে। জাহাজ দেখে হাত নাড়েন রিজাল। ডেকে যখন তোলা হয় তখন স্বাভাবিক তাঁর দেহের তাপমাত্রা। পরে অবশ্য পরীক্ষার জন্যে হাসপাতালে পাঠানো হয়েছে তাকে। রিজাল জানিয়েছেন, সমুদ্র যখন খেয়ে আসে তখন এলাকার এক মসজিদ সাফসুতরো করছিলেন তিনি। কেউ বেঁচে নেই তাঁর পরিবারের। সবাইকে ভেসে যেতে দেখেছেন। এ কদিন ভাসন্ত অবস্থায় অজস্র মৃতদেহ চোখে পড়েছে তাঁর। খোলা আকাশের নিচে আট দিন ধরে তার ওপর দিয়ে গেছে ঝড়ঝঞ্ঝা, প্রবল বর্ষণ। গত শুক্রবারই প্রলয়ের ৫ দিন পর সমুদ্র থেকে ঠিক এইভাবেই বছর তেইশের এক তরুণীকে উদ্ধার করে মালয়েশিয়ার একটি জেলেজাহাজ। নারকেল গাছ ধরে সমুদ্রে ভেসেছিলেন তিনিও।

নাগপত্তিনমের বাসিন্দারা চান সমুদ্র থেকে দূরে থাক সন্তান

চেন্নাই, ৫ জানুয়ারি (সংবাদ সংস্থা)— যুগযুগান্ত সেক্ষেত্রে বাস ওঁদের। সমুদ্রই জীবন, সমুদ্রই আশ্রয়, রুটিরুটির জোগানদার। দিনযাপনের সঙ্গে অচ্ছেদ্য জড়িয়ে তার জেয়ারশ্রোত, ভাঁটার টান। ঘরের মানুষের মতো চেনা এই সমুদ্র যে এভাবে ছারখার করে দেবে— কোনওদিন ভাবেনি তারা। এখন আর তাকে বিশ্বাস করে না। এ বিশ্বাসহ্রাস্তর কাছে আর তারা থাকতে দেবে না পরের প্রজন্মকে। দূরে সরিয়ে দেবে। তাজ্জাড়ের শিক্ষকদের একটি দল আজ নাগপত্তিনমের গ্রামে গেলে বালবাচ্চা নিয়ে ছুটে এসেছেন হীবর পরিবারের বাপ-মায়েরা। 'নিয়ে যান। এদের সমুদ্রের থাবা থেকে দূরে নিয়ে যান। শুখা ডাঙায় বাঁচুক ওরা। পড়াশোনা শিখুক। বাপ-দাদাদের পেশায় এসে কাজ নেই। এখানে থাকলে সমুদ্র আবার খেয়ে নেবে ওদের। জাল গেছে, ডিঙি গেছে। ওদের মুখে যোগাব কী?' এই আকুতির মুখে অসহায় বিভ্রান্ত উদ্ধারকারীরা বিমূঢ় হয়ে দাঁড়িয়ে থেকেছেন। সন্তানদের সমুদ্রের নাগাল থেকে বাঁচাতে সরকারের অনুদানও ফিরিয়ে দিতে রাজি নাগপত্তিনমের জেলে পরিবার। টাকা চাই না,

বালবাচ্চাগুলোকে নিন। অনাথ বলেই নিন।' চাপের মুখে হিসেব নিতে বসে দেখা গেছে কম করেও ২৮টি পরিবার তাদের সন্তানকে দূরে সরিয়ে দিতে ব্যগ্র। অন্তত ৬০টি শিশু। কে নেবে তাদের? উত্তর খুঁজছেন এন জি ও সদস্যরা। নাগপত্তিনমের দময়ন্তী স্কুলে আশ্রয় দেওয়া হয়েছে নাঞ্চিয়ার নগরের নিরাশ্রয়দের। সারাদিন এই আশ্রয়শিবিরে কী যে করে বাচ্চাগুলো। বইপত্র ভেসে গেছে। উদ্ধারকর্মীদের কাছে হাত জোড় করে দাঁড়াচ্ছে বাপ-মায়েরা। 'আদের এবার একটু লেখাপড়ার ব্যবস্থা করুন। কী ক্ষতি যে হয়ে গেল ছেলেমেয়েগুলোর।' সর্বশ্ব হারানোর পাশাপাশি সন্তানের ভবিষ্যৎ নষ্ট হওয়ার সন্তাপ এখন বড় হয়ে উঠছে। এর ওপর আগামী তিন মাস মাছ ধরা নিষিদ্ধ। রোজগার বন্ধ। নাগপত্তিনম, নাগোর, কাসিমেডু, তিরুভোত্তিয়ুর, এমোর— সব শিবিরেই এক ছবি। নাগপত্তিনমের ১৯,২১৪ জনকে এ পর্যন্ত সাহায্য দিয়েছে সরকার। মোটরবোটের জন্য তিন থেকে সাত লাখ অবধি দিচ্ছে। জেলে ডিঙি কিনতে জয়ললিতা দশ থেকে বিশ হাজার অবধি

এরপর ৬ পাতায়

৩ গুণ দান করল জার্মানি বৃশ প্রশাসনের থেকে বেশি সংগ্রহ বেসরকারি উদ্যোগে

কলম্বো, ওয়াশিংটন, ৫ জানুয়ারি (পি টি আই, এ পি, এ এফ পি)— চরবৃত্তির অভিযোগ ওঠায় শ্রীলঙ্কার পথে রওনা-হওয়া দুই মার্কিন জাহাজ ফিরে গেল। ত্রাণের কাজে সাহায্য করতে বিপুল নৌ-সেনা ও সাজসরঞ্জাম নিয়ে আসছিল জাহাজ দুটি। এল টি টি ই অভিযোগ তোলে, ত্রাণ নয়, রাজনৈতিক মতলবে পাঠানো হয়েছে এদের। টাইগারদের দমন করতে সংগৃহীত তথ্য পরে কাজে লাগানো হবে। তীব্র অভিযোগের মুখে শ্রীলঙ্কা-যাত্রা বাতিল করে সুমাত্রার দিকে ঘুরিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে দুই জাহাজকে। মার্কিন দুতাবাস এই অভিযোগ মানতে নারাজ। তাদের বক্তব্য, শ্রীলঙ্কা সরকার জানিয়েছে যে ত্রাণের কাজে এত সেনা-সাহায্যের তাদের দরকার নেই। ভারতও গোড়া থেকেই বিদেশি সাহায্য সবিনয়ে প্রত্যাখ্যান করেছে। ত্রাণের কাজে বিদেশি সেনা মোতায়েনের বিরোধিতাও করেছে। এল টি টি ই আপত্তি তোলায় ভারতের অবস্থান আরও সুদৃঢ় হল। মার্কিন ও ব্রিটিশ সেনা ত্রাণের নামে ভারতে চরবৃত্তি করতে পারে এমন আশঙ্কা যুক্তির ভিত্তি পেল। তাই সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত সুমাত্রায় পাঠানো হল সেনাদের। উদ্ধারের কাজে সাহায্য করতে ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় ১২০ গোঁর্থা সৈন্যের এক বাহিনী পাঠাতে চেয়েছিল ব্রিটেন। ব্রুনেই দ্বীপে এরা এখন রয়েছে। নেপালি সেনারা প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগের মোকাবিলায় দক্ষ। ইন্দোনেশিয়াও জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, বিদেশি সেনার তাদের কোনও প্রয়োজন নেই। ত্রাণের নামে আমেরিকার বিরুদ্ধে চরবৃত্তির অভিযোগ করেছে ইন্দোনেশিয়ার আচে প্রদেশের উগ্রপন্থী গোষ্ঠীও। এরা পৃথক রাষ্ট্রের দাবিতে আন্দোলন করছে। এদিকে আন্তর্জাতিক ত্রাণ ৩০০ কোটি ডলার ছাড়িয়ে যাবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে। আগামী কাল ইন্দোনেশিয়ার জাকার্তায় ত্রাণ নিয়ে সম্মেলনে ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিং এতে যোগ দিচ্ছেন। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের মহাসচিব কোফি আন্নান, মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব কলিন পাওয়েল, চীন-অস্ট্রেলিয়া-জাপানের প্রধানমন্ত্রীরও উপস্থিত থাকছেন। ব্রিটেনের বিদেশমন্ত্রী জ্যাক স্ট্র, ইউরোপীয় সন্ম, বিশ্ব ব্যাঙ্ক ও আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থার প্রতিনিধিরাও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ এই বৈঠকে হাজির থাকছেন। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ জানিয়েছে, প্রাথমিক বাধা কাটিয়ে দূরবর্তী ও দুর্গম জায়গাগুলিতে ত্রাণ পৌঁছে দেওয়ার কাজ শুরু হয়েছে। ইউনিসেফ সুনামি-কবলিত দেশগুলিতে অনাথ শিশুদের আশ্রয়, শিক্ষা ও চিকিৎসার ভার নিতে চায়। এজন্য বিস্তৃত কর্মসূচি নেওয়া হচ্ছে। এদিকে ত্রাণের অঙ্ক বাড়িয়ে আন্তর্জাতিক নজির গড়তে চাইছে জার্মানি। এখনও পর্যন্ত জাপানই তালিকার শীর্ষে। ৫০ কোটি ডলার দিয়েছে তারা। জার্মানিও ২০ কোটি বাড়িয়ে ৫০ কোটি ডলার দিতে চাইছে। লক্ষণীয়, বৃশ যেখানে সরকারিভাবে ৩৫ কোটি ডলার সাহায্য দিয়েছেন, মার্কিনরা স্বেচ্ছায় তার বেশি দিতে চাইছেন বলে ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে। বেসরকারি ত্রাণ ইতিমধ্যেই ২০ কোটি ডলারে পৌঁছেছে। প্রতি ঘণ্টায় এক লক্ষ ডলার দান আসছে। এঁদের মধ্যে প্রখ্যাত চলচ্চিত্রকার স্টিভেন স্পিলবার্গ যেমন আছেন, তেমনি আছেন অভিনেত্রী সান্দ্রা বুলক। স্পিলবার্গ দিয়েছেন ১৫ লক্ষ ডলার। সান্দ্রা দিয়েছেন ১০ লক্ষ ডলার। '৮০-র দশকে ইথিওপিয়ার মহা-দুর্ভিক্ষে ১৯৯৮ সালে মধ্য আমেরিকায় হারিকেন-ঝড়ও এমনটা ঘটেছিল। সরকারি ত্রাণ ছাড়া গিয়েছিল বেসরকারি দান। দুই প্রাক্তন প্রেসিডেন্ট উদ্যোগী হয়েছেন ত্রাণ সংগ্রহে। বিল ক্লিন্টন এবং জর্জ এইচ ডব্লু বৃশ। বেসরকারি ত্রাণের প্রায় ১০ কোটি ডলার রেডক্রসের হাতে ভুলে দেওয়া হয়েছে। এশীয় দেশের ধনী ভারতীয় গুরুত্ব, অস্ট্রেলিয়ার জেলবন্দীরা বা হংকংয়ের স্কলশিশুরাও পিছিয়ে নেই। মুক্তিযুদ্ধে লিপ্ত ইন্দোনেশীয় বিদ্রোহীরা ত্রাণের কাজে বাধা দিচ্ছে বলে গতকাল অভিযোগ উঠেছিল। তারা এক বিবৃতিতে আজ জানিয়েছেন, এই অভিযোগ সম্পূর্ণ মিথ্যা। দুর্গত মানুষের ত্রাণ ও উদ্ধারকাজে তারা কোনওদিন বাধা দেননি, এখনও দিচ্ছেন না।

Primitive tribes in Andaman escape tsunami

New Delhi
5 JANUARY

HELPED by nature and luck the endangered aborigines of Andaman & Nicobar Islands survived the December 26 tidal fury which wiped away thousands of people in south and South East Asia. The worst-hit islands of Nicobar



and Car Nicobar consists of the Nicobarese who are the largest scheduled tribe in the Union territory, according to an official release.

The Nicobarese, 3,000 of whom are still missing, have taken the brunt of the tsunami most due to its geographical location.

The southern part of Car Nicobar island, inhabited by the Mongolian-origin primitive tribe of Shompen, who were feared to have been hit badly by the tidal waves due to its proximity to Sumatra which was epicentre of the massive earthquake, have now been confirmed safe by-and-large after an aerial survey, the release said.

The tribe, scattered over 17 villages with a total population of 398, managed to survive the tsunami as they had taken shelter in the forests of the biosphere reserves which acted as a shield against the high waves. The Negrito-origin Andamanese, who inhabit the Strait islands in Rangat tehsil, with a population of 43 have been brought to safety to Port Blair and would require rehabilitation, it said. The Jarawas, the most primitive of all the tribes to inhabit the chain of islands and classified as a heritage tribe, have also escaped the worst of the disaster since they live deep into the jungles on high land. —PTI

ASI to set up gene bank of Toto tribe

Jalpaiguri
5 JANUARY

THE Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) is setting up a genetic database of the rare Toto tribe, inhabiting only a small hamlet in Jalpaiguri district. ASI will send out a three-member team of scientists to the area to collect blood samples, a senior district official said on Wednesday.



"The ASI scientists will be coming here soon to collect blood samples as part of the effort to examine and preserve the genes of the tribe for future research. This will help in exactly detecting the breathing-related ailments afflicting the members of the tribe, who work in quarry as labourers," assistant chief medical officer of health (Alipurduar sub-division) Dr Manas Som said.

However, the Totos were not very keen about the project demanding the authorities should first provide them economic sops and give prior intimation about any project, according to a spokesperson of the 1,285-member community living in small Totopara locality close to the Bhutan border. "The government and researchers are treating us like guinea pigs but not interested in solving our socio-economic problems," the Toto spokesperson reiterated. "Most of the Totos are now living below poverty line and have not been provided with viable sources of livelihood by the government, which has done nothing to give them land to cultivate. —PTI

India rides tsunami, shows its sphere of influence

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: India's geo-strategic ambition and importance may have been recognised in one epiphanic instant that occurred in front of a map spread out before three American presidents at the Indian embassy in Washington on Monday.

India's ambassador Ronen Sen was explaining to George Bush, Bush Sr and Bill Clinton how the tsunami raced towards India when there was a pause and a raised eyebrow. The Indian island territory of Andaman and Nicobar was closer to Indonesia than India?

Indeed, Sen explained, the southern most tip of Nicobar Island called Indira Point was almost 1,000 miles from the Indian coast and a mere 60 nautical miles from the epicentre of the earthquake just off the Indonesian coast.

In that pivotal instant, New Delhi may have driven home its strategic range, reach and ambition that for most part has escaped major powers and leaders of the world, including a geographically accomplished president like Bill Clinton.

As major powers of the world summon their financial and military might to help the victims, New Delhi has put its own imprint on the region in the wake of the tragedy.

While some may find talk of geo-strategy repugnant in the face of the disaster, western analysts are following every move by the US and Asian powers in the region. Several commentaries have spoken of which country is outmanoeuvring the other.

For instance, it has been noted that Japan, with a \$500 million aid package, has outshone both the United States (\$350 million), and China, which committed only \$63 million despite its higher military stakes in the region. India has always been sniffy about Chinese presence in the area.

India's aid of \$23 million rushed to Sri Lanka within hours of the disaster has also been noticed, along with the deployment of what is now being seen as the most potent navy in the Indian Ocean. New Delhi has dispatched three

survey ships converted to hospitals-at-sea—one to Nicobar, one to Sri Lanka, and one to Banda Aceh in Indonesia.

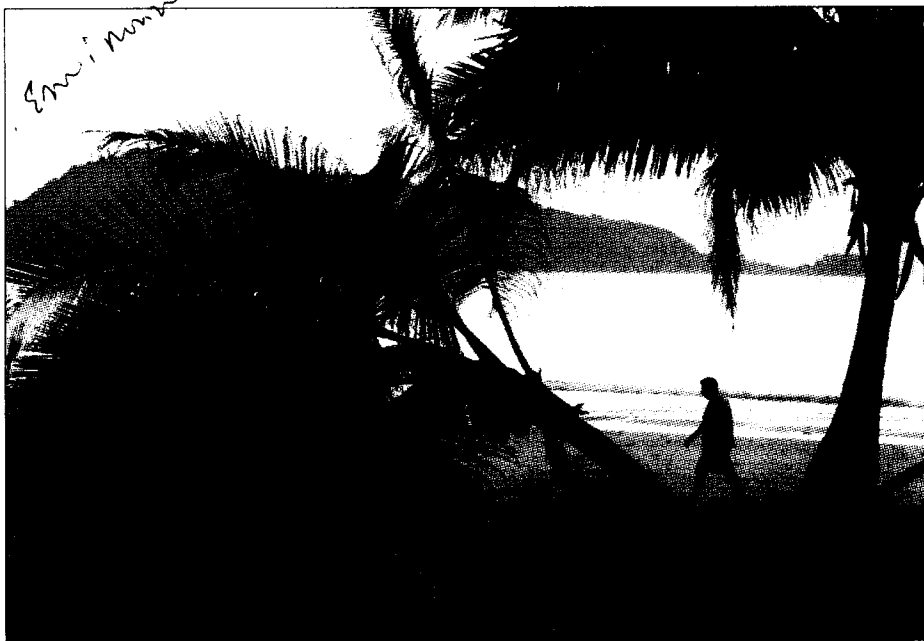
"The reason why India was approached to join the team of core nations was because it is a country with

major capabilities. We have the largest navy in the Indian Ocean," ambassador Sen acknowledged, adding, "There are good reasons why it is called the Indian Ocean...it has always been in the Indian sphere of influence."

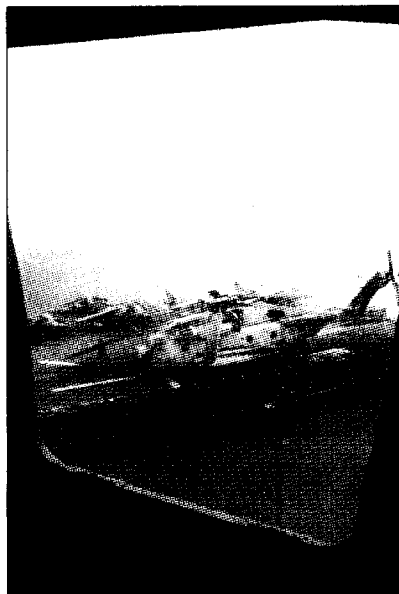
To get a measure of India's territorial expanse, Sen said western experts should try superimposing the map of Europe over that of India. "It is often overlooked, even by Indians, that the distance from Delhi to Dushanbe in Central Asia is less than to many southern Indian cities," he said. "Sad as it is, it took the tsunami to realise India's expanse," Sen said. "Even the British who drew our maps first have no idea of this now."

President Bush, who has repeatedly credited New Delhi India with justifiable global power aspirations despite its myriad problems, virtually affirmed its credentials after his visit to the embassy. He even announced his intention to visit India this year.

"I want to thank the Indian government for taking a lead in this issue. One of the first things that we did was to put together a core group of nations, nations that are capable of organising relief efforts around the region, and the Indian government has been especially strong, as a part of this core group," Bush acknowledged.



A tourist walks past fallen trees on Patong Beach



US Marines delivering relief in Indonesia

HD-1
6/1/05

Disaster management teams set up in the Andamans

Commitment

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 5. Disaster management teams have been constituted in the tsunami-hit Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where relief efforts are concentrated on eight islands.

The teams have representatives of the Departments of Revenue, Agriculture, Public Works, Police, Fishery and Animal Husbandry and Civil Supplies.

Retrieval and burial or cremation of bodies are going on simultaneously. As many as 1,737 Central paramilitary personnel are lending a helping hand in this task as well as the distribution of relief material, according to the Information and Broadcasting Secretary, Navin Chawla.

The islands with a small population — Bamboka, Chowra, Little Nicobar, Pilo Millow, Tilanchang and Trinket in Nicobar — have been completely evacuated. All the affected islands have been provided satellite phones, and a point-to-point communication, including police wireless system, has been established.

Three jetties — one each on Car Nicobar, Nancowry (Kamorta) and Nancowry (Champin) — are fit for operations. The Health Ministry is monitoring the situation round the clock for any outbreak of epidemics. Medical teams, paramedics and medicines have been despatched and 10 trauma specialists have joined them.

3,000 rescued

A 379-strong task force of the Border Security Force (BSF) has been on duty in the tsunami-battered Kachhal island, he says. It has rescued more than 3,000 persons. In the ongoing Operation Seawave in the islands, the Army has deployed four engineer task forces, two rifle companies and a platoon of infantry, four medical detachments and six signal detachments. The Army has evacuated 2,852 persons and cleared 12 km of road.

In Tamil Nadu, four infantry and three engineer columns have evacuated 8,500 persons, treated 3,039 persons, recovered 67 boats and cleared 14.5 km of road.

In Kerala, five Army columns are running nine relief camps and they have evacuated 9,950 persons and treated 4,940 affected persons.

104 aftershocks

Mr. Chawla says that as many as 10 aftershocks ranging from 5 to 7 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the Nicobar region, taking the total number of aftershocks since December 26 to 104. The death toll has risen to 9,675 and the number of missing or those feared killed has gone up to 6,107. As many as 6.38 lakh people in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been moved to safer places. These includes people moved to relief camps. Over the past 10 days, the All India Radio has broadcast 10,000 messages, giving out the numbers of helplines and other messages.

The Power Secretary, R.V. Shahi, says that nearly 40 per cent power supply has been restored in Port Blair but the situation is critical on the worst-hit Car Nicobar islands where 22 out of 27 diesel generating sets accounting for 7 MW of power have been washed away. Six hundred diesel generating sets of two to three kW each are being despatched to Car Nicobar.

The Department of Road Transport and Highways says that five teams of officers have assessed the damage in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It has been reported that about 160 km of national highways and 520 km of State roads have been damaged, besides about 50 structures.

The Union Minister of Communications, Dayanidhi Maran, today reviewed the restoration of communication facilities in the Andamans. In the first phase, BSNL has already energised INMARSAT terminals for establishing point-to-point connectivity and it is now being refurbished for use by the local population. The DoT is focussing on Car Nicobar, Little Andaman and Great Nicobar. Antenna and ancillary equipment of 2 Mb VSAT have been installed on Car Nicobar.

Editorial on Page 10

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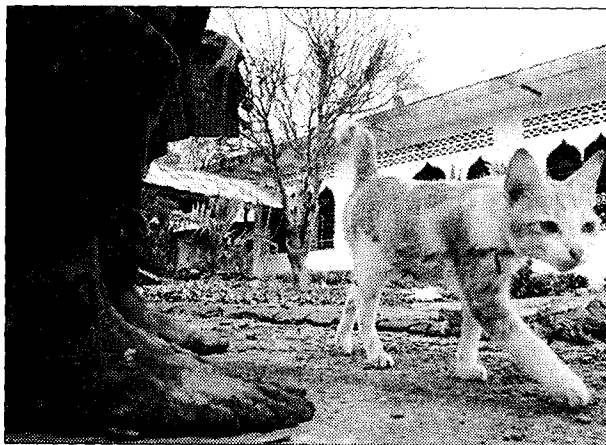
Fear of disease looms over the hungry in Aceh

Banda Aceh (Indonesia), Jan. 4 (Reuters): Hungry and filthy, Indonesians queued for water in their thousands today as aid deliveries to tsunami-ravaged Aceh province hit new snags and cases of disease and infection among survivors emerged.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said cases of pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and skin infections were emerging along with some cases of gangrene because survivors had been exposed to polluted water and not treated carefully enough.

Vijay Nath, a WHO medical officer supervising the emergency response programme in Banda Aceh, said he had a fairly good picture of the health situation in the provincial capital and there had been no confirmed cases of cholera. "But on the west coast, we just don't know what is happening," he said.

Late today, salvage crews dragged a crippled cargo jet off the runway at Banda Aceh. The airport was closed to fixed-wing craft overnight after the chartered Boeing 737



A cat walks past a man searching for his belongings in Banda Aceh. (Reuters)

reportedly hit a water buffalo on landing and damaged its undercarriage. It had been handling round-the-clock flights rushing in disaster relief. Soldiers from the US, Australia, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Germany were unloading the precious cargo.

Parts of Banda Aceh city were deserted, especially the downtown area near the waterfront, where buildings were flattened by the massive De-

cember 26 quake and killer waves. Small fires smouldered in a desperate attempt to burn stacks of debris.

In front of a collapsed shopping mall where food and water were being distributed, at least 1,000 people queued for water from a private aid station set up by businessmen.

Volunteers handed out rice, marking people's fingers with ink that would wash off after a day to allow them to col-

lect more. Residents said that, outside the huge makeshift refugee camps, it was still a struggle to get adequate food and water for their families, many of whom were injured or sick.

"If you don't live in a refugee camp, you have to queue like this. It's very hard for us also out here," Ramzi, 27, said as he queued for water. He said he and 15 relatives were living in a house undamaged by the tsunami. The health ministry said nearly 400,000 people were refugees in Aceh.

In Banda Aceh city earlier, an Australian military water purification station doled out large plastic bags of water. A machine the size of a large truck stood near 11 big black plastic tubes full of water.

"This is probably the most important thing. If they can get clean water, it's going to have a major impact," Australian air force Corporal Peter Clarke said. "People want to shake your hand. They say: 'Bless you mister'. They say: 'Indonesia has problems, but you help us'."

Core group washed away

K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Jan. 4: The core group of India, Japan, Australia and the US, set up to provide Asia-wide tsunami relief is to be disbanded, probably as soon as this week.

US secretary of state Colin Powell said before starting this week's Asian tour of a high-level American delegation that the core group "will go out of business as the UN gets itself geared up".

The shortlived, four-nation arrangement, announced by President George W. Bush on December 29, has been controversial and invited open criticism in Europe and whispered disapproval at the UN.

The most outspoken criticism came from Clare Short, the former British minister for overseas development, whose voice is respected on

matters of aid.

The core group also brought into the open rivalries within Asia, both among the region's powers, on one hand, and between the regional players and the US, on the other.

Yesterday, Powell went out of his way to calm any anxiety in Asia about the way the Americans have become involved in tsunami relief.

He told reporters that "there are sovereign interests here in each of these countries. They are in charge of their relief effort. They are the ones responsible to their people.

"They will be there long after we have gone. And so, we have to make sure that what we are doing is consistent with the desires and the sovereign interests of those nations."

Diplomats here said that by including India in the group, the US showed sensitiv-

ity and prevented any worries that might otherwise have been bred in Delhi over the geopolitics of tsunami aid.

Short said: "I think this initiative for America to set up four countries claiming to coordinate sounds like yet another attempt to undermine the UN."

Powell has been at pains to explain that "the reason we created that core group of nations, it is because those nations are in the region, to include, if I may, the US because of our military presence in that part of the world. And what we needed to do was to make sure we were coordinating our efforts.

"What we have tried to do is use the core group. We called it 'core' as a way of getting started, recognising that it will ultimately be subsumed into the efforts of the UN".

He said that by this week, "the core group will have done its work and the whole international community will be very well coordinated and knitted up".

Powell explained that the core group was formed as no mechanism was in place to coordinate relief efforts.

He admitted that "there has been some controversy about this, but I immediately called (UN secretary-general) Kofi Annan at the same time we established the core group... I called all the foreign ministers of the three countries involved and said, 'Are you in?' All three immediately agreed, and the next morning when I had their agreement, I called Kofi. We had been talking to the UN all along, and Kofi immediately agreed".

■ US in relief sweet talk, P 6

Survey on new Andamans topography

Agencies
Kolkata, January 4

TO CONFIRM if the topography of the Andaman and Nicobar islands has changed after the tsunami caused large-scale devastation on its landmass, a team of surveyors and ocean study experts would undertake a massive survey in the union territory beginning January 10 this year.

The Surveyor-General of India, Dr Prithvis Nag, told on phone from Dehra Dun that the satellite pictures beamed till now had only shown the extent of damage on the settlement areas in the islands but could not pinpoint the exact tilt or shift in landmass.

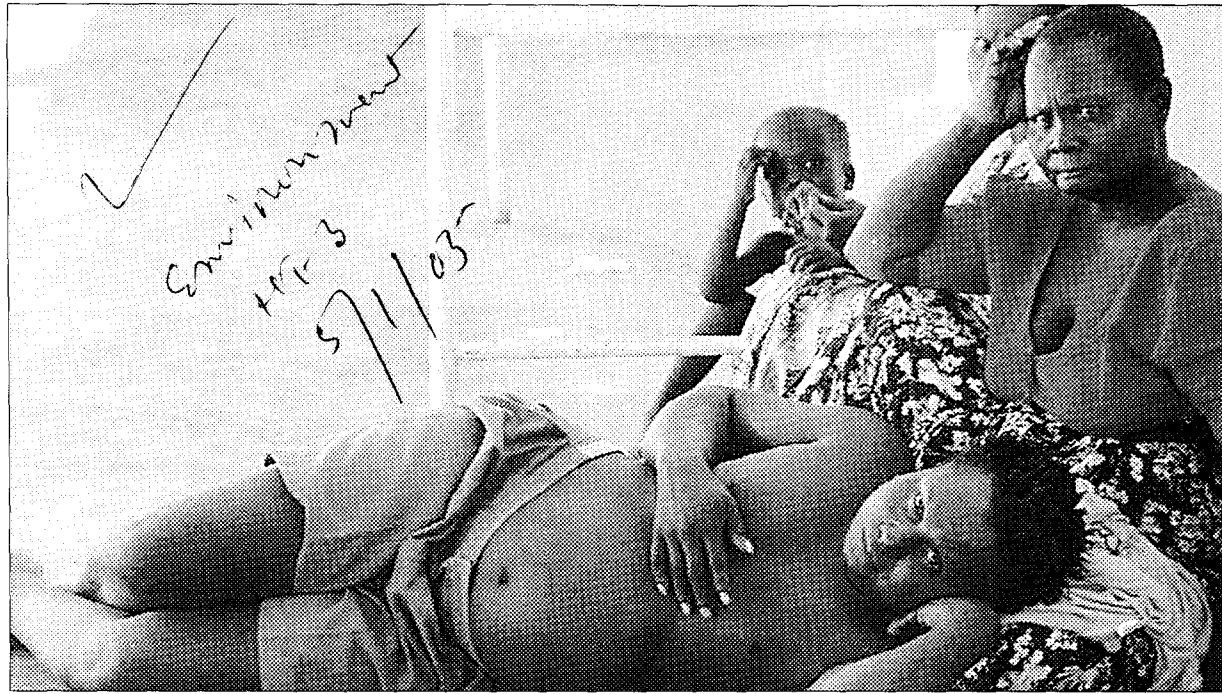
"The satellite images have shown that many habitation areas have been devastated by the tsunami.

"But they cannot reveal the tilt or shift in the topography. That needs in-depth survey and research to be verified," Nag said.

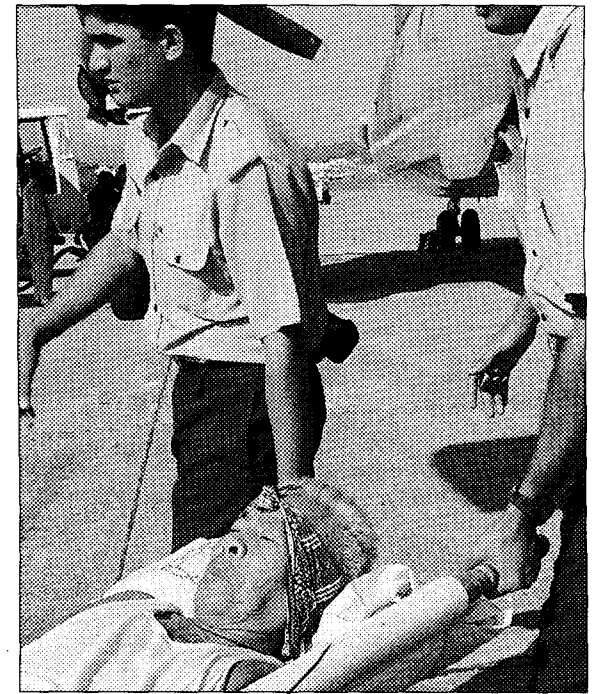
The Survey of India had already sent one scientist to the archipelago to conduct an initial survey and find out accessible points from where to carry out the detailed survey afterwards.

The survey would be based on tracking fresh indices of latitude and longitude and matching them with the existing data compiled on regular intervals by the survey body from 20 control points across the islands, he added.

The eight-member team led by Nag would use a survey ship of the National Hydrography Office of the Indian Navy and work with another team from the National Institute of Oceanography.



SUBHANKAR CHAKRABORTY/HT



PTI

(Left) An Onge family at the G.B. Panth Hospital in Port Blair. Indian Air Force personnel carry an injured tribal to a relief camp in Car Nicobar on Tuesday.

Islanders search for loved ones on All-India Radio

Reuters
Port Blair, January 4

WITH PHONES down, boat links cut and the number of missing people dwarfing the death toll, tsunami survivors on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have only one hope for tracing relatives — the radio.

Airwaves in the remote islands are jammed as hundreds of anxious islanders have flocked to the office of state-run All-India Radio with hand-written questions

about the fate of their loved ones, many of which are still cut off from the world since the December 26 tsunami.

"I am concerned about you, I promise you, I will take the first boat and fetch you," reads a message from schoolboy P. Uday Bhanu to his father who was in the Hut Bay islet, south of the archipelago when disaster struck.

Another went out from a Catholic priest, listing the names of each of his family members on Car Nicobar island, which took

the brunt of the waves, and urging them to somehow get out and reach Port Blair, the island's capital. Nine days after the tsunami, it is still not clear how many people have died on this remote cluster of more than 550 islands, of which only three dozen are inhabited.

Almost all the islands can only be reached by sea, but the giant waves destroyed most jetties, leaving many people stranded.

Rescue teams have so far found 900 bodies in the rubble of build-

ings, in the thick forests and in fissures in the ground.

But 5,700 people are listed as "missing". Officials say they cannot confirm whether the missing are dead until bodies are found or they are accounted for by a village headman or locals who survived the waves.

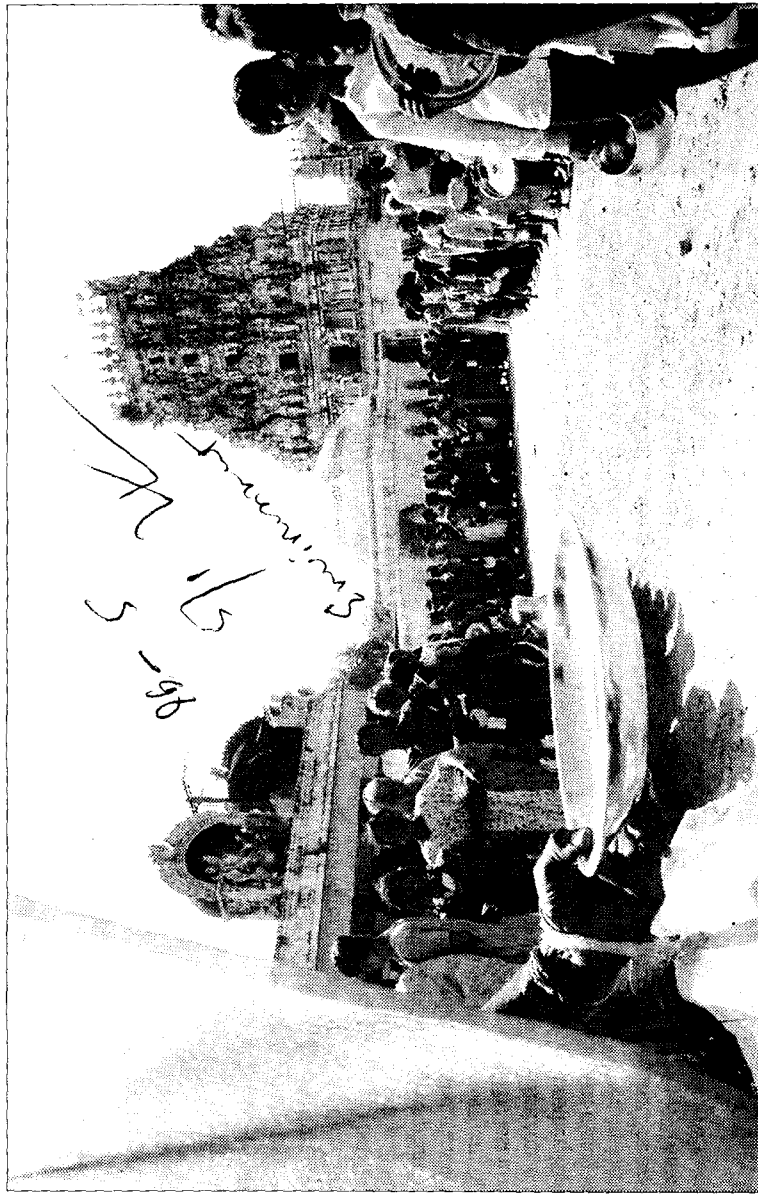
"We have to be sure about these things, how can you say somebody is dead when you cannot land on the island, cannot speak to anyone there," said P. Vaidyanathan, a clerk in the elec-

tricity department. Vaidyanathan came to the radio station to send a message to his nephew on Nancowry island, from whom he has not heard since the tsunami.

There is no way of knowing if Vaidyanathan's nephew will hear his name on the airwaves, and he can't respond.

But there is no stopping the stream of people at the radio station from trying to reach out to their families. Many others call in with messages over the few phone lines that work.

Jaya wants Rs 4,800 crore



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, JANUARY 4

TAMIL Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalithaa today announced another relief package for children who have lost their parents to the tsunami and also asked for Rs 4,800 crore and 54,000 tonnes of foodgrain from the Centre as aid for the victims.

Under the new package, each orphaned child would receive Rs 5 lakh, even if there were other survivors in the family. Unmarried girls would be given Rs 3 lakh. The amount would be kept in

a fixed deposit till the victims complete their education or vocational training, the CM said.

In the memorandum sent to the PM today, she has also sought waiver of all outstanding loans availed by the fishermen from commercial and co-operative banks, waiver of customs duty on import of fishing nets, outboard and inboard motors, and spare parts for mechanised and fibre boats.

According to an official release, the main focus of the memorandum was on the immediate rehabilitation of the tsunami-affected who have lost their homes and source of livelihood.

Detailing the steps taken by the state government since December 26 and the financial requirements, the memorandum says that the state government plans to take special steps to rehabilitate all the displaced persons and work out a special package for those who have lost everything.

Among other things, the memorandum demands Rs 1,000 crore for housing (Rs 250 crore for temporary homes and Rs 750 crore for permanent ones), Rs 709.22 crore for restoration of community assets like roads, midday meal centres and community centres which will provide a "much more suitable environ-

What TN has asked

- Search, rescue & gratuitous relief: Rs 204.95 cr
- Temporary relief: Rs 90.00 cr
- Public Health, epidemic prevention & treatment of injured: Rs 71.45 cr
- Sustenance package: Rs 261.36 cr
- Temporary housing: Rs 250.00 cr
- Permanent housing: Rs 750.00 cr
- Community assets restoration: Rs 709.22 cr
- Rehabilitation of lives of fishermen: Rs 1054 cr
- Restoration of livelihood of others: Rs 130.62 cr
- Sea coast protection, & special plan for Nagapattinam: Rs 449 cr
- Ecology restoration & growing mangroves along the coast: Rs 200 cr
- Infrastructure repair: Rs 628.88 cr

People taking refuge in a temple at Nagapattinam. Mahendra Parikh

ment for the affected families" and Rs. 449 crore for coast protection measures.

In addition, the state government has sought Rs 204.95 crore for rescue and gratuitous relief, Rs 71.45 crore for public health and treatment of the injured, Rs 261.36 crore as sustenance package, Rs 628.88 crore for repairs, construction and restoration of infrastructure and Rs 200 crore for restoration of ecology along the coastline.

In the letter, Jayalithaa states: "Given the nature of this calamity...the normal norms of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) cannot apply and a special package should be developed."



INDIAN EXPRESS

5 JAN 1985

Private US funds for relief

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, January 3

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush on Monday hailed India's strong leadership in tackling the tsunami calamity and promised all-out American help in the mammoth relief and reconstruction operations that lie ahead.

Visiting the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, he also announced that he had requested former presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush Sr. to examine ways to raise private contributions in a big way for the victims of the catastrophe.

Bush was accompanied by the two former presidents and First Lady Laura Bush as he went round the embassies of the four worst-hit nations: Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, besides India.

"We pray for the victims of this terrible disaster and we stand firmly with the people of India as she recovers", Bush wrote in the condolence book at the Indian Embassy. Laura Bush and the two former presidents appended their signatures.

In reply to a question about his visit to India, Bush said that when spoke with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, he had made known his intention to make it to India this year. He did not elaborate further.

Bush praised Prime Minister Singh's leadership in organising global relief for the tsunami victims in India and outside. India, he said, had been a strong

player in the four-nation core group that he formed after the tragedy.

Bush, who had come under intense criticism for the US's slow and initially weak response to the tragedy, has since announced a 10-fold rise in the US's aid pledge to \$ 350 million. He has also dispatched secretary of state Colin Powell and his brother Jeb Bush to the region.

It is only the second time that a US President has visited the Indian Embassy, located on Massachusetts Avenue in a stretch popularly known as the Embassy Row.

While Bush, himself, has indicated a further step-up in aid and relief efforts, some lawmakers say American assistance "could be in



President Bush, right, announces at the White House that he is appointing former presidents George H.W. Bush, left, and Bill Clinton to head efforts to raise money for US relief operations in Asia. AP

billions" eventually.

There is strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill for a massive mobilisation in the coming weeks.

Small groups of lawmakers will be visiting the affected nations to express American solidarity and assure all-out support in relief and reconstruction. A

group, led by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, is leaving this week for Sri Lanka and India.

Although New Delhi is averse to the idea of foreign help in dealing with the disaster, the US lawmakers are keen to do their bit for India and the other affected nations.

Frist, a physician and a member of the "Friends of India" in the Senate, said in an e-mail: "This week, I'm going to India to try to help...It's like 9/11 but

so different...There is a moral imperative for us to act quickly".

"The magnitude of this human tragedy may well define us in the years to come. The world has seen in recent years how tough the US can be. Now, they must see how magnanimous and caring we are as a nation", he said.

Coleman said it was important for American lawmakers to visit the region to find ways for the US

to help with disaster relief.

Global aid for the tsunami disaster has topped \$ 2 billion over the weekend, with Japan pledging \$ 500 million and the US \$ 350 million. UN officials expressed satisfaction with the response made by some 40 countries, including India, and the World Bank.

"It's the biggest outpouring of relief in such a short period of time", said Jan Egeland, the senior UN official in charge of emergency relief. But the task ahead is daunting with five million people at risk of dying of hunger and disease, he said.

ভারসাম্য বদল, অগভীর সমুদ্রে প্রাণীরা বিপন্ন

দেবদূত ঘোষঠাকুর

গভীর জলের পরিবেশ অপরিবর্তিত থাকলেও তটরেখা বরাবর অগভীর সমুদ্রের প্রাকৃতিক ভারসাম্য পুরোপুরি বদলে দিয়েছে সুনামি। ফলে অগভীর জলের বাসিন্দা সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীদের জীবন বিপন্ন হতে পারে বলে শঙ্কা প্রাণিবিজ্ঞানীদের। জলোচ্ছ্বাসের আগেই সহজাত অনুমানে অগভীর জলের বেশির ভাগ প্রাণীই গভীর সমুদ্রে চলে গিয়েছিল। সেখানে সুনামির প্রভাব পড়েনি। কিন্তু সমুদ্র শান্ত হওয়ার পরেও সেই প্রাণীগুলি অগভীর জলে ফিরে পরিবর্তিত পরিবেশে কতটা খাপ খাওয়াতে পারছে, সেই ব্যাপারে সন্দিহান সমুদ্র-বিশেষজ্ঞ জীববিজ্ঞানীরা।

সুনামির পরে সমুদ্র শান্ত হয়েছে ২৬ ডিসেম্বর দুপুরেই। নতুন করে আর কোনও ঢেউ ওঠেনি। সমুদ্রতট তখনই করে দিলেও সামুদ্রিক প্রাণী-জগতের ব্যাপক ক্ষতিসাধন করতে পারেনি সুনামি। প্রাণিবিজ্ঞানীরা বলছেন, জলের কম্পন, তাপমাত্রা ওঠানামার সামান্যতম পরিবর্তনও ধরতে পারে সি-হর্স থেকে

স্তন্যপায়ী শুক্ল পর্যন্ত জলের প্রাণীরা। মানুষ আগাম টের না-পেলে কী হবে, সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীরা কিন্তু ধরতে পেরেছে প্রকৃতির ওই পরিবর্তন। কেউ বুঝেছে মস্তিষ্ক দিয়ে, কেউ শরীরের পার্শ্বরেখার সাহায্যে। আর তাতেই তারা সতর্ক হয়েছে। তটরেখার ধার থেকে সরে এসেছে গভীর সমুদ্রে। কিন্তু যে-সব প্রাণী কোনও অবলম্বনের সঙ্গে আটকে থাকে, তারা ওই সময় সরতে পারেনি। বিজ্ঞানীদের আশঙ্কা, সুনামি তাদের ভাসিয়ে নিয়ে আছড়ে ফেলেছে তটে।

ভূমিকম্প বা সমুদ্রতলের অগ্ন্যুৎপাত জলের চাপ, কম্পন, তাপমাত্রার উপরে প্রভাব ফেলে। প্রভাব ফেলে জলের রাসায়নিক প্রকৃতির উপরেও। আর ওই সব রাসায়নিক কিংবা ভৌতিক পরিবর্তন সরাসরি প্রভাব ফেলে সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীদের উপরে। তাতেই তারা সতর্ক হয়ে যায় বলে জানিয়েছেন কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সমুদ্রবিজ্ঞান বিভাগের বিজ্ঞানী ইউসুফ আলি জমাদার। তাঁর ব্যাখ্যা: “জীবজন্তুদের একটা ষষ্ঠ ইন্দ্রিয় আছে, যা তাদের প্রাকৃতিক যে-কোনও পরিবর্তনকেই বুঝতে শেখায়। এই

অভ্যাসটা ওদের সহজাত। সেটাই ওদের রক্ষাকবচের মতো কাজ করে।”

সুনামির এক সপ্তাহ পরে সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীদের ক্ষয়ক্ষতির ময়না-তদন্ত করতে নেমে জীববিজ্ঞানীরা মনে করছেন, গভীর সমুদ্রে ছোট, বড় নানা আকৃতির যে-সব প্রাণী থাকে, সুনামি তাদের ক্ষতি করতে পারেনি। প্রাণিবিজ্ঞানীদের ব্যাখ্যা, এমনিতেই সুনামির প্রভাব সমুদ্রের তলদেশে পৌঁছয় না, তার উপরে সমুদ্রতলের পরিবেশ ও পারিপার্শ্বিক পরিবেশের পরিবর্তনের ভিত্তিতে নিজেদের গতিবিধি ঠিক করে প্রাণীরা। পরিস্থিতি প্রতিকূল হলে সমুদ্রের এক অংশ থেকে অন্য অংশে তো বটেই, এমনকী তারা প্রয়োজনে এক মহাসাগর থেকে অন্য মহাসাগরে পাড়ি জমায়। পরিবেশ স্থিতিশীল হলে বাসস্থানে ফিরে আসে। সম্ভবত সেই কারণেই অগভীর সমুদ্রের প্রাণীরা ২৬ ডিসেম্বর কিছু ক্ষণের জন্য চলে গিয়েছিল গভীর সাগরে।

কিন্তু এর ব্যতিক্রম আছে। কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাণিবিদ্যা বিভাগের সঙ্গে যুক্ত মৎস্যবিজ্ঞানী সুমিত হোমচৌধুরীর কথায়, “যে-সব

মাছ উপকূলের কাছাকাছি থাকে, বা প্রবালস্তরকে আঁকড়ে থাকে, তারা সাধারণত গভীরে যায় না। তাদের ব্যাপক ক্ষতি হয়েছে বলে মনে হচ্ছে। আর যারা প্রাণ বাঁচাতে গভীরে চলে গিয়ে আবার ফিরে এসেছে, তাদের ক্ষেত্রও প্রাকৃতিক ভারসাম্য অনেকটা নষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে বলে আশঙ্কা করছি।”

জুওলজিক্যাল সার্ভে অব ইন্ডিয়ান প্রাণিবিজ্ঞানী রামপ্রসাদ বর্মনও চিহ্নিত প্রবালের সঙ্গে থাকা মাছ বা অন্যান্য সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীকে নিয়ে। তিনি বলেন, “কিছু মাছ ও অন্যান্য সামুদ্রিক প্রাণী প্রবালকে লুকোনোর জায়গা হিসাবে ব্যবহার করে। কেউ প্রবালের স্তরকে বেছে নেয় খাদ্যসংগ্রহের জন্য। এই স্তর লম্বভঙ্গ হয়ে গেলে প্রবালের উপরে নির্ভরশীল মাছ ও অন্যান্য সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীও নষ্ট হয়ে যাবে।”

বিশেষজ্ঞেরা আর একটি বিষয় নিয়েও চিন্তিত। তটভূমি থেকে জঞ্জাল-সহ দেদার শব্দেহ টেনে এনেছে সমুদ্র। ফলে তটরেখা বরাবর জলও দূষিত হয়ে গিয়েছে। প্রাণীদের উপরে এর কী প্রভাব পড়বে, সে-দিকেও নজর রাখছেন বিজ্ঞানীরা।

Tsunami relief should be led by U.N.

By Siddharth Varadarajan

NEW DELHI, JAN. 2. Stung by criticism that its initial response to the tsunami disaster had been "stingy," the United States has moved swiftly to try and impose its "leadership" over the international relief effort underway.

When the United Nations Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, used the 'S' word last week, Washington's aid package for the region had just been upped from an initial \$15 million to \$35 million. By way of comparison, India, a poor country with more than 10,000 dead of its own to contend with, had immediately pledged \$25 million in aid to Sri Lanka alone.

Even though it made a firm commitment to spend just \$10 million more than India, the U.S. sought a larger profile by floating the idea of a "core group" of countries — consisting of itself, Australia, Japan and India — coordinating the provision of relief in areas worst hit by the disaster. In his weekly radio address, President George W. Bush said on January 1 that the U.S. was "leading an international coalition" to help with rehabilitation, adding, somewhat patronisingly, that India, Japan and Australia have "already pledged to help us coordinate these relief efforts."

Japan had pledged \$500 million and India at least \$25 million; yet credit for the generosity of these two Asian countries was

being attributed to U.S. leadership.

In any event, why such "leadership" was thought necessary when the U.N. had already swung into action in collaboration with the affected governments is a question that has not been answered by the U.S. or any of its 'coalition' allies, including India. New Delhi, which suspected that Washington was seeking to establish its leader-

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ship on the cheap, is anxious the efforts of the "core group" be dovetailed to those of the U.N. Yet it also seems to have been tempted by Washington's offer of a place at a chimerical high table.

In any disaster of this magnitude, it is only the U.N. that can coordinate relief at the macro level while the affected government coordinates the disbursement of relief material and services at the micro level. Thus, there was no need for any "core group" to oversee the Indian Navy's own overseas humanitarian efforts — such as the despatch of hospital ships to Sri Lanka and Banda Aceh in Indonesia.

Once it was clear that establishing a self-appointed core group was not giving it the leadership profile it desired, Washington abruptly increased its aid package to \$350 million. And the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, sought to dispel the im-

pression that Washington was undermining the U.N. relief effort by stressing during a press conference with Kofi Annan on December 31 that the U.S.-led "core group" intended mainly to support the U.N.

Two members of this "core group," Australia and Japan, are Pacific powers that sit on the outer peripheries of Asia and are traditional military allies of the U.S. The Indian landmass, with the exception of the Maldives and Somalia, frames the western limit of the tsunami's destructive path. Between these three corners lies the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean littoral that bore the brunt of last month's natural disaster.

India is not quite a military ally of the U.S. but military exercises involving the two navies and air forces have established a degree of inter-operability that could be useful in disaster relief as well. The U.S. military has had more extensive interaction with the armed forces of Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines but Washington chose instead to link up with India. For this reason, the inclusion of New Delhi in Mr. Bush's "core group" has generated some misplaced excitement amongst a section of foreign policy analysts.

Collaboration between militaries at times of natural disaster is expected even of adversaries, not to speak of close friends like India and the U.S. If there are specific humanitarian projects

that require Indian and U.S. military assets to be operated side by side, no rational person would object. To the extent these joint efforts improve each side's political understanding of the other, they may even generate positive externalities. India, however, needs to be wary about Washington cherry-picking the situations in, and the terms on, which it seeks engagement with New Delhi.

A multinational effort of this magnitude will be effective only when the world body is in charge of coordinating and directing relief. Countries such as the U.S. with considerable military assets in the region should place these at the disposal of the U.N. and deploy the same in close consultation with the governments concerned. That is why the multilateral relief summit called by Indonesia and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) for January 6 is so important and deserves the fullest support of Asian powers such as China and India, even if Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is unable to attend because of the Pravasi Divas conference.

Beyond the seductive pull of a U.S.-led core group are other coalitions and initiatives which India needs to think about — which enhance Asia's own economic and military capacity to respond to natural disasters and humanitarian tragedies. India is a major Asian power and it must lead from the front.

THE HINDU

3 JAN 2005

Emergency declared in Peru

Lima: President Alejandro Toledo declared a 30-day state of emergency in a remote Andean province where a group of nationalist dissidents seized a police station and took officers hostage, demanding his resignation.

"In the supreme decree, we are declaring a state of emergency in the department of Apurimac," Toledo told reporters at the government palace, after cutting short a holiday trip for an urgent cabinet meeting on the situation.

At least seven people were wounded in a shootout during the takeover on Saturday. The dissidents are followers of a retired army major who, along with his brother, seeks to establish a nationalist indigenous movement modelled on the ancient Incan empire.

"This is a military protest and we are willing to lay down our arms and surrender when Toledo resigns from office," Antauro Humala told Radioprogramas radio from the captured police station in Andahuaylas, 440 km southeast of Lima.

A state of emergency suspends basic constitutional rights such as freedom of assembly, permits authorities to enter homes without search warrants, and authorises the President to charge the armed forces with maintaining order.

Prime minister Carlos Ferrero said Humala and fewer than 100 followers, most of them army reservists, seized the police station after the police commander there refused to sell them weapons. AP

Attershocks continue in Andamans

Smiling
11/31/05
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Seven days after an undersea earthquake swept a wave of tragedy across countries in the Indian Ocean, the earth is still rumbling. By Sunday evening, a total of 92 aftershocks had been recorded since the 6.29 am tremblor on December 26. Each of these is 5 or more in magnitude.

From midnight till Sunday evening, there had been five aftershocks, each logging between 5 to 6 in magnitude. Each, said the Met office, was epicentred in the same area as the original earthquake.

Each day brings erratic frequency, hope that the aftershocks are gradually decreasing in magnitude—and fear of another big one.

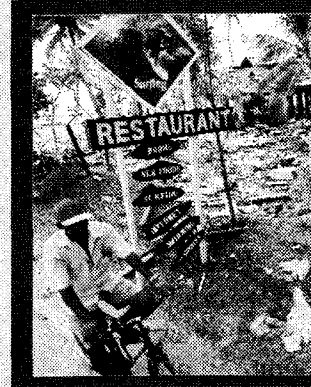
THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 JAN 2005



View from a US
helicopter after a supply
drop at Banda Aceh

Annun to visit Indonesia
UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will go to Indonesia to coordinate aid efforts in the country hardest hit by the tsunami. Global pledges for victims have reached US \$ 2 bn, but the biggest challenge has been getting the aid to the survivors. Annan will go to Jakarta on January 6. "I will go to Jakarta to launch the appeal from there and work with the leaders of the region who are also determined to play a role," Annan told ABC News



Seafood has vanished from Sri Lankan dinner tables with people fearful of eating fish that may have been feeding on corpses washed out to sea by the tsunami, shopkeepers said on Sunday. Fish markets were virtually closed in Colombo, while markets sold only canned tuna, salmon and mackerel imported from South America, said W.S. Dharmawardene, market supervisor

Former Cambodian king Norodom Sihanouk says an astrologer warned him a "cataclysm" would strike, but that his country would be spared if proper rituals were conducted. "My wife and I decided to spend several thousand dollars to organise these ceremonies," he wrote on his website

Choppers to RESCUE

TOMI SOETJIPTO
& DEAN YATES
BANDA ACEH, JANUARY 2

HELICOPTERS dropped aid to clamoring crowds in tsunami-hit Indonesian villages on Sunday but were unable to land, a week after the waves washed away entire towns around the Indian Ocean.

The US and Australian military aircraft were part of a multinational relief effort, with \$2 billion pledged so far, that is battling nightmarish logistical obstacles and torrential rains to deliver aid to millions of the needy.

The UN said it could take two weeks just to reach some tsunami survivors and predicted the death toll from the waves that followed a massive earthquake, now at almost 130,000, would rise to 150,000.

"The carnage is of a scale that defies comprehension," said US President George W. Bush, as an American aircraft carrier arrived off the coast of the worst-hit Indonesian island of Sumatra and Washington sent 1,500 troops to help in Sri Lanka.

The new year brought a surge of cash pledges. Japan vowed half a billion dollars to help and Washington raised its contribution tenfold to \$350 million. The aid drive is vast but cannot be big enough. UN health officials say disease is set to kill maybe 50,000 more people.

Danish Red Cross chief Jorgen Poulsen, in the devastated city of Banda Aceh, said waterborne diseases like dysentery were a ticking "time bomb". "We hope we can avoid cholera. The problem is we have already seen people vomiting in town," he said.

Forty countries lost nationals in addition to the 13 countries hit directly by the tsunami. Indonesia lost over 80,000 people, Sri Lanka nearly 30,000, India 12,700 and the 5,000 killed in Thailand included many tourists.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, calling the cataclysm the "largest disaster we have had to deal with", said reconstruction would probably take five to 10 years. He

planned to visit Indonesia on Thursday and would probably issue a world appeal for more relief from there, officials said.

Water is only just beginning to drain out of parts of Banda Aceh, revealing the full extent of the damage and yet more bodies to count in a nightmarish landscape.

"I've never seen anything like this. We've seen bodies 20 miles out to sea. You just cannot describe it," said Captain Larry Burt, commander of a helicopter air wing on the carrier USS Abraham Lincoln anchored off the Sumatra coast.

Walking the streets of Banda Aceh on Sunday, clean-up crews and exhausted soldiers found it hard to know where to start. Hundreds of decomposing bodies lay in the streets. Fires burned around the clock to clear streets of wooden debris.

It had been another long night, with quake aftershocks again sending panicked residents fleeing into the streets.

World Vision Australia Chief Tim Costello, who visited devastated areas of Sri Lanka, said the scenes he had witnessed were like "the apocalypse". "This is the face of utter, utter human suffering," he said on his return to Australia.

"Everywhere on that coastline people are suffering, people are desperate and begging for food, begging for water."

Sri Lanka says more than 5,000 are missing, most in rebel areas, but the Tamil Tigers put the figure at 18,000.

Relatives and friends flying to Asia in hope of finding loved ones scoured gruesome photographs of corpses on bulletin boards. More than 7,800 foreigners are missing across the region. "Please tell your friends not to come," a tourist policeman urged relatives by loudspeaker at Phuket town hall rescue centre. "The bodies are no longer identifiable." But forensic teams persevered with the task of trying to put names to bloated, rotting bodies.

Amidst the heartache are tales of survival and reunion. Ten tourists from Britain, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands and Switzerland were found alive on tiny Weh island off Aceh. —Reuters



Why, why no American pie?

DAN CHAPMAN
ATLANTA, JANUARY 2

ON MONDAY, the day after tsunamis ran over South Asia, a UN official accused America and other wealthy nations of being "stingy" for the world's poor.

Jan Egeland's comments miffed Bush and other administration officials, who continued to rebut charges of American parsimony. "We're a very generous, kind-hearted nation," Bush said. Are we? No country spends as much on "official development assistance" as the US and Americans give more through private donations to help the world's poor, than any other nation.

On a per-capita basis, though, the world's richest and most powerful nation looks chintzy. Governments in the Netherlands, Denmark and Canada all spend more per capita on humanitarian assistance. Irish, Swiss and Norwegian citizens give more than Americans.

"We don't do enough," said Nigel Purvis, a development expert at the Brookings Institution, who worked for Bush and President Bill Clinton. "We are a large nation and a wealthy nation and we have the capacity to do more per person than a lot of other countries and we don't."

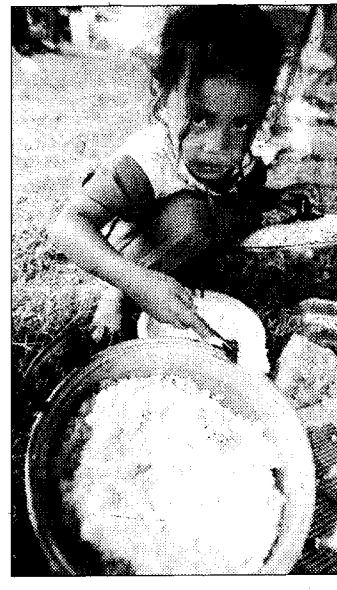
Much of the money set aside for disaster assistance is earmarked for Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2004, the US Agency for International Development (AID) slashed payments to Save the Children, Care USA and other relief groups helping African, Asian and Latin American nations.

Not everyone agrees. Edward Fox, AID's assistant administrator, defends Bush's foreign aid expenditures. "The US is not a charitable organisation where we provide assistance without regard to (its) purpose," he said. "It's part of our foreign policy. Nobody... expects us to take care of the rest of the world."

AID, which distributes the money, has surprisingly little discretion on how it is spent; the White House and Congress set specific targets. Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Colombia, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the UN all get large slices of the foreign aid pie.

And, with the Bush administration's focus on the war on terrorism, aid dollars are increasingly tied to rewarding friends (Pakistan) and isolating enemies.

The OECD, in research echoed by the Congressional Research Service, reports that the US allocates only 14 per cent of its GNP for foreign aid. Of the world's 30 wealthiest countries, America ranks last. The



An Acehese girl scoops rice while staying at a makeshift refugee camp in Banda Aceh, on the northern part of Sumatra on Sunday. Reuters

Dutch government spends \$208 per citizen per year on aid to developing countries. The US spends \$47 per person.

The South Asian crisis will ratchet up foreign giving. The American Red Cross received \$18 million in tsunami-related donations. CARE USA accepted more than \$9 million from the public as of Friday. —NYT

Disaster complicates Bush policy challenges

ROBIN WRIGHT
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 2

OVER the next two months, US President George W. Bush faces a daunting array of challenges around the world — complicated by Asia's tsunami disaster — that will be pivotal in determining how much momentum he can generate for the ambitious agenda of his second term.

The new \$350 million pledge for tsunami relief will eat up virtually the entire US disaster relief budget and the President has said further US contributions will be needed. The administration plans to go to Congress for more money to fund aid for the tsunami and other disasters this year.

Because of the rushing pace of events in West Asia, Russia, Europe and Asia, Bush cannot afford to wait until his inauguration in three weeks to set the tone for the next year. Palestinian polls and Iraq will stretch him throughout January. Bush then heads for Europe next month for a tete-a-tete with Vladimir Putin, with whom White House has had chilly relations because of Iraq and Ukraine. "The Mideast elections and Bush's trips to Europe will set the tone and produce the momentum that will carry us through later in the administration," a senior State Department official said.

The two West Asia elections will heavily influence whether Bush can make headway in the region, first in reviving the moribund Arab-Israeli peace process, and then in stabilising Iraq so the US can begin crafting an exit strategy. —LATWP

BRIEFLY

Floating cushion saves 6-year-old

SINGAPORE: A six-year-old girl survived the killer tidal waves that devastated a southern Thai resort area by clinging to a large floating sofa cushion, *The Sunday Times* reported. Zoe Shiu was playing in the pool of the Sofitel Magic Lagoon resort in Khao Lak, north of Phuket where she was staying with her family last week, it said. The girl is the only one in her family known to have survived the disaster and flew to Singapore on Thursday, where she is staying with an aunt.

Baby found alive

PHUKET: An 18-month-old Kazakh baby has been found apparently unharmed in Thailand's Khao Lak tourist resort in southern Phang-Nga province. The baby, who was discovered floating on a mattress in the sea by an Indian a few days ago, was handed over to the Kazakh ambassador on Saturday evening.

Prisoners surrender

COLOMBO: About 100 Sri Lankan inmates who were released from their cells to escape last week's tsunami have voluntarily surrendered to authorities, while 200 others were still missing, prison officials said on Sunday. The 410 prisoners of the Mataru prison, including hard-core criminals, were set free as the massive waves crashed into the country's southern shores.

Hoaxer's death e-mail

LONDON: A hoaxer pretending to be a British government official has e-mailed relatives and friends of people missing since the tsunami disaster, saying their loved ones have been confirmed dead, police said on Sunday. The hoaxer, claiming to be from the "Foreign Office Bureau" in Thailand, targeted people who had placed appeals for information on the website of TV station Sky News.

Nursery kids gone

KARATIVU: Bob Uppington, a retired teacher, came to this tiny Sri Lankan fishing village to find 40 children. But visiting a local nursery school and refugee camp on Sunday, he found no faces to match the snapshots of the three to four-year-olds he had visited less than a fortnight before the disaster. —Agencies

When tuskers cried and saved tourists

REUTERS
KHAO LAK, THAILAND, JANUARY 2

AGITATED elephants felt the tsunami coming, and their sensitivity saved about a dozen foreign tourists from the fate of thousands killed by the giant waves.

"I was surprised because the elephants had never cried before," mahout Dang Salangam said on Sunday on Khao Lak beach.

The elephants started trumpeting — in a way, Dang, 36, and his wife Kulada, 24, said could only be described as crying — at first light, about the time an earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale cracked open the seabed off Indonesia's Sumatra island.

The elephants soon calmed down. But they started wailing again about an hour later and this time, they could not be comforted despite their mahouts' attempts at reassurance.

"The elephants didn't believe the mahouts. They just kept running for the hill," said Wit Aniwat, 24, who collects the money from tourists and helps them on to the back of elephants from a sturdy



An elephant carries the body of a tsunami victim past wrecked homes after discovering it in Takuapa district, Thailand. Reuters

wooden platform.

Those with tourists aboard headed for the jungle-clad hill behind the resort beach where at least 3,800 people, more than half of them foreigners, would soon be killed. The elephants that were not working broke their hefty chains.

"Then, we saw the big wave

coming and we started running," said Wit. Around a dozen tourists were also running towards the hill from the Khao Lak Merlin Resort, one of a line of hotels strung along the 10 km beach, especially popular with Scandinavians and Germans.

"The mahouts managed to turn

the elephants to lift the tourists on to their backs," said Kulada.

She used her hands to describe how the huge beasts used their trunks to pluck the foreigners from the ground and deposit them on their backs.

The elephants charged up the hill through the jungle, then stopped.

The tsunami drove up to 1 km in shore from the gently sloping beach which had been so safe for children it made Khao Lak an ideal place for a family holiday. But it stopped short of where the elephants stood.

On Sunday, the elephants were back at work giving rides to the tourists on whom the area depends.

German Ewald Heeg, who said he came from a small town near Frankfurt, said his charter company had offered his family — wife, two daughters and one of their boyfriends — the chance to go straight home, but he had turned it down.

"Our family is OK, so we stay here to make our holiday," he said.

"Today, we make a safari. We go by elephants at first, then, we make about trip."

Lankan cricketers to pitch in

TREVOR CHESTERFIELD
COLOMBO, JANUARY 2

SRI LANKA Cricket are to unveil plans on Monday that will see the island's senior sporting body become pro-actively involved in tsunami relief programmes. Already international players as well as SLC officials have expressed the desire to play a role as part of the recovery and rebuilding process. Players' involvement in a series of charity matches is expected and one game suggested is that involving the 1996 World Cup winning side. Just who would be their opponents at this stage is uncertain. Whether the team can be reassembled in such a short time is another matter.

The SLC have already outlined to the media plans to establish three major relief centres designed to assist the displaced as a result of the tsunami that has cost the country almost 30,000 lives, that include tourists. It has left any number of widows and orphans. One centre is in the southeast port of Mataru, seriously ravaged by the tidal wave.

Other camp centres are in Dambulla and Badulla and are de-

signed to help with some of the displaced. As it is there are 798 camps established for the thousands displaced by the tsunami that was caused by the major earthquake, measuring 9.0 in the Richter scale.

In a statement already released, SLC said that "as a social responsible organisation Sri Lanka Cricket in this hour of grief, have come forward to ease the burden of the community affected by this disaster".

Food, medicine, clothing and other basic items are to be provided for the affected families.

Former SLC president Thilanga Sumathipala has been made chairman of a disaster assistance committee has already held meetings with responsible SLC officials, including outstation organisers. The players just back from their aborted tour of New Zealand are expected to endorse the programme on Monday.

In a statement released today,

Sumathipala said that the "SLC appreciated the whole-hearted efforts taken by the International Cricket Council, in supporting its efforts to assist the people affected by the tsunami disaster. I wish to thank the International Cricket Council and the Asian Cricket Council for responding immediately to my request on behalf of Sri Lanka Cricket," he said. "With the devastation of human lives and properties being affected, Sri Lanka Cricket in this hour of grief has come forward to ease the burden of all those victims affected by this disaster. We (SLC) in our plan to rebuild the devastated areas, appeal to the public as well as the cricket loving people throughout the world to contribute towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Sri Lanka and other affected countries in the region."

"Further, I take this opportunity to thank the cricketing authorities and the cricketers of the world for agreeing to organise and play two matches to raise funds for the tsunami victims," he added. A fund has also been established and further Information Hot Line Number: 0094 (0) 11 4512173

TOLL
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Delhi unlikely to seek foreign aid

Saroj Nagi
New Delhi, January 2

INDIA'S DECISION not to accept as yet any international aid to deal with last week's tsunami tragedy appears to be in keeping with its role as a benefactor in the South Asian region.

Though the Centre hasn't completely ruled out taking such assistance if required, but it is unlikely to do so. The international community has already pledged \$1.2 billion aid to tsunami-hit nations.

For one, India cannot be seen to be accepting assistance after it has stepped out to do its duty by providing relief to its smaller neighbours.

The Indian government has, for instance, dispatched seven naval ships to Sri Lanka itself besides sending supplies to Indonesia, Maldives and other countries. It has already committed Rs 100 crore to Sri Lanka.

"It would be incongruous for India to give aid to her tsunami-struck neighbours while taking assistance herself," argued well placed sources in the centre.

Analysts also see a political element in the move. With her sheer size and level of resources India dominates the region, her growing economy only adding to the stature it first acquired when it played a leading role in the non-aligned movement during the Cold War era.

A nuclear India is now looking for a new role in the comity of nations by seeking a permanent seat in the UN Security Council along with veto power. "Given that, you really cannot put yourself at the same level as Maldives," said a source.

Low-key celebrations: This year's Republic Day will be observed as scheduled, though on a low key.

Union defence minister Pranab Mukherjee told Hindustan Times that the Republic Day will be observed as usual on January 26. "We will go ahead with the preparations done so far."

Sections in the government are reported to have pitched for the cancellation of the annual fixture in view of the heavy loss of life and property in the killer tsunami.

However, the majority view appears to be to carry on with the fixture with less fanfare. The proponents of the latter view feel that the parade is more in the nature of "observing the Day that coincides with the promulgation of India's Republican Constitution on January 26, 1952. Since the preparations commence months in advance, a last minute cancellation of the parade may not even be financially wise."

US senators want to do their bit for India

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, January 2

INDIA MAY be averse to the idea of foreign help in dealing with the tsunami disaster, but a group of US lawmakers, led by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, plans to visit the country later this week.

Frist, a physician and a member of the "Friends of India" in the Senate, said in an e-mail to his supporters: "This week, I'm going to India to try to help... It's like 9/11 but so different. There is a moral imperative for us to act quickly".

The bipartisan group, which will include Norm Coleman and a few other Senators, plans to visit Sri Lanka and India, beginning January 6. Details of the composition of the team and itinerary are being finalised. Coleman said it was important for American lawmakers to visit the region to find ways for the US to help with disaster relief.

The travel plan is part of a series of moves aimed at erasing the impression that the US was slow and weak in its initial response to the tragedy. President George W. Bush has already raised the US aid 10-fold to \$ 350 million and dispatched secretary of state Colin Powell and brother Jeb Bush to the region.

Global aid for the tsunami disaster has topped \$ 2 billion, with Japan overtaking the US by pledging \$ 500 million. UN expressed satisfaction with the response made by some 40 countries, including India, and the World Bank. "It's the biggest outpouring of relief in such a short period of time", said Jan Egeland, an UN official in charge of emergency relief.

In the proposed scheme of things, the Republic Day parade may be scaled down by doing away with several state tableaux and cultural presentations.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is expected to convene an All Party meeting on tsunami next week, is expected to take up the issue with political leaders for a consensus resolution.



Ravaged
NAGAPATTINAM
SUNDAY

After the disaster, Kerala's green drive

MANOJ K. DAS
KOCHI, JANUARY 2

THIS may sound like locking the stable after the horses have bolted. In a typical knee-jerk reaction, the state government has decided to float a Rs 35-crore project aimed at insulating Kerala coasts against tidal surges with mangroves and castanea.

The sudden move to adopt an eco-strategy stems from the fact that the tsunami attack left smaller scars on coasts with a green buffer than other barren beaches and sea-facing landscapes. The government is mooted heavy incentives for institutions who adopt a shoreline and give it a protective belt.

The project has been already cleared by Forest Minister K.P. Viswanathan. Sources said the government was adopting a comprehensive strategy. "It is basically aimed at disaster mitigation. The tragedy has taught a lesson that better forest cover will minimise the impact in the eventuality of a natural catastrophe. We're now engaged in identifying species best suited for Kerala coasts," said C V Anand Bose, Forest Secretary.

The government has approached the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, among others for preparing a list of species that will protect land area from landslides, frequent flooding and other calamities.

There is also a move for commercial planting of trees. "We've already entered into an agreement with the Hindustan Newsprint Limited. They'll undertake planting of pulpwood. Together, this approach would help improve green cover over Kerala," Bose said.

Between Nagapattinam and Akkaraipettai, over 700 boats hurled ashore

JANYALA SREENIVAS
AKKARAIPETTAI, JANUARY 2

DAYS after Black Sunday, the tide may have turned, but it has left behind a grim reminder. The coastal road linking Nagapattinam and Akkaraipettai resembles a huge parking lot — it's boats that are parked here, on the roadside, on concrete houses and on top of each other.

Fishermen here don't know how to rebuild their life when their boats are lying on roads near the beach or are wedged between houses. The unusual predicament has government officials at sea.

In Akkaraipettai, 7 km from Nagapattinam, bulldozers, trucks and fire engines are jostling for space between boats that have been pushed on to the road by the tsunami.

"The priority is to restore the livelihood of fishermen. Without boats, they can't earn a living and will be dependent on help. We don't know how these boats can be salvaged," says group leader S. Nagaraj, also a fisherman. Between Nagapattinam and Akkaraipettai, some 700 boats were thrown ashore.

As dazed fishermen look at their boats and wonder how they got there, officials are wondering how to get them off the streets and into the water.

Fishing is the chief source of livelihood in Nagapattinam district. Tamil Nadu Fisheries officials say the turnover in the district alone is between Rs 80 crore and Rs 100 crore every year. Approximately 80,000 tonnes of fish are harvested by the district's fishermen annually and the industry provides employment to nearly 5 lakh people.

No wonder officials are a



Boats on the roads, OFFICIALS AT SEA

worried lot. "With great difficulty, we moved two boats off the road using heavy-duty cranes, that's how we managed to make way for fire engines and ambulances. But we still don't know if they can be pushed back to the sea," says Vijay Kumar, senior fire officer, Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Service.

The Madras Engineering Group, Bangalore, of the Indian Army which moved in on Thursday to clear the area is also clueless when it comes to the boats. "It is going to be a tough task. We are concentrating on clearing the road so that vehicles can move, right now, we're not thinking about how they

can be moved to the sea," an official said.

District Collector M. Veerashanmukhamoni says the administration is working on "a plan to rehabilitate fishermen." "But we are still working out what to do. It's a triple whammy for these fishermen — they've lost their families, homes and boats, the source of livelihood," he says.

Each boat costs anywhere between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 15 lakh and many fishermen are already heavily in debt. They have taken loans from banks as well as moneylenders. "If the boats cannot be salvaged, we don't know what we will do," says Sundaram, a fish-

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the ghost VILLAGE

KOLAPPAN
GERCOIL, JANUARY 2

BARRING a few damaged houses and a church, there is nothing to suggest there was a village here. Even from a distance, you can have a clear view of the sea — none of the houses that stood on the shores is standing.

With the destruction of as many as 454 houses and around 300 deaths, Kottilpadu, a fishing hamlet near Colachel, in Kanyakumari district is deserted now. In Singarayan Colony, not a single house escaped the waves; all survivors live in a relief camp while rescue workers are clearing the debris.

"I have lost everything. My mother is dead, but I am yet to see her body. My house has been destroyed. I lost my boats and nets. What I am now wearing is what was given by NGOs. I have to start my life from scratch," says Edwin Chelladurai, a youth from the village.

Sitting on mountains of used cloths on the campus of the marriage hall where they have been accommodated, the villagers are furious about the attitude of the government machinery towards their village.

"The government and the media always talk about Colachel and treat us as a part of that area. But Colachel is insignificant compared to the loss of lives and damages witnessed by our village. Only today, we received the Rs 4,500 from the government. Till now, everything had gone only to Colachel," said Antony, standing on the debris of his house. Antony, who had been working in Bahrain for some time and hence is comparatively well off,

is now on the streets.

Officials at the district headquarters, however, explained that they did not have separate details about the damage caused to Kottilpadu.

The residents of Kottilpadu were initially accommodated in a school along with the fishermen from Colachel. But when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Colachel, they staged a road roko and were promptly shifted to the marriage hall where they now are.

Unlike many other fishermen hamlets, Kottilpadu is rel-

With destruction of 454 houses and around 300 deaths, Kottilpadu, a fishing hamlet near Colachel, in Kanyakumari is deserted now

atively poor. There were very few big houses here, some of which have survived. But all other structures disappeared in a flash when tsunami struck.

"My house was near the sea. The day the waves turned our life upside down, I asked my daughter Mary to clean the utensils and keep them inside the house. She went into the house and the waves buried her inside. Even the sewing machine which helped me in generating a meagre income is gone," says Pushparani.

"Where to begin is the question? First, we need a place to stay. Secondly, we have to repair our catamarans and boats. We need money. Everytime I see the remains of my house, I wish I too had been killed," says Iruthayaraj.

BRIEFLY

Karnataka's to give Rs 25 crore

■ BANGALORE: Karnataka Chief Minister Dharam Singh will hand over a cheque of Rs 25 crore to PM Manmohan Singh on Tuesday towards the PM Relief Fund to assist the tsunami victims. The state also handed over a cheque of Rs 2 crore to the Tamil Nadu government as a "token" contribution.

Air Chief to visit

■ NEW DELHI: S.P. Tyagi, who took over as the new air chief last week, will tour tsunami-hit areas in Andaman and Nicobar islands on January 4 and 5 to review the massive relief operations. Former Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy, from whom Tyagi assumed charge of the top job, had visited the island territories on December 27.

Army, IAF chip in

■ NEW DELHI: The Army on Sunday moved heavy ferries to Thiruvananthapuram for deployment at two locations even as round-the-clock sorties were made by the Indian Air Force (IAF) to provide relief to the tsunami-affected people in the country as well as the neighbouring nations.

Air strip operational

■ NEW DELHI: The armed forces have succeeded in making the air-strip at Campbell Bay operational for landing of IAF aircraft. IL-76 and AN-32 planes, containing relief material are landing on the 3,000 metre air strip, said Admiral Raman Puri, heading the Control Room in the Defence Ministry.

Vivek Oberoi prays

■ CUDDALORE: Joining relief efforts in the tsunami-hit areas, Bollywood star Vivek Oberoi participated in a prayer meet at Cuddalore on Saturday and expressed his desire to adopt the district, battered by the ravaging waves. The actor offered to rebuild houses, repair damaged boats and buy fishing nets.

More help pours in

■ RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh would adopt two villages in Tamil Nadu, devastated by the tsunami, for reconstruction and rehabilitation, CM Raman Singh said on Sunday.

Maharashtra's effort

■ KOPARGAON: Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh said on Sunday that his government would provide economic assistance to Pondicherry and that one of its ministers had arrived in the area to assess damage.

Prisoners donate

■ HYDERABAD: The prisoners in Rajahmundry central jail in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday donated over Rs 36,000 to the Chief Minister's relief fund for relief and rehabilitation of the tsunami affected. About 1,700 prisoners decided to give up non-vegetarian food, and donate the amount saved.

IIT Roorkee aid

■ NEW DELHI: The IIT Roorkee Alumni Association on Sunday donated Rs 1 lakh to Lieutenant Governor of Delhi B.L. Joshi for survivors of the tsunami disaster. —PTI

সুনামির আঘাতে চূর্ণ আন্দামানের প্রবাল-স্তর

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, পোর্ট ব্লেয়ার, ২ জানুয়ারি: সমুদ্রের ঢেউ ছ'তলা বাড়ির সমান উঁচু হয়ে সব ভাসিয়ে দিয়ে ফিরে গিয়েছে। এখন আয়নার মতো শান্ত আন্দামানের সমুদ্র। কিন্তু সুনামির জেরে সমুদ্রের তলদেশ কতটা উথালপাথাল হয়েছে, তা এখনও বিজ্ঞানীদের অজানা। তবে একটা ব্যাপারে তাঁরা অনেকটাই নিশ্চিত যে, আন্দামান সাগরের গর্ভ প্রবালের স্তর ওই তাগুবে ভেঙ্গে গিয়েছে খড়কুটোর মতো।

পরিস্থিতি খানিকটা স্বাভাবিক হলেই সাগরতলে ডুবুরি নামিয়ে পরিস্থিতি অনুধাবন করতে চান জীববিজ্ঞানীরা। সেই সমীক্ষার কাজ শেষ না-হওয়া পর্যন্ত পর্যটকদের কাছ থেকে তাঁরা আড়ালেই রাখতে চান আন্দামানের অন্যতম আকর্ষণ ওই প্রবালস্তরকে। সুনামি-কাণ্ডের পরে পর্যটকদের আনাগোনা কমে যাওয়ার সম্ভাবনা সত্ত্বেও আন্দামান প্রশাসনের কাছে জুলজিক্যাল সার্ভে অব ইন্ডিয়া (জেড এস আই)-র বিশেষজ্ঞদের আর্জি, এই মুহূর্তে প্রবালগুলি তাদের উপরে নেমে আসা প্রচণ্ড আঘাত সামলাতে ব্যস্ত। তাঁরা চান না, তাদের কোনও ক্ষতি হোক। তাই আপাতত প্রবাল দেখা থেকে বিরত রাখা হোক পর্যটকদের।

পোর্ট ব্লেয়ারের জেড এস আই-এর যুগ্ম অধিকর্তা ডি কে শাস্ত্রী বলেন, “প্রবাল বাড়ে গাছের পাতা ছিড়ে খড়কুটোর মতো ভেঙ্গে যায়। সবুজ কচি পাতা মুহূর্তে পরিণত হয় জঞ্জালে। সেই ভাবেই সমুদ্রের জলকম্পে ছিন্নবিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে যেতে পারে প্রবাল। বিশেষ করে অপেক্ষাকৃত নরম, প্রস্তরীভূত নয় এমন প্রবাল।” ওই বিজ্ঞানীর অভিব্যক্তিই বলে দেয়, তিনি কতটা বেদনহত। শাস্ত্রী বলেন, “আজ যা সুন্দর অনির্বচনীয় প্রবাল, সমুদ্রের জলে তা জঞ্জালের মতোই ভেঙ্গে যেতে পারে।

বহু জায়গায় সাগরজলে তট ডুবেছে। প্রশাসন ত্রাণের কাজ সামলে উঠলেই আমরা সমীক্ষকদল পাঠাব। বিজ্ঞানীরা দেখবেন, কোথায় কী অবস্থা হয়েছে।”

প্রবালস্তর কেমন আছে, তা জানতে তাঁরা সমুদ্রের জলে ডুবুরি নামাবেন বলে জানিয়েছেন শাস্ত্রী। তিনি বলেন, জেড এস আই-এর প্রশিক্ষিত ডুবুরিরা সাগরে ডুবে দেখে আসবেন, অতল জলের গভীরে পরিস্থিতিটা এখন কী। প্রকৃতির অবস্থা এখনও বেসামাল। এই অবস্থায় ডুবুরি নামালে সমস্যা হবে। তিনি বিশেষ ভাবে



চিন্তিত তটরেখা জলের তলায় চলে যাওয়ায়। এটা প্রকৃতির ভারসাম্যও নষ্ট করে দিতে পারে।

এই সময় মা কচ্ছপেরা দল বেঁধে ডিম পাড়তে আসে তটরেখায়। ডিম পেড়ে তারা ফিরে যায় সমুদ্রে। ডিম ফুটে বেরোনো বাচ্চারাও সমুদ্রে চলে যায়। পরে শিশুরা যখন ফেরে, তখন তারা পরিপূর্ণ। যেখানে মা এসে ডিম পেড়েছিল, সেই জায়গা খুঁজে তারাও সেখানে ডিম পাড়ে। এভাবেই চলতে থাকে বংশবিস্তার। শাস্ত্রীর মতো পোড়খাওয়া বিজ্ঞানীও বলে ওঠেন, “কী অদ্ভুত! এটা একটা বিস্ময়। এদের কী অদ্ভুত ব্যবহার! কঠিন কাজও বটে।” বিজ্ঞানীদের

আশঙ্কা সুনামিতে তটরেখা ডুবে যাওয়ায় দিশাহারা হয়ে পড়বে ওই জীবগুলি। তাঁদের প্রশ্ন, ২০ বছর পরে তারা কি আর তাদের জায়গা চিনতে পারবে?

কী ভাবে এই পরিস্থিতির মোকাবিলা করা যায়, তা ভেবে বিশেষজ্ঞেরাও দিশাহারা। কৌশল নির্ধারণের চেষ্টা চলছে। তবে বিস্তর টাকা লাগবে পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখতে। প্রয়োজন অত্যাধুনিক যন্ত্রপাতিরও। শাস্ত্রী ও তাঁর দলবল সময় চেয়েছেন আন্দামানের লেফটেন্যান্ট গভর্নর ও মুখ্যসচিবের কাছে। প্রাণীদের ত্রাণে প্রশাসনের নজর ফেরাতে।

WEEK AFTER, HOPE FOR SURVIVORS FADES

World leaders gather for emergency summit

The Straits Times/ANN

SINGAPORE, Jan. 2. — Almost a dozen world leaders have confirmed they will be in Jakarta this week for an emergency summit to discuss responses to the tsunami disaster.

China was the latest to announce that Premier Wen Jiabao would be in Jakarta for Thursday's summit. Singapore officials said Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, President Gloria Arroyo of the Philippines, and Prime Ministers Mr Mahinda Rajapakse of Sri Lanka, Mr Hun Sen of Cambodia, Mr Lee Hae-chan of South Korea and Ms Helen Clark of New Zealand would attend.

PMs Mr Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore, Mr Junichiro Koizumi of Japan, Mr John Howard of Australia and Mr Bounnhang Vorachith of Laos had confirmed going earlier. Singapore officials said UN Secretary General Dr Kofi Annan and European Commission president Mr Jose Manuel Barroso will also attend. Thai PM Mr Thaksin Shinawatra said he had to wait and see if he could be in Jakarta.

The conference is being held after Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong proposed last week that Asean help convene a meeting to discuss immediate relief and long-term reconstruction efforts.

A suggestion expected to be tabled is for a tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean, similar to that in the Pacific Ocean.

Singapore yesterday also extended to the UN and other relief agencies the use of its air and naval facilities as staging posts



Refugees swarm a US Navy helicopter as it drops water in Teunom, Sumatra, on Sunday. The multinational operation to save more than one million Indonesian tsunami survivors got into full swing on Sunday. — AFP

Banda Aceh rises from disaster

The Jakarta Post/ANN

BANDA ACEH, Jan. 2. — As President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited the ravaged west coast Aceh town of Meulaboh yesterday, life in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh slowly returned to normal with the start of trading activities in its traditional markets.

Gen. Susilo went to Meulaboh, one of a few cities that remained isolated from the outside world, to ensure that aid would continue pouring into the tsunami-hit region despite a myriad of problems in distribution.

He ordered the military to accelerate aid distribution across Aceh. "Immediately channel this aid. Logistical assistance must not be severed," he told soldiers deployed for the relief effort.

The President was in Meulaboh for a

few hours, visiting refugees at the office of the local regent and touring the town to get a glimpse of ground zero.

The government has estimated that only 25 per cent of buildings in Meulaboh, which lies close to the epicentre of Sunday's 9.0 magnitude quake that generated the tsunami, are still standing.

Gen. Susilo had visited Banda Aceh and Lhokseumawe on Monday after celebrating Christmas with victims of an earlier quake in Nabire, Papua. In Banda Aceh, six days after the tidal wave swept across the coastal city, one of the largest traditional markets, Lambaro, started to breathe new life into the town as vendors opened their stalls, offering the most accessible goods to customers. "Although the tidal waves ruined parts of my shop, some of the goods inside were spared. With the remaining items I can resume business," one vendor, Hadi, said.

1 tsunami but victims still

refugee camps must be among the most shocking.

But experts say it's not uncommon in times of conflict and trauma.

"When there is displacement and chaos, the possibility of this type of behaviour is higher," Mr Harendra de Silva, head of the National Child Protection Authority, said yesterday.

Mr De Silva gave few details of the case of the

gang-raped 17-year-old girl, which occurred in the area of Galle on the southern coast but not in a refugee centre. Hours after being washed ashore and left orphaned and homeless, she was raped by six men, he said. Since Friday, two other cases of suspected abuse of children were reported, including one by a man who attempted to molest his granddaughter, Mr De Silva said.

With nearly 1 million losing their homes, Sri Lanka has immediate concerns of survival, rolling out relief trucks as cargo planes ferry food, drinking water and medical supplies from donor nations.

But psychological and behavioural problems are certain to become more important as the authorities gain control over the life-threatening issues. — AP

Escaped tsunami but victims still

COLOMBO, Jan. 2. — A teenager who escaped death but was left orphaned and homeless by the tsunami met yet another agony: gang rape, one of several cases of child abuse being investigated in the disaster zone, an official said.

Of all the human tragedies emerging from the worst natural disaster in decades, sexual abuse of vulnerable children in

refugee camps must be among the most shocking.

But experts say it's not uncommon in times of conflict and trauma.

"When there is displacement and chaos, the possibility of this type of behaviour is higher," Mr Harendra de Silva, head of the National Child Protection Authority, said yesterday.

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TOLL MAY TOUCH 1,50,000; POWELL TO VISIT TODAY

ANN & Agencies

BANDA ACEH (Indonesia), Jan. 2. — An Indonesian fisherman trapped under his boat in Asia's tsunami disaster was found alive but severely dehydrated today, even as rescue workers conceded that the thousands missing were probably dead a week after the killer tsunami struck the region. An estimated 1,50,000 were killed.

Rescue teams honed in on the epicentre of the devastation in Sumatra, where US military helicopters flew in biscuits, energy drinks and instant noodles to hungry, homeless villagers. The operation was part of a global \$2 billion effort announced ahead of an international donors' conference scheduled in the Indonesian capital on Thursday.

After a week of digging through rubble in hopes of

finding survivors, workers had begun saying on Sunday that hopes of miraculous discoveries were quickly dwindling. "There is very little chance of finding survivors after seven days," said Mr Lamsar Sipahutar, the head of the search team in Indonesia, the hardest-hit nation with an expected death toll of 100,000.

The official tally of dead from the catastrophe surpassed 123,000. But with tens of thousands still missing and presumed dead, UN officials said they expected the actual toll would exceed 1,50,000, although the exact tally will probably never be known.

As a signal of US concern, Secretary of State Colin Powell was to begin a tour of hard-hit areas on Monday. Speaking on NBC's *Meet the Press*, Mr Powell defended the administration's efforts against criticism that the

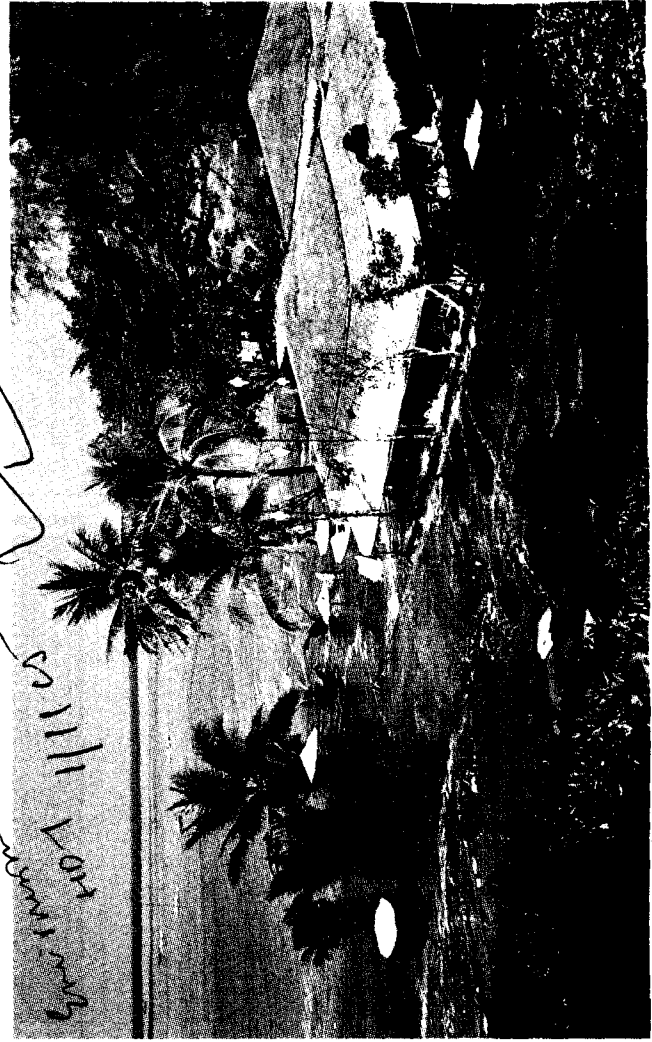
United States was slow to respond with financial aid. Washington pledged \$35 million at first, but then increased that to \$350 million on Friday.

In Thailand, officials borrowed six elephants from the Wang Chang elephant farm in the 17th century Thai capital of Ayudhaya for help in clearing away wrecked buildings and

other debris from the ruined resort island of Phuket and Phang Nga province.

The animals who were also used in recreated battle scenes for the movie *Alexander* — arrived by truck on Sunday and got to work immediately.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra visited Phuket, hoping to prop up a wrecked tourism industry.



THE DELUGE: In Phuket, Thailand, on December 26, the tsunami-driven Andaman Sea overwhelms a beachfront restaurant in a resort named Chedi. One minute it is a serene, sunny morning under beach umbrellas, the staff preparing for the day, and the next, wave after wave rolls in inexorably, the water level instantly rising to touch the coconut fronds, sea and resort seamlessly merging. Phuket, a favourite of Western tourists, is an island in the south of Thailand, where the death toll is an estimated 4,800. — AFP

Central team to visit tsunami-hit States

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 1. A Central team will visit Tamil Nadu and other tsunami-affected States from Tuesday for discussions with officials on what they need in terms of immediate relief, and rehabilitation. Long-term measures will also be taken up.

The team, consisting of groups of officials, will discuss issues that are involved in providing proper relief and rehabilitation to the people. It will complete the task within two days.

Announcing this, the Union Cabinet Secretary, B.K. Chaturvedi, said that an integrated logistics committee was also set up under the Defence Secretary for relief and rehabilitation in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It would aim to integrate the efforts on the logistic front of the Defence Ministry, Civil Aviation and Shipping Ministries.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Group of Ministers specially set up by the Centre to oversee relief and rehabilitation in the aftermath of tsunami that have wrought havoc in India. The two-and-a-half-hour meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh.

The meeting reviewed the measures undertaken in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Pondicherry.

Mr. Chaturvedi said that about 7,000 tents, 57 tonnes of drinking water and 300 diesel generating sets had already been sent to the Andamans.

In addition, 17 Immersat satellite telephone exchanges and two standard telephone exchanges had been operationalised by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the capability included video conferencing.

Further, 1,500 troops had been sent augmenting the 2,500

troops already in the islands to strengthen the mechanism for distribution of relief and rehabilitation and for the proper disposal of bodies.

In addition, 16 more officers were being sent to assist the Brigadier-level officer in Car Nicobar. Four of them had reached there and the others would be there tomorrow.

Nine helicopters had been sent, four directly to Car Nicobar and five via Myanmar.

A large number of naval and other ships, with helicopters on board, had been deployed to ferry men and material from the mainland to the islands. Since there was thick forest cover in many of the islands, sniffer dogs were being deployed to detect bodies. Of the 38 islands, eight had been affected. All of them have been visited by officials.

Power being restored

Mr. Chaturvedi said efforts were under way to establish power connections. Already, 40 per cent of the area had been covered by regular power.

This would go up to 60 to 70 per cent in three-four days and 80 to 90 per cent in about 10 days.

Earlier, the Secretary, Disaster Management Division in the Union Home Ministry, A.K. Rastogi, said the focus was now on preventing the outbreak of epidemics in the worst-hit Nicobar group of islands.

Top officials see the ravaged infrastructure as a major obstacle to the distribution of aid to the survivors.

So far, 982 tonnes of relief material has been mobilised for the Nicobar islands of which 295 tonnes has been delivered.

The remaining 687 tonnes of relief material was lined up for delivery.

More reports on
Pages 8, 9

মার্কিন ত্রাণ

১৩ বৃদ্ধি দশ গুণ

প্রথম পাতার পর
সম্পদ, অভিজ্ঞতা আর দক্ষতার
ভিত্তিতে ওই অঞ্চলেরই তিনটি
দেশকে নিয়ে গোষ্ঠীটি তৈরি হয়েছে।”
আমেরিকা এতে থাকছে, কারণ, ওই
অঞ্চলে তার 'সামরিক এবং কূটনৈতিক
উপস্থিতি' রয়েছে।

বুশের সাপ্তাহিক রেডিও-
বক্তৃতাতেও আজ সুনামির প্রসঙ্গ
প্রাধান্য পায়। বুশ বলেন, “নতুন
বছরের প্রথম দিন আমরা বিশ্ববাসীর
সঙ্গে এই বিশাল মানবিক ট্র্যাজেডিতে
গভীর শোকে সামিল হচ্ছি।” মৃতদের
স্মৃতিতে আগামী সপ্তাহে মার্কিন
জাতীয় পতাকা অর্ধনমিত রাখা হবে।

এ দিকে, কাল গভীর রাতে ফের
সুমাত্রায় বান্দা আচের ৩৫০
কিলোমিটার পশ্চিমে নতুন করে
কম্পন অনুভূত হয়। তার তরঙ্গ ধাক্কা
দিয়েছে ভারতের আন্দামান-
নিকোবরকেও। বিস্তৃত অঞ্চল জুড়ে
রিখটার স্কেলে আশিতম এই কম্পনের
মাত্রা ছিল ৫ থেকে ৬.৩ পর্যন্ত। তবে
এ থেকে ফের কোনও সুনামির জন্ম
হবে কি না, তা বলা যাচ্ছে না। গত
রবিবারের ভূকম্পের জেরে চলতি
সপ্তাহ জুড়েই মাঝে মাঝে কম্পন বা
'আফটারশক' হয়েছে।

ইয়ান এগেল্যান্ড আজ মৃতের
সংখ্যা দেড় লক্ষ ঘোষণা করে বলেন,
সঠিক সংখ্যাটা কখনওই নিশ্চিত বলা
যাবে না। কারণ কত জন মৎস্যজীবী
বা গ্রামবাসী এই বিধ্বংসী বিপর্যয়ে
শ্রেফ উধাও হয়েছেন, তা নথিভুক্ত
করার উপায় নেই। তবে নথিভুক্ত
মৃত্যুর সংখ্যাও অবিরাম উর্ধ্বমুখী
হয়েই চলেছে। ভারতে মৃতের সংখ্যা
১২ হাজার ছাড়িয়েছে।

ইন্দোনেশিয়াতে লক্ষাধিক মৃত্যু হয়ে
থাকতে পারে বলে আশঙ্কা করা
হচ্ছে। সুইডেনের বিদেশমন্ত্রী সে
দেশে পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখে
বলেছেন, সংখ্যাটা দু'লক্ষ হওয়াও
আশ্চর্যের নয়। তাইল্যান্ড রয়েছে আট
হাজারের উপরে। সেখানকার ফুকেট
দ্বীপে নিখোঁজ পর্যটকদের খোঁজে
ক্রমাগত ছুটে যাচ্ছেন মানুষ। পুলিশ
এখন রীতিমতো অনুনয় করছে, যেন
আর কেউ না আসেন—“দেহগুলি
আর শনাক্ত করার মতো অবস্থায়
নেই।” — রয়টার্স, এএফপি, পিটিআই

WAVE OF ORPHANS

JAYA MENON
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

A BOY NAMED TSUNAMI

NAGAPATTINAM, Jan. 1. — She wore a tattered pink dress she had picked up from the bundles of shabby clothes strewn all over the grounds of a marriage hall which serves as her home now. Twiddling with the white beads around her neck, Jayashree, a chubby three-year-old, is restless. Ask where her parents have gone and she replies quickly: *Avanga kizhakku poyirukkanga* (They have gone East), which in local parlance means to sell fish on the sea front. "How can we tell her that her parents are dead and that we could not even trace their bodies," said Valli, a neighbour, breaking down.

The muddy titanic waves that gobbled up hundreds of villages on Tamil Nadu's coast on 26 December caught several men, women and children in its swirl, washing them away or smashing them to death against trees and buildings. In Nagapattinam district, the worst affected, of the 5,500 bodies dug up so far, 1,800 were of children.

Jayashree and her siblings, six-year-old Nithya, and 10-year-old Gunasekaran, had been pottering around in their hut in Akkarapettai, a sprawling fishing village with more than 5,000 families in coastal Nagapattinam. As it was past eight in the morning, their parents had gone to the sea shore to sell their catch. Suddenly, the children heard screams: *odunga, odunga, thanni varuthu* (Run, run, the water is coming!) They ran, not looking back. Stumbling and falling in the mad stampede, the children, helped along by some women, reached the bridge at a safer level which connects the village to Nagapattinam town. Their parents were not so lucky. Both of them were washed away by the sea.

"We are worried about the plight of these children. Most relatives stake a claim over the orphans, only in the hope of getting relief money. Of course, the state government has decided not to give the relief to the relatives. We are sure that once they get the money they will dump the children," Mr A Natarajan, village administrative officer of Karupoor, Thiruvavur, said. Some orphans had already been taken away by some private organisations. The Rs 2 lakh (Rs 1 lakh from Chief Minister's Relief Fund and another Rs 1 lakh from Prime Minister's Relief Fund) was the lure, he pointed out.

NATURE'S FURY: pages 6 & 7



Born prematurely at a relief camp, Tsunami sleeps in his mother's arms in Port Blair on Saturday. — AFP

Ringling in memoriam

ASIA NEWS NETWORK & AGENCIES

Jan. 1. — A world grieving for the more than 1,25,000 dead in Asia's tsunami catastrophe marked a sombre passage to the New Year with the traditionally exuberant celebrations everywhere eclipsed by mourning, and remembrance candles often replacing fireworks. The traditional lights on Rashtrapati Bhavan were extinguished in mourning for the nearly 12,000 dead reported so far in India — with many more deaths feared in the Andaman and Nicobar islands.

Asia

An eerie silence descended on Sri Lanka — which lost nearly 30,000 people — as the country ushered in the New Year with prayers. Thousands of Malaysians also joined prayers.

Most of Asia was busy counting the dead, feeding survivors and combating disease forgetting to even think about partying. Government agencies in Indonesia, where the death toll stood at 80,246, cancelled fireworks and urged people to pray. Thailand, with at least 4,812 dead, cancelled a party in Bangkok which would have featured Prime Minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra and tennis stars Maria Sharapova and Venus Williams. China's CCTV announced the cancellation of its live New Year's Eve gala.

Europe and America New York's mayor saw the start of the new year

City parties on

KOLKATA, Jan. 1. — Kolkata, in the main, carried on regardless. Save sports bars, Winning Streak, calling off the European dancers and the party that went with it, most of Kolkata hotels and clubs didn't report significant dampening of party ardour though the Dalhousie Institute did say the mood was "sombre" and Taj Bengal insisted its bash was "low-key". Most city clubs — Calcutta Club, Bengal Club, Outram Club and Tollygunge Club — carried on the New Year's bash without any change in schedule. — SNS

as a time to "recognise how lucky we are," while in Sweden, the premier said celebrations were "completely wrong". In Paris, a black cloth was draped along the street famed for lovers, the Champs-Elysees. Stores in major German cities said sales of fireworks were down, in some cases by a third. The restraint was attributed to appeals from Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

Revellers in London's Trafalgar square and on the banks of the Thames also offered their prayers. Crowds fell silent for two minutes from 11:55 GMT. Then, as Big Ben struck and the clock ticked into 2005, a spectacular fireworks display burst into the sky above the Thames.

THE STATESMAN

2 JAN 2005

France-US spat over aid

By David E Sanger & Warren Hoge

Crawford/UN: Stung by the accusation that it was being stingy, the US on Friday increased its aid to tsunami-hit countries to \$350 million from \$35 million. White House officials are clearly sensitive about the charge that they responded too slowly, and President George Bush listed on Friday a series of actions the US had already taken.

Among them were the dispatch of aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and an amphibious ship carrying a Marine expeditionary unit. But the ships are not in position and several officials said the distance they would have to travel would cost precious time.

The US surrendered its bases in The Philippines more than a decade ago, and one senior American diplomat in Asia remarked on Thursday. "We're all paying the price for that a bit because those bases would have put American forces closer to the destruction at the tip of Sumatra."

In his statement, Bush noted that the US had created a coordination "core group" with Australia, India and Japan. "I am confident many more nations will join this core group in short order," he said in his statement.

Meanwhile, in the UN, Powell sought to allay suspicions that in setting up the core group, the US was competing for leadership in the relief effort with the world organisation. "We created the core group because we saw a need for a coordination mechanism," he said.



US Air Force crews load relief goods at the military airport in Jakarta on Saturday

anism to be created rather quickly and rested on countries that were nearby in the region with assets, experience and capability," he said.

Powell plans to leave for Indonesia and Sri Lanka on Sunday along with the President's brother, Governor Jeb Bush of Florida. Mr Bush said he was sending his brother because the series of

hurricanes that hit Florida had given him an expertise in disaster relief.

Traditionally, Bush appears around New Year's at the one coffee shop in this single-stoplight town a few miles from his ranch, sometimes holding an impromptu news conference by the gas pumps outside. But Bush never left the ranch on Friday. His spokesman said he was entertaining friends.

Meanwhile, the question about donation levels has sparked a new spat between the US and France. French ambassador to the US Jean-David Levitte, in a letter to director of the Agency for International Development Andrew Natsios, said he was "surprised to learn of the shocking and uncalled for comments you thought fit to make during an interview" on Wednesday.

Praising Britain, Japan, the European Union, Canada and Australia, Natsios had remarked that France was not a major donor to other nations. "They do not tend to be dominant figures in aid," he had said.

Disputing Natsios' assessment, Levitte said France, with an economy a fraction of the size of that of the US, had already given about \$28 million for tsunami relief. NYT NEWS SERVICE

Thais complain of bias

Ban Nam Khem (Thailand): While foreign survivors of Thailand's tsunami disaster have been put up in an international school complete with beds, television sets and internet connections, locals from a devastated fishing village sleep outside, many without blankets, bonfires keeping them warm and mosquitoes at bay.

Locals on Friday said they were torn between wanting to help foreigners, who are the lifeline of their economy, and getting what they can from the relief effort. "No one came to help, we just helped each other out," said 65-year-old Yokhin Chuaynu, whose home in this fishing village has been destroyed. "When injured Thais went to hospital, it was Westerners who were treated first unless the Thais were so serious that they were about to die."

Although all around the Indian Ocean there have been reports of efforts to rescue foreigners, leaving locals feeling passed by, the contrast has been most marked in Thailand where wealthy tourist resorts rub shoulders with shanty fishing villages. Shortly after the water subsided from exclusive resorts and palm-fringed beaches of southern Thailand, authorities began setting up makeshift embassies, providing free phones and food to tourists. Hotels and an international school that survived relatively unscathed threw open their doors to shellshocked tourists and foreign governments arranged for evacuation flights.

But according to Wimol Thongthae, there was no help at all here on the first day of the tragedy.

"More than 2,000—half of villagers in Nam Khem—have disappeared," he said. Eight out of 15 in his family, including his three-year-old daughter, are missing. "I'm living without hope and have not received any assistance," he said.

In Sri Lanka, some locals complained that helicopters that could have spread relief to devastated villages had been used to rescue high profile survivors instead. One early flight evacuated former German chancellor Helmut Kohl and his entourage, who were holidaying in southern Sri Lanka.

In Ban Nam Khem, fishing boats had been dumped by the waves in the middle of the town, half a kilometre away from the beach. They are still there and the stench of dead bodies rotting inside is overpowering. "The government gave more importance to Khao Lak and other tourist areas. This area is full of poor people," said provincial senator Wongphan Natakuaathing.

However, deputy agriculture minister Newin Chidchob, who is in charge of the rescue effort at Ban Nam Khem, denied that the government had ignored their plight. "We have not abandoned them. Every body has tried their best," he said as authorities pumped water out of streets.

Jeanette Dombrowe, 32, who was born in Germany but has lived for years on the island of Koh Payam, said, "The villagers are second class victims. If we don't look after the Westerners, the nation could lose its tourism. The villagers have to understand." AP



Thai women pray for those killed in the tsunami. Many Thais feel that more effort is taken to rescue foreigners

Thailand's tsunami disaster has been put up in an international school complete with beds, television sets and internet connections, locals from a devastated fishing village sleep outside, many without blankets, bonfires keeping them warm and mosquitoes at bay.

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HEALTH BOMB TICKING

Bodies rotting, people defaecating in the open in the Andamans

Avirook Sen
Port Blair, January 1

DEAD BODIES float all around the waters in the Nicobar islands, waiting to be cleared. But death, in the form of the cholera virus, floats just beneath in the estuarine environment of the Nancowrie islands.

The virus is a recent immigrant to the Nicobars. It hit a village called Tapong in Nancowrie in October 2002, killing an 18-year-old girl within a day. It spread to other villages and islands in the weeks that followed. Dozens died before it was contained in November. Children below the age of one were hit the hardest.

All of this was recorded in a confidential report prepared by the director, Regional Medical Research, ICMR. The report went to several relevant government departments. The findings of the study were also published in the journal of the American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene in May 2004.

The scariest thing about the virus is the fact that it lives freely in estuarine areas — meaning it can survive in a saline environment. As long as it remained at sea, it didn't pose any grave danger. But

The published paper issued such a warning: "It is possible that the hardy *V. cholera* may persist in this estuarine environmental niche and may cause repeated outbreaks."

At the office of the Andaman & Nicobar director of health services, a cable comes in from the Nicobars that says there are putrefying bodies all over the island and that an epidemic is expected.

Another cable comes in from the Little Andamans saying diarrhoea has hit; its symptoms, the first being loose motion, are similar to cholera's.

From Nancowrie, the only accounts coming in are from eyewitnesses who have been able to take the ship out. They say the signs are all there: people are defaecating in the open; hygiene is the last thing on their minds and there are too few counsellors (or none) to educate them.

Meanwhile, the Great Indian Bureau-cracy watches. A set of WHO guidelines on director, health services, Dr Namita Ali's table. It should have been sent out first thing. Now, it will be dispatched — after lunch, that is.

Ali says her teams have gone out to all the islands. Hundreds of kilos of bleaching powder have been distributed. Thirty

lakh halogen tablets are on their way to chlorinate the water. And then, she says: "But you know what I found at the airport? Our materials hadn't been lifted. I got them to do it on Friday."

With ships — and people — moving between islands, the virus will have no shortage of carriers.

The state says it is prepared — there are enough supplies of IV fluids and antibiotics like tetracycline to last three months. But there just aren't enough people. And very few means to get medical help to where it is required.

Several people are already affected by more benign water-borne diseases like dysentery, but cholera is yet to be confirmed. To do that you need a stool culture that takes 48 hours. Before that, you need to get the stool sample to Port Blair, the only place equipped to do it. Getting samples in from the islands doesn't seem to be the priority.

The ICMR report, which for some reason was never acted upon, said mass vaccination should be undertaken as well as health education programmes.

These were "immediate needs" in 2002. That's where the irony lies.

■ See also Pages 2 & 3

130,000

STILL COUNTING

India 13,230
Massive operation on to find missing people

Sri Lanka 28,729
President's office says toll could jump to 42,000

Indonesia 80,000+
It says it has stopped counting

Thailand 4,812
Tourists returning

the tsunami brought the sea in on Sunday and it did not spare fresh water sources in the islands. The conclusion is chilling: The virus could be in any stream or pond in the Nancowries — or all of them.

Japan pledges \$500 m in relief, a day after US hikes amount to \$350 m

Koizumi kayoes Bush's millions



Junichiro Koizumi

K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Jan. 1: The Bush administration's lead yesterday in raising tsunami relief assistance tenfold became short-lived when Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi today pledged \$500 million in aid, leaving every other country way behind.

The White House, which has been severely criticised all week within the US and abroad for what critics called its "stinginess" in providing tsunami relief assistance, yesterday took the bull by its horns and decided to lead every other country and international organisation by increasing its aid 10 times to \$350 million.

At the time of writing, a wave of compassion for tsunami victims, boosted by seasonal Christmas and new year sympathy, boosted pledges of aid by governments and multilateral organisations to \$1.6 billion.

And this figure, which does not include contributions by philanthropists and corporations, is rising.

Despite an unprecedented outpouring of sympathy and cash worldwide, it may be weeks before such aid actually reaches many victims because of coordination, destruction of infrastructure in tsunami-hit areas and a variety of other problems.

In Indonesia, which has been worst affected, US navy helicopters have moved into action dropping emergency food. Australia's defence forces have also been engaged in relief action.

With thousands of displaced people clamouring for food and in need of medicine, the only other major international relief effort has come from the Indian Navy's hospital ship, *INS Nirupak*, which was despatched to Sumatra with food, medicines, tents and first-aid kits.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



George W. Bush

2 JAN 2005

*Govt mem
HQ -*

U.N. calls donor meet

AP/2

GENEVA, JAN. 1. The United Nations today confirmed an international donors' conference to help victims of the devastating Indian Ocean tidal waves would be held in Geneva on January 11.

The U.N. on Wednesday launched an initial appeal to donors for \$130 million for the immediate needs of victims in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Maldives.

But the Geneva conference will follow up on a much bigger appeal to be launched on January 6 in New York, said the U.N. Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in a written statement. — AFP

U.S. focus on logistics

CRAWFORD (TEXAS), JAN. 1. Having pledged \$350 million to help tsunami victims in South Asia, the Bush administration is focusing on the logistics of getting

clean water, food and other supplies to people rebuilding their lives and burying the scores of thousands who died.

"The disaster around the Indian Ocean continues to grow both in size and scope," said the U.S. President, George W. Bush, on Friday in announcing that the U.S. would provide 10 times its earlier \$35 million offering — an amount criticised as miserly for such a rich nation.

"On this first day of a new year, we join the world in feeling enormous sadness over a great human tragedy," Mr. Bush said on Saturday in his weekly radio address. "The carnage is of a scale that defies comprehension."

The dollar amount of the U.S. assistance could rise as the impact of the tragedy is realised, Mr. Bush said in a statement released at his Texas ranch where he and the First Lady Laura Bush are beginning the New Year. — AP

2 JAN 2005

THE HINDU

2 JAN 2005

Blair differs with Bush on relief

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, DEC. 31. Breaking ranks with the U.S. President, George W. Bush, who has entrusted the task of coordinating relief for tsunami victims to a group of 'core' donor countries in the region, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has said that the United Nations is the right agency to handle it.

Mr. Blair has turned down a plea from the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, that he should call an emergency meeting of the G-8 industrialised countries to discuss aid to the affected areas.

He reportedly told Mr. Berlusconi that he believed the U.N., rather than the G-8 whose presidency Britain takes over in the new year, should coordinate international relief.

'Marked contrast'

"The Prime Minister said he will contact the other G-8 members about assistance that we might be able to give to the United Nations. But we are confident G-8 members will agree it is right that the U.N. should continue to take the lead role in coordinating the relief effort," a Downing Street spokesman said.

Commentators described Mr. Blair's stance as in "marked contrast" to Mr. Bush's decision to entrust the job to India, Japan and Australia.

They noted that the U.S. 'belatedly' added the U.N. to the list of coordinating agencies. Media reports indicated that Britain was taken by surprise by Mr. Bush's announcement which amounted to bypassing the U.N.

Britain trebled its aid pledge from £15 millions to £50 millions following criticism that the public response to the relief appeals had been more ro-

bust than the official donation. Private donations, including those from the Asian communities, were reported to be pouring in at the rate of a million-pound an hour.

Mr. Blair is facing more pressure to cut short his Egyptian holiday and lead the nation in responding to the disaster. "This is the biggest natural disaster in the world for 40 years...I would have thought Mr. Blair should be following what other world leaders are doing and coming back to direct operations,"

said Nigel Evans, a Tory MP.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

01 JAN 2005

All-party meet to tackle tsunami challenges: Manmohan

By Our Special Correspondent

8 VIJAYAWADA, DEC. 31. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said here today that he would convene an all-party meeting "in a day or two" to mobilise the collective national will to meet the challenges caused by the tsunami devastation.

Dr. Singh announced an immediate assistance of Rs. 100 crores each for Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. "The situation in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is grim and the Centre will meet all the costs of rehabilitation in the islands," he said.

The Centre had deputed two Ministers to supervise the relief operations in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. An 'integrated relief command' had been constituted for the islands.

The Prime Minister, who reviewed the relief and rehabilitation work in Andhra Pradesh

with the Chief Minister, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, and senior officials at the Gannavaram airport, near here, told a press conference that the Centre and the Governments of the affected States would stand "shoulder to shoulder" and work "hand in hand" for effective relief and rehabilitation of the victims.

Coastline damaged

The tsunami devastated 2,000-km of coastline in the south and 6,187 people died in Tamil Nadu. Over three lakh people had been displaced and 25,000 houses fully damaged in the State. The Governments immediately launched relief measures on an unprecedented scale. "Resources will not be allowed to come in the way of relief work," he asserted.

Stressing the need for providing basic amenities, including temporary shelters, safe drink-

ing water, clothes and utensils for the affected people, he said the Housing and Urban Development Corporation had earmarked Rs. 10,000 crores for construction of houses. There was also an immediate need for providing boats and fishing nets to fishermen and books to children.

Dr. Singh said the Centre had sanctioned Rs.1 lakh each as ex-gratia to the families of the deceased. The Reserve Bank had instructed the bankers to liberally extend loans to the affected, besides making "maximum concessions".

Soon after his arrival at the airport, Dr. Singh met the tsunami victims at the specially-erected pandals.

He distributed cheques for Rs.1 lakh each to five families which had lost the bread-earners. Fishing nets were distributed.

what the WORLD PRESS is saying

A thirsty world

THE new threat, like the old one, derives from water. The tsunami that killed at least 77,000 people in the Indian Ocean basin has now put millions of others at grave risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera, hepatitis, dysentery and typhoid fever, according to the United Nations Children's Fund. Relief agencies have been working tirelessly to replenish the drinkable water wiped out after the waves swept away wells, contaminated filtration plants and destroyed miles of pipes. There is widespread agreement among these groups about the need for water buckets, chlorine tablets and other survival tools, which have been slow to reach the area because of flooded roads and other logistical problems.

But when it comes to longer-term issues, there is no such unanimity. That's largely because the current water shortage in Asia didn't start with the tsunami. More than 1 billion people worldwide, many of them in the areas hit by the tsunami, lack access to safe drinking water. The reason, according to the WHO, is the steady decline, since 1997, in wealthy countries' support for water purification programmes. There are two reasons for this: One, water isn't seen as a resource critical to national security or economic growth, the way oil is; and two, governments have increasingly opted to leave water programs to pri-

vate industry. In the mid-1990s, corporations backed by the World Bank began installing and operating water systems in needy countries. They did it on a for-profit basis, with the view that charging for water was essential if it was to be allocated efficiently. Critics argue that water essential for life shouldn't be privately controlled.

At an international summit in 2002, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell proposed spending \$970 million over three years on an initiative that aimed to expand the supply of safe drinking water in poor countries, largely through privatisation. Critics say such privatisation schemes have been spectacular failures. Powell, however, counters—correctly—that the billions spent by industrialised nations in the 1990s to produce safe drinking water in poor countries haven't made a dent in the problem. One question facing the Bush administration and officials in relief agencies, therefore, is whether to depend on such free-market solutions in the future or do something more old-fashioned: partner with Asian nations and help them build the sort of large-scale, government-subsidised water systems. As human populations grow and water becomes more scarce, the solution will probably involve a little of both.

Editorial in The Los Angeles Times



A long and difficult task

THE USS Abraham Lincoln is joining the American relief effort in the countries hit by the devastating tsunami this week. Let's hope the aircraft carrier is leaving behind the embarrassingly premature "Mission Accomplished" banner that was hoisted to celebrate the supposed end of the shooting war in Iraq nearly 20 months ago—because this job, too, will be a long and difficult one.

Fighting hunger, thirst and disease, and then restoring normal life to the Indian Ocean nations that have just suffered so much death and destruction, will take years. Wednesday, President Bush took a break from his vacation clearing brush on the ranch in Crawford, Texas, to announce that the US is committed to a long-term engagement. An initial promise of \$15 million has already been raised to \$35 million—which drains the government's emergency relief fund—but Bush said that more will be forthcoming as time goes on.

This is all welcome news, but it's hard not to think that the White House has been shamed into taking action after its initial tightwad commitment attracted so much criticism. It's now clear that the earthquake was one of the epic disasters of modern history. India reported an official death toll that was more than double the number of Americans killed on

9/11, and the actual numbers may be twice as high; Sri Lanka's toll was seven times that of 9/11; Indonesia's was at least 15 times greater (and probably much more than that).

Yet the President of the US had nothing to say for three full days. This inability to seize the moment is perplexing. Even though the true measure of America's response can only be calculated over time, it is nonetheless the case that first impressions count for a great deal. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim nation; here is a chance for the US to show how much good it can do, to take the lead in bringing relief to this sorely tested nation. A perceived lack of compassion could come back to haunt America.

In fairness, it's worth remembering that Bush was at first slow to display his mettle in the wake of 9/11, but after visiting New York and addressing Congress, he won praise for his leadership in a time of crisis. As he prepares for his second term, here is another opportunity to set an example, and on a global stage. But this is not a disaster that can be solved with a photo op or two. No one should be looking around for an exit strategy. Recovery from the tsunami of '04 will last as long as his presidency—and perhaps the next.

Editorial in The Baltimore Sun

A tsunami of greed

As the poor of Asia count their dead, Wall Street basks in riches

DESPITE Secretary of State Colin Powell's insistence that the US is not a "stingy" nation—a charge leveled by a frustrated UN relief coordinator, then taken back—American contributions to the tsunami recovery effort seem modest by any standard. Relief workers need to get help to 10 nations, where more than a million people are believed to be homeless, where whole villages were swallowed by the earthquake-induced tidal wave last weekend, and where the death toll has crossed 50,000 and is still climbing. So far, the US is sending \$4 million to the International Red Cross and perhaps \$40 million in

other aid funds, along with a handful of planes, some bearing supplies and some to be used for patrols. The Japanese are sending \$30 million for starters, and the EU \$40 million.

Miffed at the UN official's comment, Trent Duffy, White House deputy press secretary, said, the US is "the largest contributor to international relief and aid efforts, not only through the government but through charitable organizations." He added, "The American people are very giving."

The money being put up by the US is nothing when compared to what's going on in the corridors of Wall Street, where year-

end bonuses for the securities industry are the big story in New York. Readers of *The New York Times* were greeted Tuesday morning with above-the-fold images of destruction in Asia and below-the-fold accountings of personal riches. This year, the New York state comptroller reports bonuses are estimated to total \$15.9 billion. In a press release, the comptroller reports, "The \$15.9 billion to be paid in 2004 divided among the approximately 158,000 securities industry employees in New York City works out to an average bonus of \$100,400. This is slightly higher than last year's average of almost \$99,700, and just short of the record of \$101,000 paid in 2000 at the peak of the last Wall Street boom."

And what are the rich financiers going to do with their money? According to the report in Tuesday's *Times*, one senior invest-

ment banker said, "I have a sailboat, a motor boat, an apartment, an SUV. What could I possibly need?" Then he thought of something: "Maybe a little Porsche for the Hamptons house, but probably not." Another said he bought his wife a mink coat, but explained he wasn't buying homes or boats. "We are more relaxed and generous on the small things," he said.

For the plutocrats on Wall Street, who so often make millions shunting money in and out of cheap-labour Asia, the horrid catastrophe in the Indian Ocean must seem very far away. But one never knows—perhaps the disaster will turn into an enticing investment opportunity in the days ahead. And in any event, donations for the charity relief effort could spell a big tax break.

From the Village Voice

01 JAN 2005

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World lends a helping hand, pledges \$500m

Where do you start, when you have to help rebuild the lives and livelihoods of millions of people hit by killer waves?

Well, the UN secretary general Kofi Annan said he had received pledges of over \$500 million from various parts of the world for emergency assistance. The World Bank is the single largest donor with \$250 million and 30 nations pitched in with another \$250 million.



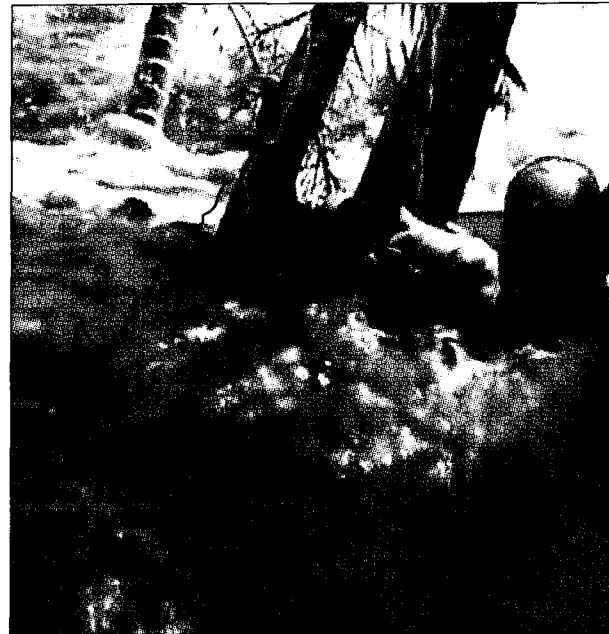
The US at \$35 million is still battling widespread criticism but both Bush and Powell have said this is only the beginning, and the State Department said the initial offering is normally 10 percent of the final figure. But several European nations have been more proactive with their money. They include Britain with

\$95 million; Sweden with \$75.5 million; Spain giving \$68 million; and France giving \$57 million. Germany upped its contribution to \$27 million on Thursday.

Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer said his government would increase their contribution by \$25 million to \$60 million. The majority of this would be used for relief operations in Indonesia's Aceh province. Sri Lanka and the Maldives would share the remaining \$5 million.

The key in rushing aid to the affected areas is that coordination is very important to avoid duplication and ensure that the right supplies reach the right places. According to the WHO, 5 million people need some assistance—a third of them are children. TNN

What war couldn't, waves could



A series of video images shows an unidentified man clinging to trees while being hit by strong waves on the island of Kho Phi Phin in Thailand. (Reuters)

Nilaveli, Sri Lanka, Dec. 31 (Reuters): For over 30 years, the Nilaveli Beach Resort, built on a pristine stretch of sun-drenched beach on Sri Lanka's eastern shore, was the only luxury hotel in this sparsely populated fishing village.

The 83-room resort operated during the "bad times", when the army launched sporadic attacks on nearby Tamil Tiger hideouts at the height of a two-decade-old guerrilla war. Miraculously, it never suffered damage in the crossfire.

While many hotels went bankrupt, it maintained an average occupancy rate of 72 per cent. On many days it gave rooms to the military to run an emergency field hospital that cared for soldiers injured in battle.

But what a war that claimed over 64,000 lives failed to destroy was swallowed up by the very surf that many visitors came here to enjoy. The giant tsunami which battered the Indian Ocean island on December 26 have killed more than 28,500 people.

Mahesh Gunatilake, a marketing manager from Colombo, had come here many times, but this year, he decided to spend Christmas in Nilaveli with his wife and 10-year old son.

On Sunday morning, they took a boat ride to Pigeon Island, around 400 metres from shore. Just a few minutes later, the family watched in horror as a towering 10-metre-high wave crashed into their hotel.

"For a few minutes I was frozen with shock," he said. "My wife forgot that our kid was with us and fainted. I had to carry her in one arm and drag my son to higher ground as the entire island was flooded soon after," he added.

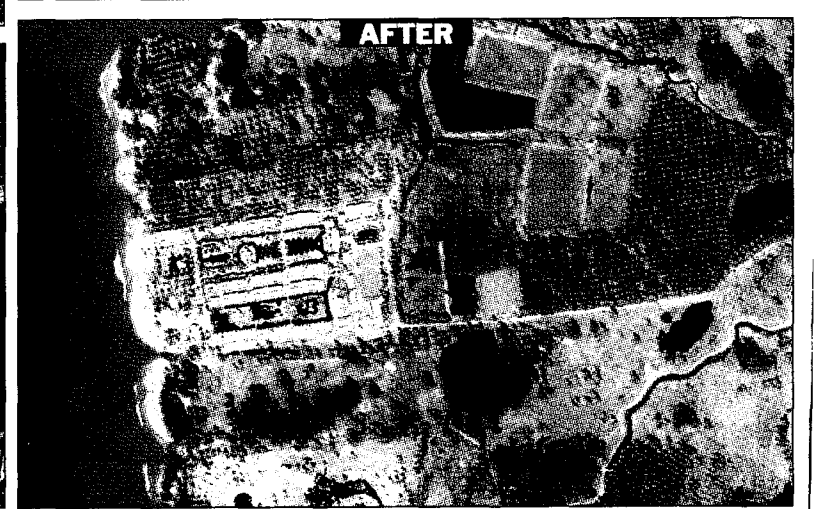
Mahesh and his family waited on the Pigeon Island for more than four hours until an air force helicopter rescued them. "I don't think I have ever prayed to God the way I did on that day," he said. His wife remains in a coma in hospital.

More than 300 people were staying at the resort when the tsunami struck and 15 of them — including eight unidentified foreign guests — drowned. Around 100 are still missing.

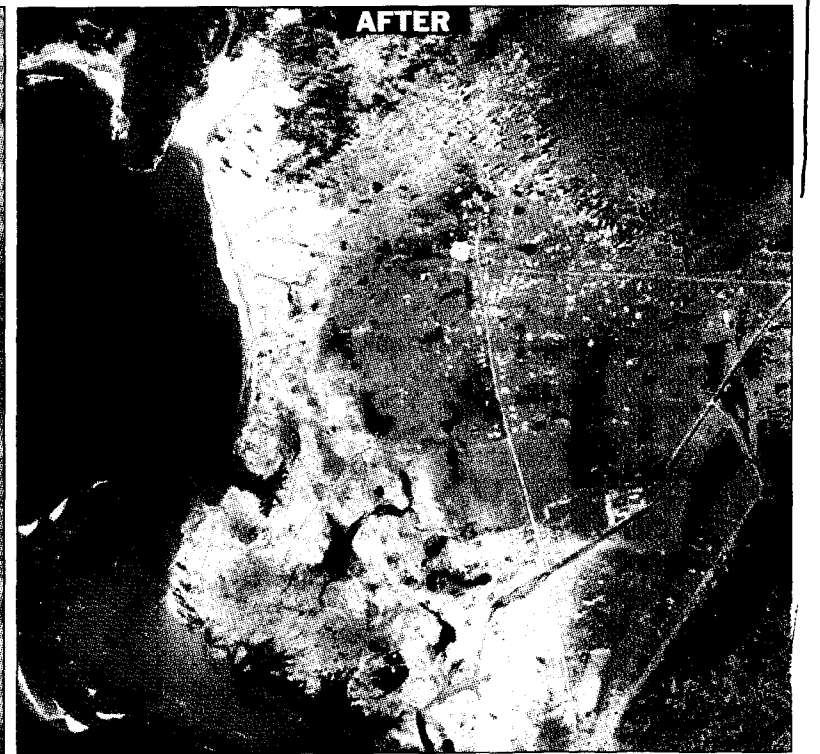
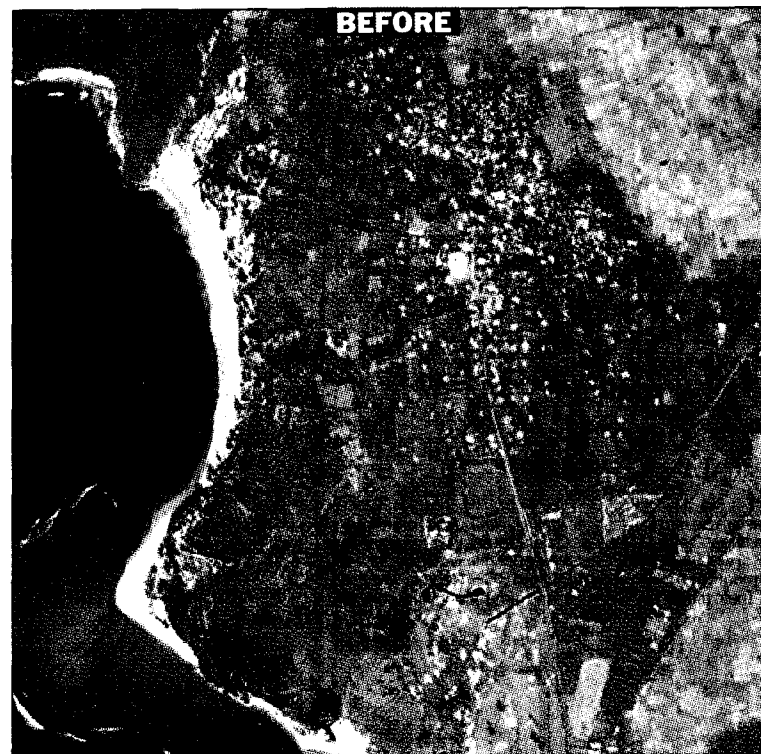
"This was one of the last unspoilt stretches of beach in the country," said resort manager Neville Paul. "Now it's like two giants had violent sex here. It will take us another year before we can open for guests again," he said.



DigitalGlobe satellite images released on Thursday show the shoreline area of Banda Aceh in Indonesia before and after the tsunami hit. (Reuters)



Ikonos satellite images show the popular tourist destination of Khao Lak in southern Thailand. (Reuters)



Ikonos satellite images show Aceh in Indonesia. (Reuters)