

Mercury rising in food and medicine

Heart, kidney diseases lurk in the fish and crab you eat

DRIMI Chaudhuri
Kolkata, December 30

IF YOU are planning to celebrate New Year's Day with *betki fry*, *ilish bhapa* and *rui maacher kalia*, think twice. There could be poison in the fish.

Fish being sold in Kolkata, whether freshwater or sea, contain several hundred times of mercury over the permissible limit. This is the finding of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), the NGO that had broken the myth about the purity of bottled water and aerated drinks.

Seafood is considered safe if the mercury is 0.05 mg per kilo or less. The study found levels between 0.3 and 0.82 mg of mercury per kilo of your fish. Crabs sold in the city were worse: 1.42 mg to 4.94 mg per kilo. Most of these came from Midnapore and the Sunderbans.

Even these seemingly low levels can be dangerous for your liver, kidneys, brain and blood. "Pregnant women and young children are the most vulnerable. If a mother is affected, the child can be born mentally retarded. In adults, it can cause kidney failure, heart collapse and genetic damage," said Partha Chatterjee, a scientist engaged in research on industrial contamination and human health at Canada's University of Nova Scotia.

Your fish and crabs got the mercury from the water they swam in. "The mer-

cury in sea fish came from global discharge, which has severely contaminated the eastern coast from West Bengal to Andhra Pradesh. For freshwater fish, the contamination came from local industries," said Chandra Bhushan of CSE.

Used fluorescent tubes, batteries and thermometers are dumped carelessly into the water, becoming the largest contributing factor to high mercury levels. "Another source is waste from industries that manufacture batteries, tube-lights and certain medical equipment," Bhushan said.

Conducted over a period of two years, the study used reports of NGOs, government agencies and research institutes. Yet the Pollution Control Board is unconvinced. Its senior law officer, Biswajit Mukherjee, said if any mercury had been found, it must have come from a distant place on the coast. "We have been monitoring the Hooghly for the last 20 years and never found traces of mercury."

New York bans three Ayurvedic drugs for toxic content

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, December 30

NEW YORK has banned the sale of three well-known Indian Ayurvedic medicines on the ground that they contain "dangerous levels of lead or mercury".

The medicines that have been "condemned and embargoed" by the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene are: Jamburulin, made by Unjha Ayurvedic Pharmacy; Baidyanath's Lakshmvilash Ras (Nardliya); and Maha Sudarshan, manufactured by Arya Aushadhi Pharmaceutical Works.

Laboratory tests reportedly revealed that Jamburulin, used for diabetes and sugar control, contained 24,300 ppm (parts per million) of lead. Lakshmvilash Ras, used for chronic fever, cold and cough, had 14,100 ppm of mercury, while Maha Sudarshan, used for flu and body ache, contained 2,190 ppm of mercury.

In its order, the department

directed storekeepers to stop sale immediately and return the stock to distributors. It also advised people taking the medicines to discontinue their use and call a physician to request a blood lead test and mercury urine test.

"These metals are poisons and can cause damage to the brain, nervous system and kidneys. Children and pregnant women (and their fetuses) are especially at risk," said department commissioner Thomas R. Frieden.

The New York action is the second major offensive in the US against Indian Ayurvedic preparations. Last December, the Harvard School of Medicine came up with an alarming report, saying 14 of 70 Ayurvedic medicines sold by South Asian stores in Boston had "potentially harmful levels of lead, mercury and/or arsenic".

According to the New York health department, there have been three confirmed cases in the past year of adult lead poisoning among residents who used the products obtained from India during visits or through friends.

The department has since conducted its own investigations with Ayurvedic medicines bought from South Asian stores in Jackson Heights and Flushing, New York areas known for their Indian concentration. Despite the high level of lead or mercury content, the metals were not listed on the product as ingredients.



DOUBLE SCORE

City food

Fish: 0.30-0.82 mg/kg
Crab: 1.42-4.94 mg/kg
Safe level: 0.05 mg/kg

Figures denote mercury levels

Ayurvedic medicine

Jamburulin

24,300 ppm lead

Lakshmvilash Ras

14,100 ppm mercury

Maha Sudarshan

2,190 ppm mercury



Arsenic alarm in heartland villages

TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Ballia, Dec. 28: A silent killer is stalking the villagers of Ballia. Although it strikes in the form of cancer, experts feel arsenic poisoning is the real assassin.

The arsenicosis alarm was first sounded by doctors in Delhi in 2003 after they treated Dinanath Singh from Rajpur in Ballia. The 62-year-old villager was diagnosed with skin cancer but doctors found his was also a case of arsenic poisoning.

Three years earlier, Dinanath's two daughters also died of cancer. Due to acute arsenicosis, Dinanath's middle finger had to be removed.

The villager's case sparked two years of extensive studies by geologists and environment activists on the water being consumed in villages in a 15-km-belt in Ballia district. The surveys have found high dose of arsenic in the water in 55 villages of the eastern Uttar Pradesh district.

Environmentalists have also found out that in the village of Sughar Chapra, about a kilometre from Rajpur, Rishidev Yadav's family lost four members to cancer back in 1987. "We did not know till recently that arsenic in water could have been the cause of those deaths," Yadav said.

A test on Ram Bahadur Singh, another villager, revealed that his body contained 6,310 parts per billion of arsenic. The normal count should not be above 225 parts per billion. "I feel unusually dry in my skin and suffer from occasional bouts of pain from



STEALTH KILLER

the pigmentation that has erupted," Singh said.

The intake of arsenic-poisoned water ruins the skin and central nervous system, leads to cardiovascular diseases that may turn cancerous, Dr Vinod Khaitan, who treats patients of arsenicosis in Delhi, said. The fact that cases of cancer in the Ballia villages are abnormally high could probably be a confirmation of this.

A study by Unicef and the Jal Nigam, an Uttar Pradesh government organisation, shows that of 5,651 samples of water collected in Ballia, 4,159 contained arsenic levels higher than the permissible limit.

"People in the villages used to think till recently that the pigmentation on their skin was due to some external infection," Unicef project officer Ross Nickson said. It was only when these became severe and people had to go for amputation that the truth became

known, he added.

The district administration of Ballia, however, reacted with disbelief to the reports. They filed a defamation case against the activists screaming "arsenicosis".

"Some officers might have been under pressure as the villagers complained that those affected with the disease were... socially boycotted. Girls in the affected villages were not getting married because of this," one officer said.

The state government has now woken up to the reality.

A task force of members from the Jal Nigam, Central Ground Water Board, IIT Kanpur, King George Medical College and the Industrial Toxicology Research Centre, has been formed, minister in charge of revenue Ambika Chaudhary, who comes from Ballia, said. All taps in the affected villages have been sealed and residents are being treated, he said.

28 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Saving lives with mangroves

The tsunami of December 26, 2004 that killed tens of thousands may be viewed as a natural calamity beyond human management capabilities. But new scientific evidence suggests the loss of life could have been substantially mitigated. A research study reported by the journal *Science* presents the disturbing conclusion that the removal of mangroves from parts of the coastline in five Asian countries, including India, reduced protection available to communities living close to the coast when the waves struck. Some of the strongest proof of the protective effects of coastal vegetation has come from satellite imagery of Tamil Nadu's Cuddalore coast, pre- and post-tsunami. These images have led investigators, including experts from the University of Copenhagen, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai, the University of Cambridge, and organisations based in Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and the United States, to conclude that villages located behind mangroves suffered little damage, while those without a natural shield were destroyed. Casuarina plantations along the coast raised years ago to shelter against cyclones also offered modest protection. Scientists from various countries who studied the Sri Lanka coast reported in *Current Biology* that relatively healthy mangroves in some of the 24 study sites had blunted the impact of the tsunami by dissipating the energy of its waves. An analytical model proposed by investigators based on tsunami-related data from Tamil Nadu suggests that the presence of 30 trees per 100 square metres may reduce the maximum flow pressure of the waves by better than 90 per cent. These important findings strengthen the view that low-cost natural defences provide a range of benefits that expensive human-made structures may not be able to match.

Given their importance as an ecosystem, it is tragic that coastal greenbelts are under increasing threat. Large swathes of mangroves that make communities resilient by serving as natural dykes and enhancing fish wealth by acting as breeding, spawning, and hatching grounds have been eliminated along many Asian coastlines for short-term economic gain. Dubious 'environmental' policies drawn up to promote commerce at the cost of ecosystem have resulted in the loss of a quarter of the mangrove area in the five tsunami-hit Asian countries during the period 1980-2000. Globally, three million out of 18 million hectares of mangroves have been lost during the 1990s on account of facilitating settlements, tourism, industrial construction, and aquaculture. The recent research findings come as a timely warning. Clearly, there is no justification for dilution of environmental policy for immediate gains. Planting coastal vegetation, particularly mangroves, in appropriate locations to replace what has been lost could mitigate damage already done, but the real task before the Ministry of Environment and Forests is to strengthen the coastal regulation zone scheme to provide absolute protection to what is left of this ecosystem.

Towards universal guidelines on water use

Ramaswamy R. Iyer

THE ARTICLE "Water and the Constitution" by T.N. Narasimhan (*The Hindu* December 15 2005) has offered a declaration or manifesto on water for adoption by India. This article proposes to annotate his observations and add some of the author's own.

The question arises: is there a need for a water manifesto? The case for one, as briefly argued by Prof. Narasimhan, is persuasive. Given the finite availability of freshwater on this planet, and the mounting pressure on that scarce resource because of the rate of growth of population, the pace of urbanisation and the processes of economic development, it is clear that a major challenge, perhaps a crisis, lies ahead of us. The importance of water is indeed widely recognised, but the formulation in response to that recognition is often on wrong lines.

Competition for and conflicts over the scarce resource are predicted, and the possibility of 'water wars' in the future is projected. The statement by Ismail Serageldin that the next war will be fought not over oil but over water has been repeatedly cited. Many thinkers have pointed out that the evidence of history is overwhelmingly against the likelihood of water wars, but the Serageldin phrase continues to be quoted.

Be that as it may, conflicts are certainly likely; indeed they are present already, both within countries and between countries. They are likely to be accentuated by the additional supply-side projects (big dams and reservoirs, long-distance water transfers) that are proposed as the answers to future demands. One may add that countries may or may not wage wars against one another over water, but separately and together, they have certainly been waging war against nature and Planet Earth!

There is a need for fundamental and holistic re-thinking about water at the international level and the adoption of a basic Water Declaration or Convention.

Cutting a long story short, the point is that if the projected crisis is to be averted, it is clear that there is an urgent need for a purposeful and fundamental re-thinking about water. The case for a water manifesto seems evident. Prof. Narasimhan says there is no water policy at present. There is, of course, the National Water Policy 1987 amended into the National Water Policy 2002 (NWP), but he is essentially right. The NWP is an imperfect, weak, deficient document lacking in coherence and vision, and cannot really serve the purpose of a water manifesto of the kind that Prof. Narasimhan has in mind. A new policy document is needed.

If so, the next question is whether Prof. Narasimhan's formulation is on the right lines. He states the nature of water as a finite, scarce, and precious natural resource and its essentiality as life-support, stresses the need for managing it wisely and commends a public trust doctrine. He seems to this writer to be fundamentally right. The two parts of his formulation need to be put together, and (in this writer's view) supplemented by a few additional points.

For instance, water is divergently perceived as life-support, basic right, common pool resource, economic good, property of the state, and so on, leading to divergent prescriptions such as community-management, declaration of property rights, water markets, state control, etc. There may be partial validity in some of these points, but there are also conflicts among them. They

need to be harmonised and integrated into a unified and holistic statement. The present writer has attempted draft declarations in some of his papers. Others have done so too. Prof. Narasimhan's formulation needs to be conflated with some of these drafts. That will have to be a separate exercise and cannot be gone into here.

Does such a declaration or manifesto need to be incorporated in the Constitution of India as proposed by Prof. Narasimhan? The Constitution is mainly a fundamental law that provides the basis for all other laws; sectoral policy essays cannot easily be incorporated into it. However, the Constitution does make certain policy declarations such as those relating to equality, non-discrimination, fundamental rights, responsibilities, reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and so on. Should we add water to that list? The question may arise: why only water?

Water in the Constitution

The answer is clear enough: water is not like steel or cement or fertilizer; for the reasons stated earlier, it is special and important enough to warrant specific mention in the Constitution. It may be added that water is not just a 'sector' of the economy; it transcends all sectors and indeed the economy itself. However there cannot be a detailed statement in the Constitution. A very brief, compressed provision could be put into the Directive Principles of State Policy and/

or Fundamental Responsibilities, and it could then be elaborated in a separate Policy Statement or Law.

Given the fact that 'water' is primarily a State subject under the Constitution, with the Centre being enabled to play a role in relation to inter-State rivers if Parliament so legislates, how can a national water law be enacted? Alternatively, if a national policy statement were to be adopted, what will be its legal force? (That question arises even with reference to the existing National Water Policy 2002.) This is not an insuperable difficulty. Public debate needs to focus on the need for a basic policy statement or law on water, and on its contents. If a consensus on these is reached, ways and means of bringing such a Declaration or Law into existence and making it effective can be explored with the assistance of constitutional experts.

Finally, thinking needs to be transformed at the international level also. The old Helsinki Rules and the UN Convention of 1997 (not ratified so far by the required number of countries) deal only with one aspect of the water theme, namely, the sharing of international rivers ('drainage basins' or 'water courses') by the countries concerned; they do not set forth a view of water in all its complexity. It may be added that water has for long been recognised in the UN system as a 'human need' but there was much resistance to accepting it as a 'human right', but that acceptance came recently through a General Comment. That is a good development, but 'human right' is also only a partial statement that fails to encompass the complexity and multi-dimensionality of water.

At present there are three influential formulations on water in the international arena: the Dublin-Rio principles; the approach of 'Integrated Water Resources Management' or IWRM propagated by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and the World Water Council (WWC); and the persistent advocacy of water markets and the privatisation of water services by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The Dublin-Rio principles essentially characterise water as an economic good, and this provides the underpinning to the WB-ADB view of water as a commodity like any other, and best left to market forces. These need to be replaced by a more holistic view of water.

The Dublin-Rio formulation also lays down the principle of 'subsidiarity', i.e., the principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level, or in other words at a level not higher than necessary. That seems to favour decentralisation and therefore to be consistent with the idea of community-management and the promotion of local, civil society initiatives; but that is not necessarily so. Underlying the principle of subsidiarity there is also an unstated idea of reducing the role of the state, not so much in favour of the community or civil society as in that of the corporate private sector. That is no doubt the reason why this principle is enthusiastically adopted by the World Bank.

As for the GWP's IWRM approach, it is an advance over earlier thinking, but is characterised by many limitations; it is derived from and continues to be influenced by old-style engineering-based thinking, and has a built-in bias towards centralisation and gigantism.

Those comments cannot be elaborated here. The point that is sought to be made is that there is a need for fundamental and holistic re-thinking about water at the international level and the adoption of a basic Water Declaration or Convention. One hopes Prof. Narasimhan's article will be the starting point of a debate towards that end. The present article is offered as a modest contribution to such a debate.

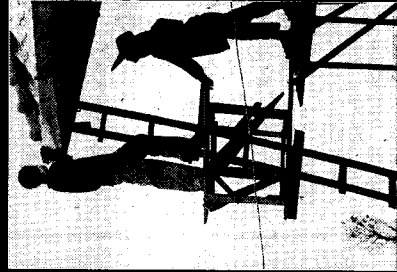
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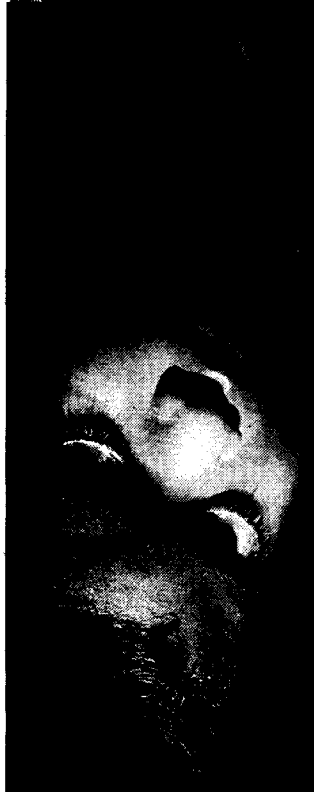
SUMATRA

THE DAY EARTH WOBBLED

Exactly one year ago this day, a tremor ripped apart the ocean floor off Sumatra, sending giant waves crashing into Indian Ocean coastlines. A dozen countries were hit. Villages and five-star resorts were swept away. At least 216,000 people were killed. Almost 400,000 houses were destroyed. More than 2 million people were left homeless. The scars are still fresh.



(From top left) Eight-year-old Swedish boy Karl Nilsson stands with a hand-written sign that asks for help in finding his family in Thailand; Acehese men bring a new house at Lapatank village in the capital Banda Aceh; a boy prepares to feed a dog; Karl Nilsson stands with his family and others attend a service for Swedish victims at Ben Yang National Park near Phuket



Survivors, families and friends gathered on Sunday around the Indian Ocean to remember the dead on the eve of the anniversary of the tsunami which snatched away tens of thousands of loved ones. More than 220,000 people were killed and the lives of millions more were altered forever in the December 26 catastrophe, unleashed by one of the world's largest-ever earthquakes which struck off the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

In Indonesia's Aceh, the area most devastated by the walls of water, officials readied for the arrival of around 40 special envoys from governments around the world, including East Timorese president Xanana Gusmao. Around 168,000 people were killed or remain missing in Indonesia.

At the flattened village of Lambung, near where Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will preside over a memorial ceremony on Monday at 0116 GMT — the precise time the first waves smashed ashore — survivors prepared to hold an overnight vigil.

In Jakarta, the capital of the world's most populous Muslim nation, people have been invited to attend a march culminating with prayers for the victims. In Sri Lanka, President Mahinda Rajapakse is due to lead commemoration ceremonies Monday with an address to the nation from the site where a train was engulfed by the tsunami, killing over 1,000 passengers.

The Colombo government has invited Buddhist monks, Hindu and Christian priests and Muslim clerics to perform respective religious services for the 31,000 people who were officially estimated to have perished in the tsunami.

Private organisations have also called for the lighting of traditional coconut oil lamps along the island's coastlines while a charity is organising a candle-light vigil at Independence Square in Colombo. Hundreds of relatives of victims and survivors of the tsunami were arriving in Thailand ahead of a series of memorial events planned there. Some 2,436 foreigners from 37 countries were among the nearly 5,400 who died in the disaster. AFP

One year on, promises to keep in Sri Lanka

One year after the tsunami, the country shows a mixed record on relief and reconstruction.

V.S. Sambandan

THE SCARS of the devastation have started to heal, but there is still a long way to go. Several political, economic, and social issues surfaced during the year as the island-nation battled to recover from its worst recorded natural disaster. The positives include a relatively good performance in relief operations, the fairly on-target completion of transitional housing, and a quick resumption of normal lives by the survivors.

The continued political bickering tops the list of the negatives. When the tsunami struck, there was a slender hope that the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would work together, at least on humanitarian issues. It was also hoped the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the opposition United National Party (UNP) would join hands. These hopes were belied.

The highlight of the political efforts was the agreement between the Government and the LTTE to create a Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS). This agreement, however, was still-born after the Supreme Court ruled its key provisions relating to finances and organisational structure were illegal.

Cooperation between the SLFP and the UNP was another non-starter; that Presidential elections were to be held in November did not help the chances of a common effort. Consequently, the two extremes of Sri Lanka's polity — the LTTE in the Tamil-majority north and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in the Sinhala-majority south — rushed in to fill the space left vacant, through their front organisations.

Unfortunately, the ground level camaraderie displayed in the wake of the tsunami — when people rushed to help the victims irrespective of ethnicity — was not taken forward. Sri Lanka lost yet another moment for ushering in political and ethnic rapprochement.

On the financial front, however, there has been enough reason for comfort. Overwhelming international assistance has been promised. While the total cost of the post-tsunami relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction effort is estimated at \$2.2 billion, Sri Lanka has received pledges worth \$2.8 billion. Of this \$2.1 billion has translated into commitments. Prudent management has helped contain the inflationary pressures during the year.

The sunny side of the story, however, ends there. Total disbursements have been a mere \$0.6 billion. Lack of a proper strategy, shortages in the construction industry, and inadequate implementation programmes are cited as reasons for the low aid-absorption.

A key indicator to the progress being



BABY 81: The Asian tsunami's most celebrated survivor Abilash Jeyarajah, is given a bath by a relative at his home in Cheddipalayam about 210 km east of Colombo, Sri Lanka. The tsunami separated Abilash, who was then two months old, from his parents. He was found under some debris and became the 81st person to be admitted to the local hospital. Eight couples claimed the baby before Murugapillai and Jenita Jeyarajah underwent DNA tests to prove they were Abilash's parents. — PHOTO: AP

made is the pace of reconstruction. An estimated 98,000 houses were destroyed in the tsunami, rendering 5.16 lakh people internally displaced, according to a report prepared by the Government and the international donors.

The Government estimated that 60,000 transitional houses would be required for who were displaced and had no supporting social network of relatives or friends to fall back on. By November, 54,102 transitional shelters were completed, described as a "success story" for the Government and all the donors and NGOs involved in the projects.

Sri Lanka's progress in permanent housing, however, is an entirely different story. The issue of constructing permanent houses was for long stuck in the controversy over the buffer zone.

The Government initially proposed 100 to 200 metres along the affected coastline within which fresh construction was to be

banned. As most of the 98,000 houses destroyed were within this zone, reconstruction became a major issue. Concerns over livelihood raised by fishermen who preferred to live along the coast, and scarcity of land outside the proposed buffer zones were the complicating factors.

With revised guidelines specifying reduced buffer zones in the offing, officials hope to clear a major hurdle. Severe shortages in labour, rising wages, and an impending shortfall in construction material have severely hampered reconstruction of permanent housing.

As new institutional structures are proposed to be put in place, the Government hopes to complete the permanent houses by 2006-end. The bigger infrastructure projects, such as bridges and highways, are likely to take another 3-4 years to complete.

The most glaring lacuna in the post-tsunami operations is that one year on, there is no clear figure of the number of those killed.

The numbers vary from 17,000 to more than 35,000. This, in a way, signifies the institutional weaknesses that have hampered post-tsunami operations.

President Mahinda Rajapakse has promised a new structure that would incorporate the several organisations involved both in post-tsunami operations and in the projects in conflict-hit northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The proposed Reconstruction and Development Authority will serve as the nodal agency for development.

A Ministry of Skills Development is also in place to provide training to meet labour shortages. For a country with an unemployed population of more than eight lakh, accelerated skills development has now become a policy priority.

Much work remains to be done on large infrastructure projects. The international commitments for reconstruction are likely to dry up in the next three to four years unless the pace is stepped up.

Tsunami relief and U.S. strategic moves

Has Indonesia's cooperation with the U.S. over "disaster relief" acquired potential strategic overtones?

P.S. Suryanarayana

AS THE world marks on Monday the first anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the story of the human spirit goes beyond the manner in which the international community marshalled itself to meet the colossal tragedy across several countries.

Aceh province of Indonesia was the worst affected. Unlike India, which relied on itself for emergency relief, Indonesia sought and obtained enormous external help. Significantly, India joined the United States, Australia, and Japan in a core group that rushed to Indonesia's help ahead of the United Nations.

Politically, it suited Jakarta to have India as an independent player in the core group of navies, given the wariness of Indonesians about Washington's real intentions. Jakarta's sensitivity was compounded by the fact that Aceh was then the hotbed of a separatist insurgency. And, in the years before the tsunami, the U.S. and Australia had either imposed sanctions or passed strictures on Indonesia. The reasons cited were perceived human rights violations by the Indonesian

military establishment (TNI in local parlance).

Of the core group countries, the U.S., given its vast maritime reach, deployed a state-of-the-art aircraft carrier, *Abraham Lincoln*, to carry out tsunami relief. Australia, India, and Japan too deployed naval vessels such as floating hospitals and supply ships. Thereafter, India was the first to leave the scene on completing the emergency-relief mission, while political controversies broke out in Indonesia over the mandate of the U.S. Navy in particular. But the issue gradually faded from public debate, as the emergency was tided over.

Engaging Yudhoyono

Behind the scenes, though, Washington remained proactively engaged with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who had undergone training in the U.S. during his military career. It was, therefore, no surprise when, on November 22, the U.S. cited "disaster relief," alongside "counterterrorism" and "maritime security," while outlining "joint objectives" for a new strategic tie-up with Indonesia.

Formally described as "aid to modernise Indonesia's military forces, [and] support joint security objectives," the new deal was portrayed as a move to "resume select military assistance" to Jakarta. Before this, the U.S. reinforced its long-standing military alliance with Japan. Washington has left no room for doubt that the new U.S.-Japan deal is to checkmate China. It stands to reason, therefore, that Washington's latest arrangements with Indonesia too is designed to promote the same strategic objective of checkmating China. However, the die is not fully cast.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso asserted on December 22 that China is "beginning to become a considerable threat." Mr. Aso's reasoning was that China "is a neighbour with one billion people equipped with nuclear bombs." While Japan's defence budget in 2004 was of the order of \$ 41.5 billion, far above the Chinese expenditure, Tokyo identifies as serious concerns the alleged non-transparency of Beijing's rising defence spending and China's status as a "veto power" at the United Nations.

In contrast, Mr. Yudhoyono, who recently

visited Beijing, has given no definitive indication of wanting to play a U.S.-surrogate in East Asia.

If the conspicuous presence of Japan in the four-nation tsunami-related core group and if Indonesia's cooperation with the U.S. over "disaster relief" have acquired potential strategic overtones, what of India and Australia, the other two members of the core group?

With no bets placed, diplomats and analysts tend to see the core group itself as a potential strategic formation under overall U.S. auspices. The reasoning is based on Australia's status as a U.S. ally, and Washington's efforts to fashion a new entente with India.

This kind of selective engagement by the U.S., aimed at keeping China in check, flows from what some experts like Joseph S. Nye, better known for advocating the importance of "soft power," have perceived as "the paradox of American power." There may be reasons why the world's only superpower cannot go it alone in meeting the "China threat." But, why should Indonesia or India join the U.S.?

A YEAR AFTER DISASTER, THE FISHING COMMUNITY OF DEVANAMPATTINAM ARE JUST PICKING UP THE THREADS OF LIFE AFRESH

Tsunami, a word that changed lives

Radhika Girish/SNS

CUDDALORE, Dec. 24 — The waves crash on the beach with seeming harshness. The water almost reaches the edge of the quiet fisherman's village of Devanampattinam in Cuddalore. A few yards more, and waves would be lapping the boats on the sand. But catamarans (country boats made of large logs tied together) have become a relatively rare sight in these parts, which were once full of them.

On the beach, seated among a group of four by a boat is Shankar, busy repairing his fishing net. The fibre boat needs small repairs and the four are kept busy under the warm sun. Shankar points to the four as his family. Another brother now lives elsewhere, he says. That brother was among those who received one of the boats given by the NGOs to the fishermen's panchayat under an allotment to compensate for losses suffered by this community because of the 26 December tsunami. Since then he has gone to

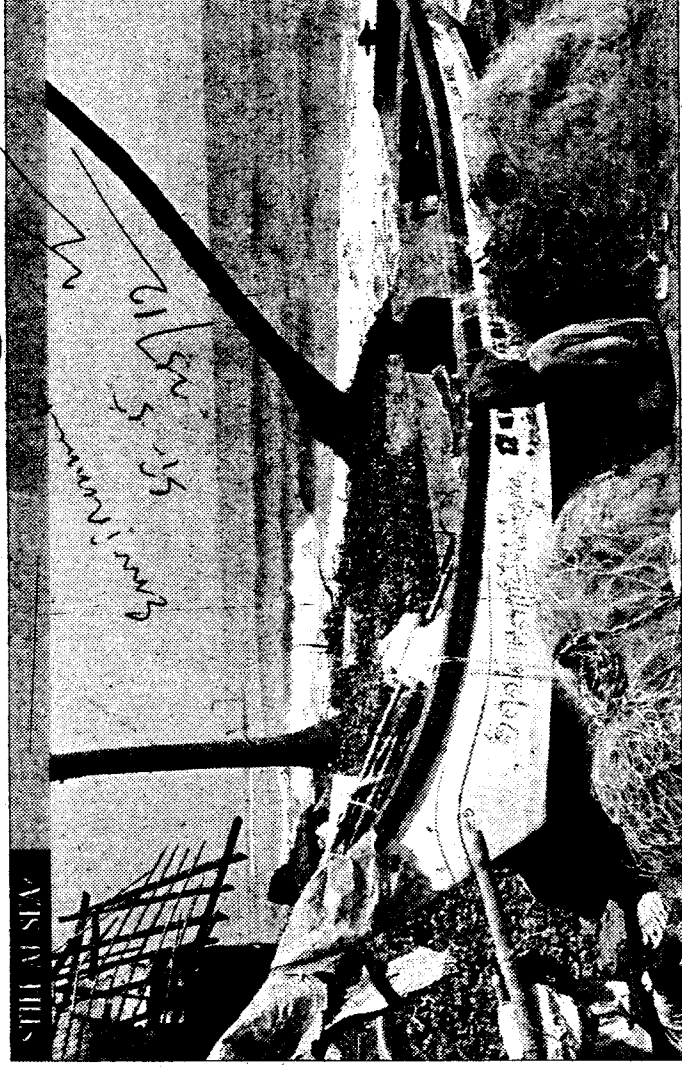
live on his own, says Shankar. On the day the killer wave crashed on Devanampattinam coast, Shankar was in mid-sea with four other fishermen and had no inkling of the devastation on land. Upon his return, he found that nothing was the same. The wave had devastated the coast in 13 districts of Tamil Nadu, affected 418 hamlets and 230 villages and killed a total of 7,995 people. Devanampattinam was the worst effected in Cuddalore district. Homes on the beach were washed away along with people and their possessions. Villagers did not return to sea for six months after the wave struck the coast on 26 December last year.

Almost a year later, remnants of devastation are still in evidence in the villages. Evidence of homes washed away can still be seen in Devanampattinam, Pudukuppam, Singarathoppu, Sonankuppam, all doffing the coast in Cuddalore district. At times, it is a temporary shelter, at others it is a broken part of a wall, at times a half broken

PM may visit areas

NEW DELHI, Dec. 24. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today expressed his desire to visit tsunami-affected regions to take stock of the rehabilitation work when he chaired a meeting of senior officials on the eve of the first anniversary of the disaster. He is expected to visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which bore the brunt of the killer waves, in the near future, PM's media adviser Mr Sanjaya Baru said in a statement after the meeting to take stock of India's response to the tsunami. A detailed presentation was made on the steps taken to provide relief, ensure rehabilitation and facilitate reconstruction. **PTI**

house with wooden beams still jutting out that indicate human habitation not long ago. The huts are nowhere in sight. Residents, who have taken refuge with their relatives in the village, point to a patch of land nearby where a sister, or a relative lived, in the clannish



Fishermen mend their nets at Devanampattinam on Saturday. The Statesman

tradition they still cling on to. Temporary shelters are neighbours of permanent homes in the villages, looking to recover from the mass loss of people and material. Like the Catamaran, women on the

beach have also become a rare sight. Says M Kumar, a fisherman settled in a permanent shelter built in Pudukuppam village: "In the tsunami wave, villages lost women and children in large numbers. They could not escape quickly. Women are no longer keen on being on the beach. Earlier, they were on the beach in the same numbers as men, as they sold the fish, helped in net repair. Now, we have taken on

the work of selling too."

With the peak fishing season (between June and September) gone, the men can be sighted playing cards in groups. "This fishing season went without making much difference to our lives. While most of us did not have boats to venture into the sea on time, some of us did not have proper nets to venture deep for the large catch. The continuing roughness of the waters also kept us away. We are still scared," says Shankar.

The poor catch is still making the fishermen's return to normalcy difficult. They have been asked to move to permanent shelters being built nearby. "We do not mind moving away. We do not like the houses that are being built for us. But we are being asked to shift for safety," says Gayatri.

The new houses come with toilets in every home, something they are not used to. They feel their clannish ways are also set to change with some of them being shifted to a different venue. The men have already stopped sleeping on the beach.

India not keen on regional tsunami warning network

PALLAVA BAGLA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23

INDIA is reluctant to join other Indian Ocean rim nations wanting to kick-start the installation of a tsunami early warning system. The country sticks out as a "data holdout" since it allows other nations access neither to real-time data from its seismic network nor to online tide gauge data. Similarly, the readings from the network of deep-sea sensors it hopes to have in place by September 2007 may be available for use only to its national agencies.

At the first meeting of Unesco's Intergovernmental Cultural Organization, which is promoting a single networked warning system for the region, Unesco Director-General Koichiro Matsuura said, "National centres must try to move away from their present minimal configuration to develop their own national detection networks, their own risk assessment and preparedness plans." So India has drawn flak for trying to move ahead on its own steam. But, as Union Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal said, "We will take a humanitarian approach beyond our boundaries and a self-reliant approach within our boundaries when setting up and sharing advisories from the Indian tsunami warning system." At least four other countries in the region—Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Australia—are trying to put into place their own systems.

There is a well thought out strategy behind India's data denial. It is the perception here that each key quake parameter, if available to an enemy country, could put Indian

security at serious risk. For instance, online tide gauge data can help adversaries plan marine invasions to precisely match tidal movements. The sensors can also detect ship movement that could give away the hidden locations of our submarines. This, however, does not mean that all Indian data will be sacrosanct. "A flexible approach is the need of the hour," says Sibal. "It should not compromise

Research Institutions for Seismology (IRIS), Washington, US, with 128 stations worldwide—also assists in the verification of CTBT by being the ears through which seismic signatures of nuclear detonations are detected by the participating nations.

It is data from this IRIS network that most seismologists use to quickly ascertain the extent, magnitude and tsunami potential of earth-

forced it to decide on a Rs 125 crore tsunami early warning system. But a change may be in the offing. V S Ramamurthy, nuclear scientist and secretary, Department of Science and Technology, said, "Our existing policy of not sharing online seismic data has to change." He explained that for predicting tsunamis accurately we need data from a much larger geographical area. In order to get bigger lead times for the



The widows of Kameshwaram in Nagapattinam face daily tribulations. Mahendra Parikh

our essential defence-related security concerns."

An important reason for keeping seismic data exclusive is India's nuclear policy and its aversion to joining the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is quite relevant that the world's most reliable and open seismology network—the Global Seismographic Network maintained by the Incorporated

quakes. Since it is not a CTBT signatory, India has never been part of this network. What this means is that the global community is neither connected online to earthquake data recorded in India and nor do they have real-time access to seismic data generated in India.

This inward looking policy seemed perfect for India till the tsunami of December 2004

warnings to be practical, India will have to source accurate seismic data from other places—not easy without joining networks like IRIS.

India is hoping that some or the other of the 36 Indian Ocean rim countries will join in its warning system initiative sooner than later. Ramamurthy added that India is re-assessing its relationship with IRIS and hinted that data re-

Widowed & desperate for anything

JANYALA SREENIVAS
KAMESHWARAM
(NAGAPATTINAM),
DECEMBER 23

HER melancholy eyes tell only half the story of the ordeal she has been through since her husband died in the

of 210 families, who are lured daily by pimps to join the flesh trade. And in the Meenawar community, which frowns on widow remarriages but willingly accepts prostitution, many are giving in for lack of better livelihood opportunities.

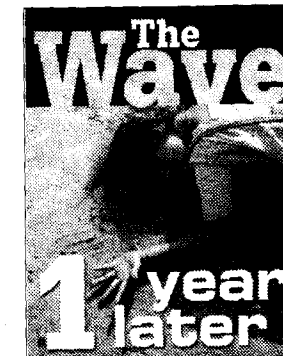
"It is very difficult to keep these women from joining the flesh trade because they have no other means of sustaining themselves and their families," said J Nagarajan, secretary of Kattur-based Bharati Women Development Centre. Bharati has been working in Kameshwaram, about 4 km from Vailankanni, for the past eight months and is trying hard to save the widows from straying. "Their husbands used to catch fish and the women went to nearby markets and sold them. Now there is nobody to bring them the fish," said Nagarajan.

Widows like Elakhi Murugan who have young children to look after survive by helping other families sell their catch. "They earn Rs 50 on a good day during the fishing season. Otherwise they depend on food provided by the panchayat or NGOs," Murugan, a panchayat volunteer says.

NGOs like Bharati are now holding counselling sessions for the widows. "We cannot forcefully prevent anyone from doing any work. We explain to them

the importance of dignity of labour and hard work, and the trap they will all fall into if they try to find easier means of earning," says Nagarajan.

Most widows gathered for



an interaction at the village temple expressed the desire to lead a decent and respectful life. Pushpavalli, 55, the oldest among them, said they need a "loading autorickshaw", a goods carrier. "We cannot carry a big load of fish on our heads to the market. If we can get a loading rickshaw all of us can buy more fish here and take them as far as Akkaraipettai or Nagapattinam to sell. Maybe we will even get a better price there. We can then earn a little more money," she said.

Bharati has constructed a fish landing point in the village and fishermen auction fish there daily. "We belong to the fishing community and we only know how to deal in fish. We have to have a better way of getting the fish to the market. If that can be done we don't have to

look for any other work," says a weeping Chinnapalai.

Although the Kameshwaram village fishermen's panchayat is supposed to look after the families, especially the widows, it has not even ensured proper investment by the women of the compensation money they got for their husband's deaths. "The majority of the widows have squandered the money. Either their sons and relatives have used it for unproductive purposes or they lived lavishly till the money lasted," says Nagarajan.

Murugan adds, "A few women have put the money in fixed deposits. Using the interest, one started a small shop, some started selling fish." But this was not the prudent way of all women. "They did not think of ensuring their economic security when they got so much money and spent it all. They just did not listen to our advice," said Govindraj, the village fishermen panchayat head.

Ephrem Susai, regional manager of the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Society, thinks NGOs and social organisations will be able to take care of widows. "So long as there is monetary support from organisations and the government they will be taken care of. It is only when aid stops that things will go wrong. Some stray cases of the widows opting for prostitution are already there," he said.

garding earthquakes of magnitude 5 and above could soon be reciprocally swapped in near real-time. Earlier

many international experts had raised a red flag on India's policy of data holdout, but there is grudging under-

standing of the country's compulsions. Costas Synolaks, a tsunami specialist from the department of civil engi-

neering, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, said, "I am less pessimistic about this now."

প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগে নিষেধাজ্ঞা কার্যকর করা নিয়ে সংশয়

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা: প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগের বিরুদ্ধে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের জেহাদ বাস্তবে কতটা কার্যকর করে তোলা যাবে, সে বিষয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে শিল্পমহলে। পরিবেশ রক্ষার জন্য প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগ নিষিদ্ধকরণে তো বটেই, এমনকী এ বিষয়ে কড়া কড়ি করার ক্ষেত্রেও বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়াতে পারে শিল্পায়নের তাগিদ। এটাই মনে করছে সংশ্লিষ্ট মহল।

রাজ্যে এখন মোট ৬২৭টি প্লাস্টিক কারখানা। এর মধ্যে ৮০ শতাংশ কারখানায় তৈরি হয় প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগ। এর সঙ্গে জড়িয়ে আছে ২০ হাজার মানুষের জীবিকার প্রশ্ন। রাজ্যে মোট প্লাস্টিক ব্যবহারের ৩ শতাংশ প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগ হলেও, বাস্তবে এর প্রভাব সুদূরপ্রসারী। হলদিয়া প্রকল্পের অন্তর্গত প্লাস্টিক কারখানাগুলি নতুন চালু হয়েছে। প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগ নিষিদ্ধ করলে অধিকাংশ ক্ষুদ্র সংস্থা কয়েক দিনের মধ্যেই গুটিয়ে যাবে বলে আশঙ্কা করছেন প্লাস্টিক শিল্পদ্যোগীরা। সে ক্ষেত্রে ফের ধাক্কা খাবে রাজ্যের শিল্পায়ন ও তার ভাবমূর্তি।

এ কথা মানতে নারাজ পশ্চিমবঙ্গ শিল্পায়ন নিগমের ম্যানেজিং ডিরেক্টর গোপাল কৃষ্ণ। তিনি বলেন, “সাধারণ মানুষের স্বার্থের প্রক্ষেপে আর্থিক লাভ-ক্ষতির প্রসঙ্গ থাকতে পারে না। প্লাস্টিক শিল্প মানেই কিন্তু প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগ নয়।”

উল্লেখ্য, প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগের ক্ষেত্রে ২০ মাইক্রন পর্যন্ত ছাড় দেওয়া আছে। ইন্ডিয়ান প্লাস্টিক অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের প্রাক্তন প্রেসিডেন্ট জগদীশচন্দ্র অগ্রবাল সমস্যার কথা স্বীকার করে নিয়েও বলেছেন, নিষেধাজ্ঞা সমস্যার সমাধান নয়। এ ক্ষেত্রে পুরসভার নজরদারি ও প্রয়োজনে শাস্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া বেশি জরুরি।

এই সিদ্ধান্ত কার্যকর হলে চটশিল্পের লাভ হওয়ার কথা। চটকল মালিকদের সংগঠন ইজমার ডেপুটি চেয়ারম্যান রবীন্দ্র পোদ্দার জানান, চাহিদার কথা মাথায় রেখে এখন বড় মিলগুলি নিজেরাই চটের ব্যাগ ও এ ধরনের জিনিস তৈরি করছে। বড় মিলগুলির ক্ষেত্রে এ ধরনের ব্যবসার পরিমাণ বছরে প্রায় ৫০ লক্ষ টাকা।

জুট ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং ডেভেলপমেন্ট কর্পোরেশনের সচিব অরুণ বল জানান, রাজ্যে প্রায় ৬০০টি ক্ষুদ্র শিল্পসংস্থা চটের ব্যাগ তৈরি করে। তবে দামের ব্যাপারে অবশ্য বিশেষ আশাবাদী নন তিনি। এখন চটের ব্যাগের দাম তিন থেকে চার টাকা। চটের বিবিধ জিনিস তৈরির ব্যবসায় নিযুক্ত জলি গুহঠাকুরতা জানান, বাজারে চাহিদা তৈরি হলে দাম কমানো সম্ভব। চলতি বাজার দর থেকে তা নামিয়ে ৮০ পয়সায় নামিয়ে আনা যাবে বলে তিনি মনে করেন।

তবে দামের অসঙ্গতি থেকেই যাচ্ছে। কারণ ২০ মাইক্রন প্লাস্টিক ব্যাগের দাম মাত্র ১০ থেকে ২০ পয়সা। বড় মাপে উৎপাদন করলেও চটের ব্যাগের দাম দাঁড়াবে ৮০ পয়সা। এই ৬০ পয়সার ফারাক খুচরো বিক্রেতার কাছে অনেকটাই বলে মনে করছে সংশ্লিষ্ট মহল।

Second toxic spill hits China

AGENCIES

BEIJING/KHABAROVSK, December 22

A TOXIC slick has cut off water to thousands of people living along a river in southern China and was on Thursday headed for Guangzhou, a city of 10 million residents. The incident was reported while residents of Khabarovsk in far eastern Russia braced for tough times as another toxic slick — resulting from an explosion at a Chinese factory on November 13 — reached the city on Thursday.

The latest incident that was caused by excessive cadmium discharges from a smelting works in Shaoguan city on December 15, has polluted the Beijiang river in Guangdong province.

Officials denied there had been any stoppage to the water supply due to the slick, which came a month after a chemical spill in northeast China shut off water for four days to millions of people.

But residents in Yingde, a city of one million people downstream from Shaoguan, said on Thursday they had been without running water for most of this week.

Workers at a cement factory on the banks of the polluted Beijiang said its more than 1,000 employees had been rely-

ing on potable water trucked in by four fire engines.

"The fire engines' water is only for drinking. There's not enough water for showering," said an official surnamed Huang at the Yingde Cement Factory.

Officials in Yingde said on Wednesday the city had lowered a dam gate to halt the slick and had built an emergency pipeline

to divert water from a local reservoir to urban areas. Several Yingde hotels, however, said the city had cut off water on Thursday.

"They cut water from about 8 am to about noon today," said an employee surnamed Liang at the Dongfang Hotel downtown. "They announced on television that the reason was because of the



AFP

Russian officials monitor water quality of the Amur in Khabarovsk on Thursday.

toxic slick. They told us to prepare back-up water," he said.
Many families were using water they had collected in cement tanks. Guangdong officials appeared eager to avoid charges of incompetence like those that followed the spill a month ago, which led to the head of China's environmental protection agency being sacked.

Meanwhile, in Khabarovsk, tons of carbon are being used to filter out contamination from water supplies taken from the contaminated Amur River, which normally provides the city with all its water. The dreaded slick, which extends for 110 miles, entered the city limits five weeks after a chemical plant explosion in China's northeast spewed 100 tons of benzene, nitrobenzene and other toxins into the Songhua River.

The Songhua becomes the Amur in Russia, and Natalya Zimina, a spokeswoman for the regional administration, said levels in the Amur were normal and water supplies to the city of 580,000 would be maintained.

Experts, however, warned that the ecological fallout would be felt later. Benzene and nitrobenzene are heavier than water and they are settling on the river bottom or sticking to the ice.

Grozny under radiation cloud

FRED Weir
Moscow, December 17

A CHECHEN chemical factory, bombed by Russian forces in 1999, has been found to be emitting "catastrophic levels" of radiation.

Russian TV said the pollution at the Chechennftekhimprom plant, near Grozny, is equal to "half a Chernobyl" — a reference to the 1986 accident at a Soviet nuclear station, the worst atomic disaster in history.

Chechen prosecutors, who have launched a criminal case against the factory's management, say that nearly 30 "dangerous radioactive isotopes" have been identified at the plant, including Cobalt 60, which is deadly if ingested by humans.

The level of radiation inside the factory is "58,000 times greater than the legal limit", Russian TV reported.

Experts say the radiation could pose a serious threat to the city of Grozny, whose inhabitants have endured two destructive wars in the past decade.

Russian experts also worry that the quantities of unsecured nu-

clear material found at the Chechen chemical plant could provide terrorists with means to build a "dirty bomb".

A dirty bomb is a conventional explosive packed with radioactive debris, which could make a large city uninhabitable for decades.

It was not clear why the radioactive source had been kept in the factory, but officials said it posed a severe threat to anyone who came near to it.

"This is above all now a threat to the population, because the leadership and officials of the firm did not take the necessary steps to isolate the isotope," Chechen prosecutor Valery Kuznetsov said on NTV television.

Almost all of Grozny was destroyed by Russian bombing in 1999-2000 when troops poured into the region to reassert central control over separatist rebels.

Once a mighty industrial centre, Grozny's factories are now a wasteland of twisted steel — many of them dotted with machine gun nests. No comment on the issue was forthcoming from other Chechen officials.

NUCLEAR WASTE

18 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2005

Improved climate for Kyoto agenda

The 11th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Montreal has certainly brought about an improvement in the "atmospherics" relating to the international campaign to reduce the danger of global warming. The UNFCCC's concrete programme, embodied in the Kyoto Protocol, had come under stress following the refusal of the U.S. (besides Australia) to accede to the Protocol and the U.S.' own parallel initiatives in recent months in forging "partnerships" with several countries on climate issues outside the treaty. The Montreal conference has had two major achievements. One was in firming up a plan to start talks on further commitments on targeted emission reductions beyond 2012 by those developed countries which have already undertaken such commitments in the first phase of the Protocol. The second was in trying to bring the U.S. and other dissident members of the UNFCCC into the international climate change agenda by initiating what is called a "dialogue process", due to take place in the next two years. The conference has gone out of the way to accommodate U.S. concerns. First it has emphasised that the "dialogue on long-term cooperative action" is based on a recognition of "diversity of approaches to address climate change" and the "essential role of technology". Secondly, it has declared that the dialogue will "take the form of an open and non-binding exchange of views, information and ideas in support of enhanced implementation of the Convention and will not open any negotiations leading to new commitments." It is hoped that the non-binding dialogue process will make it easier for U.S. administration, present or future, to end its boycott of Kyoto.

Equally important would be a series of decisions, mostly of a technical and procedural nature, which are intended to take forward the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), one of the main instruments of cooperation between developed and developing countries under the Kyoto regime. The CDM, which is a market mechanism facilitating transfer of technology to developing countries for projects based on sustainable development, had been making very slow progress because of the complexity of procedures and vagueness in respect of criteria such as "baseline", "additionality", and afforestation. The institutional framework necessary at the level of individual nations, certified agencies for monitoring and approving CDM projects, and even carbon trading exchanges have all been put in place in the past few years. However, not even half a dozen projects had gone through the whole gamut of approval till now. Accelerated operation of the CDM will be valuable to the global community in forging the broadest possible political commitment to the issue of climate change. The conference's decision to examine the technological feasibility of 'capturing' carbon and storing it underground as one method of mitigation of global warming is also likely to widen the support base of the UNFCCC's agenda.

18 15 RISING HEAT

There are two seemingly obvious statements that have left their imprint on the consciousness of the modern world. One is the maxim of the Utilitarians which holds up "the greatest good of the greatest number" as the test for any public action and policy. The other is John Maynard Keynes's epigram which announces that "in the long run we are all dead". The deliberations on climate change and global warming seem to be caught in the contradiction embedded in these two statements. Global warming caused by increasing carbon emissions is a long-term threat to planet earth. Many of the present inhabitants of the world may not be directly affected by global warming, and therefore they can choose to remain indifferent to what is a long-term and long-drawn-out impact. The Utilitarian maxim does not raise the question of time. Is it rational, it might well be asked, to make sacrifices in the present to achieve a collective good in the future? Yet the entire debate concerning climate change hinges on this question. The Kyoto Protocol, which now lies in tatters, failed because there was no agreement on the answer to this question. The costs of cutting carbon emissions are huge but the benefits are not immediate, although they are far-reaching.

In this context, the pessimism that enveloped the global environment ministers' meeting in Montreal last week is understandable. The principal item on the agenda was the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to which, it needs to be recalled, the United States of America was not a signatory. This remained a stumbling block in Montreal as well despite an eloquent plea to save the planet by the former US president, Mr Bill Clinton. This should not, however, encourage votaries of doom. For one thing, business houses seem to be undergoing a change of heart and have shown a willingness to look beyond their bottom line. Representatives of leading multinational companies met the British prime minister, Mr Tony Blair, to make the case that the G-8 rich-country group should enter into a global carbon-trading system. In the US, 100 cities and 24 states have evolved methods to curb greenhouse gases. It would appear that away from governments, there is an emerging consciousness among individuals and corporations about the perils confronting humankind. The failure of Kyoto may be compensated by man's innate sense of survival.

15 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

UN PACT TO NEGOTIATE EMISSION CUTS ✓✓

Deal reached on climate change

50-8 11/12

Associated Press

MONTREAL, Dec. 10. — A UN conference on global warming, working overtime in snowy Montreal, ended early today with a watershed agreement by more than 150 nations — an unwilling USA not among them — to open talks on mandatory post-2012 reductions in greenhouse gases.

The Bush administration, which rejects the emissions cutbacks of the current Kyoto Protocol, accepted a second, weaker conference decision, agreeing to join an exploratory global “dialogue” on future steps to combat climate change.

That agreement specifically ruled out “negotiations leading to new commitments,” however.

The divergent tracks did little to close the climate gap between Washington on one side, and Europe, Japan and other supporters of the Kyoto Protocol on the other. But environmentalists welcomed the plan to negotiate “second-phase” emissions cuts. “The Kyoto Protocol is alive and kicking,” said Ms Jennifer Morgan of the World Wide Fund for Nature. Before finally gaveling the two-week conference to a close at 6:15 a.m. conference president Ms Stephane Dion told delegates: “What we have achieved is no less than a map for the future, the Montreal Action Plan.” But Ms Dion, Canada’s environment minister, later acknowledged to reporters, “I would

prefer to have the USA in Kyoto.” The Montreal meeting was the first of the annual climate conferences since the Kyoto Protocol took effect last February, mandating specific cutbacks in emissions of carbon dioxide and five other gases by 2012 in 35 industrialised countries.

A broad scientific consensus agrees that these gases accumulating in the atmosphere, byproducts of automobile engines, power plants and other fossil fuel-burning industries, contributed significantly to the past century’s global temperature rise of 1 degree Fahrenheit (0.7 degrees Celsius). Continued warming is melting glaciers worldwide, shrinking the Arctic ice cap and heating up the oceans, raising sea levels, scientists say. They predict major climate disruptions in coming decades.

The USA is the world’s biggest greenhouse-gas emitter, and the Bill Clinton administration was instrumental in negotiating the treaty protocol initialed in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan — a pact the Senate subsequently refused to ratify.

When Mr Bush rejected Kyoto outright after taking office in 2001, he said its mandatory energy cuts would harm the US economy, and he complained that major developing countries were not covered. The protocol’s language required its 157 member nations by 2005 to begin talks on deeper emissions cuts for the next phase.

DFC

11/12

Delegates overjoyed as climate talks take Kyoto to next phase

ALISTER DOYLE
& DAVID FOGARTY
MONTREAL | DECEMBER 10

ENVIRONMENT ministers agreed on Saturday to a road map to extend the Kyoto Protocol climate pact beyond 2012, breaking two weeks of deadlock at UN talks aimed at curbing global warming.

Minutes after passing the Kyoto resolution, ministers also agreed to launch new, open-ended world talks on ways to fight global warming, overcoming objections by the United States, which had resisted taking part in broader discussions.

The Montreal meeting had dragged on till nearly dawn on Saturday, in part delayed by last-minute Russian objections.

"This has been one of the most productive UN climate change conferences ever. This plan sets the course for future action on climate change," said Richard Kinley, acting head of the UN Climate Change Secretariat.

Environment activists cheered, hugged and some even cried after the delegates passed what they saw as historic decisions tackling climate change.

Clinton steals show

MONTREAL: In an impassioned speech, former US President Bill Clinton told the climate talks here on Friday that the Bush administration was "flat wrong" to reject the Kyoto accord and said cutting greenhouse gases was good for business and the planet.



"We know from every passing year ...that if we had a serious, disciplined effort to apply on a large scale existing clean energy and energy conservation technologies that we could meet and surpass the Kyoto targets easily in a way that would strengthen, not weaken, our economies," he said.

REUTERS

"There were many potential points when the world could have given up due to the tactics of the Bush administration and others but it did not," said Jennifer Morgan, of the WWF. "We must count on this resolve moving forward to bring the much deeper cuts in emissions in order to avoid the very devastating impacts of climate change," she said.

11 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

150 nations agree to launch talks on reducing greenhouse gases

Historic resolution passed amid emotional scenes; U.S. refuses to join dialogue

MONTREAL: More than 150 countries agreed on Saturday to start formal talks on mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012, while the United States has refused to join the talks.

The administration of U.S. President George W. Bush, which rejects the Kyoto Protocol requiring signatories to curb greenhouse gas emissions, will only participate in non-binding talks.

Persisting gap

The two-track talks showed that the gap between Washington on the one side, and Europe, Japan and other supporters of the Kyoto Protocol on the other, still remains after two-week talks during the U.N. climate conference.

"These countries are willing to take the leadership," Swiss delegate Bruno Oberle said. "But they are not able to solve the problem. We need the support of the United States."

Minutes after passing the Kyoto resolution, Ministers also agreed to launch new, open-ended world talks on ways to fight global warming, overcoming objections by the United States.

The Montreal meeting had dragged on till nearly dawn on Saturday, in part delayed by last-minute Russian objections.

For its part, the U.S. accepted only a watered-down proposal to enter an exploratory global "dialogue" on future steps to combat climate change. That proposal specifically rules out "negotiations leading to new commit-



A MODERN NERO?: Activists of the environmental group, Energy Action, wearing masks act out U.S. President George Bush fiddling while the planet burned, outside the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal on Friday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

ment." Environment activists cheered, hugged and some even cried after the delegates passed what they saw as historic decisions tackling climate change.

"There were many potential

points at this meeting when the world could have given up due to the tactics of the Bush administration and others but it did not," said Jennifer Morgan, climate change expert at WWF.

"And we must count on this resolve moving forward to bring the much deeper cuts in emissions in order to avoid the devastating impacts of climate change," she said. The Montreal

talks followed a twin track, one pursuing negotiations to advance Kyoto and the other under the broader U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Convention. - Reuters

11 DEC 2005

THE HINLU

Worldwide protests seek climate controls

Montreal: Thousands of protesters took to the streets in cities worldwide to demand urgent action on global warming as delegates continued their work at the climate change conference to review and update the Kyoto Protocol.

Police said about 7,000 people marched on Saturday in downtown Montreal — some dressed up as polar bears. Five environmental groups, including Greenpeace and the Climate Crisis Coalition, delivered a petition signed by 600,000 Americans to the US consulate in Montreal urging US President George W Bush



Thousands march through the streets of Montreal as part of a worldwide day of protest against global warming

and the US Congress to help slow global warming.

"We're worried about cli-

mate change, about ways of life in the Canadian Arctic disappearing," said Sarah Binder of Montreal's Urban Ecology Centre.

Organisers said 10,000 people marched through London, passing Prime Minister Tony Blair's home on Downing Street, where they delivered a letter demanding the government reaffirm its commitment to Kyoto with legally binding targets on emission reductions.

Chanting and blowing whistles, the marchers denounced Blair and Bush for their perceived environmental failings. Some held banners depicting

Bush as 'Wanted — for crimes against the planet' and advising 'Ditch Blair, not Kyoto.'

Canadian Inuit travelled to Montreal from the isolated Arctic north to join the protest there. Indian leader Jose Kusugak said he brought along hunters, trappers and elders to reassure them that people from the south were not indifferent to their plight.

Canada's Environment Minister Stephane Dion, who is presiding over the 10-day UN Climate Change Conference in Montreal, also took part in the march. Protests were expected in 32 countries. AFP

THE ... OF INDIA

UNEP to launch operation clean-up in Baghdad

An assessment of hotspots is presented to Iraqi Ministry

Special Correspondent

complex, 50 km. southeast of Baghdad. Pesticide pollution there is also considered a potential public health risk.

The report warns that destruction of military arsenal is creating new contamination and hazardous waste problems at scrapyards and munitions dumps, which could be better managed with better working practices and basic planning.

There are also recommendations covering the oil industry's contaminated sites and a suggestion for establishment of a hazardous waste treatment facility. Overall close to \$40 million is needed to meet the recommendations in full, according to the UNEP.

The assessment of the five sites was conducted in April 2005 with a contribution from the Japanese government to the United Nations Development Group's Iraqi Trust Fund ear-

marked for the UNEP. These are the Al Quadissiya metal plating facility, built in the 1980s on 50 hectares on a flat plain between the Tigris and the Euphrates.

• Cyanide wastes to be removed, stored and treated

• Details contained in report presented to Iraqi Ministry

• Destruction of Iraqi military arsenal creating new contamination

Piles of cyanide pellets

During 2003 the facility was damaged in ground and air strikes and following the conflict "comprehensively and repetitively looted". Piles of sodium cyanide pellets are lying dis-

persed. The chemical was used in the hardening process for small arms such as rifles.

Several tonnes of the acutely toxic compound, lethal at a dose less than one gram, is believed to be at the site.

There is concern that children entering the site could be exposed by skin contact or accidental ingestion.

The four-hectare Al Suwaira complex, 1.5 km north of the town of Al Suwaira, was used to store, mix and dispatch a range of pesticides for 30 years. These included mercury, zinc and calcium compounds as well as organo-chlorine and organo-phosphorous substances such as lindane, heptachlor and DDT.

After March 2003, the complex was looted leading to smashing of containers and pesticides spreading around the buildings.

The site is now secured, keeping trespassers out.

The UNEP proposes to decontaminate the site, vacuuming pesticide wastes and spraying warehouses to neutralise residues.

The Khan Dhari Petrochemicals Warehouse facility, 30 km west of Baghdad, contained several thousand tonnes of refinery chemicals until it was looted and partially burnt down in March 2003.

The Al Mishraq Sulphur Mining complex, 50 km south of Mosul, is one of the world's largest sulphur mines. In June 2003 a fire burnt up to 3,00,000 tonnes of stocks.

The last site is the Quireej military scrapyard, 15 km south of Baghdad, which became the main dumping and processing site for military scrap and destroyed Iraqi weapons.

Kyoto protocol comes into effect

Montreal: The controversial Kyoto protocol, aiming to cut greenhouse gas emissions, became fully operational on Wednesday after a UN climate conference here adopted the final rules. The 34 signatory countries—which do not include the US or Australia—passed the final regulatory measures by consensus at the Montreal conference.

“The Kyoto protocol is now fully operational. This is an historic step,” said conference chairman Stephane Dion, Canada’s environment minister.

Under the protocol, the 34 agree to limit emissions of gases that cause global warming until 2012. The Montreal conference is trying to set out preliminary plans to further cut emissions

when the accord ends.

Kyoto was negotiated in 1997 and formally entered into force on February 16, 2005. However, it could not come into operation until after the formal adoption of the rulebook, which was drawn up over the past four years. The signatories hammered out a mechanism for trading pollution rights.

The final rules also eased pollution standards by allowing countries to take into account carbon dioxide produced by growing trees. A separate system setting out sanctions for those who breach the protocol should be adopted before the 12-day conference ends on December 9.

“I am absolutely confident that the compliance system will be adopted next

week,” said Richard Kinley, acting head of the United Nations climate change secretariat. “Carbon now has a market value. Under the clean development mechanism, investing in projects that provide sustainable development and reduce emissions makes sound business sense,” Kinley said.

Under the scheme, developed countries can invest in other developed countries, particularly in central and eastern Europe, to earn carbon allowances which they can use to meet their emission reduction commitments at home. Industrialised nations can also invest in “sustainable development projects” in developing countries to earn extra pollution allowances. The United States and Australia, have refused to ratify the protocol. AFP

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Environment 11-15

CLIMATE CHANGE

A Disaster Called Bt Cotton

We need GM crops that work for farmers

By SUMAN SAHAI

Just a few days ago, the government admitted for the first time that Bt cotton had indeed failed in parts of India. The agriculture minister conceded in the Rajya Sabha that Bt cotton had failed in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. He asked state governments in all cotton growing regions to order an enquiry into the quality of seeds available to farmers and the spread of spurious seeds.

At the same time, in Madhya Pradesh, the governor has asked the state government to find out the causes of the failure of Bt cotton and called for compensation to farmers. The Mahyco-Monsanto and Rasi varieties of Bt cotton have reportedly failed in large parts of Madhya Pradesh causing serious losses to farmers. A report from Nimad district states that Bt cotton is causing allergic reactions in those coming into contact with it and cattle have perished near Bt cotton fields in another district.

Reports of the failure of Bt cotton have been coming in steadily after the harvest of the first crop of 2002-03. Gene Campaign's study of the first Bt cotton harvest in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra had shown that 60% of the farmers who cultivated Bt cotton in these regions had suffered such losses that they could not even recover their investment.

Based on the Andhra government's report of Bt cotton failure, the state has banned the sale of the Mahyco-Monsanto varieties because it caused large scale losses to farmers. Recently, a 20-member group of NGOs conducted surveys in several cotton-growing regions and found the seed had failed to germinate in many places like Tamil Nadu, so farmers had to buy expensive seed twice or thrice to sow their crops.

In addition, wilt which started in Bt cotton fields in Madhya Pradesh was found to be spreading. The reasons for this are not yet known.

In addition to these reports came scientific data that showed why the Bt cotton crop was failing in India. The Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur, published a paper to show that India's Bt cotton technology is faulty and inadequate to protect the cotton crops where the major pest is the bollworm. The Bt technology used here was created for the US, to protect America's



cotton crops against its major pest, the tobacco budworm, not the bollworm.

According to the CICR study, poor Bt cotton performance in India could be due to the fact that in India, Bt cotton is produced as hybrids, not true varieties, as in China, Australia and South Africa. Indian regulators must also answer why hybrids are promoted, when they will force the farmer to buy seeds for every new planting? Why did the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), the principal regulating authority, not take the decision that only true breeding varieties of Bt cotton would be permitted in India, not only because they perform better but also because they would be a cheaper option for farmers who could save seeds for the next harvest?

Along with these developments is the continuing spread of illegal Bt cotton

varieties which began with the appearance of Navbharat 151 in Gujarat some years ago, but which has since proliferated into a number of variants being bred in several parts of the country. Now, Bt cotton varieties are being sold which do not even contain the Bt gene. Farmers are being fooled by unscrupulous seed providers. No action has been taken against them by the GEAC.

The GEAC has failed to check the problem of illegal seeds; it refuses to answer queries from the public or share information with them. It has further refused to press for compensation for losses suffered by the farmers; instead, it has continued to release a slew of new Bt cotton varieties even though it knows that the cultivation is taking place without the implementation of the mandated insect refuge management strategy that the GEAC itself has prescribed.

Even as these issues remain unaddressed, comes the report that the GEAC has already approved the first stage of tests of the new Monsanto cotton, Bollgard II which contains not one Bt gene, as the older varieties, but two. Monsanto has been given permission for the final field trials for Bollgard II, which it boasts is 10 times better than the older Bt cotton. Scientific papers in prestigious journals have already pointed out that the one gene Bt cotton and the two gene Bt cotton cannot be cultivated in the same region, they cannot coexist.

The Bt cotton saga has gone on long enough, so has the obduracy of government's regulatory agencies and their anti-farmer stance. What will it take to get a policy on GM crops in this country that work for the farmers, not against them?

If Bt cotton is a technology that could benefit our farmers, it should be developed for Indian conditions, farmers must be adequately trained in the use of this complex and alien technology and provisions for compensation in the event of crop failure must be rigorously enforced.

The writer is convenor, Gene Campaign.

Residents sue China leak plant

2011
Soviet Union
Harbin (China), Nov. 26 (Reuters): Residents of a Chinese city who have endured four days without water because of a toxic spill are suing the chemical plant that caused it, highlighting growing demands for environmental protection and transparency in China.

Two residents lodged claim for damages in Harbin courts against Jilin Petrochemical yesterday, and a lawyer leading the litigation, Hu Fengbin, says he expects more to follow.

Ding Ning is claiming damages of 15 yuan (\$1.86) for purchases of bottled water

due to have passed the city by early tomorrow.

"Whoever brought risk to everyone's life should take the blame. I hope to use the law to exercise citizens's rights -- to send a warning to the perpetrators -- so we can avoid a repeat of such problems," Ding told Xinhua news agency.

Ding operates a small restaurant in Harbin and said business was badly hit by the water scare. The legal challenges are unusual in a country where citizens rarely sue, and, even more rarely, win cases against powerful state-backed entities.

Jilin Petrochemical is

owned by PetroChina, the country's biggest oil corporation.

Ten days after the spill, the Harbin government turned off the city's water and residents belatedly learned the spill threatened their health. But many Chinese believe the Jilin authorities sought to cover up the pollution and Harbin also first explained the shutdown as routine maintenance.

In her claim, Li said Jilin Petrochemical "throughout the year expels waste water with high volumes of pollutants into the upper reaches of the Songhua river".

A Harbin government spokesman said the government also was calculating the economic cost of the water shutdown and clean-up.

Wen promise

China Premier Wen Jiabao promised aid to the thirsty northeastern city and pledged openness about the incident on behalf of the communist party accused at home and abroad of covering up the truth of disasters, disease outbreaks and social problems.

Soldiers and workers raced to ensure water would be drinkable when it starts flowing late tomorrow.

Quake kills 14

Beijing, Nov. 26 (Reuters): An earthquake killed 14 people, injured nearly 400 and destroyed 8,500 homes in Jiangxi province in eastern China this morning, the official Xinhua agency reported.

Some 130,000 homes were damaged in the worst-hit Jiangxi and Ruicheng counties, while 420,000 people moved to safer areas.

Emergency officials rushed tents to the zone to shelter the homeless and earthquake specialists flew down from Beijing.

China toxic scare: Hundreds evacuated

China Daily/ANN

BEIJING, Nov. 25. — Hundreds of villagers have been evacuated from their homes along a river in northeast China after an explosion at a petrochemical plant upstream dumped 100 tons of toxic chemicals in the water.

Premier Mr Wen Jiabao has issued instructions demanding safe drinking water be ensured. More than 300 residents of Niujidian village and Gou island in Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province, were evacuated yesterday before an 80-km slick of water contaminated by benzene and other chem-

icals passed by on the Songhua river, the local Life Daily said.

Meanwhile, another chemical plant blast yesterday has killed one worker and prompted fears of another benzene leak and warnings that residents not drink river water. The explosion occurred at the Yingte Chemical Company in Dianjiang.

In another development, China's biggest oil company apologised for an explosion that polluted a northern river with benzene and prompted the government to cut off running water to 3.8 million people. Mr Zeng Yukang, deputy general manager of China National Petroleum Corp., expressed "symp-

athy and deep apologies" late yesterday to the people of Harbin.

About 1,000 soldiers and paramilitary police have been deployed at several water plants to install filters that can more effectively absorb nitrobenzene, the main pollutant, the government Web site said.

James city, downstream from Harbin, has no plans to cut off water supplies because it uses underground water, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Reactions ranged from stoic acceptance to anxiety in Harbin, home to nine million people. Local hospitals had stockpiled antidotes to benzene-related poisoning.

Local officials warned residents to be on the lookout for symptoms of benzene poisoning, which can cause anemia, other blood disorders and kidney and liver damage.

Citizen sues China petroleum

A Harbin citizen filed a lawsuit against the subsidiary of the China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC), which is held accountable for polluting Songhua River, the city's major water source. The plaintiff, Mr Ding Ning, accused CNPC's subsidiary, Jilin Petrochemical Company, of contaminating the river and affecting the normal life of Harbin residents.

THE STATESMAN

26 NOV 2005

Environmentalists to focus on Kyoto Protocol

Montreal meeting to discuss dangerous climate change

Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI: Environmental organisations will argue for environmentally effective implementation of the Kyoto Protocol at the 11th Conference of Parties (COP 11) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) beginning at Montreal this coming Monday. They will insist on the need for urgent negotiations to agree on the next steps for ensuring the much deeper cuts that would be required to avoid dangerous climate change.

The Framework Convention was agreed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 and has since been ratified by 189 countries and the decisions that the governments, industry and civil society make over the next decade or two will be crucial, a Greenpeace spokesperson said.

Temperature

Greenpeace and their colleagues in the Climate Action Network will call for limiting global mean temperature rise to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

They have urged the parties to develop the climate regime along four parallel tracks including furthering developing of Kyoto Protocol for the Second Commitment Period (2013-2017) for fair, equitable and economically beneficial ways of involving newly industrialised countries in the process; to facilitate introduction of low carbon

• **The upcoming meeting will review emissions reduction targets**

• **Bid to mobilise international support to halt tropical deforestation**

emitting technology in developing countries; to mobilise local, regional and international support to halt tropical deforestation; and take action to upgrade adaptation efforts internationally.

Relief agencies

This could be done by establishing a Ministerial Working Party to explore how to capture synergies across relevant UN agencies, international financial institutions, disaster relief agencies, regional environmental and economic co-ordination entities; and to report with a plan of action and to consult with the UN Secretary General to ensure the full and open co-operation of UN bodies in this work, Greenpeace has said.

The ultimate objective of the Kyoto Protocol is "stabilization" of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not

threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

The Kyoto Protocol specifies legally binding targets and timetables for reductions of greenhouse gases by the developed countries, amounting to a nominal 5% reduction of emissions by 2008-2012 relative to 1990 levels. It came into force and became legally binding on the Parties on February 16, 2005.

The Kyoto Protocol's enforcement marks the end of 10 years of negotiation, and in practical terms this means that the industrialised countries that have ratified are now legally bound by the targets they agreed to back in December 1997 in Kyoto. They must now get serious about meeting those targets, through domestic emissions reduction measures as well as through the use of the various trading mechanisms in the Protocol.

New evidence

The upcoming meeting in Montreal will review emissions reduction targets for the second and subsequent commitment periods. The initial targets agreed in 1997 were only the first step and new evidence underscores the urgency of much deeper cuts in emissions in the period after 2012. Industrialised country parties must negotiate on further emissions reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol, where the US and Australia cannot block progress, the spokesperson said.

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Toxic slick near China city

Environment 5-3 25/11

Harbin (China), Nov. 24 (Reuters): A toxic slick of polluted river water reached the outskirts of one of China's biggest cities today, nearly two weeks after an explosion at a petrochemical plant upstream.

China said the blast had caused major pollution, spilling benzene compounds into the Songhua river from which Harbin, capital of the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, draws its drinking water. Harbin is home to nine million people, including three million urban residents.

Local officials warned residents to be on the lookout for symptoms of benzene poisoning.

In a sign of how the spill has jarred national nerves about widespread pollution, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao issued instructions demanding safe drinking water be ensured. In Heilongjiang, governor Zhang Zuoji ordered hospitals to brace for possible cases of poisoning and promised to drink the first glass of water from city taps once the pollution passes.

According to initial estimates, the explosion resulted in 100 tonnes of benzene and related products being released into the water, deputy head of the state Environmental Protection Administration, Zhang Lijun, said.

A provincial government spokesman said the 80-km stretch of pollution passed Harbin's water supply inlet early today and would flow beyond the city on Saturday.

Water supplies could resume partially as early as Sunday, Xinhua said. Harbin's mayor, Shi Zhongxin, said the water would at first be unsuitable for drinking.

Residents' reactions



The polluted waters of the Songhua river on the outskirts of Harbin, China. (Reuters)

ranged from stoic acceptance to anxiety, but there were few signs of panic in Harbin, where most residents continued to work and shops and restaurants remained open.

"It's worrying, because it may not have a strong smell or colour, so you can't tell when it's gone," said Hong Shan, a retired official exercising beside the river. "It's up to the

government to keep us informed. We can't tell ourselves."

Commentators in Beijing and further afield condemned the "lies" told before the authorities revealed what had really happened. A paper in Harbin itself tried to play down the crisis.

Farmers in surrounding areas mostly said they draw

water from wells, and so were not panicked by the spill.

"We've stored up enough water to get by, but I don't know if this pollution can seep into the underground water," said Gao Erling, from Sifangtai village near Harbin.

The explosion took place at a chemicals plant in neighbouring Jilin province about 370 km from Harbin on November 13.

The plant was only a few hundred metres from the Songhua river, but at the time officials there warned only of air and ground contamination, not water pollution.

Across China today, a blast shook a chemical factory in the southwestern province of Sichuan, killing one person, injuring three and raising fears of benzene contamination in the nearby town of Danjiang, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Jilin plant, Jilin Petrochemical Co., had insisted it was not responsible for the pollution, state media said. But the deputy general manager of China National Petroleum Corp., Jilin Petrochemical's parent company, apologised to Harbin residents.

Russia worry

Russia's environmental protection agency said it was worried the pollution might affect drinking water in its Khabarovsk region, which the Songhua enters several hundred kilometres downstream from Harbin.

BENZENE FACTS

- Colourless, highly flammable liquid distilled from petroleum
- Used as a cleaning agent, solvent, in dyes and paints
- Lethal to humans exposed to it in high levels
- Chronic exposure leads to degeneration of bone marrow and leukaemia



The state Environmental Protection Administration's Zhang rejected accusations that the local authorities had waited too long before telling residents or Russia about the pollution.

"The water will still flow through Heilongjiang for another 14 days" before reaching Russia, Zhang said.

The

Kyoto holds the key ^{Commitment}

Environment groups are alarmed at the conflicting signals Tony Blair has been giving on climate change.

Tony Juniper

NEXT WEEK 10,000 people will start to gather in Montreal for what are expected to be the most important climate change negotiations since the agreement of the Kyoto protocol in 1997 (United Nations Climate Change Conference, Montreal, November 28 to December 9). Put simply, the scientific consensus is that only a small window of opportunity remains to avoid dangerous climate change. If Governments can take sufficient action to cut emissions within a decade or so, then there is a chance of avoiding going above the two degrees centigrade of global warming that could make climate change unstoppable, causing massive economic damage and millions of deaths. The Montreal talks, which will seek to set a framework for what happens after the first phase of the Kyoto agreement runs out in 2012, will be the key to determining the future for all life on earth.

But because of conflicting signals given to different audiences during the past few months, the role played by the British Prime Minister leaves campaigners worldwide deeply alarmed. Tony Blair, who has helped to move climate change to the top of the international agenda, has enormous influence. What he says will shape how these talks go. This is why green groups have been so utterly appalled at some of the things he has said in recent months.

Two months ago, Mr. Blair dropped a bombshell. While on a platform with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in New York, he was asked what he thought about climate change. His response departed from the long-standing EU targets-led position and lurched toward the U.S. view.

"I would say probably I'm changing my thinking about this," Mr. Blair said. "The truth is that no country is going to cut its growth or consumption substantially in the light of a long-term environmental problem. What countries are prepared to do is to try to work together cooperatively to deal with this problem in a way that allows us to develop the science and technology in a beneficial way." He added: "I don't think people are going — at least in the short term — to start negotiating another major treaty like Kyoto."

His expression of doubt about the political viability of firm pollution reduction targets clashed with the policies being expressed by his own Ministers. The George W. Bush-led "kill Kyoto" campaign and the coterie of climate change deniers seized on his words with joy. And then, earlier this month, he again set out his views. Once more, he highlighted the false choice between development and the environment, saying that a more "sensitive and flexible" framework [than Kyoto] was needed.

Last weekend, having been hammered by environment groups and governments around the world, Mr. Blair shifted his emphasis again, once more claiming a commitment to legally-binding targets. Many people will only believe him, however, if that is a consistent

message— not only in his prepared speeches, but when he expresses his own opinion and in his dealings with Mr. Bush.

Mr. Blair dug the hole deeper still when he told British Parliament last week that "the Kyoto protocol expires in 2012," when in fact that year marks only the end of the first commitment period. Montreal will need to negotiate what cuts come next, and if he is saying that the Kyoto process will expire, he is undermining the prospects for success.

Yet no one doubts that climate change is clearly the one environmental issue that has consistently been on Mr. Blair's international agenda. Shortly after moving into Downing Street, and a few months before the Kyoto meeting, he observed that: "At Kyoto, industrial countries must agree legally binding targets for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions during the first decade of the next century ... We in Europe have put our cards on the table. It is time for the special pleading to stop and for others to follow suit." Bold words — including a clear rebuff to those in the U.S. who either refused to act or denied that there was a problem.

In the end, the industrialised countries agreed in Kyoto to modest cuts to their own greenhouse gas pollution. The compliance period would be between 2008 and 2012. Countries would average their emissions over that period so as to iron out any annual anomalies and would in the interim come back and negotiate what cuts would need to follow. Britain was justifiably proud. The plan was that we would build on this track record in the run-up to Montreal.

What happens now? We need Mr. Blair to back the European Union delegation going to Montreal with a strong and clear statement about the importance of legally-binding targets, with or without the U.S., and the need to come away from Montreal with at least a process for working out what those targets will be. The outcome in Montreal will be determined by some 10,000 official participants, representing 190 national government delegations as well as environmental groups, including the international networks of Friends of the Earth, WWF and Greenpeace.

Kyoto is insufficient and has many faults. But at least there is a basis for moving forward. It sets some modest targets and broadly states the rules for meeting them. It was a monumental effort to negotiate it, another great heave to get it ratified by sufficient countries to bring it into force earlier this year. These talks will be very delicate, as in Kyoto. But now there is a heightened sense of urgency. Climate change science is sending ever more dire and desperate warnings about how long we have to take action. Given that the world is now on an ecological knife-edge, it is vital that the right signals are sent in advance of the Montreal talks. If politicians do not get it right, then the world may well be condemned to climate chaos. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

(Tony Juniper is director of Friends of the Earth.)

THE HINDU

24 NOV 2005

Unease over environment clearances

The draft Environment Impact Assessment notification draws protests.

Meena Menon

THE MINISTRY of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has for some time now been under attack, accused of a lack of commitment to what it is supposed to safeguard. On Monday, November 14, about 150 environmental activists managed to enter the Ministry premises in New Delhi and stage a sit-in, protesting against its draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) notification. That day was also the deadline for objections to the draft notification.

The draft, released on September 15, was a dilution of the original 1994 EIA notification, activists said. The protest action followed a public hearing a day earlier in the capital where about 25 affected groups from across the country made representations. A "death certificate" to the EIA was issued during the protest action.

The yet-to-be-released National Environment Policy has been criticised for its lack of consultation with communities and as being economic growth driven, with the idea of promoting private-public partnerships. The draft EIA notification seeks further dilutions.

In the past 11 years, there had been 13

amendments to the EIA notification of 1994. The 13th amendment of July 4, 2005, relaxes the requirement for major projects to get prior environmental clearance. Instead, it says that the MoEF may, after satisfying itself, grant temporary working permission to major projects. This effectively does away with the main reason for environmental clearance, which is to ensure that projects do not result in ecological disasters.

The Govindrajan committee on reforming investment approval and implementation procedures (October 2004) observed that environmental clearance perhaps takes the longest time and causes maximum delays to projects. It seems that its observations have found their way into the draft EIA notification as it proposes that environmental clearance can be given without public hearings, if it is justified, "depending on local conditions." Also, the validity of environment clearance has been extended to 15 and 10 years in case of river valley and other projects respectively, (earlier it was five years from commencement of the project).

Kalpavriksh, the Environmental Action Group that coordinated the three-year biodiversity action plan supported by the MoEF, was reduced to releasing "Securing India's Future," the final technical report of

the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), on its own last month. The MoEF is critical of the report for various reasons. In a press release on October 5, the Ministry said the NBSAP submitted by Kalpavriksh was rejected. The NBSAP was reviewed by a group of scientists appointed by the Ministry, the note explained. They concluded that the report was, for the major part, scientifically invalid. Hence, the Ministry also said that it had started the process of developing the National Bio-diversity Action Plan afresh. Ashish Kothari of Kalpavriksh claims what may be irking the MoEF is not the 15 or 20 so-called factual errors or the scientific flaws that were detected by a three-member committee appointed last year, but the recommendations of the Plan, which are quite radical.

It has to be emphasised that it was the MoEF that initiated the three-year process of preparing the NBSAP from 2000 onwards and 50,000 people all over the country were involved in it in a massive consultative process. Over 100 documents were produced in the process and the final report was submitted to the Ministry in 2003. Many scientific institutions were also involved in the process, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP). The report has a wealth of information and action plans, which many States such as Maharashtra, Sikkim, and Karnataka have already started to implement.

The NBSAP report comes at a time when the country is losing nearly half its forests, 40 per cent of mangroves and substantial portions of its wetlands. Agricultural biodiversity was also under threat and this directly impinged on the nutrition levels of people. Mr. Kothari said the biggest threat to areas rich in biodiversity was the threat of development projects. One of the major recommendations the NBSAP makes is to re-orient the development process. Projects will have to conduct what impact they will have on biodiversity in future, before they are approved. It also recommended a National Land Use plan that would ensure that development processes respect the sanctity of regions rich in biodiversity. Apart from this, the report also demands localised planning and governance.

India's richness in biodiversity needs to be protected at all costs, not merely to satisfy the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), under which the country has to have a national biodiversity action plan ready by 2006.

Aid welcome, Kashmir too!

SNS & PTI

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 19. — Appreciating India for helping Pakistan in earthquake relief efforts by providing tents, blankets and food, President Pervez Musharraf today said the tragedy had offered an “opportunity of a lifetime” to both countries to resolve the Kashmir issue “once (and) for all”. This could be Delhi’s “donation to Kashmir”, he added. Against the backdrop of Pakistan’s stated policy that all of Kashmir should be part of that country, Gen. Musharraf’s urging was construed by observers in Delhi as a nudge to India, and a very public and not very diplomatic one at that, to “donate” or give up its claim over Kashmir.



Making India-Pakistan ties an important component of his keynote address to the international donors’ meet here to mobilise funds for reconstruction of quake-hit areas of Pakistan and PoK, Gen. Musharraf

turned to the minister of state for external affairs, Mr E Ahmad, representing India at the conference, and made an emotional appeal for peace between the two countries: “I will specially single out the Indian representative sitting in our midst today. Thank you very much for coming.”

“Knowing very well an Indian delegate is sitting here... (I say) the quake has created a unique feeling of togetherness, an urge to help each other. Let success and happiness emerge from the ruins of this catastrophe, for the devastated people of Kashmir, let this be the Indian donation to Kashmir,” he told the meet attended by UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan. He also asked for corrugated sheets from India’s steel industry.

Buried alive, an entire generation

Frantic search as time runs out for survivors

MUZAFFARABAD



AFP/PTI
ISLAMABAD

"TWO of the classmates with us died. The other one lost her leg," 10-year-old Ifsan weeps as she is carried out on a makeshift stretcher, wrapped up in a filthy brown blanket. The two days she survived under the school's wreckage seemed never to end.

She was one of four friends trapped when Saturday's earthquake brought the Birani school in the northwestern town of Balakot crashing to the ground in a pile of twisted rubble. Today, she was carried out of a car to a field hospital set up on open ground in Mansehra, the nearest major city.

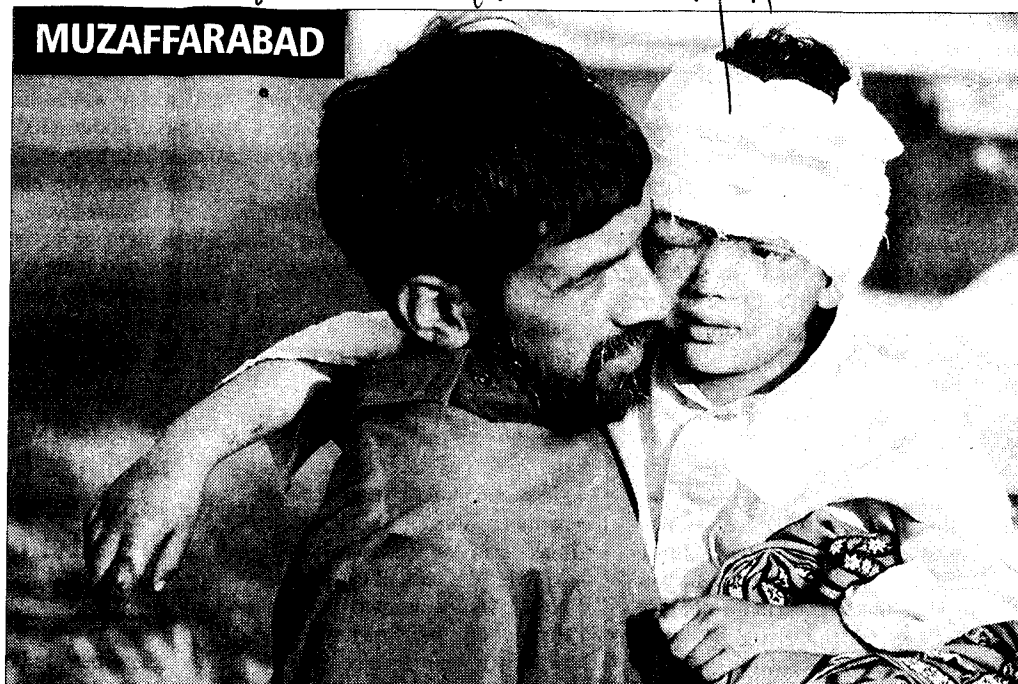
Rani said she and her classmates did not know what had happened when the 7.6 magnitude quake flattened the building. "For a long time, we didn't realise there had been an earthquake. Only later when we were talking to each other we worked out what had happened," she said.

Rani said her dress was trapped by the rubble and she tore it off to free herself. For around 48 hours, she had nothing to eat or drink.

On Monday morning, she and her surviving friend were finally rescued by their teacher, who was among hundreds of townspeople who had refused to stop trying to dig them out of the rubble.

Witnesses said a stream of heavily-bandaged children suffering severe injuries were also brought to the hospital, including some who

MUZAFFARABAD



had lost their eyes.

Their story was one small moment of hope in an otherwise tragic panorama in Balakot and elsewhere, where the smell of death is robbing desperate parents

of hope. Pakistan's military spokesman today said the quake had wiped out a whole generation in the worst-hit areas — the worst affected here were schoolchildren.

"It is a whole generation that has been lost in the worst affected areas. The maximum number affected was schoolchildren," Major-General Shaukat Sultan said.

I had four kids trapped in the madarsa debris, what shall I do?

a single family there that has not suffered," he added.

Time is quickly running out for whatever survivors are still alive after Saturday's quake. In Balakot,

two schools and a madarsa were toppled, with nearly 1,000 students thought to be buried. "I had four children who are trapped in here," cried 60-year-old Mohammad Yusuf, pointing to the wreckage of another school that collapsed with hundreds of students inside.

"What shall I do?"

ROBERT BIRSEL
MUZAFFARABAD, OCT 10

RESCUERS searched frantically for survivors as the death toll in Pakistan climbed over 20,000 and officials said thousands more bodies could be in the rubble.

The US military in neighbouring Afghanistan said it was diverting eight helicopters being used in the war against Islamic militants to assist with emergency operations as offers of aid poured in from around the world.

Officials in North West Frontier Province and Pakistani Kashmir say the final death toll could be close to 40,000. There was still no



ISLAMABAD

medical attention for many of the more than 40,000 injured by the quake. In Muzaffarabad, almost 700 people are known to have been killed.

Many survivors have complained about the slow response of emergency services stretched by the worst natural disaster in Pakistan's recent history. "Most are cursing the government for still not providing proper attention and we agree with their feelings," said Ayub, among a group of about 120 medical students who set up a camp here.

Another doctor, Khalid Querishi, had set up several charpays in the open to treat the injured. "Save these people from secondary infection," he said. "The only solution is to move them from here because after a while the stench of these dead bodies will become unbearable and infectious." **Reuters**

'I'm PM of a graveyard': He governs from a tent

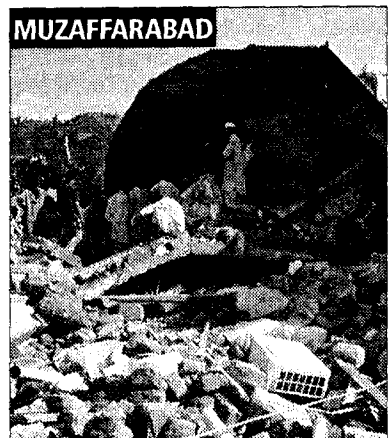
AAMIR ASHRAF
MUZAFFARABAD, OCTOBER 10

SIKANDER Hayat Khan surveys his ruined capital from a tent where he has slept since a weekend earthquake destroyed towns and villages across Pakistani Kashmir.

Critics say the "Prime Minister" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, is little more than Islamabad's puppet, but that doesn't lessen Khan's sense of responsibility for his people in the aftermath of the catastrophe. "It's the biggest natural disaster. It has totally paralysed Kashmir," he says in the tent on the lawn of his official residence in the small city of Muzaffarabad. "For the first two days we have been either digging ground to recover bodies or digging to bury them... Kashmir has turned into a graveyard." Khan's aides persuaded him to abandon the residence in case it collapsed around him.

Khan welcomed India's offers of help as a positive sign for the peace process with Pakistan. However, his distrust is intact. "They offered us help on humanitarian grounds and I hope that there should be no politics in it," Khan said.

Muzaffarabad, a city of 100,000, is without power, without water, and food is getting scarce. The sewerage system was ruptured by the quake. "We are fearing epidemic diseases if the situation remains unchanged. Water is polluted, bodies are still under debris, we are trying to control the situation but the magnitude of disaster is very great, so we are unable to do it quickly." Khan reckoned it would take up to six months to complete rescue and relief work. **Reuters**



In Mansehra, they've run out of shrouds

NAVEED AHMAD
GARHI HABIBULLAH,
OCTOBER 10

FROM the suburbs of Abbottabad to anywhere towards the north and northwest, graves are being dug and *janaza* prayers offered — from Mansehra to the range of Chilas, towns like this one have run out of *latha*, the cotton cloth used for shrouds.

"Send some cotton *latha* so that we could bury our dead with respect," says Samandar Khan, an elderly Mansehra resident. "Loved ones have been buried in blankets, bed sheets, even in the clothes they died in.

In Garhi Habibullah, the rubble of the Government Girls' Secondary School is yet to be photographed. No one came to offer condolences or to make promises of early rescue operations for their trapped loved one — no one except for a lone military helicopter hovering overhead, many hundred feet high in the sky.

At the ruins of the girls' school, beneath whose rubble at least 400 students and teachers lie buried, a local contractor's broken-down bulldozer at the mouth of the debris sits blocking the manual evacuation of the rubble.

On Saturday, an entire

BALAKOT



two-storey block — which housed some 350 girls — was razed amid huge clouds of dust. Five classrooms filled with students and teachers disappeared in a matter of

From THE NEWS

less than a minute. School watchman Syed Zakir Hussain said he had never felt so helpless in his

whole life. "One of my daughters had escaped while the other, Maria, was under the debris and I had no way to rescue her," he recounts.

He could hear his daughter crying, "Abbu, Abbu," which gave him an idea where to dig through to rescue her. Others joined in and the child was finally rescued unharmed.

But not every parent was so lucky. Rain set in later in the day, hampering the local self-help relief effort. The men managed to rescue six girls and a teacher, and retrieved 135 crushed bodies.

"We try to work with our bare hands and dig holes in the concrete slabs to find the dead or living," says Ismail. "Above all, the fear of death revives with every tremor," says Ismail, breaking off to murmur a prayer.

THE NEWS

11 NOV 2005

Tehri goes down under

UTPAL Parashar
Tehri, November 4

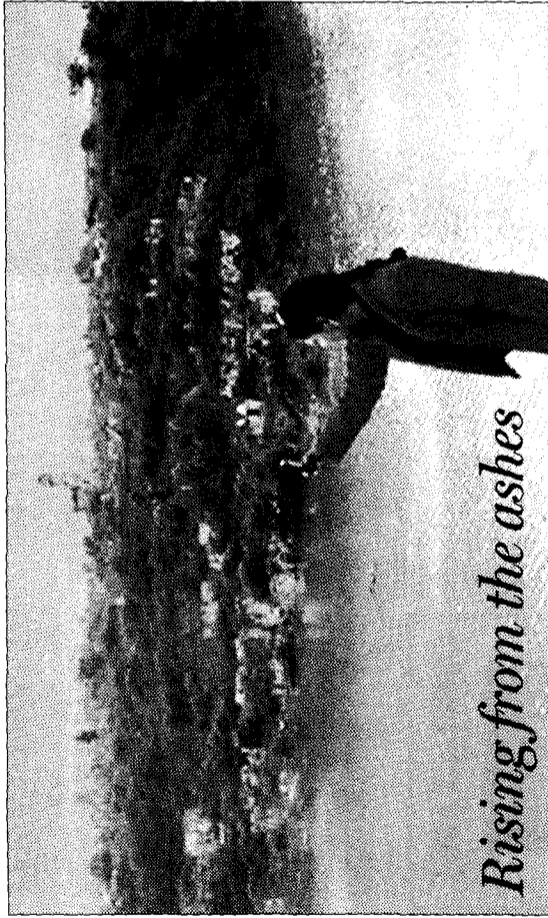
GOODBYES ARE never easy. To bid adieu to the town you were born in, the streets you walked on, the porches on which you spent lazy evenings with friends is gut-wrenching. Ask the residents of Tehri, who are watching their town being swallowed by the rising waters of the Bhagirathi.

The town's fate was sealed the day the Tehri dam project was announced. But after a recent Uttaranchal HC directive allowing the closure of the dam's last tunnel, the 190-year-old town and 37 nearby villages have begun sinking and will soon be wiped out from the country's map.

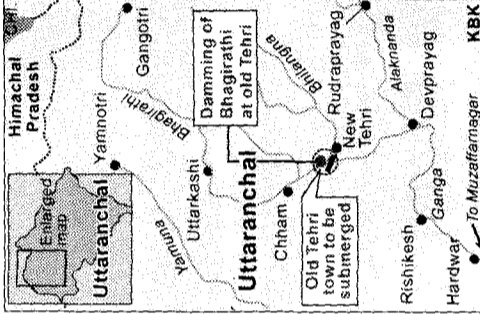
People whose lives have somehow been touched by Tehri are rushing to get a glimpse of the dying town before it turns into a large body of water. By Thursday afternoon, almost 40 per cent of the town had gone under water — the surviving section with razed houses and broken streets is now a ghost town. Uttaranchal Jal Sansthan CGM Harshpati Unnival showed his daughter around the town he spent his childhood in even as his camera clicked furiously to capture Tehri's last images for his 99-year-old father in Dehra Dun.

Amid the gloom, questions about rehabilitation remain. Dhan Singh Negi, a tenant living in the town since 1981, mutters that he is yet to get a single paisa as compensation. The last family to stay back in the hope of getting something from the government, Negi and his wife are now making preparations to shift to a safer location. When the town finally submerges in another few days, a prophecy, believed to have been made by a royal astrologer, that Tehri would die after 200 years will come true, 10 years ahead of schedule. Once the reservoir fills up, power generation from the dam is expected to start from March-April next year.

Prophecy of astrologer made 190 years ago comes true



Rising from the ashes



A resident (left) captures the sinking town on her mobile

- Started in 1978 with an initial project cost of barely a couple of hundred crores of rupees, the project is expected to cost nearly Rs 8,000 crores at the time of completion.
- With a height of 260.5 metres, the 2400 MW Tehri Dam is the highest dam in Asia and the fourth highest earth and rock fill dam in the world.
- Once filled, the reservoir will be spread out across 43 square kilometers. Plans are afoot to turn it into a major water-sports destination.
- Power generation expected to start in March-April. Apart from lighting up homes in north India, water from the project will irrigate thousands of hectares of agricultural land.
- 5291 families of Tehri town and 5000 families from 37 nearby villages will be fully affected by dam. Nearly 4000 families in 88 other villages will be partially affected.
- Around Rs 700 crore has been paid till date as compensation to affected families. This includes setting up of infrastructure at New Tehri town.

Climate change talks open a new front

HD-16
3/11

Environment

Setting targets or developing cleaner technology is an issue

DAVID ADAM

BBRITISH OFFICIALS opened a new front in the fight against climate change on Tuesday, with a two-day conference of environment ministers in London triggering weeks of intense discussions on how to bring the developing economies of Asia into efforts to tackle global warming.

Experts fear countries such as China and India, which are exempt from pollution caps under the Kyoto protocol, could derail attempts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Both countries say they take the threat of climate change seriously, but they are keen to use abundant coal stocks to feed the energy demands of their booming economies.

China's plans

China plans to build a new coal-fired power station a week and will overtake the U.S. as the world's largest carbon dioxide emitter by 2025.

The London conference comes ahead of critical talks later this month intended to tackle the growing threat of climate change.

Speaking before the meeting, the U.K. environment secretary, Margaret Beckett, said partnerships to develop new technology that would allow developing countries to burn their vast stocks of coal more cleanly were the best way to get them to cooperate in efforts to tackle climate change.

"We want something on which the whole world community can agree and which will

• **China, India keen to use coal stocks to feed energy demands**

• **China, India exempted from pollution caps may derail attempts to reduce CO₂ emissions**

• **By storing carbon pollution underground, emissions can be reduced by up to 90 per cent**

bring success in cutting emissions. There are all sorts of ideas about what that might constitute."

Later this month the focus will switch to Montreal and crucial negotiations over what should succeed the Kyoto protocol. Ms Beckett warned that a rush towards a new treaty aimed at curbing global warming could do more harm than good.

Very nervous and worried

Prime minister Blair said after yesterday's meeting that talk of specific frameworks and targets made people "very nervous and very worried."

"People fear some external force is going to impose some internal target on you which is going to restrict your economic growth," he said. "I think in the world after 2012 we need to find a better, more sensitive set of mechanisms to deal with this problem."

The U.S. has refused to sign up to emission reduction targets such as those in the Kyoto protocol because it says caps on energy use would damage its

economy. The informal meeting brings together ministers from 20 countries as a follow-up to the G8 summit earlier this year, which emphasised the importance of climate-friendly technologies such as clean coal, nuclear power and renewables.

Tackling change

It comes in the build-up to the U.N. talks in Montreal later this month, which will address how the wider international community should tackle climate change when the Kyoto protocol expires in 2012.

Ms Beckett said there was mounting evidence that climate change was an urgent problem, including warming oceans, shrinking Arctic ice coverage and stronger hurricanes over the last 30 years.

She admitted there had been "a serious divide" in recent years about whether the solution to climate change was through setting targets or developing technology.

"This is clearly a false divide. Technology is essential to make the transition to a low carbon economy, and targets or goals or objectives set by country or sector or internationally have a vital role to play in driving forward that progress."

Campaigners' accusation

She also insisted that the U.K. government had not changed its position on the best way to address climate change. Environmental campaigners have accused Tony Blair of downplaying the impact of the Kyoto protocol in recent weeks.

Mr Blair has also expressed doubts about whether there will be a follow-up treaty that sets

mandatory, binding targets on greenhouse gas emissions.

At a summit organised by Bill Clinton in New York, Mr Blair admitted he was "changing his thinking" on whether international treaties were the best approach.

Norman Baker, the Liberal Democrat environment spokesman, said: "Mr Blair cannot claim to take the environment seriously unless he secures an agreement from the G8 that mandatory national targets are essential to progress."

It is all very well for the government to trumpet the merits of technology in reducing carbon emissions. But it simply isn't enough. We need robust, measurable targets – not just vague aspirations."

An alternative way

The U.S. and the EU have had discussions with India and China on finding and transferring clean technology as an alternative way to bring emissions down. Central is the idea that carbon pollution could be stored underground, keeping it away from the atmosphere.

The concept – also called carbon sequestration – has become popular with politicians, who see it as a way to carry on burning fossil fuels, and environmentalists, who view it as a way to prevent the building of new nuclear power stations.

In theory it could reduce emissions by up to 90 per cent without restricting fossil fuel use, but experts say a viable large-scale system could be decades away. ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

The Guardian

03 NOV 2005

90 killed as floods wash away train in A.P.



Samuel
40-1
20/10

TRAGEDY IN NALGONDA DISTRICT: Bogies of the Secunderabad-bound train which were swept away in flash floods at Velligonda in Andhra Pradesh on Saturday. — PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

Andhra Pradesh Bureau

HYDERABAD: In the worst-ever train disaster in Andhra Pradesh in recent memory, at least 90 people were killed and over 100 injured when many bogies of a Secunderabad-bound passenger train were washed away in a flash flood at Valigonda, about 80 km from here, in the wee hours of Saturday.

Survivors said at least 150 of the 1,000 persons travelling in the Repalle-Secunderabad Delta Fast Passenger would have died

— either crushed in the mangled compartments or washed away in the floods. Thomas Varghese, who is holding additional charge of South Central Railway, told *The Hindu* that the death toll might go up once bodies trapped inside the bogies were extricated.

The accident occurred at 4.25 a.m., barely 10 minutes after the No. 415 Delta Fast Passenger steamed out of the Ramannapet station in Nalgonda district in pouring rain. The engine, which was hauling 17 compartments,

had to cross a small culvert over which some trains had passed earlier. Several irrigation tanks breached their banks and flooded the six-metre-wide culvert whose embankments caved in for 120 metres, leaving the tracks dangling.

The engine along with four sleeper and three unreserved coaches plunged into the raging waters and lay in a tangled heap of steel with muddy waters swirling around. The able-bodied managed to climb to the roof of the bogies.

Engine driver D. Samuel was killed instantly. Assistant driver D. Srinivasa Rao, survived. "I was shocked to see the rails floating on waters from a distance. Even before Samuel could react, the tragedy struck," he said.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, asked officials to seek the assistance of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy even as a relief van of the railways rushed doctors to the spot. Soon the Army, with the help of two IAF helicopters, took over the rescue operations.

Using gas cutters, the army men ripped open the compartments and retrieved many bodies.

After visiting the scene of devastation along with Dr. Reddy, Union Minister of State for Railways R. Velu announced that, for the first time ever, at least one family member of each of those killed would be provided employment in the Railways. Besides, their kin would be paid ex-gratia of Rs. One lakh immediately in addition to Rs. four lakhs from the Railway Safety Fund.

THE HINDU

30 OCT 2005

Mumbai, Kolkata, B'lore, now Chennai



26/7

Mumbai came to a halt after a day's heavy downpour



19/10

Ploughing through a waterlogged Kolkata street



26/10

India's Silicon Valley, Bangalore, was found short of infrastructure



27/10

Chennai shuts down as city struggles to cope with incessant rain

Flights, trains in disarray; Army called, I-T raids off

G.C. Shekhar
Chennai, October 27

FIRST MUMBAI, then Kolkata, Bangalore and now Chennai. Rains have paralysed life in yet another metro.

On Thursday, roads turned into rivers, subways into underground tanks. International flights were diverted and domestic flights delayed. Even the Income-Tax Department, which had raided half a dozen film personalities, including A.R. Rehman, on Wednesday, was forced to postpone its follow-up operations.

The army was called out to evacuate people trapped in low-lying areas, especially suburbs like Velachery, Madipakkam and Nandanallur.

"About 50,000 people have been evacuated from low-lying areas", said Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalithaa. "In many places, power has been switched off to prevent death from electrocution".

Between 8 am on Wednesday and 8 am on Thursday, Chennai received 27 cm of rain. Of this, 21 cm were dumped in five hours between 1 am and 6 am on Thursday, leading to extensive flooding of the city, said G. Ramanan of the Chennai met office. Other parts of Tamil Nadu also reeled under incessant rainfall, with the Cauvery being flooded — an almost unheard-of phenomenon.

In Visakhapatnam, the airport was closed for the 14th consecutive day de-

spite the fact that it had been declared reopened on Wednesday.

Met officials have predicted more rain in the region over the next two days as a severe depression over the Bay of Bengal moved close to the Andhra Pradesh coast. It is likely to cross the coast between Chennai and Ongole (AP) on Friday morning.

Gales are likely to reach speeds of 60-70 kph off south coastal Andhra and 50-60 kph off north-coastal Andhra.

Sudhakar Rao, director, Hyderabad met office, said the rain being seen in parts of South India was normal. "It's wrong to call it erratic. By comparison with earlier years, when there was scanty rainfall, this would appear unusual but this is normal rainfall."

ALL BECAUSE OF THE WEATHER

0.5 lakh
EVACUATED in
Chennai

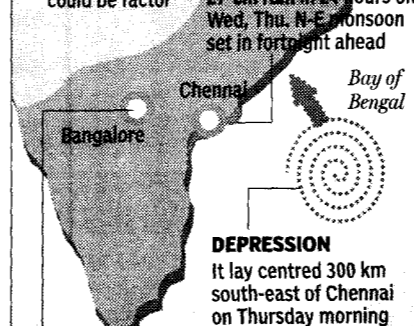
1 lakh
FOOD PACKETS
distributed

4
DEATHS IN TN
in past 24 hours

100
DEATHS IN
S India in Oct

Why the rain

- Retreating monsoon
- Global warming too could be factor



Wettest October in 49 years
Avg. ann. rainfall: 97 cm. This season: 143 cm

Map: SANJAY KAPOOR

WORST-HIT

Tamil Nadu. Many parts of Chennai were inundated, cut off

BEING CM IS NO HELP

Rains didn't spare Jayalalithaa's Poes Garden residence. Compound and road in front were waterlogged

NO-FLIGHT ZONE

Airport in Visakhapatnam remained closed for 14th day

NOT OVER YET

More rains have been predicted in the region over next two days

ON FRIDAY

Depression over Bay of Bengal likely to cross coast between Chennai and Ongole (AP)

Drizzle in city, storm in Orissa

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, October 27

THE RAIN will resume on Friday but will be light, at worst moderate, and last only till Saturday. Instead, the weather will be at its worst in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, coastal Bengal and Orissa with the depression over the Bay of Bengal having intensified and started to move in a west-north-westerly direction.

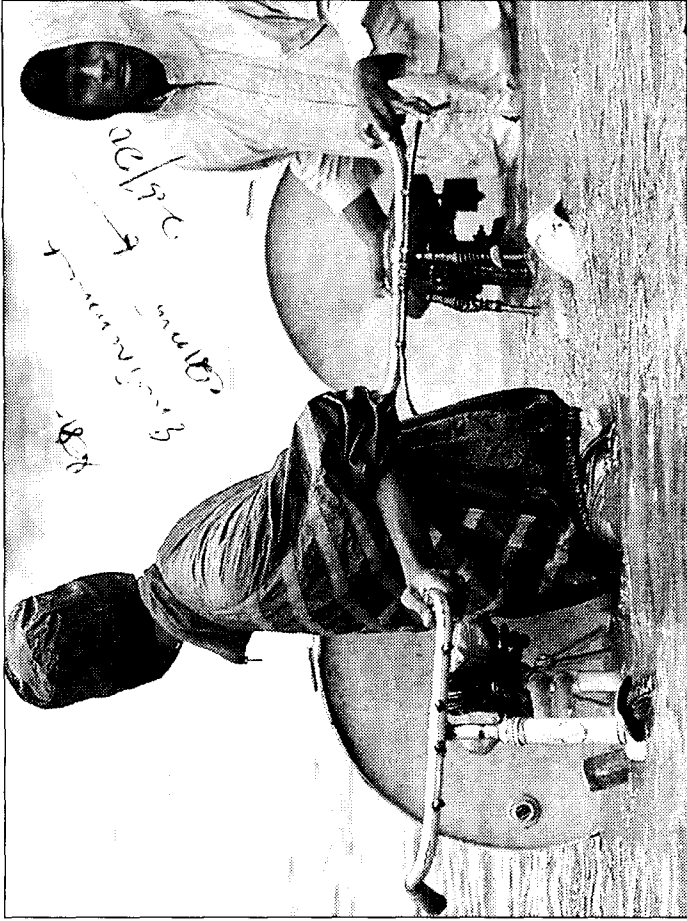
According to K.K. Chakraborty, director-general of the met office at Alipore, "The depression is now around 150 km from Chennai. There is going to be light rainfall in Kolkata". The weather over the city is likely to be partly cloudy, with possibilities of one or two spells of rain or thundershowers in some areas, he added.

ভাসছে চেন্নাই-বাস্গালোর, বিমান বন্ধ ভাইজ্যাগে

চেন্নাই ও বাস্গালোর, ২৫
অক্টোবর: চীনা বর্ষে বিপর্যস্ত হয়ে
পড়েছে দক্ষিণ ভারতের বিস্তৃত অংশ।
বাস্গালোরের বহু এলাকা যেমন জলের
তলায়, তেমনি বিশাখাপত্তনম
বিমানবন্দরে জল ঢুকে চার দিন ধরে
বন্ধ বিমান ওঠানামা। চেন্নাইয়েও আজ
বন্ধ রাখতে হয়েছে স্কুল-কলেজ।
তামিলনাড়ু ও কন্নটিকে মৃতের সংখ্যা
বাড়ছে। কেরালায় বন্যা পরিস্থিতি
খোরালো। কবে দুর্যোগ কাটবে, বলতে
পারছে না আবহাওয়া দফতর।

বাস্গালোর-সহ কন্নটিকের দক্ষিণ
অংশের জেলাগুলিতে জনজীবন
একেবারেই বিপর্যস্ত। দেশের
তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি কেন্দ্রের দক্ষিণাংশে
অভিজাত এলাকাও জল থইথই। বহু
তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সংস্থার দফতরও এই
অংশে। উইস্ট্রো, হিন্দুজা টি এম টি-র
মতো তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সংস্থার দফতর জলে
ভাসছে। স্কুল-কলেজ বন্ধ দু দিন।
কন্নটিকে এখনও পর্যন্ত মৃত্যু হয়েছে তিন
জনের। তার মধ্যে বাস্গালোরে সিন্ধু
বোর্ড জংশনের কাছে কোমর-জলে
ভেসে গিয়েছেন দু জন। শহরের বহু
রাস্তা জলময়, তামিলনাড়ুর কৃষ্ণগিরি
পর্যন্ত ৭ নম্বর জাতীয় সড়কও বন্ধ। এই
অবস্থায় আগামী কাল বাস্গালোরে
তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সম্মেলন কীভাবে শুরু হবে,
তা নিয়ে খোর সংশয় দেখা দিয়েছে।

বাস্গালোরে যেমন প্রায় ২০টি বাড়ি
ভেঙে পড়ার খবর মিলেছে,
তামিলনাড়ুতে তেমন কানের
তীরবর্তী সালেম জেলাতেই ধসে
গিয়েছে ছ শোর বেশি কাঁচা বাড়ি।



চেন্নাইয়ের জলে ডোবা রাস্তায় কোনও মতে সাইকেল নিয়ে এগোচ্ছেন মাল্লীরা। মঙ্গলবার। —রয়টার্স

তামিলনাড়ুতে এখনও পর্যন্ত মারা
গিয়েছেন ৩৭ জন। মেটুর-সহ সব
জনাধারের জল বাড়ছে। চেন্নাইয়ে
আজ সকাল পর্যন্ত একটানা বৃষ্টি
হয়েছে। দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব বাস্গাপত্তনমের
উপরে একটি ঘূর্ণাবর্তের প্রভাবে
চেন্নাইয়ে আরও দু দিন বৃষ্টি চলবে বলে
জানিয়েছে আবহাওয়া দফতর।

দেওয়ার তোড়জোড়ও শুরু হয়েছে।
চেন্নাইয়ে চারটি জাতীয় সড়ক আংশিক
বন্ধ করে দিতে হয়েছে। ব্যাহত হয়েছে
দক্ষিণ ভারতের ট্রেন চলাচলও।
আবহাওয়া দফতরের অধিকর্তা
আনন্দ কোম্পার জানিয়েছেন,
বাস্গালোরের ইতিহাসে কোনও
অক্টোবর মাসে এত বৃষ্টি হয়নি। আরো

রেকর্ড ভেঙে আজ দুপুর দু টো পর্যন্ত
এই শহরে বৃষ্টিপাতের পরিমাণ ৫২.৫
মিলিমিটার। ডুবুডুবু শহরের জন্য
কোনও আশার বাণীও শোনাতে
পারেননি আবহাওয়া-কর্তা। বরং
বলেছেন, প্রাবল্য কম-বেশি হতে পারে,
কিন্তু বৃষ্টি চলবে নভেম্বরের প্রথম
সপ্তাহ পর্যন্ত। জলে ডোবা রাস্তায় যান
চলাচলের আপাতত দফারফা।

বর্ষে শোচনীয় অবস্থা উপকূলবর্তী
অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ এবং কেরলের কিছু
জেলায়। বিশাখাপত্তনম (ভাইজ্যাগ)
বিমানবন্দরে শনিবার থেকেই নামছে
না-ওঠছে না কোনও বিমান। বৃষ্টির পরে
রবিবার মাথাপিছুজা জলাধারের জল
বিমানবন্দরে ঢুকে পড়ায় পরিস্থিতির
আরও অবনতি হয়। রানওয়ে থেকে
আজ জল নামতে শুরু করলেও বিমান
চলাচল শুরু হতে আরও দিনকয়েক
লাগবে বলে বিমানবন্দরের এক পদস্থ
কর্তা জানিয়েছেন। পরিস্থিতি যাচাই
করতে হায়দরাবাদে উচ্চ পর্যায়ের
জরুরি বৈঠক ডেকেছেন অক্টোবর
মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ওয়াইএস রাজেশ্বর রেড্ডি।

বিশাখাপত্তনম বিমানবন্দরের
পরিস্থিতিকে কেন্দ্র করে চাপানউতোর
শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে লৌ-বাহিনী এবং
অসামরিক বিমান চলাচল মন্ত্রকের
মধ্যে। লৌ-বাহিনীর বক্তব্য, রানওয়ে
ঠিকই আছে। আর বিমান মন্ত্রকের দাবি,
এখনও রানওয়েতে অসুস্থ আধ ফুট
জল। বিশাখাপত্তনমের বিমানবন্দর লৌ-
বাহিনীর এজিয়ারে পড়ে। টার্মিনাল
এবং পার্কিং ব্যবস্থার দায়িত্ব এয়ারপোর্ট
অথরিটির। —পি টি আই

U.S. forging a partnership of expediency?

Sudha Mahalingam

ON AN average, each American expends as much primary energy as 26 Indians and as much petroleum as 40 Indians. Despite the disparity, both countries have made common cause in the name of energy security to come together in a new coalition, the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development & Climate, widely viewed as a U.S. response to the Kyoto Protocol. The partners of this new initiative met in Tokyo last week to flesh out the preliminary details of the framework set out in the launch meeting held in Laos, last August. But the Tokyo meeting yielded nothing conclusive since the partners failed to reach a consensus on the roadmap to be followed.

The six-country Partnership focusses on "the importance of the development agenda in considering any climate change approach" and thus signals a deviation from the Kyoto agenda. The Partnership has some strange bedfellows — China and India, two of the world's most populous nations requiring abundant quantities of energy to fuel their development, in addition to Australia, Japan, and South Korea. The group is led by the U.S. itself, a huge energy guzzler and the world's biggest polluter, accounting for 36.1 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The U.S. had elected not to join the Kyoto Protocol, citing non-inclusion of the three large developing countries — China, India, and Brazil — in the first commitment round of 2008-12. Australia, which emits 2.1 per cent of global GHG, is a signatory to Kyoto but has not ratified the Protocol and as such is not subject to commitments. Of the other four Kyoto signatories in the Partnership, only Japan, with 8.5 per cent of global GHG emissions, is subject to emission reduction targets during the first commitment period.

The timing of the launch of the Partnership is curious. Parleys are about to begin on the second Kyoto commitment phase. The European Union and other members were hoping to persuade the

The six-country Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development & Climate has put paid to any hopes of getting the U.S. into the Kyoto Protocol.

U.S. to chip in. After all, without the U.S., the Kyoto Protocol is not really effective. Roping in the U.S. might have meant imposing commitments on China and India as well. But the Partnership seems to have put paid to any hopes of getting the U.S. into Kyoto. Worse, now there are fears that the U.S. may effectively lure China and India away with promises of technology transfer for clean development. No wonder there are fears that the Partnership has severely weakened Kyoto and its objectives.

However, the mission statement put out by the Partnership strenuously protests that the new coalition "will complement, not replace, the Kyoto Protocol." Yet there are several areas of unease. A perusal of the mission statement makes it abundantly clear that the focus of the Partnership is on energy technologies particularly suited to the "resource endowments" of the member countries. It says, "The Partnership will collaborate to promote and create an enabling environment for the development, diffusion, deployment and transfer of existing and emerging cost-effective, cleaner technologies and practices through concrete and substantial co-operation so as to achieve practical results. Areas for collaboration may include, but [are] not limited to: energy efficiency, clean coal, integrated gasification combined cycle, liquefied natural gas, carbon capture and storage, combined heat and power, methane capture and use, civilian nuclear power, geothermal, rural/village energy systems, advanced transportation, building and home construction and operation, bio-energy, agriculture and forestry, hydropower,

windpower, solar power and other renewables."

Prima facie, the objectives of the Partnership may seem to endorse most of the things that Kyoto sets out to achieve, but there are some material areas of departure too. First, unlike Kyoto, the Partnership is envisaged as a loose, non-binding coalition without any firm commitments or targets. Kyoto, on the other hand, has put in place a very complex mechanism to prescribe, measure, and enforce binding targets. U.S. Deputy Secretary Robert Zoellick emphasised the role of "mutual interests and incentives" in making the coalition work. In response to a question at a press conference held to announce the launch of the Partnership, Mr. Zoellick said, "One can't just command other parties to do things. You can try, but it's not going to be effective, so you need to try to develop interests and incentives."

Secondly, unlike Kyoto, the Partnership is forward-looking — that is, only future greenhouse gas emissions come under its purview, as it were. Kyoto requires its rich members to bring down their GHG emissions by 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels because it is premised on the belief that global warming cannot be arrested without undoing past damage alongside containment of future emissions. Also, unlike Kyoto, the Partnership does not envisage setting up a substantial corpus fund since members are expected to work out the terms of technology transfer bilaterally. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation for appropriate technologies is envisaged to be voluntary. Each country procures whatever technology it needs, on the basis of its relative

bargaining strength within the forum. And finally, the Partnership initiative makes a radical departure from Kyoto inasmuch as it includes nuclear power within the scope of the initiative.

Coming on the heels of the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, the Partnership initiative is viewed with suspicion by critics of nuclear power. Despite its zero-emission, nuclear power has never been viewed as a clean source of energy because of the huge problems associated with waste disposal, decommissioning, and safety aspects. Kyoto's decision to keep nuclear power out of the list of clean energy sources was an acknowledgement of these factors. Yet, the Partnership not only emphasises the role of nuclear power in a future energy paradigm, but the U.S., its initiator, leads the way.

Nuclear option

Not having built a single atomic reactor for power production in the last 25 years, the U.S. is now reviewing the nuclear power option, thanks to spiralling natural gas prices at Henry Hub, which now quote well above \$12/mmBtu. Simultaneously, the U.S. is also scouting around for markets for nuclear reactors being built by Westinghouse, the U.S.-based manufacturer of pressurised heavy water reactors. China is planning to build 32 new nuclear reactors over the next 15 years to add 32,000 megawatts of nuclear power capacity. Last year, Vice-President Dick Cheney was in China making a pitch for Westinghouse reactors. Until recently, U.S.-based firms were not allowed to build reactors in China, but those curbs are being eased and Beijing has also evinced an interest in these reactors.

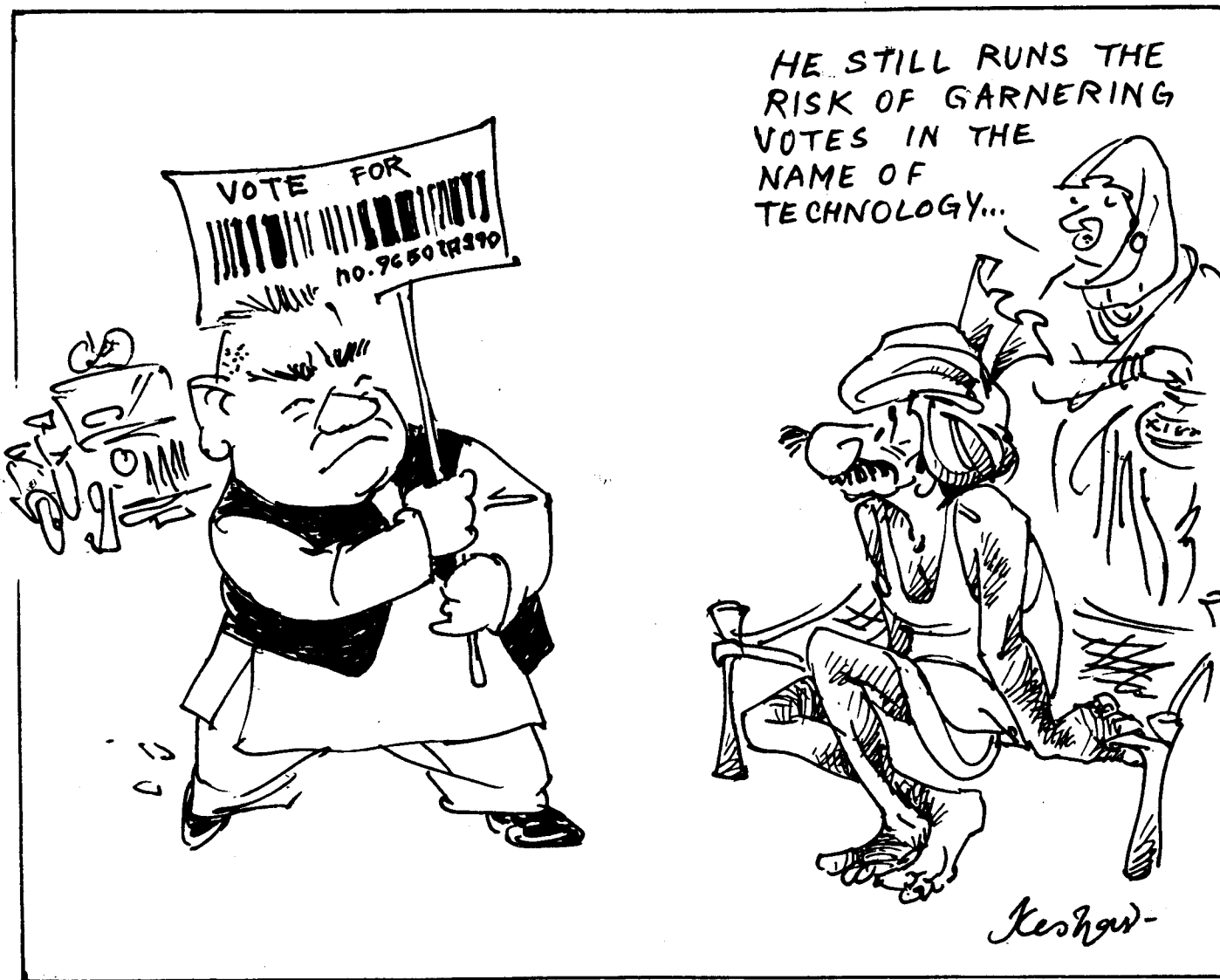
As for India, the details of the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal are being worked out. India will need more reactors, and that too quickly, if it is to add the anticipated 20,000 megawatts of capacity from nuclear power. That India presents an attractive market for nuclear reactors appears to be too much of a coincidence.

For Japan, which imports more than 80 per cent of its hydrocarbon requirements, nuclear power offers respite from import dependence at least for electricity generation. Therefore, since 1973, Japan has made development of nuclear power a strategic objective. Currently, it has 55 reactors with a total of 48,000 megawatts of capacity and is in the process of building many more. It has a fairly well-developed fuel-cycle industry and requires to import only natural uranium for its needs. Similarly, South Korea also generates 38 per cent of its electricity from 20 nuclear reactors and has made expansion of nuclear capacity a national priority.

Australia's inclusion in the Partnership is perhaps more than fortuitous. After all, Australia has the world's largest reserves of uranium, accounting for 30 per cent of global reserves. At \$40 a kg, Australian uranium is among the cheapest in the world. Currently Australia operates three mines to supply a fifth of global consumption and exports fetch substantial revenue. Now it is looking for customers who would enable it to start mining in two more locations. India is hugely deficient in natural uranium, which is why it chose the fast breeder and thorium cycles for its nuclear power programme. After the recent Indo-U.S. nuclear accord, India is hoping that the U.S. could persuade the Nuclear Suppliers' Group — of which Australia is a member — to supply fuel to India.

Thus the Partnership initiative appears to be well-balanced — with two potential suppliers of nuclear reactors and natural uranium, and four potential buyers with huge appetite for nuclear power. By fostering and promoting nuclear power, the U.S. can claim to have done its bit for a carbon-free future, even as it promises to fulfil the development aspirations of a third of humankind located in the two large nations of Asia. Whether in the process it has also weakened the Kyoto Protocol, only time will tell. One thing is sure though. With the Partnership initiative, the U.S. has, with characteristic dis-ingenuity, ducked global pressures to accede to the Kyoto Protocol. At the same time, if it manages to improve the business prospects of its firms and allies engaged in the nuclear power business, it would be a bonus. That India and China should have played along — unwittingly or deliberately — comes as a surprise.

CARTOONSCAPE



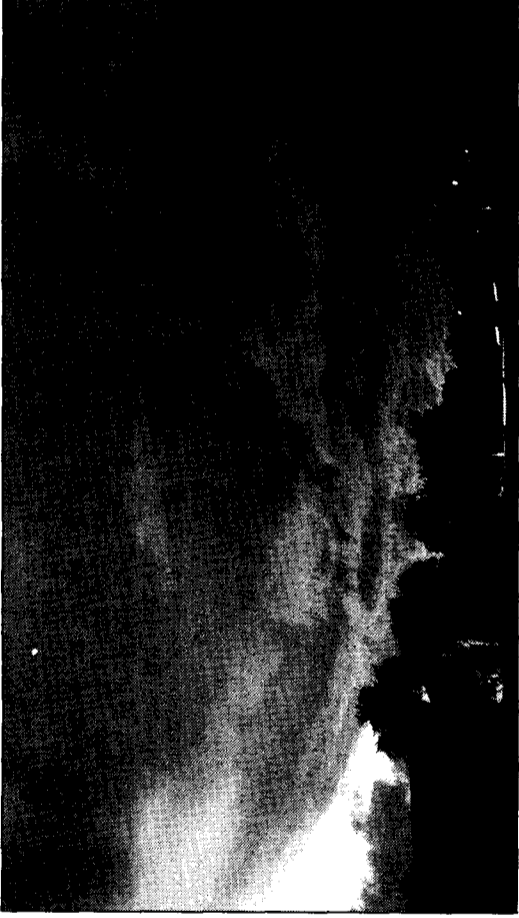
Raging Wilma needs new category

The Conventional Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Rating Scale Only Takes Wind Speed Into Account

In a season that has included three Category 5 hurricanes for the first time on record in the Atlantic Basin, scientists are beginning to wonder if their rating system is adequate, livescience.com reported. On the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale, there is no Category 6. But Wilma brushed up against where a 6 would be if the scale were logically extrapolated to include another category. And hurricanes are getting stronger, apparently fueled by global warming. Researchers expect that trend to continue.

Kerry Emanuel, a climatologist at MIT calls the Saffir-Simpson scale irrational, in part because it deals only with wind. "The whole system needs rethinking," livescience.com quoted him as saying. Emanuel says a new hurricane rating system will need to have at least three numbers, describing not only wind speed, but also rainfall and storm size.

In the Saffir-Simpson



imum wind speed attainable. This value is known as the "maximum potential hurricane intensity" and is calculated using a formula developed in 1998 by Emanuel, the MIT climatologist. Based on ocean and atmospheric conditions on Earth nowadays, the estimated maximum potential for hurricanes is about 190 mph.

This upper limit is not absolute, however. It can change as a result of changes in climate. Scientists predict that as global warming continues, the maximum potential hurricane intensity will go up.

They disagree, however, on what the increase will be. Emanuel and other scientists have predicted that wind speeds—including maximum wind speeds—should increase about 5% for every one degree Celsius increase in tropical ocean temperatures. The fastest "regular" wind that's widely agreed upon was 231 mph, recorded at Mount Washington, New

Hampshire, on April 12, 1934. During a May 1999 tornado in Oklahoma, researchers clocked the wind at 318 mph.

Some scientists believe that the Saffir-Simpson scale is too simplistic and that it should either be extended or replaced. Other critics have pointed out that the Saffir-Simpson scale doesn't take into account a hurricane's size or the amount of rainfall. The rains associated with some hurricanes can lead to flooding that causes just as much or more death and damage than wind.

A hurricane's size can also make a large difference in the amount of damage it inflicts. Hurricane Katrina, which was a Category 5 storm before weakening prior to landfall, caused much more damage than Camille—Category 5 hurricane in 1969. Katrina was a much larger. Katrina's winds extended 105 miles from its center while Camille's only extended 60 miles out. TNN

tively rare, or at least they used to be.

Some scientists predict, however, that the intensity of hurricanes and their maximum wind speeds may be increasing and that Category 4 and 5 storms will become more common in the years to come.

Ocean and atmospheric temperatures work together to determine the maxi-

would be on the verge of breaking into this hypothetical new category.

The scale didn't include a Category 6 for two reasons—first, it was designed to measure the amount of damage inflicted by a hurricane's winds, and beyond 156 mph, the damage begins to look about the same. Another reason is that Category 5 hurricanes are rela-

Hurricane Rating scale, a Category 1 storm begins at 74 mph and a Category 5 at 156 mph. On average, there is about a 20 mph increment in wind speed between the categories. An extrapolation suggests that if a Category 6 were there, it would be in the range of 176-196 mph. Wilma, which had maximum recorded wind speeds of 175 mph,

Thousands flee approaching storm

The entire population of the Florida Keys island chain under evacuation orders

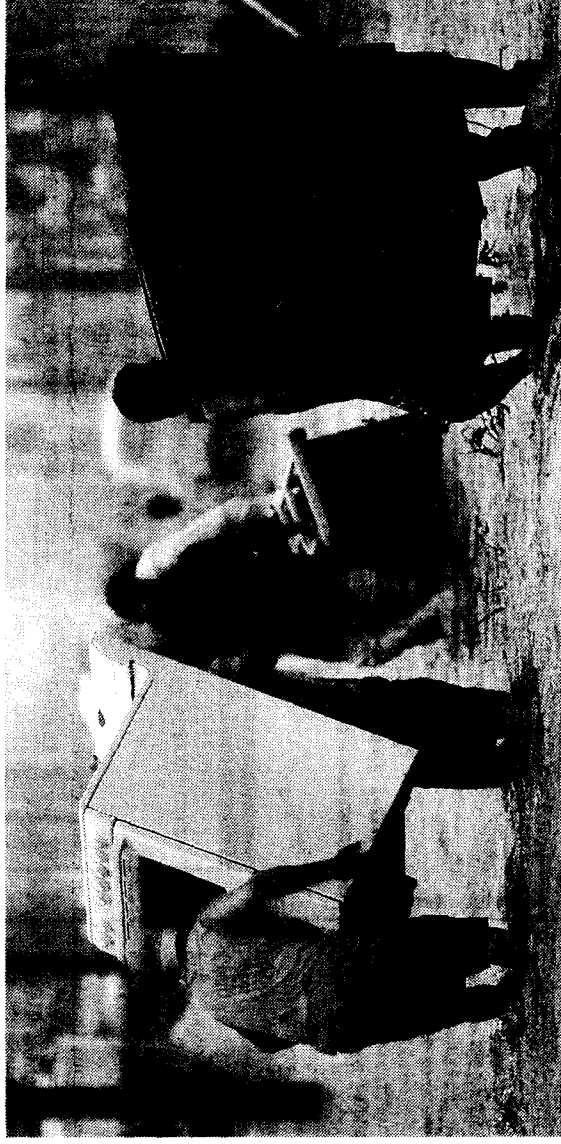
KEY WEST (FLORIDA): Thousands of residents had been ordered to evacuate on Sunday and businesses and emergency officials prepared rescue and relief plans as forecasters predicted Hurricane Wilma would pick up speed "like a rocket" on a course toward Florida.

The southern half of Florida's peninsula was under a hurricane warning on Sunday in anticipation of Wilma, a Category 2 storm with 161 kmph sustained wind. Although still far from the State, Wilma's outer bands of rain had already caused street flooding in a South Florida suburb.

Time for action

Tropical storm-force wind was expected to begin lashing the State late on Sunday and meteorologists said the heart of the storm was expected to roar across the State on Monday. "The time of preparing is rapidly moving into time of action as people are evacuating," Florida emergency management director Craig Fugate said.

Wilma had been joined by Tropical Storm Alpha, which formed on Saturday south of the Dominican Republic as the record 22nd named



GRAB AS THEY CAN: Looters carry electronic equipment from a store after Hurricane Wilma hit the resort town of Cancun in Mexico's Quintana Roo on Saturday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

storm for the Atlantic season. It was the first time forecasters exhausted the regular list of names and had to turn to the Greek alphabet for labels in almost 60 years of naming storms. "It's really going to take off like a rocket," he said. About 160,000 people in the State were under mandatory evacuation orders, including the entire population of the Florida Keys island chain, according to officials and census data. There was no way of knowing exactly how many actually left, but it appeared only about 20 percent of the 78,000 Keys residents fled. Evacuation orders also covered barrier islands and coastal areas in Collier and Lee counties, such as Fort Myers Beach, Marco Island, Sanibel and parts of Naples. — AP

THE HINDU

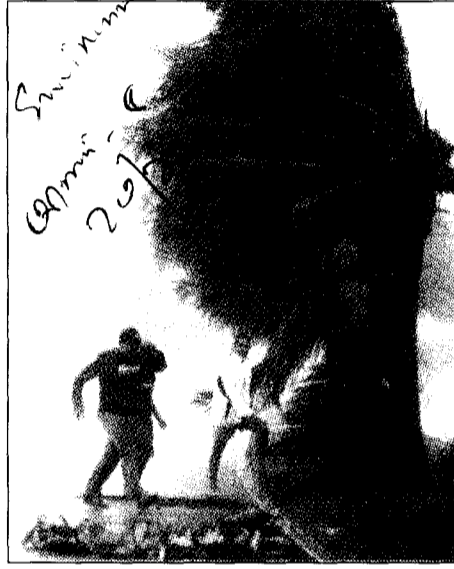
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রেকর্ড বেগে উইলমা মেক্সিকোয়

কানকুন, মেক্সিকো, ২২ অক্টোবর: ক্যাটরিনা, রিটার পরে উইলমা। অনেকেই ভেবেছিলেন, হারিকেন নিয়ে এ বার একটা অযথা আতঙ্ক পেয়ে বসছে বুঝি। ফলে শুক্রবার যখন সকলকে ঘরদোর খালি করতে বলা হয়েছিল, অনেকেই আমল দেননি। ফল হাতে হাতে। শুক্র-শনি দু'দিনের মধ্যে মেক্সিকোর ইউকাতান উপদ্বীপ হারিকেনের দাপটে লুপ্তভঙ্গ। ঘটায় ১৪০ মাইল বেগে ঝড়, সঙ্গে ৫৯০ সেন্টিমিটার বৃষ্টি। হাইতি থেকে যে উইলমা এ বার মেক্সিকোয় পৌঁছল, বুধবারই আটলান্টিকের হারিকেনের যাবতীয় রেকর্ড ভেঙে ফেলেছিল সে। বাতাসের চাপ যত কম থাকে, হাওয়া তত জোরে বয়। এ পর্যন্ত সর্বনিম্ন রেকর্ড ছিল ১৯৮৮-র হারিকেন গিলবার্টের, ৮৮৮ মিলিবার। উইলমা কম, ৮৮২ মিলিবার।

উইলমার 'চোখ' প্রথমে ছিল মেক্সিকোর কজুমেল দ্বীপে। গত কাল রাত এগারোটা নাগাদ সেটা আছড়ে পড়ে কানকুনে। অঞ্চলটিতে একেই বিলাসবহুল রিসর্টের ছড়াছড়ি। সবচেয়ে বিপাকেও পড়েছেন সেই পর্যটকেরাই। মেক্সিকোর সরকারি সূত্রের হিসাব অনুযায়ী, শুধু কানকুন শহরেই আটকে রয়েছেন ১০-১২ হাজার পর্যটক। আর, আশপাশের এলাকা ধরলে সংখ্যাটা ২০ হাজারের কম নয়। উপড়ে পড়া গাছ, ভাঙা গাড়ি, কাচ ও কংক্রিটে রাজাঘাট ধ্বংসস্তূপের চেহারা নিয়েছে। হোটেলে খাবার নেই, জল নেই, বিদ্যুৎ নেই। গাদাগাদি করে গলগল করে ঘামতে ঘামতে কেউ মেঝেয়, কেউ ছাদে শুয়ে পড়েছেন। একবাক্যে বলছেন, 'এমন অভিজ্ঞতা আর যেন কারও না হয়।'

ক্ষয়ক্ষতি কতটা হয়েছে, তা অবশ্য এখনই বোঝা যাচ্ছে না। একটা সূত্রে অবশ্য ১৩ জনের মৃত্যুর খবর পাওয়া গিয়েছে। উইলমার দাপট টের পাচ্ছে কিউবার পশ্চিম উপকূলও। সেখানে ইতিমধ্যেই পাঁচ লাখ লোককে নিরাপদ জায়গায় সরিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়েছে। সমুদ্রে ২১ ফুট উঁচু



উইলমা তাণ্ডব থেকে বাঁচতে। কানকুনে। — রয়টার্স

টেউ উঠছে বলে খবর। মনে করা হচ্ছে, আরও দু'দিন এই তাণ্ডব চলবে। রবিবার বা সোমবার নাগাদ উইলমা মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ফ্লোরিডায় ধাক্কা মারবে বলে আশঙ্কা। ক্যাটরিনার বেলায় ত্রাণ আর উদ্ধার নিয়ে বৃশ প্রশাসনকে যেমন বেইজ্ত হতে হয়েছে, তাতে এ বার তারা আর কোনও ঝুঁকি নিতে চাইছে না। উইলমার বেগ ক্রমশ কমে দিকে গেলেও প্রশাসন আগাম সব রকম ব্যবস্থাই নিচ্ছে বলে জানিয়েছে।

PAKISTAN SENDS FORMAL PROPOSAL

India for 3 relief units along LoC

23/10
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 22. — India today announced that it would allow victims of the 8 October earthquake in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) to get medical assistance at relief and rehabilitation centres set up at three locations on the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC). They would also act as meeting points for divided families across the border.

The three points for setting up "composite relief and rehabilitation" camps are at Kaman, Tithwal and Chakan da Bagh. While Kaman is near Aman Setu, the latter two are at Tanghdar and Poonch.

India has said that it could make the three camps operational by 25 October — this will only be done after getting the green light from the Pakistani authorities. "This (proposal) has been conveyed to Islamabad. We are waiting for Pakistan's response before setting up the centres," the external affairs ministry spokesperson, Mr Navtej Sarna, said.

Pakistan today formally forwarded its proposal to India to open points along the LoC to enable delivery of aid to quake victims on both sides.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson, Ms Tasneem Aslam, said in Islamabad that the proposal had been handed over to the Indian High Commission. Pakistan has also proposed official-level talks before the end of this month to discuss and finalise modalities for opening points along the LoC.

She said Pakistan had received India's proposal to hold relief camps at three points along the LoC to enable quake victims on both sides to meet each other.

"We have just received India's proposal and we are hoping to hold discussions on that. Hopefully something will come of it," she said.

Mr Sarna elaborated that arrangements for providing relief material, medical aid, food, drinking water and temporary accommodation would be arranged at the three points.

"People from across the LoC will be permitted to come to these points after necessary screening during daylight hours and return after receiving medical treatment and relief," he said, adding that Indian nationals would be allowed to meet their relatives in PoK at these three points.

The proposal was in line with the long-pending Indian plan to set up meeting points at five points on the LoC. Three of them are the locations for the proposed relief and rehabilitation centres. The other two points identified are at Suchetgarh and Rajouri.

Environment
21/10

Pak quake relief operation toughest ever, say aid officials

DAVID BRUNNSTROM
MUZAFFARABAD, OCT 20

THE devastating earthquake in Pakistan's northern mountains is turning into one of the toughest relief operations the world has ever known, international aid officials said on Thursday.

"It's actually scary if you see the situation in the villages. You feel a sense of urgency you've not felt before, even in the tsunami," the World Food Programme's Mia Turner said. "This is probably the greatest logistical challenge faced by an emergency operation."

While the confirmed death toll in the earthquake—49,739 in Pakistan and 1,300 in Indian

Kashmir—is only about a quarter of that in last year's December 26 Indian Ocean tsunami, the number is expected to rise substantially.

Large areas have not been reached and no one knows how many more were killed in the high hills.

UN emergency relief coordinator Jan Egeland, warning that the death toll could double, said the NATO military alliance

should launch a massive airlift to evacuate the tens of thousands of people trapped in Pakistani Kashmir before winter sets in. "We need a second Berlin airbridge, and if they could do that in the 1940s—set up in no time a lifeline to millions of people—we should be able to do that in 2005," he told a news conference in Geneva, referring to the US airlift set up in 1949 to keep Soviet-blockaded West Berlin supplied.

UNICEF said hundreds of cut-off villages needed urgent help and 10,000 children could die of hunger, hypothermia and disease over the next few weeks. "There are still too few helicopters to reach more than 1,000 remote villages with life-saving supplies that children urgently need," UNICEF director Ann Veneman said in a statement.

—Reuters



Once home, now ruin: all the quake left at Dildaar, near the Line of Control. Reuters

The hard climb for relief

Almost two weeks after the South Asian earthquake, a combination of logistical and other factors has hindered relief efforts, particularly in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which bore the brunt of the devastation. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, relief operations remain stuck largely in the life-saving mode, with the focus on immediate concerns such as reaching remote villages, treating the injured, and delivering food and other basic supplies. The Pakistan Government admitted a couple of days ago that help was still to reach one in five villages in the affected area. This is a region dotted with remote and far-flung hamlets and access to them has been rendered even more difficult because of damaged roads, landslides, and heavy rainfall. PoK officials recently claimed that the death toll in this region alone is "not less than 40,000" and an estimated two million have been rendered homeless. A more exact casualty figure and a better and more detailed assessment of the condition of the survivors will emerge only after Pakistani soldiers, relief workers, and volunteers are able to reach the areas that still remain cut off. To add to the gargantuan problem, the onset of the harsh Himalayan winter is only about a fortnight away; providing survivors with tents and blankets brooks no delay.

The magnitude of the tragedy in India, where over 1,300 people were killed and over one lakh left homeless, is by no means small. But it can hardly be compared with the scale of the devastation in Pakistan, where authorities now fear a second wave of deaths due to the difficulties in reaching survivors and treating the wounded. Relief operations have been more effective in Kashmir, where the affected area is smaller (Uri and Kupwara districts being the worst-affected) and where the Indian Army was able to swing quickly into action. As a result, New Delhi, unlike Islamabad, did not have to seek international aid; rather, it was able to offer assistance to Pakistan — a generous gesture made within hours of the earthquake striking the subcontinent. Islamabad has expressed its gratitude for receiving aid consignments of such relief materials as fortified biscuits, medicines, tents, blankets, and plastic sheeting. However political sensitivities in Pakistan, which President Musharraf would have found difficult to ignore, were behind its rejection of New Delhi's suggestion for joint relief operations and offer of helicopters manned by Indian military personnel. The Pakistan President's recent and dramatic suggestion of opening the Line of Control to allow people to cross over more easily should facilitate relief operations and family contacts. Kashmir may be a bitterly disputed region, but there are large numbers of families divided by the LoC. They need more than ever, in this hour of calamity and grief, to be given the opportunity to reconnect with each other and participate in the relief and reconstruction of a ravaged region.

Quake may have shifted thousands of mines

'Army maps may be of little help'

HTC and Agencies
Srinagar, October 20

THE DEVASTATING October 8 earthquake may have shifted thousands of landmines planted by Indian and Pakistani troops along the Kashmir border, a group warned on Thursday.

"We are very much concerned", said Shafat Hussain of Global Green Peace, a non-government organisation that has worked since 1998 to persuade India and Pakistan to demine the region. "There are thousands of mines out there threatening to take human lives".

Hussain said areas along the de facto border, the Line of Control (LoC), are "heavily mined" on both the sides. "As the earthquake triggered massive landslides along the LoC, it must have surely relocated these mines", said Hussain. "We are told that respective armies do keep a proper map of the planted mines, but those maps will not help, given the devastation".

Army spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Vijay Batta played down the risk. "Landmines have been planted along the LoC and army posts some 58 years ago. No civilian area is involved", he said. "Wherever a little bit of damage has taken place to the minefields due to the landslides, it does not affect the civilians as no mines have drifted or shifted towards the civilian areas".

The Red Cross says that in the heat of war, mines are often not mapped or monitored and can shift depending on the weather and soil type, sometimes travelling kilometers if washed out by heavy rain.

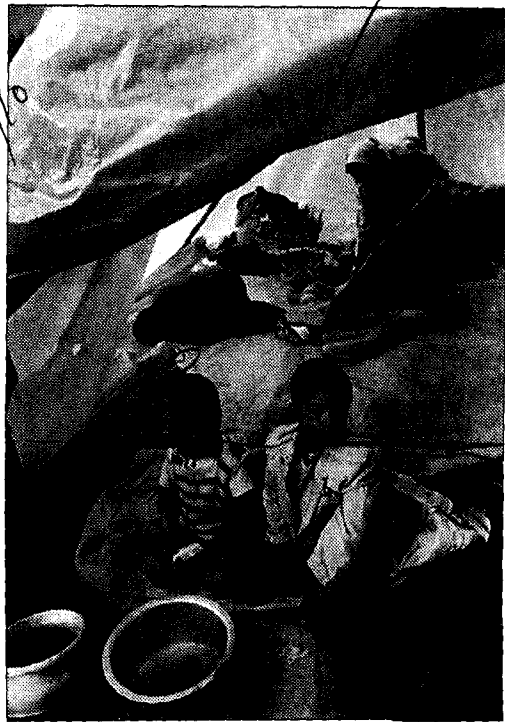
Hussain said if mines have been displaced they will put the lives of quake-hit villagers living along the LoC at risk. Scores of people have died in landmine explosions over the years in Uri district, one of the regions in Indian Kashmir worst hit by the quake. It took the Indian army weeks to demine a three-kilometer stretch of road in Uri that is part of a route opened in April for a bus service between the Indian and Pakistani Kashmir capitals Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

Phone kiosk several miles away

A small group of men stood outside the heavily guarded BSNL kiosk in Srinagar on Thursday morning, watching Aziz-Ur-Rahman cling to the phone as tears rolled down his face.

Aziz had travelled from Tangdhar to Srinagar, to use the free direct phone line to PoK to contact his mother, who had started for Muzaffarabad on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus two days before the region was ravaged by the earthquake.

Since then, the family had received no news from her. So, when Aziz heard of the telephone facility in Srinagar, he took the first bus to Srinagar.



A family from a quake-hit village sits near a fire in their makeshift tent near Srinagar.

AP

Pakistan to make formal proposal on opening LoC

PAKISTAN WILL shortly make a formal proposal to India on opening the Line of Control to facilitate movement of Kashmiri people on both sides of the divide to help in quake relief and rehabilitation works.

Modalities for throwing open the LoC for Kashmiris would be settled through consultations between the two countries, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz told reporters on Wednesday night after a meeting with JKLF leader Yasin Malik here. "If Kashmiris wanted to help each other, this is the perfect opportunity", said Aziz.

Pakistan's foreign office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam said Islamabad would shortly make a formal proposal to India on opening the LoC to facilitate movement of Kashmiri people on both sides.

"Currently, internal discussions are taking place. We hope to contact the government of India shortly", she told local daily Dawn, adding the proposal would be made through diplomatic channels.

Agencies

Phone link with PoK established

Kashmiris call up kin across LoC

Luv Puri

Swimming
JAMMU: History was scripted in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday after telephone calls were made to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) for the first time in 15 years.

The facility was provided on the orders of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited installed toll-free ISD (International Subscriber Dialling) telephones at the Disaster Management Control Rooms in Jammu, Srinagar, Tangdhar and Uri to facilitate divided families to enquire about the welfare of relatives across the border.

Mukhtar Ahmed, a resident of the city, made the first call at 11.35 a.m. to his cousin, Farid, in the quake-hit Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. He broke down when told that 12 of his relatives across the border died in the quake.

The dead included his uncle, Abdul Rehman Joo, whom he has never met. "I do not know how to pass this information to my father, who is 75. We were eagerly waiting as he was supposed to come here and meet my father after 57 years. They had not met for over five decades," Ahmed said.

Most callers said the line at the other end was engaged or nobody was picking up the phones. Liaquat wanted to enquire about his relatives in the Bagh tehsil of PoK. "I tried the numbers of four relatives but there was no response. I will try

again tomorrow." The facility was available between 11.35 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the Police Control Rooms and some BSNL offices.

Only for 15 days

BSNL Jammu and Kashmir General Manager K.C. Jindal said, "Not many people came to make calls today. We are expecting a good response tomorrow."

According to BSNL officials, the facility would be available for a fortnight.

Most divided families hail from the Pahari speaking belts of Rajouri and Poonch. They are unlikely to benefit from the facility as they would have to travel long distances to make the calls.

Shujaat Bukhari reports from Srinagar:

In Srinagar, 20 such calls were made and a number of people spoke to their relatives in PoK.

The first call was made by Abdul Gani, a resident of Baramulla. He shed tears of joy on coming to know that all his family members survived the quake.

Many callers could not establish contact with their relatives. "I tried a number of times to talk to my sister but failed to get her on the line," said Farooq Ahmed. One caller broke down after learning that five of his relatives perished in the quake.

Asked if it would be a permanent feature, Union Home Secretary V.K. Duggal said he had no idea. "These centres have been set up for the convenience of divided families. It is a beginning, and let it work for the time being."

Pakistan ready to open LoC for quake relief

Musharraf makes dramatic announcement

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: In a dramatic announcement Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf proposed on Tuesday night opening of the Line of Control to allow people to assist in reconstruction of the ravaged areas in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). He also said Islamabad could consider with New Delhi's consent opening of routes other than Muzaffarabad-Srinagar.

Addressing a news conference at Muzaffarabad, the flattened capital of PoK, Gen. Musharraf said that a decision has already been taken to allow mobile companies from both sides to operate in the earthquake-affected areas.

He was responding to a question on the travails of people in the worst-affected areas and the nature of cooperation Pakistan was contemplating with India to reach out to the displaced people.

"We will allow any number of people coming across the Line of Control to meet their relatives and assist with reconstruction," he said. The procedure for allowing people from across the LoC needed to be formalised with India, he added.

He said his country was ready to allow political leaders from both sides of the divide to interact and assist each other. He appealed to India to agree to the plan.

When a western correspondent asked him about the 'reluctance' of Pakistan to accept the Indian offer on helicopters, he said his country was being unfairly criticised by a section of the media. Pakistan was ready to accept the helicopters but not pilots or military personnel, he



General Pervez Musharraf

said. Given the 'sensitivities involved' this stand should be viewed in the proper perspective. "Let me say we are ready to accept any number of helicopters without pilots."

India hails remarks

PTI reports:

Reacting to Gen. Musharraf's offer, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna told reporters in New Delhi: "We have seen news reports. If indeed this is what has been said, India welcomes the remarks. It is in line with India's advocacy of greater movement across the LoC."

India, he said, was willing to facilitate the movement. "But we wait for word from Pakistan about the practical dimension of implementing this intention."

Mr. Sarna said India has always been in favour of greater people to people contacts. He recalled that before the quake, India had made several confidence building measures like opening up of five points along the LoC to enable divided families to meet.

He said four telecom facilitation centres would be set up in Srinagar, Jammu, Uri and Tangdhar to assist divided families across the Line of Control to contact their kin.

Baglihar: the points at issue

The specific points of difference relate to the design of the Project, the extent of pondage, and the placement of the spillway gates and the water intake.

Ramaswamy R. Iyer

RAYMOND LAFITTE, the Neutral Expert to whom the differences between India and Pakistan over the Baglihar Project stand referred, recently made a site-visit. This has once again brought the issue into prominence.

Baglihar is a "run of the river" hydro-electric project on the Chenab, one of the three western rivers allocated to Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty 1960. The Treaty lays down certain parameters and conditions to which such projects must conform: (i) no Indian storage on the western rivers (except to a limited extent); (ii) design of project not to be such as to enable the water level to be raised above the Full Pondage Level; (iii) the "pondage" not to exceed twice the pondage required for "firm power"; (iv) if gated spillways are considered necessary, the gates to be located at the highest level consistent with sound and economical design and satisfactory construction and operation; (v) the water intake for the power plant to be similarly located at a high level; and (vi) no outlets below the dead storage level, unless certain technical con-

siderations necessitate this.

Leaving aside the various points that came up during the course of the discussions at the meetings of the Indus Commission, the specific points of difference over Baglihar relate to (a) the design of the Project; (b) the extent of pondage; and (c) the placement of the spillway gates and the water intake. Pakistan feels that the "free board," that is, the space between the maximum water level and the top of the dam, is excessive and will enable India to store more water than the full pondage level. India says that the free board is a standard safety feature, and that using it to store more water would compromise the safety of the structure and cannot be done. Pakistan argues that the planned pondage of 37.7 mcm is more than what the Treaty permits. India says that its calculation of the pondage required is correct. (The difference here arises from different understandings of "firm power.") Pakistan says that the placements of the spillway gates and of the water intake do not conform to the Treaty provisions. India justifies the placements on certain technical grounds that need not be gone into here.

On all these points, Prof. Lafitte will give findings in due course, and these will be final

and binding. Why do such differences arise? The answer lies in a fundamental divergence of perceptions and motivations. India is inclined to interpret the Treaty provisions broadly, with greater attention to the spirit than to the letter; and in formulating projects India attaches a great deal of importance to technical soundness, economic viability, and satisfactory operation. Pakistan, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with safeguarding its own interests, and tends to insist on a stringent and literal interpretation of the Treaty. The Indian concern with techno-economic or operational considerations does not carry much weight with Pakistan.

Was India wrong in starting construction in this case without waiting for Pakistan's agreement? That is the Pakistani view. The Indian reply is that the Treaty does not specifically say that construction should not start without Pakistan's clearance; that if Pakistan's concurrence is held to be necessary for the start of work, it can use the power of raising objections and rejecting the answers given to stall a project indefinitely; and that this was what happened in the case of the Tulbul Project.

Are there deeper concerns underlying the

technical differences? Indeed there are. Pakistan is worried about the control that India acquires through structures on the rivers allocated to Pakistan and the possibility of that control being used to harm Pakistan (withholding of water, flooding). India says that such fears are unwarranted as India cannot inflict damage on Pakistan without first inflicting damage on itself.

Some commentators say that given the history of bad relations between the two countries, Pakistan distrusts India and has deep security concerns; and others argue that any lower riparian is bound to have visceral anxieties vis-à-vis the upper riparian. The answers to those concerns and anxieties cannot be found in the Treaty: they have to be looked for in the political sphere. The Neutral Expert is concerned only with questions of conformity to the Treaty.

There is in fact a strong political element in the difficulties that have arisen in the Baglihar and other cases under the Indus Treaty.

All the Indian projects on the Jhelum and Chenab are in Jammu and Kashmir. In other words, behind Baglihar and other differences under the Indus Treaty lurks the Kashmir issue.

19/10
Lafitte's views
11/11

Miracles, graft in land of devastation

DC shunted for alleging relief scam

Agence France-Presse
Srinagar, October 17

A SENIOR official in charge of relief in quake-hit Kashmir has been removed after he complained that politicians were diverting vital aid to constituents.

Aijaz Kakroo, who was in charge of relief in the worst-hit Uri district, detailed political interference led by the state consumer affairs minister, saying it stopped aid reaching the most needy.

Kakroo, a popular government employee, was removed after telling reporters that Congress minister Taj Mohiuddin had been interfering.

Mohiuddin, who is also Uri MLA, was unrepentant. "Yes, I am interfering, I am the government", he shot back. "If I will not intervene, who will? I will intervene at every level to see equitable distribution of relief", he said,

Punished

Aijaz Kakroo, in charge of relief in Uri, removed after he accused state consumer affairs minister of diverting aid

Taj Mohiuddin, the minister under glare, counters: "Yes, I am interfering. I am the government. He (Kakroo) is a government servant. He is accountable to me

Villagers back the DC's claim, alleging that relief distribution is taking political colours

Kakroo, who holds deputy commissioner rank, could not be contacted on Monday after being transferred to a different post. In remote quake-hit villages of Indian Kashmir, where the delivery of relief supplies remains patchy, residents complained that political parties had disrupted distribution efforts. "Our village has not received any relief so far as we had voted for the opposition during the last elections", says Farooq Ahmed, a resident of Garkote village in northern Uri sector.



A woman and her daughter in a tent for quake hit people at Uri in Kashmir.

Girl and three others pulled out of rubble

Declan Walsh
Muzaffarabad, October 17

A THREE-YEAR-OLD girl was pulled out of the rubble of her parents' house on Sunday night, eight days after the earthquake that devastated northern Pakistan. The dramatic rescue — which defied predictions that no more survivors would be found — came after many international rescue teams had abandoned their search and had started to return home. The alarm was raised after the girl's brothers, aged seven and nine, walked five miles to safety from their flattened mountain village, army spokesman major-general Shaukat Sultan said. "She's absolutely fine now. It's a big example of survival". Only hours earlier, President Pervez Musharraf had said it would take a "miracle" to find anyone alive after eight days. The top UN disaster official put the chances of finding more survivors at "almost nil".

The children's parents died in the 7.6-magnitude quake and a series of giant landslides cut the highland hamlet of Sanger off from most relief operations. But the two boys managed to carry one of their sisters, a 7-month-old baby, down the mountain trails to Balakot. The brothers, who have not been named, then led soldiers back to the flattened house where their second sister, who has polio, was trapped. "They are the real heroes", said maj.-gen. Sultan.

The Guardian



A Kashmiri boy at a makeshift medical camp in Islamabad.

PTI

Pak wants Indian choppers, not pilots

ALTERING ITS stand on the participation of Indian copters in relief work in quake-hit areas of PoK and the NWFP, Pakistan has said it will accept them, but without pilots.

On Saturday, amid reports that India had offered to provide helicopters to help ferry the injured to hospitals and rush relief supplies, Pak PM Shaukat Aziz had said his country did not need In-

dian choppers.

But on Monday, Pak foreign office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said Pakistan was "willing to accept copters from India if these were offered without pilots". "Given the obvious sensitivities, we could not accept involvement of Indian military on our side for relief operations," she said.

HTC & Agencies

PTI

'No adoption' of quake orphans

Agence France Presse

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 16. — Pakistan will not allow the adoption of orphans from South Asia's devastating earthquake with the government taking care of them itself, Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz said today. The government has already decided to set up special shelters for at least hundreds of Pakistani children whose parents died in the 8 October disaster, officials said.

Visiting injured children in a hospital, Mr Aziz said all efforts would be made to trace the children's parents and if they are not found, the government would assume full responsibility for them.

"Adoption of these children is completely banned," the Prime Minister told reporters at Islamabad's Poly Clinic hospital. He said the government had already directed all hospitals not to allow anyone to adopt orphans.

Hundreds of children are believed

to have lost their parents and the number is likely to rise after a fuller picture emerges in the weeks ahead, a senior government official said.

The quake measuring 7.6 on the Richter Scale devastated large swathes of the Himalayas, killing nearly 40,000 people and leaving more than three million homeless in Pakistan alone.

Helicopter crash

A Pakistani military helicopter involved in relief operation for quake victims in the worst-hit PoK has crashed, killing all six people aboard, including four officers, defence spokesman Maj Gen Shaukat Sultan said today.

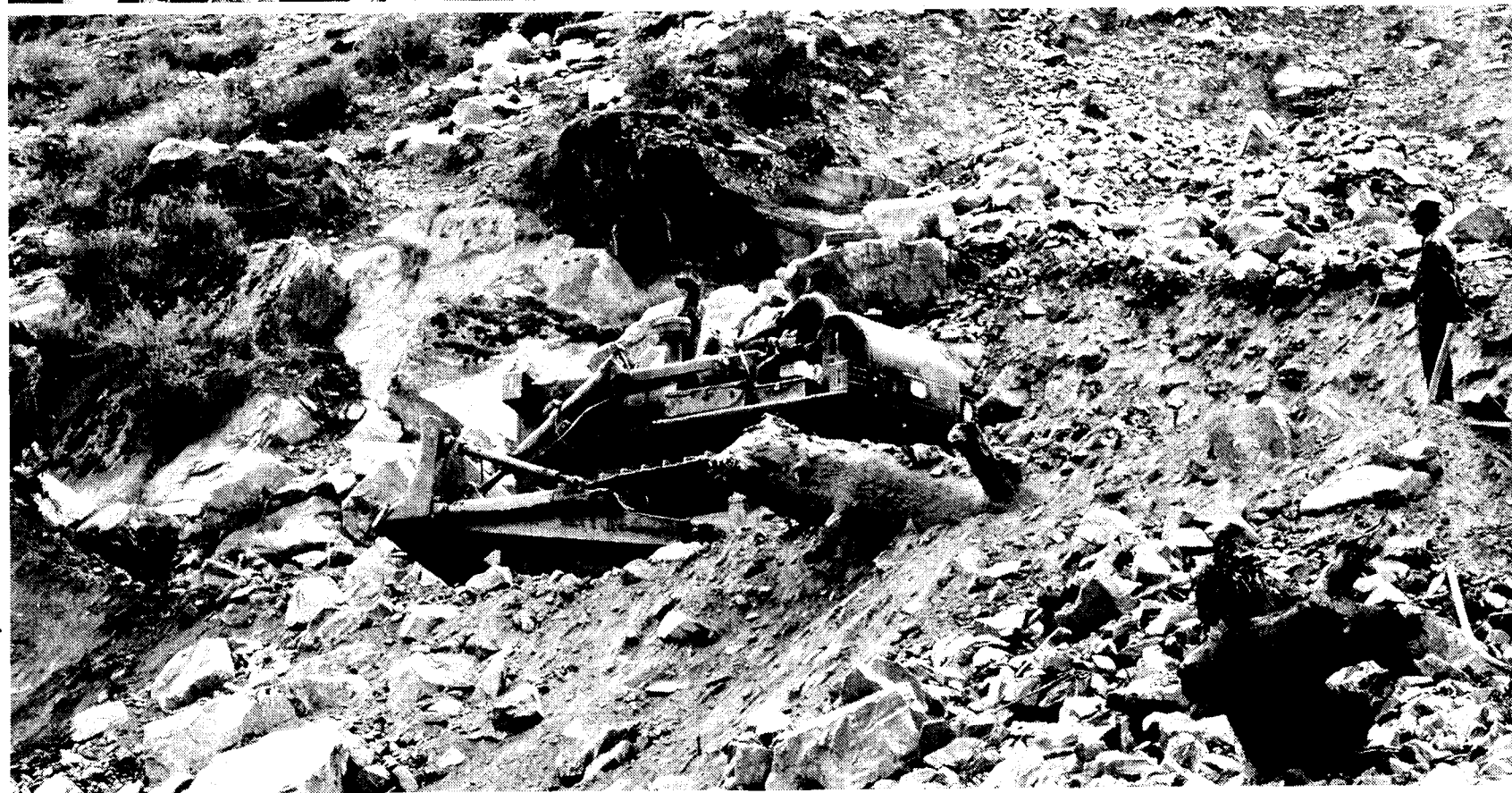
The MI-17 helicopter drafted for relief operation in the Bagh area of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir went missing last evening and rescue teams found the wreckage of the crashed chopper early today, the spokesman told reporters in Islamabad, adds a PTI report.

Those killed included four officers and two technical staff, Maj. Gen. Sultan said, adding that an inquiry has been ordered whether the helicopter crashed due to bad weather or technical snag.

Flights cancelled

Heavy rains forced the cancellation of nearly all helicopter aid flights today, leaving millions of destitute and drenched earthquake survivors waiting in the Pakistani mountains for aid that could mean life or death, adds a report from Muzaffarabad. More than a week after the 8 October earthquake which tore apart entire villages, much of the relief aid was just trickling in to the neediest areas. Aid workers looked for donkeys and mules to get them through.

In Muzaffarabad, the ravaged city where nearly half of Pakistan's 39,422 earthquake victims died, only two choppers braved the foul weather, sources said.



NO END TO AGONY: (Clockwise, from top left) Earthquake-affected villagers at Salamabad, 104 km north of Srinagar, sift through clothes donated by relief agencies; The wait for relief material at Kamal Kot village near the border; Soldiers using batons to make victims queue up for supplies in Jabori, Pakistan; Hands are extended for aid in Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir; workers removing boulders off what used to be a road at Teetwal, 200 km north of Srinagar. - AP, AFP, REUTERS, NISSAR AHMAD

Green signal for Pakistan helicopters

Request to fly them in the no-fly zone along LoC accepted

Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI: India said on Saturday that it was willing to permit Pakistani helicopters to fly in the no-fly zone — one km along the Line of Control (LoC) — on a case-by-case basis.

"We have received a request from Pakistan on October 13 to fly helicopters in the peace-time no-fly zone (one km along the LoC). We are conveying our agreement today [Saturday] to this request provided permission is taken on a case-by-case basis," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

"We have seen a news report that India is delaying action on a request by Pakistan [for soldiers] to cross over the LoC so as to have access for [post earthquake] relief work. It is clarified that we have received no such request from Pakistan," the statement added.

A Pakistan High Commission official confirmed late on Saturday evening that the External Affairs Ministry had communicated in writing India's acceptance of the Pakistani request for its helicopters to fly close to the LoC.

According to the official, accessing some of the quake-hit areas might require the helicopters to fly close to the LoC and, hence, permission had been sought and obtained from the Indian side. Pakistan, the of-

• **Permission to be taken on a case-by-case basis; Pakistan to provide advance information of flights to avoid misunderstanding**

• **No request from Pakistan for soldiers to cross LoC for relief work**

official added, would provide advance information of helicopter flights to prevent the possibility of any misunderstanding.

On October 11, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that India had offered to Pakistan relief in earthquake-affected areas in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, which had better access from the Indian side of the LoC.

"It depends on Pakistan's sensitivities. We have to respect [them]. If they agree to this, there will be positive response from our side," the Prime Minister was quoted by the Press Trust of India as saying after visiting quake-hit areas in Tangdhar and Uri. According to the Prime Minister, the Army Chief and Director-General of Military Intelligence (DGMI) have made such an offer to Pakistan.

Pakistan death toll put at 38,000: Page 10

Stench of death hangs heavy in air

Islamabad: The stench of death hung heavy in the air along the ravaged roads leading to the mountain villages of PoK and adjoining areas, where an eerie silence indicates the presence of a very few living souls.

Hope is fast giving way to despondency as the pace of death is overtaking that of rescue in the regions where Saturday's killer tremor wiped out thousands of lives and rendered lakhs homeless.

"The stench of rotting bodies is unbearable," Mohammad Qureshi of Bagh village in PoK was quoted as saying by the local media. For survivors, anger reigned supreme at not getting enough aid—blankets, food and tents—to battle the elements in view of chilly winter fast setting in in the mountain towns.

As news of loot and ransack of essential items trickled in from Muzaffarabad, which

ALL SHOOK UP PAGES 8, 9 & 12

bore the brunt of the of the quake, victims in the surrounding hill regions expressed frustration at not being able to get a share of the relief material earmarked for them. "It is bad enough that our homes are razed, but the shortage of food and water in these parts are killing us slowly," Iqbal Hussain of Rawlakot said. The local media reported the incidents of looting and lawlessness in certain areas were severely hampering relief operations. The gargantuan task, now facing the administration, is the clearing of the dead, officials said, adding that heaving heavy machinery up the mountain tracks to the cut-off villages is posing a greater challenge than actual distribution of food supplies.

However, amidst the numerous glum faces milling on the streets are also some gladdened by a sudden rescue by army personnel. A British rescue team on Thursday saved a septuagenarian, man trapped under the debris of a building in Muzaffarabad for the last five days, bringing cheer to the devastated city. Agencies



An earthquake survivor sits at a temporary refugee camp located at a stadium in Muzaffarabad on Thursday. Agencies

Aftershock triggers panic in Kashmir

Srinagar/Islamabad: A strong tremor measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale in the wee hours of Thursday rattled Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control and several parts of Pakistan, triggering fresh panic among people already reeling under the havoc wreaked by the quake six days ago. Although there were no reports of any casualties, the aftershock, which was epicentred near the PoK capital Muzaffarabad, sent survivors out into the open.

The strong tremor came as a rude shock to the hapless victims of the worst-affected Uri and Tangdhar regions on this side of LoC, as also PoK and cities in Pakistan, who rushed out of their tents praying for safety. The Met department in Srinagar said the aftershock measuring 5.8, occurred at 1.53 am IST. It classified the quake as moderate.

However, reports from the Pakistani capital said one tremor was felt at 23.29 hrs IST on Wednesday night which was followed by another at 1.54 on Thursday. Agencies

Pakistan death toll may exceed 30,000

Islamabad ready to accept relief supplies from India but not for joint relief and rescue operations

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: Even as it became clear that the death toll in Saturday's earthquake in Pakistan could well be over 30,000, Islamabad on Monday maintained that there was no "possibility" of joint relief and rescue operations with India in Kashmir on the plea that the Line of Control (LoC) was not inhabited.

On the basis of field reports and projections, the United Nations Children's Fund has estimated that between 30,000 and 40,000 people died in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Children accounted for 50 per cent of the population in the affected areas in northern Pakistan and PoK.

Pakistan on Monday night said relief goods for the quake-hit would start flowing into the country from India on Tuesday.

Hours after Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran announced in New Delhi that a planeload of relief materials would be ready to leave for Pakistan, Foreign Office spokesperson of Pakistan Tasneem Aslam told *The Hindu*, "Yes. We have indicated our requirements to New Delhi and relief materials would begin coming from there from tomorrow onwards. However I am not sure about the mode of transport."

It appears India offered to lend a few helicopters as well as experts to help in the rescue of people stranded in different parts of Pakistan and PoK but Pakistan did not accept the suggestion.

Earlier Ms. Aslam told a news conference here that Islamabad had offered assistance to New Delhi to help the quake victims on the other side of the LoC.

On the possibility of a coordinated approach by India and Pakistan, she said the Pakistan Army was operating in villages and towns in PoK, including in

far-flung areas but not along the LoC. To a question whether security concerns were involved in relief operations in PoK, Ms. Aslam said: "I don't know. Maybe, the Indian media has reported about security concerns."

She said, "We remain willing to help Indians if we are needed for any kind of assistance, like the Indians offered us," she said. Ms. Aslam replied in the affirmative when asked whether Pakistan has formally conveyed its offer to India.

Assessing requirements

About the Indian offer, she said: "At the moment we are assessing our requirements. We are getting assistance. We will see if there is need for assistance [from India]." While evaluating the Indian offer, Pakistan was conscious of the fact that India was engaged in rescue and relief operations in some of the worst-hit areas on the Indian side, she said.

The counter offer by Pakistan to India has surprised diplomatic observers here considering the magnitude of its problem. While some areas on the Indian side were badly hit by Saturday's quake, there can simply be no comparison with Pakistan in terms of the area and the nature of the damage.

In an interview to CNN on Sunday, Gen. Musharraf hinted that Pakistan was cautious in reacting to the Indian offer of assistance given the "sensitivities" involved.

UNICEF projections

The UNICEF projections were corroborated by the grisly footage telecast on local channels. Several television crews reached the capital of PoK, Muzaffarabad, on Monday and shot images of the flattened structures and terrified residents. The only consolation was that the authorities were successful in re-opening the roads to the capital city and



LIGHT AT LAST: Rescuers trying to pull out a man trapped under the debris of a building in Balakot town in the North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan on Monday. - PHOTO: AFP

other big towns, and the hope of help on hands. United Nations agencies and NGOs reported that trucks carrying relief supplies

began arriving in the region.

The United Jehadi Council (UJC), a conglomerate of militant groups engaged in oper-

ations in Jammu and Kashmir, announced temporary suspension of their activities. UJC chairman and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen

chief Syed Salahuddin chief was quoted as directing directed the cadres from Muzaffarabad to engage in rescue and relief efforts.

More reports, photographs on Page 12

J&K death toll 927; Baramulla worst-hit

Number of injured has crossed 3,000; 4,597 houses destroyed

Staff Reporter

SRINAGAR: The death toll in Saturday's powerful earthquake in Jammu and Kashmir has risen to 927, including 619 in Baramulla and 301 in Kupwara, the worst-affected frontier districts.

The number of injured has now crossed 3,000 and 4,597 houses have been destroyed, as per the official figures available till late on Monday evening.

Army and Air Force continued operations for the third consecutive day to reach the remote places, where civic administration remains hit.

But half-a-dozen villages in Baramulla district such as Chapper and Chruanda are still not accessible, as there have been landslips at various places. The main challenge faced by the

search parties is to bring people to Uri and Tangdhar, the two towns where relief operations are being carried out.

In many villages such as Digia and Kamalkote, bodies are yet to be retrieved from the debris. Many of the injured continue to reach Uri and Tangdhar from the remote villages.

Protests were held at various places on the Rampur-Baramulla National Highway 1A; people complained of inadequate relief and scarcity of tents even in Uri town.

Chief Secretary Vijay Bakaya said on Monday: "We have already supplied 1,900 tents, but we need 15,000 more tents to provide shelter to the affected families." Twentyone teams of doctors were working round-the-clock in Uri and Tangdhar

sectors since Sunday and 15 ambulances had been deployed in the area, he said.

This was in addition to the medical assistance being provided by the armed forces. There is also acute water shortage, as there are only six water tankers in the area.

Repeated visits by VIPs are allegedly diverting the attention of the authorities. BJP president L.K. Advani toured the affected areas on Monday.

Mild aftershocks were experienced across the state on Sunday night but officials said there was no need to panic as they were less intense and less frequent.

The J&K Trade Union Centre has announced formation of the Kashmir Relief Committee for the earthquake victims.



AFTER-SHOCKS: Villagers near the Line of Control carrying a man wounded in the recent earthquake arrive at the army hospital in Uri, 110 km north of Srinagar, on Monday. - PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

Alarm at Delhi airport

NEW DELHI: The Indira Gandhi International Airport here was put on high alert on Monday as the pilot of an Air Sahara flight to Hyderabad decided to return to the airport minutes after taking off as he noticed some trouble in one of the engines. As the pilot informed Air Traffic Control

about the situation in view of which he wanted to make the precautionary landing", all emergency procedures were adopted at the airport and ambulances, fire-fighters and teams of the Quick Reaction Team of the Central Industrial Security Force were deployed.

DEVASTATION AND AGONY AFTER THE QUAKE



RESCUE WORK: (Pictures clockwise) Pakistani rescue workers gather at the site of a building collapse in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, on Sunday while Indian soldiers remove debris from an Army barracks in Uri. Zena, 45, cries outside her house damaged at Jabla, near Uri. A Kashmiri holds his injured child in Salamabad, 110 km north of Srinagar. Another child is comforted by her parents at a hospital in Jammu. PHOTOS: REUTERS, AFP AND AP

Straying Indian soldier 'returned'

SRINAGAR: An Indian soldier, who had inadvertently crossed the Line of Control after Saturday's earthquake, was returned by the Pakistani troops in the Tangdhar sector, Jammu and Kashmir Governor Lt. Gen (retd.) S.K. Sinha said on Sunday.

Lt. Gen. Sinha, on a visit to the affected border areas, said the Army had lost 54 men. Some of the forward defences and pickets were damaged. At "Eagle" picket, 12 soldiers were caught in landslips and their bodies were yet to be recovered. Flag meetings were held on the LoC with the Pakistani commanders and help offered.

Though the Army patrols had established contact with remote villages to assess damage and carry out rescue operations, many hamlets were still cut off. By Monday, the Army would reach them. Rain and hailstorm hampered rescue operations on Saturday, he said.

The devastation caused by the quake was tremendous. "Poonch in Jammu province has also suffered but the damage there is much less. Thirteen persons have been killed and 50 injured."

"Excellent work"

Lt. Gen. Sinha said both the Army and Air Force were doing "excellent" rescue and relief work. He also acknowledged the civil administration's role in providing succour to the victims.

The Governor, who is also the president of the Red Cross, said the organisation was being mobilised to meet the situation. The seriously injured were being evacuated from the affected areas to Srinagar and treated in Army and civil hospitals. "The Air Force helicopters are running a constant shuttle service."

— PTI

Parents join rescue workers

Schoolchildren trapped in rubble

BALAKOT: With hands, picks and shovels, desperate parents struggled on Sunday to reach more than 850 children trapped in the rubble of two schools flattened by the weekend's massive earthquake in northern Pakistan.

The voices of trapped children and the anguished wails of their parents accompanied the frantic work in the Balakot valley in the mountains of Northwest Frontier Province, one of the areas worst hit in Saturday's devastating quake.

"Save me, call my mother, call my father," came the faint voice of a boy, again and again, from the rubble of a government school in which local people said about 200 children were trapped.

"Bring out my child, bring out my child," his mother wailed, beating her chest as other parents and relatives pulled out the bodies of four children, bringing the death toll to eight.

A day on, police and emergency services were nowhere in sight, but residents of the town of about 20,000 people estimated 2,500 people may have been killed there and in seven surrounding mountain villages.

Thousands were injured, mostly women and children who were in their homes at the time of the disaster while their men worked in the open. Almost every second woman or child bore an injury.

A spokesman for President Pervez Musharraf said 18,000 people had been killed in the north as a result of the quake.

At the private Shaheen School, another 650 children were trapped inside the four-storey building that collapsed as the children sat in class at 8:50 a.m. (0920hrs IST).

Parents scrambling through

the rubble said they had brought out the bodies of six dead children and 19 injured. The bodies of four children could be seen on the school roof. Parents said they could hear the cries of children, but were helpless until they managed to get makeshift rescue equipment, including iron bars they used to lever away rubble.

A teenage girl named Busra was pulled out covered in dust and with leg injuries.

"We were sitting down when it happened. We tried to get up and run, but everything just caved in," she said. "I was lying buried up to my neck. There are many others in there."

The Balakot region is a scene of massive devastation. Perhaps half of the concrete houses have collapsed and dozens of bodies lay in the open.

Residents complained about the lack of help. The road into town has been blocked by landslips, and it is only possible to reach the town on foot.

A Reuters reporter counted 105 bodies on the eight kilometre (five mile) trek into town. Some were laid out by the roadside by relatives hoping for help with their burial. Others were carried on charpoys, or traditional rope beds. A small boy carried a younger sister of perhaps four or five, her skin stripped off her face and the side of her body by a rock that flattened their house. He did not know what to do. "There are no bandages or anything at all," he said. "There are no doctors, no nothing — where should we go?"

A German woman doctor running a leprosy centre in Balakot said they were doing what they could to help. She said six of their patients died when the centre's roof collapsed and 20 were hurt.

— Reuters

Tangdhar wakes up to the quake tragedy

300 bodies have been recovered including that of 22 security men

Luv Puri

TANGDCHAR: A day after the earthquake more than 300 bodies, including those of 22 security personnel, had been recovered while hundreds remained missing in this remote zone adjoining the Chakoti tehsil of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Police parties and Army columns of the 53 Mountain Brigade arrived at the scattered hamlets only on Sunday morning. The district administration was not aware till then about the devastation in the scattered villages as the focus had been on Uri. Wails of hapless women, children and men meets any visitor. Tangdhar is three-hours drive from Kupwara town, district headquarters of north Kashmir. None of the tin-roofed houses in the area has escaped nature's fury.

• Police parties and the 53 Mountain Brigade arrived at the scattered hamlets only on Sunday

• Four villages with a population of over 75 families still have to be accessed

• The real heroes are the local youth who worked despite injuries

Four villages with a population of over 75 families still have to be accessed, say police officials. Many villages such as Dragar with 100 houses, Chitrakot with 75 hamlets and Titwal with 50 houses have been completely flattened.

Entire families have been wiped out. Maskat Ali from Chitrakot is looking for his maternal uncle's family. "The entire family is missing. They are beneath the rubble which remains to be cleared," he said.

Abdul Razak, who was out in the fields when tragedy struck, is searching for his wife and son. It is difficult to locate the remnants of his house which is buried amidst the rubble of other houses.

There were some lucky ones who were dragged out from the rubble by locals. Raja Mushtaq, who survived with his two-year-old child, says, "I was beneath the rubble for 23 hours. It is the local people who brought me out."

The real heroes besides the Army jawans, the police personnel and the medical officials are the local youth. Irshad, a 22-year-old who has a cut on his right leg, worked through the night with hammer and tongs digging broken mud houses to save lives in Dragar village. He says, "Every second is crucial. Our wounds can wait to heal but every second is the difference between life and death." Most of the affected villages near the Line of Control inhabited by Pathari-speaking and Gujjar population have their relatives just across the Line of Control in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir which has borne the brunt of the earthquake.

Ramzan Ali, whose family survived, is worried about his sister's family in the neighbouring Chakoti tehsil.

People spend the night in the open

URI: For thousands of people in Jammu and Kashmir whose lives were devastated by the earthquake, even the skies seemed to have joined in to compound their misery.

With most houses in the quake-hit areas flattened by yesterday's 7.4 intensity earthquake and few tents available, the victims were forced to spend the night in the open. It rained during the night and some parts of the State even experienced the first snowfall of the season. "I don't know what we have

done to deserve this," said a shaken Farooq Ahmed as he huddled with his family.

In Baramullah, many people, including women and children, had to spend the night in a graveyard. They said no government official had visited them yet.

There were similar allegations of the Government apathy from most of the quake-hit areas, including Tangdhar, one of the worst-affected.

"In fact, if the Army had not helped us, we don't know what we would have done," said Asim

Khan.

Putting own losses behind it, the Defence forces had set up makeshift hospitals where people airlifted from remote areas were being treated.

Nearly all the houses in Uri either collapsed or developed big cracks. As strong aftershocks continued throughout the day, even those who still had roof on their houses could not gather the courage to go back.

"We are resigned to spending another night out in the open. We only wish we had more food

and some blankets," said Nilofar.

Shortage of food, water and blankets was a major problem in almost all the quake-hit areas though the administration claimed adequate supplies had been rushed there.

The quake had also temporarily removed the distinction between the rich and the poor.

Most people rushed out of their houses without picking up their wallets or purses which were now buried. — PTI

UNFOLDING TRAGEDY



The destruction in worst-hit Balakot in Pakistan's Northwestern Frontier Province a day after the quake.

REUTERS

Army, Air Force lead rescue operations

Agencies and HTC
Uri/New Delhi, October 9

STURDY ARMY personnel, their fingers always on the trigger to counter militants, turned out angels for this border town. Leaving aside their assault rifles, the troops used bare hands to find possible survivors of the trembler that hit the Valley on Saturday.

Shafat Ahmed, who was carrying a tent to keep cover the head of his family following complete destruction of his house, said "but for the army, we would have been dead by now. They have come to us as angels," he said in a choked voice.

Though the civilian authorities claimed relief and rescue operations was in full swing, it were the troops who used shovels and other equipments to extract bodies or survivors from under the debris.

"We have set up a makeshift hospital where army and civilian doctors were treating the injured," says Defence Spokesman Col J.S. Joneja as jawans brought hordes of injured on their shoulders to the hospital.

Both the army and IAF continued their relief work under Operation Imdad by evacuating 250 injured persons from the Line of Control.

IAF Vice Chief Ajit Bhawnani said, "All air bases are on a red alert. Two IL-76 aircraft and 6 AN-32 aircraft from 25 squadron in Agra are also on a standby for any requirement."

Two MI-17 Helicopters of the IAF formed an airbridge between Uri and Kupwara regions and the Corps Headquarters in Srinagar and another MI-17 and some smaller Chetak Helicopters were ferrying the injured from Tangdhar — another area devastated by the quake.



A jawan at a funeral procession in Uri.

AP

The Army has pressed into service 'Dozers' for clearing up roads and tracks leading to villages that are littered with debris. Mobile medical teams have been dispatched to remote localities. Twenty tonnes of medical supplies and 200 tonnes of ration have been dispatched to the affected villages.

Overnight 1,000 tents have been sent to Uri and Tangdhar.

Pakistan quake death toll touches 19,000

43,000 people injured, still no access to three districts in Pakistan occupied Kashmir

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: On the basis of preliminary estimates, Pakistan announced on Sunday that at least 19,136 people were killed and 42,397 injured in the earthquake that struck on Saturday.

The final toll may be much higher. Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao told a news conference here after an emergency Cabinet meeting that the Government still had no access to three of the four worst-hit districts in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The aftershocks, which continued through the second day, only added to the woes of people stranded in the affected areas. In the capital city, every time a tremor was felt people ran out into the streets. Most people preferred to spend the night in the open. The Minister said 70 per cent of the houses in the three worst affected districts in PoK, including the capital city of Muzaffarabad, were destroyed. Landslips triggered by the earthquake blocked road links to the region, cutting it off.

The Pakistan Army suffered casualties in PoK; 200 personnel were killed and 450 Army officers and personnel injured.

After PoK, the North West Frontier Province suffered the impact of the earthquake. Around 1,760 people have been confirmed dead and 1,797 people are believed to be injured. The Government does not have estimates of the number displaced

● 70 pc of houses destroyed in PoK districts

● Musharraf seeks international aid, Rs. 1 lakh compensation for next of kin of victims

● British team on mission to rescue survivors under rubble of multi-storied block

in the province. It may run into the thousands if not a million as in at least three districts in the province, 50 to 70 per cent of the houses have been reduced to rubble. With the arrival of a team of experts from Britain the operation to remove the debris of the 10-storied Margalla Tower in the capital was intensified in a bid to rescue people trapped under it. Among the lucky ones to be rescued during the day were a woman and two little girls. By Sunday evening, around 80 persons had been rescued from under the debris. Thirty-five persons were confirmed dead while 150 persons were believed to be still trapped under the rubble.

After an aerial survey of the affected areas in PoK, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf asked the international community to assist the country with supplies of medicine, tents, cargo helicopters and financial assistance.



SOME HOPE FOR THE SURVIVORS: A rescuer approaches a victim of the earthquake in the debris of the high-rise Margalla Tower in Islamabad on Sunday. — PHOTO: AFP

History of Major Earthquakes



Date	Place	Magnitude	Deaths	Date	Place	Magnitude	Deaths
① Apr 4, 1905	Kangra, India	8.6	19,000	⑫ Dec 26, 1939	Erzincan, Turkey	7.8	30,000
② Aug 17, 1906	Valparaiso, Chile	8.2	20,000	⑬ Oct 5, 1948	Ashgabat, Turk.	7.3	110,000
③ Dec 28, 1908	Messina, Italy	7.2	100,000*	⑭ May 31, 1970	Peru	7.9	66,000
④ Jan 13, 1915	Avezzano, Italy	7.5	29,980	⑮ Feb 4, 1976	Guatemala	7.5	23,000
⑤ Dec 16, 1920	Gansu, China	7.8	200,000	⑯ Jul 27, 1976	Tangshan, China	7.5	655,000*
⑥ Sep 1, 1923	Kanto, Japan	7.9	143,000	⑰ Dec 7, 1988	Spitak, Armenia	6.8	25,000
⑦ May 22, 1927	Tsinghai, China	7.9	200,000	⑱ Sep 29, 1993	Latur, India	6.2	9,748
⑧ Dec 25, 1932	Gansu, China	7.6	70,000	⑲ Jan 26, 2001	Gujarat, India	7.7	20,023
⑨ Jan 15, 1934	Bihar, India	8.1	10,700	⑳ Dec 26, 2003	Bam, Iran	6.6	26,200
⑩ May 30, 1935	Quetta, Pakistan	7.5	60,000*	㉑ Dec 26, 2004	Sumatra, Indonesia	9.0	283,106**
⑪ Jan 25, 1939	Chillan, Chile	8.3	28,000	㉒ Oct 8, 2005	Near Muzaffarabad (PoK)	7.6	N. A.

* Estimated ** Including deaths from Tsunami

How many earthquakes occur worldwide each year?

Description	Great	Major	Strong	Moderate	Light	Minor	Very Minor
Magnitude	8 & higher	7 - 7.9	6 - 6.9	5 - 5.9	4 - 4.9	3 - 3.9	2 - 2.9
Annual Average	1	17	134	1319	13,000 (Estimated)	130,000 (Estimated)	1,300,000 (Estimated)

Source: The United States Geological Survey

KBK Infographics

THE HINDU

Climate change, pollution kill millions: report

John Vidal

Environment
110-19

LONDON: Almost a fifth of all ill-health in poor countries and millions of deaths can be attributed to environmental factors, including climate change and pollution, according to a report from the World Bank.

Unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene as well as indoor and outdoor air pollution are all said to be killing people and preventing economic development. In addition, says the bank, increasing soil pollution, pesticides, hazardous waste and chemicals in food are significantly affecting health and economies.

More controversially, the report, released recently in New York, links cancers to environmental conditions and says global warming has a major impact on health. "For almost all forms of cancer, the risk of contracting this disease can be reduced if physical environments are safe for human habitation and food items are safe for consumption," says the report.

It also cites the spread of malaria and dengue fever as climate change intensifies. Global warming, says the report, is leading to lower yields of some crops and the salination of coastal areas. "In 2000 more than 150,000 premature deaths were attributed to various climate change im-

pacts, according to the World Health Organisation," it says.

While tobacco, alcohol and unsafe sex are still the most likely threats to health in developing countries, rapid urbanisation and the spread of slum conditions are now major hazards, says the report.

"Some 1.1 billion people lack access to safe water and 2.6 billion lack access to safe sanitation. [This leads to] about four billion cases of diarrhoea a year, which cause 1.8 million deaths a year, mostly among children under five," it says.

Sanitation, says the bank, which is committed to increasing spending on the environment, is very much "a forgotten problem", with spending on improvements estimated at just \$1 billion in 2000 – less than 10 per cent of that spent on water.

Millions of people who have moved to cities to find work have swapped indoor for outdoor air pollution, suggests the report. Urban air pollution is estimated to cause about 800,000 premature deaths, it says, approaching the number of people affected by indoor air pollution from wood fires in poorly ventilated homes in rural areas. According to the report, which uses WHO statistics, high concentrations of minute particles released by smoky fires are now responsible for over 1.6 million deaths a year. Acute

respiratory infection, largely caused by indoor air pollution, it says, was responsible for 36 per cent of all registered infant deaths in Guatemala between 1997 and 2000.

The report also says manmade chemicals such as pesticides have an increasing impact on the health of poor people. A survey of child labour in several developing countries, it says, found more than 60 per cent of all working children were exposed to hazardous conditions, and more than 25 per cent of these hazards were due to exposure to chemicals

"Without a healthy, productive labour force, we will not have the economic growth that is necessary to ensure a pathway out of poverty. Poor people are the first to suffer from a polluted environment," said Warren Evans, director of the bank's environment department.

Meanwhile, the scale of the Boxing Day tsunami led to complete chaos and "misguided goodwill" among the hundreds of humanitarian groups who rushed to Asia to help affected communities, according to a report commissioned by the International Red Cross. But the eagerness to help led to some sending or distributing inappropriate aid, others competing to spend vast sums of donated cash, and many duplicating each other's efforts. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

9/10 ✓

110-19

Baramulla bears the brunt.

At least 180 people, including 21 army personnel, were killed and over 600 injured in Jammu and Kashmir, the worst-hit Indian state in the massive earthquake that jolted large swathes of the Indian subcontinent beginning with Pakistan.

Chief secretary Vijay Bakaya said the casualty figures may go up as reports were pouring in from far-flung areas. According to unconfirmed reports, the number of killed is around 250. Bakaya said while 142 people were killed and 550 injured in Kashmir, 15 people died in Jammu. Baramulla district of north Kashmir reported the maximum casualties: 116. Out of these 104 deaths were reported from border township of Uri where 80% houses have been damaged. He

500 die in NWFP dist

Islamabad: At least 500 people were killed and over 1,700 injured in the Mansehra district of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, a senior police officer said. The other region hit hard was Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Some 250 people died and thousands were injured in Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK. Agencies

said Tangdhar near the LoC in Kupwara district accounted for 25 deaths while eight persons were killed in Poonch district and four in Udhampur district, Bakaya said. Three persons were

killed in Srinagar.

Defence sources said 21 soldiers were killed and scores of others injured when the bunker buildings along the LoC collapsed under the impact of the quake.

Police and paramilitary forces have fanned out to help with relief and rescue. The army has also been pressed into service. They have already set up medical camps to attend to the injured civilians. Bakaya said officials at the Centre were in constant touch with the authorities here and have assured all possible help to the victims of the natural calamity. He said air force choppers are also at hand for rescue missions.

Almost all the critically injured persons have been evacuated to Srinagar, he said. Teams of

doctors are being sent to treat the injured in Tangdhar sector who could not be evacuated to hospital after quake-triggered landslides closed the main road. The blockades on Srinagar-Kupwara and Baramulla-Uri roads have been removed and efforts are on to shift the injured to Srinagar for treatment, he said.

A child was killed as the strong tremors rocked parts of Punjab and Haryana leading to power breakdowns and damaging houses at many places. The five-year-old child was killed when the roof of his house collapsed in Shahpur Jajan border village in Gurdaspur district.

In Chandigarh, power and mobile connections went on the blink for some time, but life in the city remained by and large

normal. Senior superintendent of police, Batala, J K Jain said a school building collapsed in Dhergawar, a border village, but no loss of life was reported.

Neighbouring Himachal Pradesh was spared any casualty but the almost minute-long tremors damaged a roads and several houses.

High-risk Kashmir

Kashmir is well known to be a high-risk area for earthquakes and Saturday's 7.6-magnitude temblor came after warnings that seismic activity there seemed to be on the rise. Experts have predicted several after-shocks in the Valley and adjoining areas in the coming days.

Seismologists have long con-

Quake worst in 120 yrs

Srinagar: The tremors that shook Jammu and Kashmir was the severest in the state in over 120 years. "Our records show that an earthquake of 7.0 magnitude was felt in the valley with epicentre at Sopore in Baramulla district of north Kashmir on May 30, 1885," director weather office G K Mohantey said here. Agencies

sidered the Himalayan region to be a danger area like some other parts such as Gujarat where over 20,000 people died in 2001.

Kashmir lies in the collision area of the Eurasian and Indian

tectonic plates which formed the mighty Himalayas 50 million years ago and are now responsible for the yearly quakes that cause widespread devastation.

Measuring the tremendous stresses below the surface, experts in recent years have noted an increase in the seismic activity of the plates under Kashmir. Scientists have voiced fears that major quakes could occur in Kashmir as well as Uttaranchal and Nagaland, which also skirt the southern fringe of the Himalayas on the east.

While geographical statistics show that almost 54% of India's land is vulnerable to earthquakes, Kashmir lies closer to the fault line of the tectonic plates where the most severe earth quakes are to be expected. TNN and Agencies

TIMELINE



WORLD'S WORST KILLER

On May 31, 1935, a quake measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale destroyed Qila Bala (Pakistan) killing 30,000 to 60,000 people.

Some of the most serious quakes in recent decades:

December 28, 1974

PAKISTAN: A quake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale killed 5,300 people in the northern mountains of the country.

August 20, 1988

INDO-NEPAL BORDER: A quake measuring 6.6 killed 1,450 people.

October 19, 1989

INDIA: 2,000 people were killed in a 7.0 quake in north India.

January 4, 1988

AFGHANISTAN: Over 2,300 were killed in Herat district (Takhar) in a quake measuring 6.1.

May 30, 1988

AFGHANISTAN: Measuring 6.9, this quake killed up to 4,000 people in Takhar.

March 25, 2002

AFGHANISTAN: At least 1,000 were killed in Nahrin district in the Hindu Kush ranges in tremors measuring up to 6.1.

October 8, 2005

PAKISTAN: Over 1,000 are feared killed in Pakistan in an earthquake measuring 7.6 that struck northeast of Islamabad. About 200 casualties are reported in north India as well.

US Geological Service Archives



Two Kashmiri women console each other in Baramulla on Saturday

Quake fells what shells spared

By Aarti Tikoo Singh/TNN

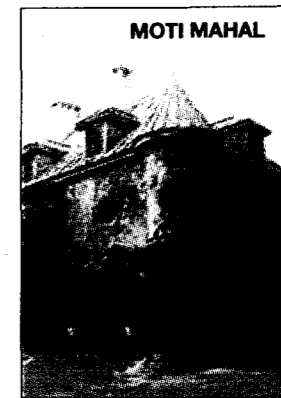
Jammu: For Poonch, it was like watching a slice of history disappear. On Saturday morning as residents, hardened to dangers of shelling and war, rushed out as the ground beneath them convulsed with a fury they hadn't seen before, they saw the city's prize historical monument tremble and almost crash.

It was the city's Moti Mahal Palace, built in 1926 by Raja Sukhdev Singh, one of the line of Dogra kings who invested in the area's landscape and architecture, little knowing that a twist of history would place it on

the frontlines of a long border confrontation.

But Moti Mahal, which took Sukhdev Singh's builders 10 years to finish, had survived conflict. "For long Pakistan had been eyeing Moti Mahal, the historical palace, and therefore this palace was spared during all the wars and otherwise too. Pakistan never fired at or shelled this palace with a design that when they invade Poonch, they would enjoy it," an Army officer of Poonch brigade told TOI.

Known as one of the most exquisite palaces in Jammu & Kashmir, the Moti Mahal, a castle-like structure, was a big draw



for tourists as well as the pride of residents. On Saturday, the massive earthquake, epicentred in the same country whose sol-

diers had a soft corner for it, almost flattened it.

IG Police S P Vaid told TOI that the palace was on the verge of collapse since the roof had plummeted and serious cracks had developed. "We have no details whether the Army inhabiting the palace suffered any loss. But we know some of the soldiers have been injured. The telephone and other communication lines have broken down completely in Poonch." Also severely damaged in Poonch, one of the Indian cities which bore the brunt of the quake, were at least 100 other homes and buildings.

Sonia, PM herded to lawns

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was yanked out of a speech he was delivering and herded out with Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and Congress chief ministers attending a conference in Chandigarh to the lawns of Punjab Bhavan, the venue of the conclave, by jittery SPG commandos as doors and windows started rattling exactly at 9.22 am.

Hours after the earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale rocked north India, the Centre said an electronic system to calculate the exact intensity of an earthquake would be put in place within a couple of weeks time. "We are improving on the system that could give us the exact intensity of an

earthquake within 10 minutes of its occurrence and it would be put in place in a few weeks time," Union minister for science and technology Kapil Sibal said in New Delhi.

The US will provide \$100,000 in emergency relief Pakistan. "We recall with gratitude that when Americans needed help in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Pakistan stepped forward," said ambassador Ryan Crocker.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation said its structures were quake-resistant. "The Delhi Metro stations, elevated structures and underground tunnels are built with



With Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in tow, President Pervez Musharraf surveyed the destruction in Islamabad on Saturday and called the quake a "test of the nation"

sufficient strength to endure maximum stress and strain, including earthquakes," said Anuj Dayal, a Metro spokesperson.

HC freezes building in mangrove zones

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Environment
Mumbai: It's celebration time for greens and environmentally conscious citizens. Mumbai's endangered mangroves have got judicial cover, quite literally. On Thursday, in a landmark order, the Bombay high court froze all construction and dumping activities on mangrove areas in the city and the rest of the state. (TOI has consistently written about the destruction of the city's mangroves and its grave impact on the environment.)

Hearing a PIL filed by the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), a division bench comprising Chief Justice Dalveer Bhandari and Justice Dhananjay Chandrachud cleared the decks for total protection of mangroves and set

WHAT IT MEANS

- | Total ban on construction and dumping of garbage and debris in mangrove areas
- | Declare mangrove areas as 'protected forests' after satellite mapping and survey
- | Total freeze on destruction and cutting of mangroves
- | Stop construction within 50 metres on all sides of all mangroves immediately
- | State and its agencies can't grant any development permission on mangrove plots

specific deadlines for the government to declare mangrove plots as 'protected forests'.

The concern of the judges was

evident from the fact that a special messenger was despatched to deliver a signed copy of the order to chief secretary Prem Kumar on Thursday itself. Greens are happy about mangrove lands being declared as forests. This, they say, will afford mangroves a far greater degree of protection as their care and preservation will be the responsibility of the state forest department, with heavy penalties and jail terms for offenders.

In the first part of their interim judgment, the judges have ordered a ban on the destruction and cutting of mangroves in the entire state. Not stopping at a ban on any development on mangrove plots, the court also issued orders to stop all construction activity within 50 metres on all sides of all mangrove areas.

Bio-diversity report released

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 7. — The final report emanating from the mapping of the country's bio-diversity under the National Bio-diversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) was released by Kalpavriksh, the NGO entrusted with the task, even as the environment and forests ministry termed it "scientifically invalid".

"The environment ministry has gone back on its word to make this report an official document for a National Action Plan," Kalpavriksh chief, Mr Ashish

Kothari said, while releasing the report here yesterday. "This is the outcome of a four-year process. And the report was submitted in 2003 with the understanding that it would be an official document."

Kalpavriksh, in consultation with the technical and policy core group (TPCG) set up initially, decided to make the report public for three primary reasons, Mr Kothari said. Firstly, it would allow the public easier access to the information, analysis and recommendations contained therein without further delay. Secondly, this move was aimed at providing public access to the 100-odd other

documents produced in the NBSAP process. Finally, it is aimed at enabling the public to compare the final action plan as and when brought out by the ministry of environment and forests with this final technical report.

In a scathing comment, Mr Shekhar Singh of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information, who is a member of the Steering Committee set up by the ministry as part of the NBSAP exercise, said: "It wasn't so much the content but the whole mentality of the ministry that has changed, as they did not approve of the participatory

process followed."

The ministry had conveyed to Kalpavriksh early this year that it was "not comfortable with some parts" of the report but no specific list was made available. In March the ministry also wrote to Kalpavriksh "not to publish or in any form make publicly available" the report submitted in December 2003.

In its reaction to the report, the MOEF today said the "Consultant's report" submitted by Kalpavriksh had been reviewed by a group of scientists appointed by the ministry.

"They have concluded that the

report is for the major part scientifically invalid. Hence the ministry has rejected the report and has started the process of developing the National Bio-diversity Action Plan afresh," it said in a communiqué.

Mr Kothari said that the government was also in technical violation of the UNDP agreement as an Action Plan had to be brought out at the end of the process, which in this case ended in 2003.

Moreover, India is committed under the Convention of Bio-diversity (CBD) to come out with a document by 2006.

Sri Lanka court freezes tsunami aid sharing pack

REUTERS

COLOMBO, JULY 15

SRI LANKA'S Supreme Court today froze a government pact to share \$3 bn in tsunami aid with Tamil Tigers rebels, in a fresh blow to peace hopes as a rash of violence threatens a three-year truce.

The court objected to clauses regarding the management of donor funds pledged to rebuild tsunami-hit areas in rebel-held parts of the island's northern coastline, but it stopped short of declaring the agreement illegal.

"The President, as the leader of the country, has the sole and discretionary power

to enter into any agreement with the LTTE," said Chief Justice Sarath N Silva, reading out the 40-page ruling.

The interim order temporarily suspends the creation of a relief fund—a key aspect in the tsunami aid-sharing mechanism—in the northern rebel stronghold of Kilinochchi, and objects to where the funds are deposited.

The court ruling followed a petition lodged by the Marxist People's Liberation Front (JVP), which quit President Chandrika Kumaratunga's ruling coalition last month over the aid pact.

The pact aims to help speed up relief to tens of thousands of Sri Lankans still living in tents.

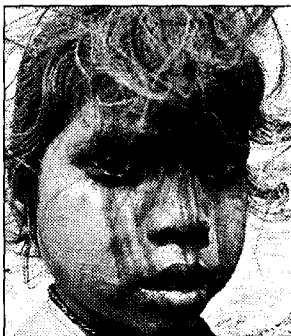
After tsunami, disease

Boston/Jakarta, June 23 (Reuters): The December tsunami that left over 200,000 people dead or missing in Asia and Africa appears to have caused some unusual lung and sinus infections, and even a paralyzing brain infection, according to officials and a report in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Doctors from Massachusetts General Hospital report in the *Journal* on the case of a 17-year-old girl from Indonesia who was 2.5 km inland when a wave from the December 26 tsunami swept her up and carried her another kilometre.

Two days later she developed a cough, followed by headache, nausea and vomiting. She was treated for pneumonia but after another week developed a weakness on the right side of her body, which progressed to paralysis.

The teen turned out to have a brain abscess caused by the same infection that had first attacked her lungs. After in-



A girl at a tsunami shelter in Kargil Nagar, near Chennai, after it was razed by a fire.

(Reuters)

tensive treatment with antibiotics, she recovered and was able to walk.

Her case was rare among tsunami survivors, said Tjandra Yoga Aditama, a senior lung doctor who served in a government team that reopened hospitals in Aceh where the tsunami left more than 160,000 killed or missing.

"There were a few cases,

but definitely not many. We had one treated in Aceh and several (treated) in Medan," he said, referring to the country's third largest city where many tsunami patients from Aceh were taken.

Aditama said he had not heard of any new cases since early this year, but added that pneumonia was a major problem for tsunami survivors.

World Health Organisation (WHO) officials also said the case reported in the journal was likely to be rare.

"This is most likely an individual case, but would not be a transferable disease based on the information available," Anshu Banerjee, head of the WHO office in Aceh, said.

In Thailand, a team of doctors at Bangkok's Rajavithi hospital reported that after the December 26 disaster they had to treat lung problems in dozens of patients who inhaled salt water contaminated by bacteria often found in the soil.

21 JUN 2004 THE TELEGRAPH

Scientists in fresh tsunami fears

London, June 8 (Reuters): The second earthquake in South Asia in three months increased stress on fault lines in the region, making it vulnerable to another rupture and a tsunami, scientists said today.

"We're concerned about a large earthquake and there is a strong probability that if it happens, it will generate a tsunami," Prof. John McCloskey of the University of Ulster said.

He and his team, who predicted the March 28 quake about two weeks before it occurred, said the area under the Mentawai islands west of Sumatra is most at risk of an earthquake with a magnitude

of 8.5 or stronger. "The potential for something bigger is there," he added.

Unlike the December 26 rupture that triggered the Indian Ocean tsunami in which 300,000 people perished, the March earthquake did not create a giant wave because there was no rapid vertical movement of the earth's floor.

But McCloskey believes the stress changes and historical evidence could mean the next one could be similar to the earthquake of 1833 which set off a tsunami in the region that killed many people.

The scientists, who reported their findings in the journal *Nature*, studied stress changes

caused by the March earthquake.

It is the same technique they used after the December tsunami when an estimated 1,200 km of fault line slipped up to about 20 metres.

Both earthquakes were caused by the Australian tectonic plate grinding under the Indonesian plate. The displacement changes the stress values everywhere in the region.

"The area where we are most concerned about the earthquake rupturing is probably under Siberut island. That part hasn't ruptured since 1797," said McCloskey.

About 100 km south of In-

donesia's Siberut is the area of the 1833 earthquake which hasn't had any major movement for 150-170 years.

"Slip on the southern portion could be as great as in 1833: that is, up to 10 metres," the scientists said.

Seismologists can determine which areas are vulnerable to an earthquake but they can not predict when one will occur, which is why early warning systems are so important.

"Our work is strongly indicating that the foot should not be taken off of the accelerator in going ahead full steam with high-tech warning systems," said McCloskey.



A picture taken from a tourist video shows an unidentified man clinging to a tree after being hit by the December 26 tsunami in Kho Phi Phi island, Thailand. (Reuters)

U S A S A E S I R I F S T A Y T

Shipping Ministry proposal to repair tsunami-hit jetties

Environ
G.D. N
110-13

Priority for projects to develop Katchal harbour, alternative jetty at Teresa Island

S. Dorairaj

PORT BLAIR: Jetties play an important role in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the logistics of transporting passengers and cargo to various islands. Their significance in the life of the people can be understood from the fact that there are 49 jetties at various islands for berthing ships. But several of them have been destroyed by the December 26 tsunami.

The total collapse of six jetties at Hut Bay in Little Andaman, Malacca and Tee Top in Car Nicobar, Chowra, Teresa and Katchal in Nancowry group and badly-damaged ones in Junglighat and Fisheries Jetty at Port Blair, Pongibalu in South Andaman, Gandhi Nagar in North Andaman and Campbell Bay in Great Nicobar made things difficult for the Integrated Relief Command to transport relief and rehabilitation material to different islands.

Though the temporary arrangements such as use of floating jetties have helped the IRC tide over the emergency situation, the Ministry of Shipping has realised the need to reconstruct and modernise the jetties.

According to Lt. Governor Ram Kapse, the Ministry of Shipping has put up an estimate for the rehabilitation, reconstruction, modernisation, replacement of damaged infrastructure and creation of additional facilities for ports at Rs.1,606.33 crores.

The proposal has been accepted by the Planning Commission and included in the final report of the tsunami relief programme.

Under the project, Rs. 347.71 crores will be earmarked for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the damaged port infrastructure and Rs. 1258.62 crores will



VITAL LINKS: A floating jetty put up at the Campbell Bay. —PHOTO: V. GANESAN

be utilised for modernisation and creation of additional facilities in two phases till 2010.

In the first phase from 2004-2008, a total investment of Rs. 897.31 crores will be made, out of which Rs. 238.69 crores will be spent on rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Additional facilities will be

created at a cost of Rs. 658.62 crores.

Of the total investment of Rs. 709.02 crores to be made in phase-II during 2008-2010, Rs. 600 crores will be earmarked for additional facilities and Rs.109.02 crores will be spent on rehabilitation.

According to D.S. Negi, Chief

Secretary to A and N Administration, the Ministry of Shipping has identified six projects to be taken up on turn-key basis at a total cost of Rs. 560.20 crores.

Utmost importance is being given to the implementation of two of the six projects: development of Katchal harbour for berthing of mainland ships and

construction of an alternative jetty for inter island vessels at Safed Balu in Teresa Island.

The notice inviting expression of interest for selection of the consultancy agency, under whose supervision the turnkey projects will be taken up has been published, he says.

08 JUN 2008 THE HINDU

Tsunami island spews lava

OUR BUREAU

May 30: Barren Island is breathing fire again.

Eleven years after a massive eruption, India's lone active volcano has started spewing flames and lava in the tsunami-scarred Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.

The eruption was first spotted by a Coast Guard ship — the island is out of bounds for civilians because of strategic reasons — on Saturday as it came close to the island, 140 km northeast of Port Blair.

The latest volcanic blow-up does not seem to be as powerful as the one in 1994 when a smouldering river of lava flowed into the sea, creating a tongue of cooled and hardened rock that extends to a distance of about half-a-kilometre into the sea.

But an official said the flames are 70 to 80-foot tall and the lava is gushing out from a new crater.

"The new spot is a crater slightly smaller and a bit far from the original crater where the huge eruption took place. As of now it is not a cause for concern, but we are constantly monitoring the situation," D.S. Negi, the chief secretary of the Andaman and Nicobar Island administration, told **The Telegraph**.

"The volcanic eruption is not as bad as before, but the smoke which comes out from the volcano has suddenly thickened. We had a team on the island and they have seen for themselves the fresh lava," said commander S. Tiwari, staff officer to the commander-in-chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Unified Command.

"The marine life is not under any threat as the lava is not flowing into the sea, but I

will reassess the situation tomorrow," Negi, who had seen the volcanic eruption in 1994, said.

"If the eruption had taken place on the same crater things could have been worse, but the island is away from Port Blair and is not inhabited," he added.

Though uninhabited, the 3-km diameter Barren Island is home to bats, crabs, rats and several species of birds and

goats. The island was once known for the goats — which were thought to be surviving on seawater until an Indo-Italian research team discovered two fresh-water springs on the island in 2003.

Scientists are trying to find out whether the eruption has anything to do with the December 26 tsunami.

According to Dornadula Chandrashekaram, a geologist at the Indian Institute of

Technology in Mumbai and a member of the Indo-Italian expedition to the island two years ago, the fresh eruption is not surprising.

Barren Island is in the north end of a chain of volcanic islands that extends from the Java-Sumatra region to the north Andaman sea. The region has experienced a string of earthquakes over the past few months.

"A steady swarm of earth-

quakes in a volcanic terrain is a strong indicator of magma (the hot fluid under the Earth's crust) movement — a precursor to volcanic eruption," Chandrashekaram told **The Telegraph**. Such earthquakes suggest that the magma, usually confined to depths below 100 to 200 km, is moving upwards, he said.

Scientists can predict volcanic eruptions by steadily tracking the magma flow be-

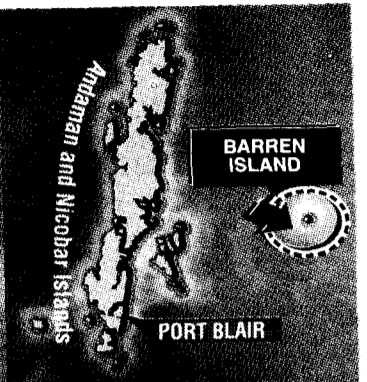
neath the volcano. A laboratory at the base of Mount Etna in Sicily, for instance, does this and can predict when the Etna will ooze lava. But magma activity is not monitored on Barren Island.

Chandrashekaram said there is not enough data to predict how long an eruption would last on Barren Island. The molten lava could take weeks or even months to solidify.

BARREN ISLAND: MAY 28, 2005



Smoke billows from Barren Island on Saturday. (PTI)



●Why does the Earth need volcanoes?

Volcanoes allow the Earth to cool off

●How many active volcanoes are there?

800 in the world. One — Barren Island — in India

●What is lava?

When molten rock reaches the surface, it is called lava

●How long do eruptions last?

Difficult to predict. The most common frequency is one to six months. One day to a week is also not uncommon

●Are volcanoes killers?

Risk increases if safety warnings are ignored in volcanic zones. The chance of dying due to volcanic eruption is 1 in 80,000, according to a table of life risks. The same for cancer is 1 in 3

MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Clinton calls for rehousing of victims

TEUREUBEUH (INDONESIA): The former U.S. President Bill Clinton traded jokes and tears with survivors as he ended a tour of tsunami regions in Indonesia on Monday but made a serious call to speed up efforts to rehouse thousands still living under canvas five months after the disaster.

A relaxed Mr. Clinton shrugged off concerns over his health to travel to one of the areas worst affected by the December 26 catastrophe that left more than 217,000 dead and missing around the Indian Ocean and listen to the concerns of victims.

"The most important thing is we have to speed up building houses. This is the same problem everywhere that I have visited," he told reporters on his one day trip to Indonesia, the last of four countries he has visited as a U.N. tsunami recovery envoy.

"I heard this when I was in India and when I was in Sri Lanka. I talked to the people here, they hope that we can speed up build-

ing houses for them," he said.

More than half a million people were left homeless by the tsunami in Indonesia's western Aceh region, seen as the ground zero of the 9.3 magnitude earthquake and the giant waves that followed.

Mr. Clinton met people living in tents at Teureubeuh, a coastal village surrounded by mountains, after arriving by helicopter from the main city of Banda Aceh.

One woman burst into tears, holding his hand as she implored him to build her a new home. He was also asked to name a newborn baby, but declined, asking locals to "give him a name that means hope". He was clearly in higher spirits than a day earlier when a visit to the Maldives was cut due to bad weather. Some reports said he was suffering from exhaustion possibly linked to his heart surgery last year.

His tour of tsunami-stricken areas was partly aimed at answering frustrations felt by many tsunami victims. — AFP



BRINGING SOLACE: Former U.S. President Bill Clinton jokes with a child while meeting the people of Teureubeuh village refugee camp in Jantho, Aceh province on Monday. — PHOTO: AFP

31 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Clinton cancels Maldives tour

Eminent
(Tsunami)

Male, May 29

PT-13

FORMER US President Bill Clinton was disappointed that he could not make a planned visit to tsunami-hit areas in the Maldives, his deputy said on Sunday, as some officials said the cancellation was due to bad weather while others said Clinton was exhausted.

"He is disappointed ... He wanted to go," said Erskine Bowles, Clinton's former chief of staff and deputy to the ex-president in his role as special UN envoy for tsunami recovery. "But we'll be back," Bowles said. Clinton had been slated to visit tsunami-devastated areas, speak to survivors and review recovery efforts. The ex-president was still set to meet with a UN team, as well as business and civil society leaders on Sunday, officials said.

Clinton was not sick, but was "just plain pooped and he wants to slow his schedule down," said Cherie Hart, regional communications officer for the UN development program and a coordinator of Clinton's visit. The former president had a heart bypass operation in September. In March, fluid and scar tissue were removed from his chest.

However, Brendan Varma, a UN spokesman in New York, said Clinton cancelled the trip due to bad weather. "He is not exhausted," Varma said. "He is doing fine and he is going to continue with his busy schedule of meetings."

The monsoon season is just starting in the Maldives. The country's meteorology department had forecast intermittent rain showers and moderate seas on Sunday. There were some sun breaks throughout the day.

Bowles said Clinton was set to go to the Indonesian city of Banda Aceh — in the area hit hardest by the December 26 earthquake and tsunami — on Monday. Clinton had initially planned to fly to the Maldives' Fonadhoo Island, one of those hardest hit by the tsunami. His meetings with officials, initially scheduled for Sunday morning, were pushed back to the afternoon to let him rest, said Maldives government spokesman Ahmed Shaheed.

AP

30 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

U.N. envoy Clinton conveys world's solidarity

"The trick is to get the coordination right and make the resources move"

Ramya Kannan

CHENNAI: The former United States President and Special Envoy of the United Nations secretary-General for Tsunami Recovery, Bill Clinton, on Friday played the role of an international ambassador — looking, observing and approving.

Leading a top U.N. team to survey the tsunami-hit areas of the district at Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, Mr. Clinton spent about one and a half hours, trying to understand the five months of hard work that has gone into rebuilding a society that was badly devastated by the killer waves that struck on December 26.

Winding up his short, yet purposeful, visit to the district with a press conference, Mr. Clinton said that in the beginning he had thought the big problem would be to get the governments of the world to give aid for tsunami relief and rehabilitation. However, contributions came pouring in and non-government organisations, put together, had about \$3 billion in the bank. "The trick is to get the coordination right and make the resources move," he said laying his finger on the nub of the post-tsunami reconstruction activity.

It was a hot and humid afternoon, a couple of hours before, when Mr. Clinton's special helicopter landed at Nagapattinam, bringing the man to a town that has borne large-scale havoc, destruction, and death — 6,065 persons dead, over 75 per cent of the total human life loss in Tamil Nadu. Clad in a bright orange t-shirt and khakis, Mr. Clinton drove straight down to the Collectorate that houses the NGO Coordination and Resource Centre, supported by the U.N. He took a look at the tsunami photo exhibition and the award winning designs for disaster-resistant shelters accompanied by U.N. Resident Coordinator,

Maxine Olson, UNICEF Representative Cecilio Adorna and WHO Representative, Salim Habayeb. He also interacted with members of NGOs, Nirmala and Vadivelu, two children affected by the tsunami, and the Parameswaran couple who, after losing their three children in the disaster, are looking after other orphans. "I can never forget your story," he told Parameswaran.

His next stop was the ITI temporary shelter, There he spoke to the tsunami-affected children, played with them — big and small. Yogeswaran hardly came up to the knees of the tall, imposing visitor who walked into temporary shelter 601. So when he ran to hug him, he could only clutch at the big man's legs. But when he could, he held on tight.

Mr. Clinton was thrilled. He spent a few minutes in the shelter where Yogeswaran lives with his mother Bhoopathy and three sisters, asking them how they coped. He also walked into the dimly-lit shelters 599 and 600, and spoke warmly to the inmates, communicating more through feeling, rather than words.

Where language did not matter, could accents have mattered much? A group of little ones in a circle singing nursery rhymes, in partly-intelligible English won instant appreciation for their enthusiasm.

Finding himself among children eager to reach out to him, Mr. Clinton did the spontaneous act — bending down to them, speaking to them, calling them endearingly and telling them that they looked good in their clothes. And he assured them that he would be back. "It was very moving," he later told the media.

Inside the ICDS centre, also sponsored by the United Nations, Mr. Clinton lifted Mohammed Imran Nazeer, a toddler. Little Nazeer stared at the stranger and yet for the minute that he was held in the hands of the former President of the United States, he seemed at ease.

On his way back to the helipad, with the crowds lining on either side of the road and cheering him, Mr. Clinton broke protocol. He got out of the car and shook hands with them, before moving on.

'Funds not a problem now'

R.K. Radhakrishnan

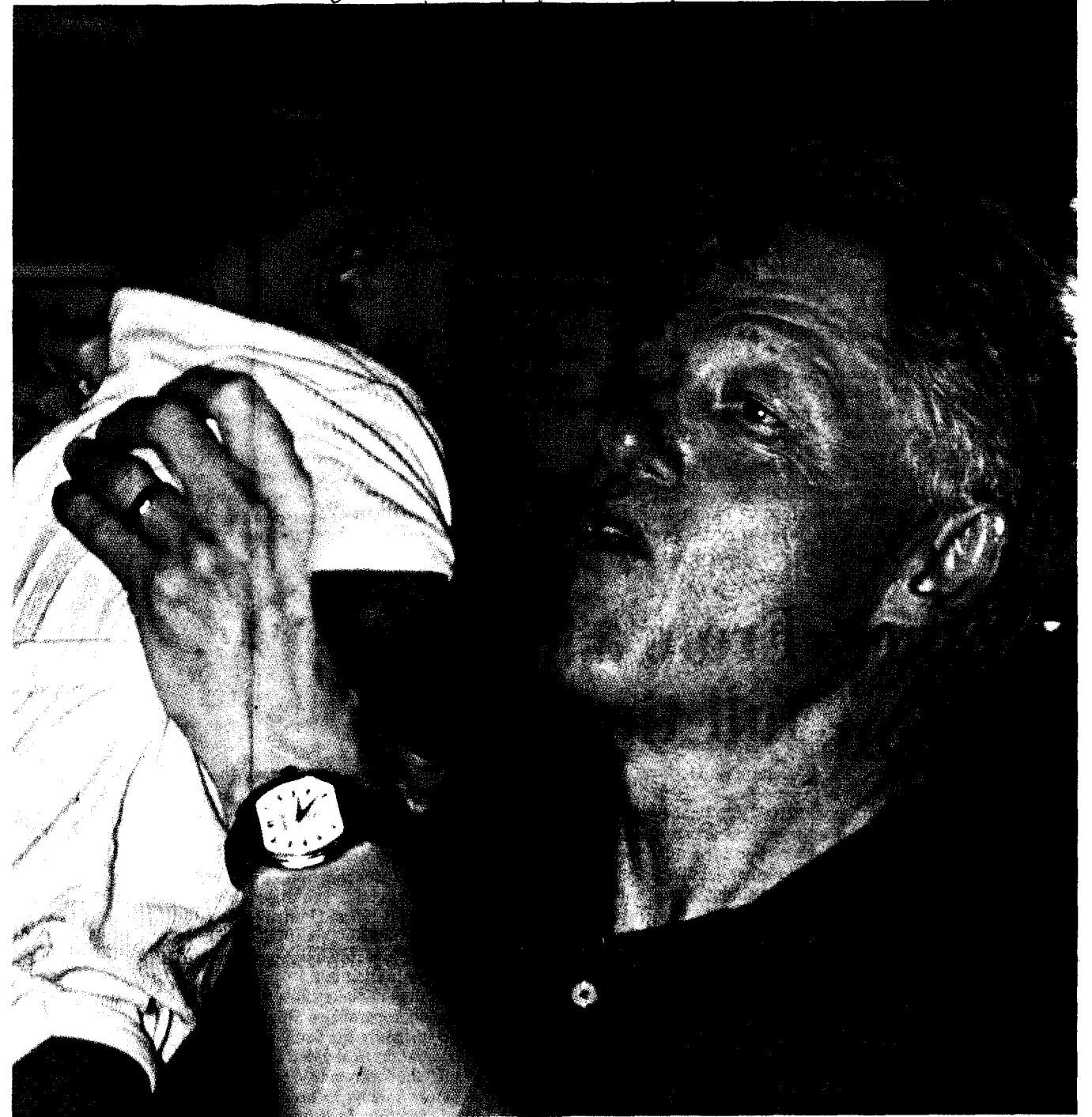
CHENNAI: The former U.S. President and United Nations special envoy, Bill Clinton, said on Friday that he hoped that he would be able to persuade the nations that promised financial aid for tsunami relief to deliver on their promises.

Answering a question here, Mr. Clinton said:

"I hope I can do something about it. Because that is one of the big reasons Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, asked me to do this job. I know he

was sitting in his office thinking 'how can I make sure that the countries give the money they promised. I will ask Bill Clinton to do this and then he will go and meet the leaders of the countries that are guilty...' I think in a year that will be an issue.

"Now, interestingly enough, that is not the issue because the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have made commitments they will honour, and today there are over \$3 billion in the bank accounts of the NGOs. Given by people...for tsunami relief."



IN SOLIDARITY: Bill Clinton, Special Envoy for U.N. tsunami recovery, empathises with seven-month-old Mohammed Imran Nazeer of Silladi Nagar in Nagapattinam district. His mother managed to hold him tight when the tsunami struck on December 26. His two brothers, seven-year-old Mohammed Basith and five-year-old Abdul Halim, were snatched away from their mother by the giant wave; only the older survived. — PHOTO: S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

Tsunami a moving experience for India

SUTIRTHO Patranobis

New Delhi, May 19

THE DECEMBER 26 tsunami that killed more than 200,000 people in South-East Asia has changed the ground beneath our feet forever. The latest data available through the Global Positioning System (GPS) has shown that under its impact, almost the entire country has moved eastwards by a few centimetres.

South India moved the most on the day of the quake, itself — by more than 15 mm. On an average, Thiruvananthapuram moved by 26 mm, Bangalore by 15 mm and Hyderabad by 10 mm. The displacement decreases



Source: Scientist, Geophysics Group Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology

es northwards — Dehra Dun moved by only about 2 mm. The data also reveals that the quake caused deformations on the earth's surface across a radius of 4,500 km from the epicentre. "This kind of an impact is astonishing. We also learnt through GPS data that the quake continued for two hours. By the time it reached the Andaman Islands, it was so slow that people didn't realise that the earth was shaking. This also means that the total release of energy was, initially underestimated," says P. Banerjee of the Dehra Dun-based Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology. Banerjee — along with FF. Pollitz of the US Geological Survey and R. Burgmann of the Uni-

versity of California — collected, analysed and computed the data. Their paper, titled 'The Size and Duration of the Sumatra-Andamans Earthquake' is slated to be published in this month's edition of *Science* magazine. Banerjee said he collected data through national and international GPS receivers — installed on the ground for collecting geological data from dedicated satellites — in India, China, Korea, Japan, Australia and other countries. Has the tectonic movement of such a great magnitude made our region more prone to earthquakes? Banerjee says, "That's difficult to say, but it has changed some notions about quakes we had."

Chief Minister launches tsunami reconstruction programme

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: Chief Minister Jayalithaa on Wednesday launched the World Bank-assisted Rs.1,852.74 crores "emergency tsunami reconstruction project." The project is expected to be completed by the end of October, 2007.

The project involves the construction of homes and common amenities and the provision for livelihood. Ms. Jayalithaa unveiled a plaque signalling the commencement of the project. The World Bank Country Director, India, Michael F. Carter, launched a website exclusively to monitor the progress of the reconstruction efforts: www.tn.gov.in/etrp.

The project has five major components. These are housing reconstruction at an outlay of Rs.1551.4 crores, restoration of livelihood at an outlay of Rs.122.2 crores, repair and re-

ment and Poverty Reduction Project.

Ms. Jayalithaa said that maximum importance should be given to crop diversification based on efficient utilisation of water and hence the water resources consolidation project - 2 should be given priority. This project will modernise the irrigation systems in each basin and provide new growth momentum for the farm sector. Ms. Jayalithaa requested Mr. Carter to facilitate early clearance for this project.

The Chief Minister also wanted the Tamil Nadu Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project cleared immediately. The project has been finalised.

Mr. Carter said later that the Bank's engagement with Tamil Nadu was substantial. Of the \$3 billions earmarked for projects in India, a majority went to projects in States that had progressed a great deal. The States

that lagged behind did not get a very large share of the development loans.

Two reasons

"There are two reasons for that. The first is the capacity problems ... The other is [that] the actual change in the composition of our lending programme does take some time because the projects that we finance take more than two years to prepare. Hence, 2008 is when you will see a substantial shift towards the poorer States ... But we are not

going to do this shift thoughtlessly. We are going to make sure that this is based on a good prospect that there can be satisfactory implementation," Mr. Carter said.

Mr. Carter said that the Bank tried to work closely with some of the States that lagged behind in development and helped them build capacities recognising that this will be a long-term effort.

World Bank sanctions three new projects

Water resources project should get priority: Jayalithaa

Website launched to monitor reconstruction progress

construction of infrastructure at an outlay of Rs. 85.41 crores, technical training at an outlay of Rs. 41.17 crores and implementation support at an outlay of Rs. 52.56 crores.

Record sanction

A press release said that the Chief Minister thanked Mr. Carter for the record sanction of three new projects by the Bank - the Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project, the Tamil Nadu Urban Development Project - 3 and the Tamil Nadu Empower-

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THE HINDU

Govt okays Clinton's tsunami tour

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, May 18

FORMER US President Bill Clinton is all set to tour tsunami-ravaged areas of Tamil Nadu later in this month.

Although the Centre did not allow the UN secretary-general Kofi Annan to travel the tsunami-affected regions of Tamil Nadu in January, this time it has no objection to Clinton, who is the UNSG's special representative, visiting the worst hit villages.

With the race for reforms at the UN in its final phases, and India, along with Brazil, Germany and Japan, having circulated a draft resolution seeking permanent slots on the UN Security Council, Clinton's visit is welcome.

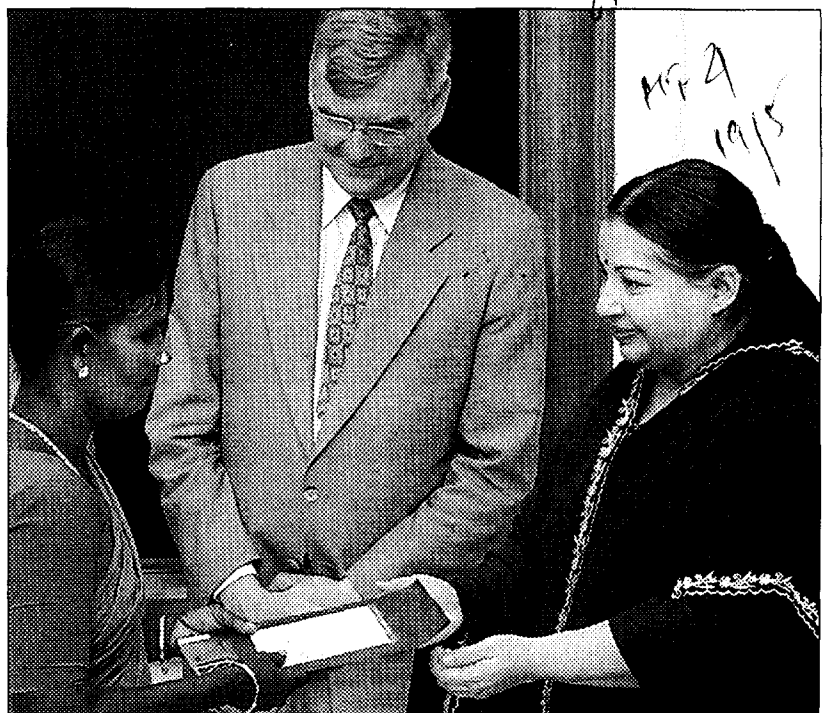
It would help serve as an opportunity to showcase how India "responsibly" and largely on its own handled the tsunami disaster and its aftermath.

Clinton was appointed the UNSG's point person for tsunami rehabilitation in February. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) is coordinating this India visit.

The former US President, who is also President George W. Bush's special coordinator for tsunami relief, is scheduled to arrive in India on a three-day visit from May 25.

He will review relief and reconstruction work in Tamil Nadu's tsunami-hit Nagapattinam district, where his Clinton Foundation has adopted several tsunami-afflicted villages.

In January, when Annan visited some worst-hit countries, including In-



Tamil Nadu CM Jayalitha distributes assistance during the launch of the Emergency Tsunami Reconstruction Project in Cuddalore on Wednesday. World Bank's director in India Michael F. Carter was also present on the occasion.

onesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, he had wanted to visit India, but was politely told that visitors were not welcome.

According to MEA spokesman Navtej Sarna, the January decision was "a matter of general policy."

The government felt "such visits at

this stage should not take place because the local authorities are fully preoccupied with the relief effort."

At a briefing Sarna had said, "We would not be in a position, at this stage, to have made the arrangements and provide the facilities that we normally do for high-level visits."

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Navy to take on tsunami of a mapping task

SHIV AROOR
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

NEARLY five months after the December 26 tsunami calamity, the Navy is shifting its focus from relief works to one of its most formidable tasks — remapping the entire Bay of Bengal over a period of 12 months.

With navigational points, marine structures and coastal oceanic depths thrown into disarray by the massive oceanic upheaval on the Andaman & Nicobar Islands late last year, the Naval Hydrographic Department (NHD) will now engage in a phenomenally laborious exercise to re-draw a staggering 94 navigational charts for the islands and the mainland's Eastern seaboard.

In an exclusive preview to *The Indian Express* of what lies ahead, NHD's Chief Hydrographer Rear Admiral B R Rao said, "Fantastic changes have taken place, the water ingress has been tremendous on the islands. Depths have

changed. It is a long process ahead. The data has to be absolutely fool-proof. We will be completely re-drawing 45 navigational maps on the East Coast and 49 maps on the islands alone."

Fundamentally, while there has been no rise in ocean levels at the islands, the new coastal depths have been caused by the islands themselves being jolted either up or down by the Indian tectonic plate slipping partially under the Burma plate. To the untrained eye, the depth changes may seem trivial — the water is deeper by a metre on average at Port Blair's coast and 1.5 metres at Campbell Bay — but these translate into comprehensive considerations for mariners docking at the islands.

That's not all.

Consider this: all navigational aids on the islands have been destroyed and only some repaired. The navigational points at Camorta Island, Campbell Bay, Diglipur, Mayabander and Rangat Bay also stand altered because of changes in water level, ranging from 0.3

metres to 1.5 metres.

As an interim measure, the Navy continues to issue notices to mariners on the altered depths so they are forewarned even of minor changes at all harbours on the islands. Rao presents the example of Diglipur, where estuaries have gone dry, coral reefs have come up

Nearly five months after Dec 26, Navy to remap entire Bay of Bengal within a year

and mud flats have emerged, substantially shallowing the water. The jetties of Nancowry, Hut Bay and Tarasa Bay are all now out at sea.

Rao's team has also observed widespread creation of new shoals — patches of seabed jolted up, posing a definite threat to vessels; migration of existing shoals, depth alterations caused by siltation, substantial changes to dredged and

anchoring areas on the islands, drastic changes in the shoreline, bottom installations and topography and a critical displacement of navigational marks.

And crucially, some beaching points like Trinkat island, Chowra, Bompoka and Katchall may actually have to be deleted from the new maps, simply because they no longer have beaches. But Rao, with eight blue-water capable ships at his disposal, has his plan sorted out.

"Hydrographic instructions have been issued to harbours that have been severely affected. Near the coast, there are still substantial changes, but navigation out at sea is still not so much of a concern since the depths there are far greater," Rao said. On the Eastern coast of the mainland, the changes to navigational considerations have been far less.

"On the Eastern seaboard, the changes have not been drastic at the fishing villages because of breakwaters, though there was extensive damage to boats. We are still conducting check surveys though, at Pondicherry, Cuddalore,

Nagapattinam, Vilinjam, Quilon and Kolachel," Rao said.

To begin with, the NHD will begin re-surveying and drawing out the charts for Port Blair (Map Code 4001), Campbell Bay (4035), Diglipur (4003), Rangat Bay (4006), Maya Bandar (4008) and Nancowry (4005).

The strategic importance of the islands has been recognised far more since the tsunami — the Air Force recently launched deep penetration — it is the critical turn-around and servicing points as the country's warships venture into bluer waters further south. The shipping channel blends into one of the busiest lanes in the world, a fact that Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash has consistently emphasised.

And Rao does not miss the irony of his task ahead. Just a year ago, the Navy had completed a brand new set of charts for the islands. Now, with check surveys complete, his team will wait till the monsoon recedes before getting to work. On calmer water.

Andamans have shifted closer to mainland

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 9

TSUNAMI EFFECT

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THE ANDAMAN Islands have shifted permanently on the western side towards India by three metres and a similar shift has also taken place towards Burma on the eastern side following the tsunami due to displacement of the Indian plate underneath.

Secretary, Department of Ocean Development, H.K. Gupta gave this information at a post-tsunami Press conference addressed by science and technology and ocean development minister Kapil Sibal.

He said that, though India had decided to go in for an indigenously built tsunami warning system, it would not be averse to procuring technology from anywhere if it was required and would also be open to sharing of information with its immediate neighbours, including Pakistan.

Dr Gupta said India had decided not to be part of the Pacific tsunami warning system because there were 70 per cent to 90 per cent false alarms.

Warning was given on the basis of the earthquake location and magnitude only and such advisories were not suitable for India, where the coastal population was large and intense coastal operations needed to take place.

India needed to have its own transducers placed strategically to sense the creation of tsunamis.

The only two places considered to be tsunamigenic earthquake-generating zones were Java-Sumatra to Andaman-Nicobar and the area close to the Makran coasts in the Arabian Sea, he added. The Indian system would be in place

by next year and functional by 2007, he said. Dr B.R. Subramanian, director, Integrated Coastal and Marine Area Management Project Directorate, said cruises undertaken on board Sagar Kanya, Sagar Sampada, Sagar Purvi and Sagar Pachimi to study the impact of tsunamis on the east coast, west coast and around the Andaman & Nicobar islands had shown damage to the coral reefs along the middle and south Andamans — primarily because of the physical impact to reefs and siltation.

Rejuvenation of reefs might take some time and needed to be monitored, he added. There was also seen to be a decrease in the fish catch from 1,500 kg to 300 kg along the south-west coast (depth 250 m) and increase of the fish catch from 9 kg to 125 kg along the north-east coast (depth 300 m).

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Post-tsunami: waiting for things to happen

Tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction waits for land, funds, and norms.

V. Jayanth

IT IS already mid-summer and the heat is intense in many parts of the country. Tamil Nadu and most of Andhra Pradesh will have to await the northeast monsoon, which may not come before October-November. This means the thousands of families, who lost their dwelling units in the December 26, 2004 tsunami, may have to rough it out for a year; perhaps, more. Tamil Nadu and the Andaman and Nicobar islands were the worst affected by the tsunami and the permanent rehabilitation and reconstruction programme has not begun in any serious way in these two regions. A policy framework may be ready; some lands have been identified, a model for housing has been evolved, but that is all.

Even in the restoration of livelihood, a lot more needs to be done before a majority of the fishermen who lost their nets, equipment, and more important, their fishing vessels, can return to the seas. Thousands of fisherfolk still depend on local labour or the Government's special assistance programme to provide their families at least one square meal a day. Also, how long can the State Governments continue assistance — free rations and a cash assistance. The earlier a permanent programme is firmed up the better. The feedback from the fishing villages does not seem very reassuring. Fishermen who have not ventured into the sea for want of a vessel may lose their self-confidence. And, at the moment, they may not be equipped or trained to do anything else. Aside from the economic angle, the problem has social dimensions.

Permanent housing

As for the housing problem, a majority of the tsunami-affected families have been accommodated in temporary dwelling units, not very far from the coast. But the unseasonal heavy rain in coastal Tamil Nadu in early April made life miserable for those sheltered in these units. The authorities concerned had taken some steps to make these temporary shelters "more liveable." In summer, the heat makes it difficult to stay indoors. And, rain makes it worse; the roof



MUCH TO MEND: The scene at a temporary shelter for tsunami-affected people in Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam district after the recent rain in early April. - PHOTO: R. SHIVAJI RAO

leaks and there is no flooring as such. So, the fisherfolk were moved to emergency camps and sent back after the rain stopped. But they have to be prepared for the monsoon season ahead.

Permanent housing means major investment. The fisherfolk cannot afford to build houses or units on their own — especially after losing all their possessions. The Government of India and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the United Nations are finalising a major tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction programme for the affected States. The European Union and a few other organisations have also pledged some funds. The Centre has to firm up the package and complete the formalities so that the funds can start flowing in. A peculiar problem for the Andaman islands is that some of the affected families have come to Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, seeking relief and compensation. Temporary shelters have just taken shape in the ravaged islands.

On the restoration of livelihood, the prob-

lem appears to be one of formatting and procedures. The Centre has already announced a package of subsidy and loans for fishermen — repairs and replacement. The subsidy differs for catamarans, mechanised boats and fibreglass boats. After Tamil Nadu's complaint that the subsidy should not be linked to loans, this has been done, but the problems on the ground and in the implementation of the programme remain. There appears to be a crisis in the villages, but the solution lies more with the fishermen than the Government.

As far as accounting procedures — be it for subsidy or loan — are concerned, distribution of such assistance necessitates "asset creation." About Rs. 115 crores have been distributed among the affected fishermen in Tamil Nadu for repairs and replacement of mechanised boats, catamarans, fibreglass boats as well as nets and fishing equipment. But this is barely a third of what has been sanctioned. Enquiries show that subsidies or loans are released to a joint account of the beneficiary and an official of the Fisheries

Department. On the production of bills or orders placed for vessels or equipment, the amount is released. "There has to be an asset creation for any amount released from the joint account. That is the procedure. Those who are able to satisfy this condition have availed of the subsidy or loan, as the case may be," explains a senior official.

A spokesman of the fishermen's federation says: "The fishermen do not want to be bogged down by procedures and documents. Most of them are used to private, informal loan arrangements and have not gone to a bank before. Some of them have grouped together and want to buy a mechanised boat as a team.

"The administration has to formulate new schemes to meet their needs instead insisting on their meeting the existing rules and regulations. It is an extra-ordinary problem and calls for an out-of-the-ordinary solution." The question is whether the Governments — Centre and the States — can come up with such a framework before it is too late.

Port Blair sinks by a metre!

Stanley Theodore
in Hyderabad

April 4. — Hundred days after the terror quake on 26 December, scientists at the National Geophysical Research Institute here disclosed that Port Blair has sunk by one metre. "This sinking of this region is established. This caused the disappearance of some islands south of Nicobar like the Indira Point," a specialist dealing with India-Burma seismol-

ogy beneath the sea floor, Mr RK Chadha, told The Statesman.

Mr Chadha said eight teams with Global Positioning Systems at Andaman and Nicobar are trying to read the extent of geographical change caused by the quake. "Our scientists at Andaman are not able to reach parts of Nicobar which is south. Actually, with the vanishing of land in that area, they just don't know how to reach the southern

parts," he said. This is the first conclusive assessment that the islands moved. Mr Chadha further said that at some places the islands have also been pushed up. "We have been taking the readings and we have to repeat the process over the next few months to determine the extent of land deformation after the quake," he said.

Andaman and Nicobar have also moved closer towards the Indian landmass. Initial measure-

ments show that Nicobar moved south-west by five metres and Andaman shifted westwards by about one metre. The NGRI teams are exchanging data with their Geographical Survey of India counterparts.

Also, there are data pouring in from other agencies. The entire range of measurements indicates that India, in the big picture, moved closer to Indonesia. "Based on these, we are still calculat-

ing how much Andaman and Nicobar has moved closer to the Indian mainland," he said.

Mr Chadha also revealed that the 26 December quake moved northward and the 28 March quake, 130 km away from its predecessor's epicentre, moved south by 200 metres. "The reasons why these two mega quakes (9 and 8.7 on the Richter scale, respectively) moved in opposite directions is not yet known," he added.



সোমবার রাতে শহর যখন শুতে যাচ্ছে আচমকা প্রকৃতির ছোবল। নিয়াস দ্বীপের গুন্সটোলি শহরের ছবি, ভয়াল ভূমিকম্পের পরের দিন সকালে। — রয়টার্স

সুনামি নয়, ভূমিকম্প নিল হাজার প্রাণ

নিয়াস ও নয়াদিল্লি, ২৯ মার্চ: শেষ পর্যন্ত রেহাই দিল সমুদ্র। তবে ভূকম্পের ধবংসের হাত থেকে নিস্তার মিলল না।

সারা রাত আতঙ্ক আর ছড়োছড়ির পরে সকালে স্বস্তি পেলে এশিয়া। ইন্দোনেশিয়ার সুমাত্রা দ্বীপপুঞ্জ লাগোয়া সমুদ্রতলে তীব্র কম্পনের পরেই সুনামি আতঙ্ক চেপে বসেছিল সমুদ্র উপকূলবর্তী দেশগুলিতে। ভোর হতে না-হতেই অবশ্য পরিষ্কার হয়ে যায় যে, তিন মাস আগের প্রবল জলোচ্ছ্বাসের পুনরাবৃত্তি হচ্ছে না। তবে শুধু ভূমিকম্পে মূল্য দিতে হয়েছে সেই ইন্দোনেশিয়াকে, সুনামির জেরে যে দেশ ছিল সব চেয়ে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত। রিখটার স্কেলে ৮.৭ তীব্রতার কম্পনে সুমাত্রার নিয়াস দ্বীপে ১ হাজার লোক মারা গিয়েছেন, ভেঙে পড়েছে বহু ঘরবাড়ি।

সুনামি আসছে না, এই মর্মে সংশ্লিষ্ট আবহাওয়া এবং ভূতত্ত্ব বিভাগের আশ্বাস পাওয়ার পরে আজ খুব সকালে সতর্কতা প্রত্যাহার করে নেয় ভারত সরকার। কাল রাতে ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় ভূকম্পের খবর পাওয়ার অল্প সময়ের মধ্যেই ওই সুনামি-সতর্কতা জারি করা হয়েছিল। আজ কেন্দ্রের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়, বিপদের আশঙ্কা নেই। সরকারি ঘোষণার পরেই আন্দামান ও নিকোবর, তামিলনাড়ু, কেরলের মতো রাজ্যে উপকূল এলাকার বাসিন্দারা ঘরে ফিরতে শুরু করেন। সরকারি সতর্কতা উঠে গেলেও আন্দামান ও নিকোবর দ্বীপপুঞ্জের প্রশাসন সর্বোচ্চ সতর্কতা বজায় রেখেছে। তটবর্তী অন্য রাজ্যগুলিকেও পরিস্থিতির উপরে কড়া নজর রাখতে বলা হয়েছে। রাতভর পরিস্থিতির দিকে নজর রাখার পরে দুর্ঘটনা মোকাবিলা গোষ্ঠী সকালে জানায়, বিপদ কেটে গিয়েছে। তাদের বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, “এই অঞ্চলে সুনামির খবর পাওয়া যায়নি। বিপদ কেটে গিয়েছে বলে মনে হচ্ছে। তাই সতর্কবার্তা প্রত্যাহৃত হল।”

ভারতের মতো শ্রীলঙ্কা, তাইল্যান্ড, মালয়েশিয়াও আজ সকালে সুনামি-সতর্কতা তুলে নিয়েছে। ইন্দোনেশিয়ার মতো তীব্র কম্পন না-হলেও কাল বেশি রাতে এবং আজ ভোরে অল্পসল্প কেঁপে উঠেছে অন্যান্য দেশও। হংকং ও সিঙ্গাপুরে মৃদু কম্পন হয়েছে, কাল রাতেই সামান্য কেঁপেছে আন্দামানের পোর্ট ব্লেয়ার ও কাছাল দ্বীপ। ভারতীয় সময় কাল রাত ৯টা ৩৯ মিনিটে হওয়া তীব্র ভূকম্পের উৎসকেন্দ্র ছিল ইন্দোনেশিয়ার রাজধানী জাকার্তা থেকে ৮৭০ মাইল উত্তর-পশ্চিমে সুমাত্রার সিবেলগা থেকে ১২৫ মাইল দূরে সমুদ্রগর্ভে। তার পরেও সুমাত্রায় মৃদু কম্পন টের পাওয়া গিয়েছে। ইন্দোনেশিয়ার নিয়াস দ্বীপ এবং আচে প্রদেশের আচে সিংকিল শহর ভূমিকম্পে বিপর্যস্ত। সুনামিতে বান্দা আচে মারাত্মক ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হলেও আচে সিংকিল সে যাত্রায় নিকৃতি পেয়েছিল। এ বাত্রে অধিকাংশ বাড়িই হয়ে ভেঙে পড়েছে, নয়তো ফাটলে জর্জরিত। বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ ভেঙে পড়েছে। রাস্তায় বড় বড় গর্ত তৈরি হয়ে গিয়েছে।

নিয়াস দ্বীপের রাজধানী গুন্সটোলি এখন পুরোপুরি ভূমিশযায়া। একমাত্র বিমানক্ষেত্রটি ব্যবহারের অযোগ্য হয়ে পড়েছে। তার উপরে আজ খারাপ আবহাওয়া এবং ঘন মেঘের আন্তরণ থাকায় ত্রাণ নিয়ে বিমান নামতে পারছিল না। বিকালের দিকে অবশ্য কয়েকটি ত্রাণবাহী বিমান নিয়াসে নামতে পেরেছে। তবে গুন্সটোলিতে ঢোকা যায়নি, সেখানে ধ্বংসস্তূপের নীচে অনেকে চাপা পড়ে আছেন বলে প্রশাসনের আশঙ্কা। মৃতের সংখ্যা নিয়েও বিভ্রান্তি রয়েছে। ইন্দোনেশিয়ার ভাইস প্রেসিডেন্ট ইউসুফ কালা প্রথমে বলেছিলেন, অন্তত ২ হাজার লোক মারা গিয়েছেন। দুর্ঘটনা মোকাবিলা কেন্দ্রের কর্তারা অবশ্য জানান, মৃতের সংখ্যা ১ হাজারের মধ্যে থাকবে বলেই তাঁদের ধারণা। ৪৩০টি মৃতদেহ উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে। নিয়াসের উত্তরে সিমিউলু দ্বীপে অন্তত ১৫ জনের মৃত্যুর খবর মিলেছে। ভূমিকম্পের পরে ইন্দোনেশিয়ার জন্য গোটা বিশ্ব থেকেই সাহায্য আসতে শুরু করেছে। ভারত দিয়েছে ২০ লক্ষ ডলার।

সুনামির স্বস্তি এখনও টাটকা থাকায় এ বাত্রে সতর্কবার্তা দ্রুত ছড়িয়েছে বিভিন্ন দেশে। ভূমিকম্পের আধ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই মূলত ই-মেলে হাজার হাজার লোকের কাছে খবর পৌঁছে গিয়েছে। ‘প্যাসিফিক সুনামি ওয়ার্নিং সেন্টার’-এর বিজ্ঞানী হার্লে বেনজের কথায়, “দ্রুত হিসেব কষতে সফটওয়্যার উন্নত করা হয়েছে।” বিপর্যয় ঠেকানোর প্রস্তুতিতে স্বস্তি পেয়ে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের জরুরি ত্রাণ সমন্বয়কারী ইয়ান ইগোলান্ড বলেছেন, “এই বার অনেক ভাল ব্যবস্থা হয়েছে।”

কম্পন নিকোবর: আজ সন্ধ্যায় নিকোবর দ্বীপপুঞ্জ ফের জোরাল ভূমিকম্পে কেঁপে ওঠে। রিখটার স্কেলে কম্পনের মাত্রা ছিল ৫.১। আজকের কম্পনের উৎসস্থল ছিল ২৬শের উৎসস্থলের মাত্র ৩২০ কিলোমিটার দূরে। — রয়টার্স

ফের প্রমাণিত, ভারত মহাসাগরে সুনামি ব্যতিক্রম

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: হলই বা রিখটার স্কেলে ৮.৭ মাত্রার ভূমিকম্প। কিংবা তা ঘটে থাকুক সমুদ্রের নীচে। সোমবার ভারত মহাসাগরে, সমুদ্রতলের অন্তত ৩০ কিলোমিটার নীচে হওয়া কম্পনটি যথেষ্ট শক্তি নির্গত করতে না পারায় এ বার সুনামি হল না। তবে সোমবারের ওই কম্পন একেবারে নতুন ভূমিকম্প না ২৬ ডিসেম্বরের ভূমিকম্পের জের তা নিয়ে ভূবিজ্ঞানীদের মধ্যে মতানৈক্য রয়েছে।

আসলে সুনামি এমনই বিরল ঘটনা যার জন্য ভূমিকম্পের মাত্রা রিপোর্টার স্কেলে অন্তত ৯ হতেই হয়। বিশেষ করে ভারত মহাসাগরে। যেমনটি হয়েছিল গত ২৬ ডিসেম্বর। গত ২০০ বছরে ভারত মহাসাগরে ওই একটি সুনামির কথাই রেকর্ড বইয়ে লেখা রয়েছে। গত ১০০ বছরে সারা বিশ্বে যে ছটি সুনামি হয়েছে তার মধ্যে পাঁচটির ক্ষেত্রেই ভূমিকম্পের মাত্রা ছিল ৯ কিংবা তার উপরে। ডিসেম্বরেরটি ছাড়া আর সব ক’টিই হয়েছে প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরে। ভারত মহাসাগর যে সাধারণত সুনামি-প্রবণ নয়, এ বাত্রেও তার প্রমাণ মিলল।

মার্কিন ভূতাত্ত্বিক সংস্থা (ইউ এস জি এস)-এর পারসংখ্যান বলেছে, ১৮৩৩ এবং ১৮৬১ সালেও ভারত মহাসাগরে সুমাত্রার কাছেই আরও দু’টি ভূমিকম্প হয়েছিল। কিন্তু সুনামি হয়নি। হওয়ার কথাও ছিল না। কারণ, অতিবিরল ওই ঘটনা ঘটানোর জন্য যে সব পারিপার্শ্বিক পরিস্থিতির প্রয়োজন হয়, সেগুলি ছিল না। সাধারণ ক্ষেত্রে ভারত



মহাসাগরে তা থাকেও না। ২০০৪ সালের ২৬ ডিসেম্বর রিখটার স্কেলে ৯ মাত্রার ভূমিকম্পে অস্বাভাবিক ব্যাপার ঘটে গিয়েছিল। ভারত মহাসাগরে তৈরি হয়েছিল সুনামি। তা আছড়ে পড়েছিল সুদূর আফ্রিকার উপকূলেও।

ভূবিজ্ঞানীরা বলেছেন, ভারত মহাসাগরের নীচে টেকটনিক প্লেটগুলি যে ভাবে বিন্যস্ত রয়েছে সেটাই সুনামির সহায়ক নয়। গত ২৬ ডিসেম্বরের ভূমিকম্পে এত শক্তি নির্গত হয়েছিল যে ওই সব প্লেটের স্বাভাবিক অবস্থানের পরিবর্তন ঘটে। সোমবারের ভূমিকম্পের মাত্রা যেমন রিখটার স্কেলে ৯ ছোঁয়নি, তেমনই যে এলাকায় কম্পন হয়েছে সেটিও সুনামি সৃষ্টি হওয়ার পক্ষে সহায়ক নয়। ভূমিকম্পে উদ্ভূত শক্তি এই পরিস্থিতি বদলে দিতে পারত। এ ক্ষেত্রে তা হয়নি।

ইতিমধ্যেই সোমবারের ভূমিকম্পটির উৎপত্তিস্থল, মাত্রা এবং ধরন বিশ্লেষণ করেছেন ভূবিজ্ঞানীরা। নিজেদের মধ্যে আলোচনাও করেছেন। তার ভিত্তিতে তাঁদের মধ্যে দু’টি মতের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। এক দল বলেছেন, ডিসেম্বর মাসের ভূমিকম্পের ফলে ভারত মহাসাগরের বুকে যে ১২০০ কিলোমিটারের ফাটল তৈরি হয়েছে তারই জেরে সোমবারের ওই কম্পন। এটা ভূমিকম্প-পরবর্তী কম্পন ছাড়া আর কিছু নয়। ভূবিজ্ঞানীদের অন্য দলটি মনে করছেন, এটি সম্পূর্ণ নতুন একটি ভূমিকম্প।

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

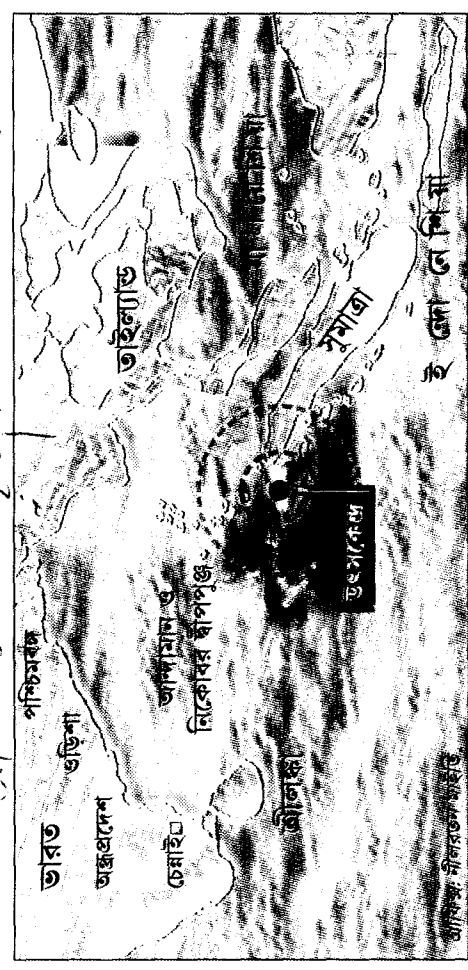
সুমাত্রার সমুদ্রে কম্পন ফের ছড়াল সুনামি-আতঙ্ক

বান্দা আছে (ইন্দোনেশিয়া), ২৮

মার্চ: তিন মাস আগের ভয়াল সুনামির পুনরাবৃত্তির আশঙ্কা জাগিয়েও শেষ পর্যন্ত বেহাই দিল প্রকৃতি। আশঙ্কার সূত্রপাত ভারতীয় সময় রাত ৯টা ৩৯ মিনিটে। ইন্দোনেশিয়ার সুমাত্রা দ্বীপপুঞ্জ লাগোয়া সমুদ্রতল তীর ভূমিকম্পে কেঁপে ওঠে। ঠিক যেমন ভূমিকম্পের তীব্রতাও ছিল গতবারের কম্পনের তীব্রতাও ছিল গতবারের কাছাকাছি। আমেরিকার ভূতত্ত্ব বিভাগ জানিয়েছে, কম্পনের তীব্রতা বিখ্যাত স্কেলে ৮.৭। জাপানের ভূতত্ত্ব বিভাগের যন্ত্রে কম্পনের তীব্রতা ৮.৫। গত বার কম্পনের তীব্রতা ছিল ৯.০। তার জেরে জন্ম নেওয়া সুনামির শিকার হয়েছিলেন নটি দেশের প্রায় তিন লক্ষ মানুষ। ভূকম্পের দেড় ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই সাধারণত আছে পড়ে সুনামি। কিন্তু

এ দিন পাঁচ ঘণ্টা পরেও তেমন কোনও খবর মেলেনি। তবে ভূমিকম্পের জেরে ইন্দোনেশিয়া, মালয়েশিয়া ও তাইল্যান্ড থেকে কিছু ক্ষয়ক্ষতির খবর এসেছে। সতর্কতা জারি করা হয়েছে ভারতের আন্দামান-সহ সমুদ্রতটবর্তী রাজ্যগুলিতে এবং শ্রীলঙ্কায়। আমেরিকার ভূতত্ত্ব বিভাগের দেওয়া খবর অনুযায়ী, এ বারের ভূকম্পের কেন্দ্র ইন্দোনেশিয়ার রাজধানী জাকার্তা থেকে ৮৮০ মাইল উত্তর-পশ্চিমে সুমাত্রার সিবেলগা হকংয়ের মানমন্দির জানাচ্ছে, ভূকম্পের কেন্দ্র বান্দা আছে থেকে ৪১০ কিলোমিটার দক্ষিণ-পশ্চিমে। ২৬ ডিসেম্বর সমুদ্রতলের যে চ্যুতিরেখায় ভূকম্পন হয়েছিল এ বারের কম্পনও সেখানেই হয়েছে।

গতবারের কেন্দ্র হলে আরও ৩০ কিলোমিটার কম্পন হয়েছে বলে প্রাথমিক ভাবে মনে করা হচ্ছে। তার তীব্রতা তেমন হবে না বলেই মত গভীরে। সমুদ্রতলের ৩০ কিলোমিটার কম্পন হয়েছে বলে প্রাথমিক ভাবে মনে করা হচ্ছে। তার তীব্রতা তেমন হবে না বলেই মত



প্রকাশ করেছিলেন বিশেষজ্ঞেরা। তবে কোনও ঝুঁকি নিতে রাজি হলি তারা। কম্পনের অব্যবহিত পরেই সতর্কতা জারি করে প্যাসিফিক সুনামি ওয়ানিং সেন্টার। তাদের বার্তায় বলা হয়েছে, "তীর সুনামির জন্ম দেওয়ার ক্ষমতা এই ভূকম্পের আছে।"

সুনামি না-এলেও ভূমিকম্পের জেরে বেশ কিছু মানুষের মৃত্যুর খবর মিলেছে ইন্দোনেশিয়া থেকে। সুমাত্রার দক্ষিণে নিয়াস দ্বীপের রাজধানী গুন্মুং সিটোল শহরে কয়েকশো ঘরবাড়ি ভেঙে পড়ে। দ্বীপের উপ-প্রশাসক আগুস মেত্রোফা বলেন, "বেশ কিছু মানুষ মারা গিয়েছেন। সংখ্যাটা কত, এখনই বলা সম্ভব নয়। ধ্বংসাত্মক নীচে অনেকেই আটকে আছেন।" শহরের প্রায় ৭৫ শতাংশই ভেঙে পড়েছে বলে খবর। ভূকম্পের পরেই

ভেঙে পড়ে বান্দা আচের বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ ব্যবস্থা। ফলে আতঙ্ক ছড়ায় আরও বেশি। শহরবাসীরা দলে দলে বাড়ি ছেড়ে বেরিয়ে পড়েন। সুনামির স্মৃতি এখনও তরতাজা। ফলে তারা আর কোনও ঝুঁকি নেননি। যে যেমন পাকেন যানবাহন জোগাড় করে নিরাপদ স্থানের উপদেশে রওনা দেন।

মালয়েশিয়ায় উত্তর-পশ্চিম উপকূলের বাসিন্দাদের নিরাপদ স্থানে সরে যেতে নির্দেশ দেয় সরকার। সরকারি সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, সতর্কতামূলক ব্যবস্থা হিসাবেই এই নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে। কিন্তু সেই নির্দেশের জেরে ব্যাপক আতঙ্ক ছড়ায়। বহুতল বাড়ি ছেড়ে পালানোর জন্য হুজুহুড়ি পড়ে যায় সাধারণ মানুষের মধ্যে। সতর্কতা জারি করা হয় এর পর সাতের পাতায়

8.7 MAGNITUDE TEMBLOR ON SAME FAULTLINE AS 26 DEC DISASTER

Quake off Sumatra sparks panic, tsunami fears ebb

Michael Casey in Banda Aceh

March 28. — A major earthquake struck off the west coast of Indonesia's Sumatra Island late today, on the same faultline as the 26 December quake that generated huge tsunami across a swathe of countries in the Indian Ocean region. The epicentre of today's quake was barely 55 km away from that of the 26 December quake. Officials earlier warned that a tsunami could strike the area but fears of another catastrophe eased within hours, as officials in countries closest to the quake's epicentre said they had received no reports of waves striking their coasts three hours after the earthquake hit.

"It seems this earthquake did not trigger tsunami," said Mr Prihar Yadi, a scientist with the Indonesia Geophysics Agency. "If it had, the tsunami would have hit the coastline of Sumatra by now. And if there's no tsunami on the coastline near the epicentre of the quake, there will not be one heading in the other directions." A Thai expert said the threat would seem to have passed.

The US Geological Survey said the temblor, described by one of the agency's geologists as an aftershock of the devastating 26 December earthquake, had a magnitude of 8.7 on the Richter Scale.

Tremors were felt as far away as Malaysia, Singapore and parts of Thailand and fears of a tsunami spread across South-east and South Asian countries that had borne the brunt of the December disaster. Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka issued tsunami alerts following the quake and

'Dozens have died'

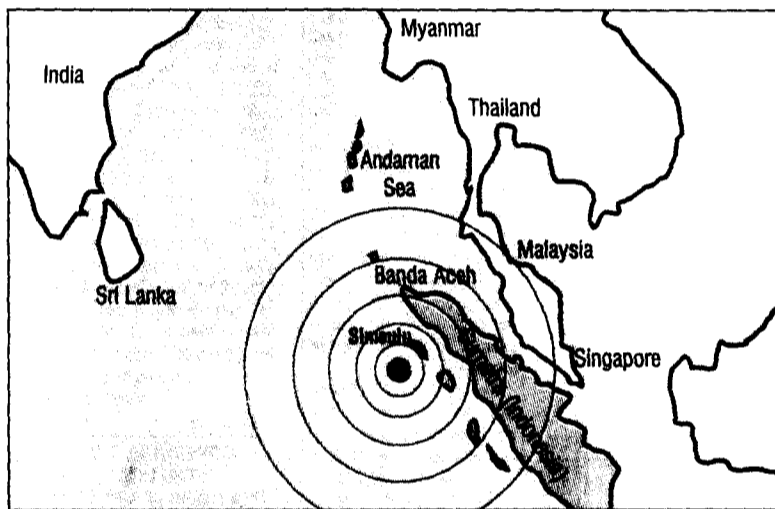
JAKARTA, March 28. — The quake off Sumatra has left "dozens" of people dead and caused extensive damage on the outlying island of Nias, an official on the island told Metro TV in Indonesia. "I can say that tens of people died but I cannot be sure," Mr Agus Mendrofa, the deputy chief of Nias island said. He said hundreds of houses had collapsed in the island's capital Gumung Sitoli trapping many. — AFP

panic-stricken residents made for higher ground.

The USGS said in a statement that the quake occurred on a segment of the same fault line that triggered the, magnitude-9 earthquake on 26 December, the world's biggest in 40 years. Mr Budi Waluyo of the Indonesian National Meteorological and Geophysical Agency, said the quake's epicentre was 90 km south of the island of Simeulu, in the sea-bed off Sumatra's western coast. The quake occurred at 11:09 p.m. local time at a depth of nearly 19 miles. Aftershocks rocked Sumatra with a six-magnitude quake recorded after midnight.

In Banda Aceh, the Sumatran city that was hit hardest by December's disaster, the quake cut electricity and thousands of people poured into the streets, most getting into vehicles to flee low-lying areas. The quake lasted about two minutes. "People are still traumatised, still scared, they are running for higher ground," said Feri, a 24-year-old volunteer.

The quake was felt as far away as Malaysia, about 300 miles from the epicentre, sending panicky residents fleeing from their apartments



Alert across coastal India

NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD March 28. — Ahead of the earthquake in Sumatra, a 5-Richter quake hit Nicobar at 7.15 p.m. (IST). Till midnight there was, however, no sign of water rising and exploding on India's shores. Secretary, ocean development department, Dr Harsh Gupta, said: "The earthquake in Sumatra took place at 9.40 p.m. IST. Two hours have passed. I have talked to Dr Jan Sopasclu Waken, director Indonesian Institute of Science. He says there is no tsunami. I have checked with tide gauge at Port Blair, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, there is no tsunami." Earlier, science and technology minister Mr Kapil Sibal had warned

and hotels in Kuala Lumpur and Penang after authorities activated fire alarms. Officials issued a tsunami warning for residents of southern Thai provinces too and mild tremors in Bangkok sparked panic.

Residents of highrises in Singapore scurried for safety while in

that the earthquake could trigger off a tsunami and it had to be taken very seriously. The Union home ministry advised the coastal states of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Pondicherry, Lakshadweep and the Andamans to take all precautionary measures and remain in the "highest state of preparedness" even as it alerted the Army, Navy and Air Force. "There is a need to keep a close watch for another six to eight hours," it said. In Andhra Pradesh large-scale evacuation was taken up in the coastal districts. The Tamil Nadu government issued a high alert along the coast as residents fled their homes in panic. — SNS

peninsular Malaysia's west coast, thousands fled hotels and highrises. "I was getting ready for bed, and suddenly, the room started shaking," said Kuala Lumpur resident Ms Jessie Chong. "I thought I was hallucinating, then I heard my neighbours screaming..." — AP

"Tsunami takes a heavier toll among women"

By Our Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25. The December 2004 tsunami had claimed the lives of more women than men, the numbers being four times higher, according to the new research released by an aid agency, Oxfam International. The figures were released by the agency as part of a report showing the impact of the tsunami on women.

Oxfam surveyed eight villages in two districts of Banda Aceh in Indonesia which showed that the number of women killed was four times that of men. In Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu — the second most affected district in India, almost three times more women were killed than men. The number of women killed stood at 391,

compared to 146 men. In Pachaankuppam village, the only deaths reported were those of women. In Sri Lanka, too, information from camp surveys suggests a serious imbalance between the number of men and women killed.

More women appear to have been killed by the tsunami for a variety of reasons, an Oxfam press release issued here today said. These include women staying back to look for their children and women being less likely to know how to swim or climb palm trees. Women in India were close to the shore, waiting for the fishermen to come with their catch when the tsunami hit. In Batticaloa district in Sri Lanka, when the tsunami hit it was the hour women usually bathed in the sea.

Maldives' coral reefs unscathed by tsunami

Sydney: The coral reefs of the Maldives, backbone of the island nation's tourism-dependent economy, survived the December 26 tsunami virtually unscathed, according to an Australian marine report released Wednesday.

"The report is good news for the Maldives, indicating the tsunami had minimal impact on the country's coral reefs and baitfish populations," said Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer in releasing the report.

"There has been surprisingly little change to reef flats, beaches and islands. There is also good news for the Maldivian fishing industry, with the tsunami causing little change in fishing conditions," Downer said in a statement.

Last December's tsunami hit 13 countries, seven in Asia, leaving more than 300,000 people dead or missing. The huge

waves washed over many of the Maldives' 1,200 idyllic coral islands, killing 82 people and destroying many of its famed resorts.

Marine experts feared that the waves had crushed the Maldives' coral reefs and mangrove areas, which would have left the nation economically struggling for years as the reefs slowly recovered.

Australian scientist John Gunn, head of the Maldives Coral Reef Assessment team, said the Maldives' reefs had been spared because they were not hit by destructive waves like Indonesia and Thailand. He said the low-lying islands, some only 3 feet above sea level, virtually sank beneath the rising waters.

"Repeated comments from people in the Maldives was...that there was no wave, they really felt like their islands were sinking," Gunn told reporters. Reuters



Chandrika thanks Manmohan for helping hand after tsunami

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 26. The Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, today conveyed the "deep gratitude and appreciation" of her Government and people to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, for the prompt and "most generous assistance" extended to Colombo by India in the aftermath of the December 26 tsunami devastation.

A letter from Ms. Kumaratunga was handed over to Dr. Singh

by her special envoy, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, this afternoon. The letter was handed over exactly two months after the tsunami hit the region.

"Notwithstanding the consequences of this unprecedented natural catastrophe in some states of India itself, relief supplies from India started arriving in Sri Lanka on the same day of the disaster," the text of the President's letter, made available to the press, stated.

"The massive relief and recovery operation mounted by

India which was watched with heartfelt appreciation by our people is emblematic of the enduring ties of friendship and cooperation between our two countries..." Ms. Kumaratunga said.

According to her, India's multi-pronged support at a "time of such humanitarian need in the region demonstrates not only your solidarity with and sensitivity to the problems faced by our neighbours but also India's capability and readiness to meet challenges [that] manifest in our region".

THE HINDU

27 FEB 2005

Couple's claim on Baby-81 vindicated

DNA TESTS CONFIRM TSUNAMI BABY'S PARENTS

COLOMBO, Feb. 14. — Ending the seven-week drama over the parentage of a tsunami-hit child that became globally famous as Baby-81, a Sri Lankan court today ruled DNA tests have confirmed a couple's claim that it was their child.

District judge Mr MP Moahaidein in the eastern coastal town of Kalmunai said the test results showed that the couple — Junita and Murugupillai Jeyarajah — were the parents of the four-month-old boy Abilash, as they had insisted throughout.

"This is a landmark case in Sri Lanka," a court official contacted by telephone said.

He said the judge will call the parties to court on Wednesday and see that the baby is reunited with the parents in the open court.

"I am so happy, and I only have to thank God for giving my child back," Murugupillai, the boy's father said. "We've got the results for all our hardships."

The couple, however, added that they were "harassed and humiliated" whenever they went to the hospital to see their baby. "We are very upset with the way we were treated by doctors at the hospital," Jeyarajah told reporters. The couple is now threatening legal action against the hospi-

tal for holding on to the baby despite evidence.

It was the first time that DNA tests, or "genetic fingerprinting" was used in the island to establish biological parents.

The Kalmunai district court ordered the tests after doctors and a lawyer representing a local child protection agency insisted on DNA testing to verify the claims of the couple. Nine couples originally claimed the boy in the coastal town of Kalmunai. The Jeyarajahs were the only couple to file a formal claim, but they couldn't document it because their records were swept away in the tsunami. — PTI



FAMILY REUNION: A file photograph of Murugupillai Jeyarajah and his wife with Baby-81 in a hospital in Kalmunai. — AFP

40-10

SHORT-CHANGING TSUNAMI VICTIMS

THE UNSAVOURY, INSTITUTIONALLY damaging controversy over the funding of a rehabilitation package for tsunami-hit fishermen in Tamil Nadu is entirely of the making of the Central Government. An estimated 15,000 lives have been lost in India, and Tamil Nadu and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands account for more than 90 per cent of this toll. The devastation of dwellings, property, and livelihood has been stupendous. In the relief phase of the national response to the unprecedented calamity, everything seemed to go smoothly. The widespread expectation was that the Government of India would put on a fast track a massive relief and rehabilitation package to enable the State Governments to put the tens of thousands of affected families of fisherfolk and other sections of the coastal population back on their feet — essentially by restoring their means of livelihood. To formulate this national task in terms of the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen, the system needs to focus sharply on the restoration and expansion of the affected people's capabilities to achieve valuable human functionings.

What went wrong with the thinking and practice of the Central Government, especially after it responded so effectively to the calamity in the relief phase? Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar appeared extremely sympathetic to the demands of the State Governments and promised massive assistance. The State Governments concerned rose spiritedly and resourcefully to the challenge and, in partnership with diverse political and citizen sector organisations, brought life-saving relief and immediate rehabilitation to the affected families. Now is the time to look to the future — and here the role of the Central Government in providing adequate resources to the federal units to undertake the stupendous task of permanent rehabilitation and rebuilding of the lives of the tsunami victims becomes critical.

Enter the Union Finance Ministry, which must bear a heavy responsibility for queering the

pitch. Out of the blue Finance Minister P. Chidambaram announces a 'subsidy-cum-loan' rehabilitation package for the tsunami-hit fishermen, in which 35 per cent will come as subsidy and 65 per cent as loan for the purchase of boats with motors and nets and also mechanised boats (for repairing boats, the subsidy-loan ratio will be 60-40). Mr. Chidambaram, in fact, specifies that "both the subsidy amount and the loan amount will be disbursed by the bank itself" — and this effectively means bypassing the elected Government of the affected State or Union Territory. After a strong protest from the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and criticism from other quarters, the Finance Minister clarifies it is a Cabinet decision but the Centre decides to route the subsidy through the State Governments. Even after this change, it is evident that the twist the Finance Ministry has introduced into the rehabilitation scheme is in contradiction with a Union Home Ministry communication of January 31 asking for the release of funds "immediately ... in favour of the respective States" from the National Calamities Contingency Fund, which unambiguously means grant assistance. Moreover, the affected fishermen have made it clear they are not interested in loans and cannot, in any case, offer the requisite security. Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry have requested the Centre to provide the entire livelihood rehabilitation assistance as grants. What justification can there be for short-changing tsunami-hit fishermen by offering livelihood rehabilitation 'subsidies' that are contingent on their taking loans from banks? Had the fishermen insurance cover, it would have taken care of the cost of replacing their fishing craft. In response to a great calamity, the Centre must act as a social insurer to uninsured and desperately vulnerable working folk. It must provide the States grant assistance in full measure for the purpose of rehabilitating livelihood and restoring valuable human functionings. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh must intervene immediately to resolve an unsavoury, totally avoidable standoff.

THE HINDU

10 FEB 2005

H.O. 12/

Sri Lankan tsunami damage put at \$1 billion

Environment

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, FEB. 2. A preliminary damage and needs assessment report by the World Bank and two other international agencies has estimated that Sri Lanka would need around \$1.5 billion to "effectively implement" a recovery and reconstruction strategy following the massive destruction caused by the December 26 tsunami.

Assessment for India

The assessment for India, which commenced on February 1, "is expected to be completed by the end of the month."

The report, by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the World Bank, estimated the overall damages at about \$1 billion, equal to 4.4 per cent of Sri Lanka's Gross Domestic Product.

A "large proportion" of the losses was concentrated in housing, tourism, fisheries and transportation.

Around \$500 millions would be required as "external financing in the short term" for the current year.

The report called for "transparency" and "inclusiveness" in the reconstruction operations.

The assessment, which was prepared in "close co-operation" with the Sri Lankan Government, "sets out clear guiding principles" for reconstruction, with "an important emphasis on the inclusion of affected communities" in planning and rebuilding.

At least, 31,000 persons were killed, 6,300 are reported mis-

sing and nearly 4.43 lakh persons displaced by the tsunami. "Of those killed, 27,000 belonged to fishing families. Around 65 per cent of the fishing fleet — 29,700, boats — has been completely destroyed or damaged," the report said.

Hardest hit

Among the hardest hit were the people in eastern districts, described by the report as those who were "already vulnerable due to the civil conflict," which bore "well over 40 per cent of the total damage."

The tsunami's damage to the island-nation's education system has been estimated at \$21 millions, with 168 public schools and 18 vocational centres damaged.

In the health sector, "around 92 local clinics, hospitals and drug stores were either destroyed or damaged, causing disruptions to delivery of health services and patient care."

Significant losses were also sustained in power, transportation (roads and railways), water supply and sanitation.

The damage to the tourism sector was estimated at \$200 million, and the estimated inflow of tourists was revised downward from the all-time high of five lakh visitors in 2003, to 1 lakh for the current year.

It was also "imperative that all key stakeholders in this: the Government, the international community, civil society and the LTTE, agree upon a transparent monitoring and accounting system for all the resources," the report said.

Thailand to go it alone on warning system

Nation/ANN & AP

Tsunami footage

PHUKET, Feb. 1. — Thailand is not prepared to wait for a planned regional tsunami-warning centre to be completed, and will in the meantime forge on with creating its own system, Prime Minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra said today.

The Kingdom's initial warning system will be operational in six months, he said. "We will do it whether or not anyone joins us

BANDA ACEH, Feb. 1. — A video shot on 26 December has captured in detail the terrifying power of that day's quake and tsunami, showing residents floating on debris atop torrents of water gushing through this city's streets. The video, made by a local cameraman, shows people lying on the road as if on a listing ship as the ground is jolted by the magnitude 9 quake. — AP

and it will be a private investment if no one wants to share (the costs). We will not be stingy when

it comes to saving the lives of our people and tourists."

The Thai warning came even as the UN today said it is developing an interim early warning system for tsunami in the Indian Ocean that could go into operation almost immediately, until a full-fledged network is put in place.

In another development, Mr Kofi Annan has selected former US President Mr Bill Clinton to be the UN point man for tsunami reconstruction, a UN diplomat said today.

Fishermen cool to Centre's package

By A.V. Ragnathan

CUDDALORE, FEB. 1. The Rajiv Gandhi rehabilitation package announced by the Centre has not enthused fishermen in the tsunami-affected coastal villages of Cuddalore district. The scheme opened today with nationalised and commercial banks asking the fishermen to apply for a loan-cum-subsidy, based on a list approved by the State administration.

The fishermen here propose to take a collective decision to shun the package and instead seek financial assistance in the form of grant to get boats repaired.

The Centre's package comes at a time when almost all fishermen have been reduced to penury, says a cross-section of them here. Brooding over losses and contemplating moves to recoup themselves, the fisherfolk are not thinking in terms of

such a large loan.

They do not expect any largesse but want immediate financial support (in the form of grant, whatever the size) to set right their fishing craft so that they can resume fishing.

Hence, the fishermen propose to seek an outright grant

to repair the boats themselves. The proposal will be formalised at a meeting of the Mechanised Boats Protection Committee here tomorrow.

The Thevanampattinam panchayat member, K. Dinakaran, told *The Hindu* that after the tsunami struck, the fishermen

were afraid of falling into a debt-trap from which it would be difficult to escape.

The fishermen want answers to two questions: Who is the competent authority to sanction the loan and will the banks ask for collateral security? This is perhaps why the fishermen are not inclined to go for a loan. (There were a total of 22 enquiries with the banks here today).

Mr. Dinakaran said the committee's decision would be binding on the sub-committees at Portonovo and other places.

It is the predominant opinion among the fishermen that if the Government gives the amount earmarked for subsidy (35 per cent of the loan amounting to Rs 1.50 lakhs) as grant, it will be a boon. They will mobilise the requisite number of mechanics, carpenters and painters to make the boats seaworthy at optimum cost.

Subsidy to be routed through State

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, FEB. 1. The State Government has finally received official communication from the Centre on the tsunami rehabilitation package. The subsidy element in the fishermen's livelihood programme to repair damaged boats or buy new ones will be routed through the State. A formal notification was issued today following the receipt of the message, official sources said.

But there was no sign of the scheme, named after Rajiv Gandhi, taking off smoothly. Fishermen's associations are planning a protest. They are hoping for a rethink by the Centre, following the standoff with the State Government. Indications are they may wait till Friday before taking a decision on applying for assistance. Ideally, the fishermen will want just the subsidy, not loan, according to functionaries in the federation of fishermen's associations.

THE HINDU

02 FEB 2005

Disaster cell tussle heads for Saarc

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Jan. 30: The UN may have suggested a cluster of centres to paper over divisions among the Indian Ocean nations on who would control the early warning system against tsunamis, but the tussle is far from over.

The countries have agreed to press ahead with the scheme to put it in place by mid-2006 but failed to reach an understanding on who would host the coordinating centre, allowing the debate to boil within the smaller Saarc grouping.

The seven South Asian members are likely to call for a regional disaster management centre at its summit next week. But serious differences over the venue are predicted here too.

Sources said Bangladesh is keen to host it. There has been no official word, but the media has been pressing for the past few weeks the need to base it in Dhaka. There have been suggestions that the local meteorological office be converted into the proposed centre, which will include an early warning system.

However, impressed with India's prompt and effective delivery of help to its neighbours, many of the members seem inclined towards Delhi.

Disaster management has been incorporated in the agenda of the Dhaka summit, coming as it is after the December 26 tsunami that battered several member countries.

The tragedy had pushed back the summit from early this month. It will now be held on February 6-7 and will be preceded by meetings of officials at the senior level and a separate meeting of the seven foreign ministers.

King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, who was

in Delhi as the chief guest for the Republic Day celebrations, has made it clear that as India has the money, technology and requisite facilities, it should take the lead in coordinating among the Saarc members on disaster management.

Sri Lanka and Maldives, two countries that received plenty of help from India after the tsunami, have also acknowledged that Delhi must be at the forefront of the effort.

India has announced its decision to set up a national disaster management centre. But it has not spoken yet about the proposed regional centre.

In private, Bangladeshi officials have argued that Dhaka is best placed to host the centre as the country has been fighting natural disasters regularly and its expertise in the field has been recognised by many in the world.

But India is not happy. It fears Bangladesh might use the proposed centre more to score diplomatic points against Delhi than fight disasters.

In recent years, bilateral relations between India and its eastern neighbour have been strained. Delhi believes the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government has not lost any opportunity to draw political mileage by playing the anti-India card.

Sri Lanka, one of the worst-hit by the tsunami, has apparently been asked to present a paper on closer and stronger cooperation among Saarc members on disaster management. Indications suggest that at the moment, stress will be mainly on exchange of information and expertise among the neighbours.

But if Bangladesh insists in setting up the regional centre in Dhaka, Sri Lanka and the other members might suggest alternative sites.

Turf war at tsunami alert conclave

Environment (Tsunami)

OUR BUREAU AND AGENCIES

Jan. 29. National egos are getting in the way of international tsunami cooperation.

Delegates from 43 countries, including India, Indonesia and Thailand, today struggled to map out a plan for a tsunami warning centre in the Indian Ocean, failing to thrash out who should run it and how to fund it.

The UN finally emerged as the coordinator, deciding that

several warning centres would be set up around South Asia within its framework.

"There will not be one regional centre," said Margaret Wahlstrom, special envoy to UN secretary general Kofi Annan. "A number of institutions" around the Indian Ocean could serve as smaller regional centres, she said.

The UN taking on the role of coordinator dealt a blow to Thailand, host of the two-day meeting in Phuket, which had wanted to run the centre itself.

India and Indonesia butted in with arguments of their own — Delhi contending it has the technological know-how to host the centre and Jakarta insisting its position close to major quake zones means it should run the system.

Only a week ago, ocean development minister Kapil Sibal had announced India would set up a warning system of its own than go with the US or the UN.

India's muscle flexing is in line with its policy of refusing outside aid for its wrecked re-

gions but generously offering it to other countries. Many see this as a reflection of India's eagerness to assert what it perceives as its new-found global status.

K. Radhakrishnan, director of Ocean Information Centre in Hyderabad, represented India at today's meeting. He had also attended a similar meet in Kobe, Japan, a week ago, which had ended without consensus.

Today's compromise came after Annan sent a written statement to the conference

urging all nations to coordinate their regional efforts.

"Our challenge now is to ensure that all the elements of effective early warning systems are integrated, cohesive, and cover not only tsunamis but also other hazards such as cyclones and floods," he said.

Radhakrishnan said Delhi would implement its national early warning system next month and it was expected to be fully in place in two years.

Bangkok's proposal to set up a regional tsunami trust fund, to which it pledged an

initial \$10 million, was not welcome at the conference, where cabinet ministers of only six countries took part.

Thailand wanted the system to be built on the existing structure of the UN-backed Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, which has around 30 member countries in Asia and is located in Bangkok.

Unesco director-general Koichiro Matsuura suggested the ministers of thousands of mosques dotting Indonesia could be used to blare out early tsunami warnings.

He stressed that any permanent warning system would need to be wholly owned by participating nations, require "open, free and unrestricted exchange of data and information" and accommodate the sensitivities of local cultures.

Later, Thai foreign minister Surakiat Sathirathai said: "We agree that the role of the United Nations is the most important in ensuring that all aspects in building an early warning are coordinated effectively and timely.

Source: *[Handwritten]*
(*[Handwritten]*)

TOWARDS A GLOBAL WARNING SYSTEM

FOR THE LAST 40 years, only the Pacific Ocean has had a tsunami warning system. However, after the tsunami of all tsunamis — the monster of December 26, 2004 — there is uneasy awareness of the destruction this relatively obscure natural phenomenon can bring. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation plans (according to its Director-General, Koichiro Matsuura) to establish a global tsunami warning system that will be operational by June 2007. A warning system for the Indian Ocean, which will be the first regional component of the global system, is to be in place by June 2006. Plans for the Indian Ocean component are to be settled this June at the annual meeting of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), which coordinates the international warning system for the Pacific. The United States has announced plans substantially to increase its tsunami detection and warning capabilities. Although this augmentation is primarily meant to extend tsunami protection to the whole U.S. coastline, the improved tsunami monitoring capabilities in the Pacific and Caribbean basins will, in the words of an official press release, provide "tsunami warning for regions bordering half of the world's oceans." The U.S. will continue to provide leadership in planning and implementing a global system, according to John H. Marburger III, science advisor to the U.S. President and director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

At the World Conference on Disaster Reduction at Kobe in Japan, where special sessions were devoted to tsunamis, there were initially tremors of a different sort with the U.S. appearing to question the ability of the U.N. to coordinate a global tsunami warning system. Considering that UNESCO has been running the International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific (ICG/ITSU)

from 1968, the U.S. position clearly lacked credibility. In the end it was agreed that the United Nations would coordinate implementation of the tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean. But there are still hurdles to overcome. The United States, Japan, Australia, and Germany all want their technologies to be used in the Indian Ocean warning system. Not to be outdone, India, China, France, Thailand, and Indonesia wish to contribute. India and Thailand, in fact, may choose to establish their own tsunami warning systems. It will be up to the U.N. to make sure all these technologies and regional warning systems can work together smoothly. Immediately after the Kobe conference, there was a U.N.-sponsored meeting to review and coordinate plans and activities on developing tsunami early warning systems, particularly for the Indian Ocean region.

According to Kapil Sibal, India's Minister of State for Science and Technology, the Department of Ocean Development has prepared a Rs.125 crore plan for a tsunami warning system that will benefit not just India but also neighbouring countries. There will no doubt be companies and groups that would want to sell their equipment and technology for setting up the Indian system. The warning system that is configured must be one that meets Indian requirements best and makes the most of capabilities available within the country. In addition, it is in India's interest to ensure that its proposed system integrates well with the tsunami network being planned by the U.N. Thus unnecessary and costly duplication can be avoided, and the effectiveness of the warning system can be greatly enhanced. The best way to secure a national warning system that is dependable, efficient, and cost-effective will be for the Government to initiate wide-ranging consultations with scientists and other experts within the country and abroad before finalising its plans.

World Bank, UN join tsunami battle

M.R. VENKATESH

Chennai, Jan. 25: The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the UN have finally stepped in to help Tamil Nadu with tsunami rehabilitation.

Two weeks after the Centre approached them for assistance to "rebuild infrastructure and rehabilitate livelihoods", the agencies have decided to jointly undertake a "detailed technical survey" in wrecked coastal districts of the state.

Based on their findings, the agencies will chalk out a reconstruction and rehabilitation plan in consultation with

the Jayalalithaa government, official sources said.

World Bank country director Michael F. Carter and ADB counterpart Louis de Jonghe had extended "full support" to the state in a recent meeting with the chief minister. Before that, officials of both agencies had undertaken a "field visit" to the Nagapattinam and Cuddalore districts, which took the full fury of the waves on December 26.

Although the agencies appreciated the "record time" in which temporary shelters were rigged up, Jayalalithaa had pushed the state's case for a

liberal aid package. She urged them to take up a Rs 5000-crore "Coastal Zone Protection Scheme" to "instil confidence" among devastated fishermen.

The scheme would include planting mangrove shelter-belts wherever feasible along the coast, besides building groynes, sea protection walls and rubble mount sea walls.

Jayalalithaa also sought a special package for the worst hit Nagapattinam district,

sources said. In response to this, the agencies have decided to focus on four broad areas: restoration of affected families' livelihoods; restoration

and upgradation of infrastructure such as ports, roads and bridges; a coastal protection scheme and a disaster management programme.

Non-government organisations, which have played a dominant role in relief so far, are also keen to help with the construction of permanent houses a safe distance from the sea. They have been holding talks with the government.

The efforts of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, a UN-affiliated NGO with a sizeable presence in Calcutta, has come in for wide acclaim. Soon after the tsunami struck, it convert-

ed its Chennai office into a relief centre and airlifted 10,000 food packets from its Gujarat headquarters for people living near the Marina beach.

Over the past month, BAPS has set up several centralised kitchens in the city. "We shall continue to provide hot meals till required," its Chennai head, Sadhu Anandsagaradas, said. The NGO had taken up relief work in 32 villages in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, he said. It had also provided school children over 10,000 sets of stationery and school bags.

Another NGO partnership, the IMGE Emergency Relief

Fund and the UK-based HOPE Worldwide, has launched a "Save The Family" programme to offer a "life package" to families in coastal Pudupattinam village near Kalpakkam, where the atomic power station is located.

The package, to be funded by donations to the IMGE emergency relief fund, includes a thatched roof hut, utensils, stove, food and provisions for two months, furniture, bedding, children's books, school uniform and clothes. A boat, fishing net and other equipment to enable fishermen to get back to sea will also be given.

25 JAN 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

10-10
25/11

CALAMITY AND CONFLICT

10-10
25/11

CAN CALAMITY TRUMP conflict? In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, there was hope that out of the ruins would be born reconciliation in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the two worst affected countries. Both have a long history of an internal conflict between the state and separatist forces. That hope has proved chimerical. The havoc the waves caused may have momentarily blurred the lines of conflict, but it certainly did not erase them. In both countries the most badly hit regions lie within the conflict zone, almost unfairly heaping devastation on an already devastated people. Out of the total number of those killed in Indonesia — now estimated to be in excess of 100,000 — more than two-thirds are from Aceh, a province in the island of Sumatra where a three-decade fight for independence peaked two years ago. In Sri Lanka, where the death toll is estimated to cross 40,000, more than half the dead and missing are from the North-East, where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam want to establish an independent state. But in both countries, the conflict has resolutely refused to budge, even for the humanitarian purpose of reaching relief to those affected by the tsunami or for their long-term rehabilitation.

In Sri Lanka, the LTTE is blowing hot and cold over Government relief efforts in the North-East. It oscillates between assertions of independence and the knowledge that it cannot do without Colombo's assistance to overcome the disaster. In order to underline its separateness, the LTTE wants international aid given to it directly. At the same time, the fanatically secretive Pol Potist organisation wants no international scrutiny of its activities, giving rise to fears that it is exploiting the tragedy for its own interests. The recent LTTE criticism of the United Nations Children's Fund for publicising the group's recruitment of child soldiers from

among the orphans in the tsunami relief camps is an indicator of the difficulties that lie ahead for relief agencies. In Indonesia, it is the Government that appears to be uneasy with the army of international relief agencies that has landed in the country; and with the media scrutiny of Aceh, to which it had barred access since launching a military offensive against the rebels in May 2003. Jakarta's explanation that its restrictions on the movement of aid workers will protect them from being kidnapped by the rebels has not gone down well, especially as the region's main insurgent group, the Free Aceh Movement, has made a commitment not to hinder relief work in the province. Skirmishes between the military and the Free Aceh Movement, despite a temporary ceasefire the rebels initiated, have also hampered relief operations. Evidently, the military, which retains an important role in Indonesia's politics notwithstanding the country's recent democratic make-over, wants no let-up against the rebels. It probably sees in the present situation an opportunity to press ahead with a military solution in the troublesome province.

In the unforeseen test of leadership that has come with the tsunami, the leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, already stands exposed for his failure to rally around the people he claims to represent and for remaining in hiding so long after the tragedy struck that it set off speculation about his own fate. It will come as no surprise if he fails to put the basic needs of Tamil people in the North-East before his own. But much better is expected of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia's first directly elected President. In the interest of Indonesia and democracy, Mr. Yudhoyono must rise to the occasion and ensure that short-sighted political interests do not come in the way of providing for the tsunami survivors of Aceh.

More questions than answers on tsunami tragedy

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The timeline of the December 26 killer tsunami leaves you wondering if the mainland at least could have been warned.

The tsunami hit Port Blair at 7.14 am, lashing Chennai port nearly two hours later, at 9.06 am. It hit Cochin at 11.12 am. Nobody seems to have warned anybody. IMD's Port Blair observatory has been upgraded—after the earthquake.

Waves reached heights of 50 ft as 1200-km of fault-line slipped about 45 ft, one tectonic plate slipping under another. The rupture was complete in 9 minutes. The northern tip of Sumatra may have moved 118 ft southwest, the Port Blair area may have sunk a metre. One station in distant Mexico recorded a 2.6-m high wave. There have been 709 aftershocks since, 135 being 5 or more in magnitude.

Beach profiles have changed in Kerala, the Adyar river has "opened up" to seawater, sand dunes have vanished, Trinket Island in the Andaman and Nicobar isles has been sliced. There are "apprehensions" that mudslides started a few weeks earlier, possibly signalling a slow earthquake. There is the

possibility of other "precursors" which need to be investigated. The thermal spring at Bakreswar, near Santiniketan in West Bengal, recorded fluctuations of radon, gamma dose and helium emanation.

At the moment, scientists seem to have more questions than answers. India is vulnerable to tsunamis from



three sources. One, ocean floor quakes in the Myanmar-Andamans-Java-Sumatra belt, extension of the Bhuj fault into the Arabian sea, and landslides or volcanic eruptions. The Rs 125-crore plan for this, expected to take two years, is being worked on by the departments of science, ocean development and space as well as Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. The Arabian Sea coast is considered safer than the Bay of Bengal coast.

Peace hope for tsunami-hit Aceh

Indonesian government and Acehese rebels will meet to discuss a formal ceasefire and restart the dead peace process

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
JAKARTA, JANUARY 23

THE INDONESIAN government and Acehese separatist rebels will meet this week to discuss a formal ceasefire in the tsunami-ravaged province, and possibly lay a framework for restarting the peace process that foundered 20 months ago, sources close to the negotiations said today.

An official long involved in bringing the two sides together said the talks will definitely be held in Europe this week, probably in Helsinki, Finland, on Thursday.

The source, who spoke on condition that his name not be used for fear of disrupting the delicate negotiations, said President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono — who was elected head of state in October — had been eager to restart the peace process even before the tsunami struck on Dec 26.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the earthquake and tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean passed 227,000 today with another 7,000 deaths being reported by Indonesia's health ministry. Thailand's toll crept up to 5,373 confirmed dead. A further 3,000 people were listed as missing, over 1,000 of them foreigners. — *PTI*

Lanka rebels see 'promise' amid disaster

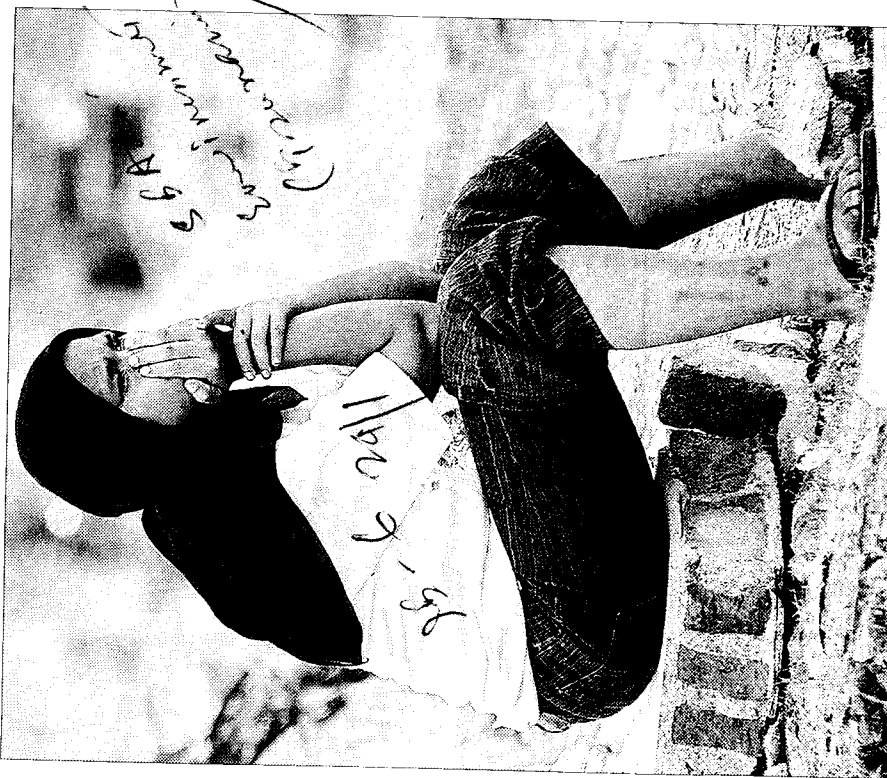
COLOMBO: Tamil Tiger rebels held their first talks with Norwegian peace envoys since the tsunami on Saturday saying the disaster opened up new possibilities for a solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

But chief rebel negotiator Anton Balasingham said the government must do more to get aid to Tamil-held areas.

"This is a sudden intervention of nature, for which we have to give total attention, leaving the political aspect aside," Balasingham said after talks between reclusive Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and Norwegian peace envoys.

"We want to see this human tragedy ... open up new perspectives... so that we can work out a mutual solution to solve the ethnic problem," he said after the talks in the rebel's administrative centre of Kilinochchi in the north.

The comments were in contrast to a rebel threat in November to resume a war for autonomy that killed 64,000 people after a three-year truce. It took the December 26 tsunami, which the government says killed around 40,000 people across the ethnic divide, to give the long-time foes a common goal. — *Reuters*



A young Acehese girl muses over the remains of her home in the tsunami-devastated village of Lhoknga, Banda Aceh. *Reuters*

Angry tsunami survivors protest in Thailand

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAKUA PA, Jan. 22. — More than 1,000 relatives of tsunami victims demonstrated in Thailand today against a government plan to move unidentified bodies of victims from Buddhist temples where they are being kept to a central location where forensic experts are working.

"I will fight to death. I won't let anyone move the dead bodies," said Sunthorn Kuakhem (50), who lost his wife, his 18-year-old son and his 11-year-old daughter. "They were born here. They will have to be laid to rest here." The demonstrators at Takua Pa beach resort oppose moving the bodies to the city of Phuket because they cannot afford to travel the 130 kilometres to be with them, and they fear that identified corpses will not be returned home for burial, even though the government has said they will.

Other protesters carried

VCDs on sale

JAKARTA, Jan. 22. — A "highlights" package of Indonesia's tsunami horror has hit the streets of Jakarta, with VCDs showing the carnage in Aceh on sale for \$1.64.

The documentary-style VCDs entitled *National Disaster in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam*, captures the height of panic as people scramble up buildings to escape the torrents. — AFP

banners saying: "Don't make our lives worse. Don't take the bodies away."

The four-hour demonstration ended in Phang Nga province after pathologist Dr Pornthip Rojanasunand, who is heading the identification effort promised to take special care of the bodies and release them to families as soon as possible.

Kobe summit pushes for alert system

Associated Press

KOBE, Jan. 20. — Delivering on their promises to support tsunami-hit nations in Asia and Africa, the world's richest nations today pledged millions of dollars for a new network that would detect tsunami in the Indian Ocean and alert vulnerable coastal communities of approaching killer waves.

Critics however said the UN conference should also be setting global disaster reduction targets. Unesco has proposed a \$30 million network of deep-sea buoys in the Indian Ocean and regional communication centres that would be operational by mid-2006.

Japan topped the list of donors at US\$4 million, while the European Commission said it would contribute \$2.6 million and Sweden \$1.5 million.

This week's five-day UN disaster conference in Kobe, Japan, has been dominated by competing visions for the alert network. Mr Briceno director of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction said the UN

Phuket moves

BANGKOK, Jan. 20. — Academics at Chulalongkorn University today disclosed that a model calculation suggested that the tsunami might have moved Phuket 15 cm further to the southwest. The change would greatly affect Thailand's survey for map as the earth normally moves about 1 millimetre per year, said Dr Itthi Trisirattayawong who heads the team to survey the tsunami's geology affect. — Nation/ANN

was taking the lead, and would tailor the system to the needs of poor Asian and African countries.

US Ambassador to Japan Mr Howard Baker Jr. today said that Washington could expand a Hawaii-based warning system for the Pacific Ocean that was established in 1965.

Meanwhile, Japan said it would extend technological expertise to nations, and Germany proposed its own high-tech programme of ocean-floor pressure gauges and a satellite-based Global Positioning System.

Rs. 2,731 crores for tsunami relief work

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 19. The Union Cabinet today approved a Rs. 2,731-crore relief and rehabilitation package for the victims of the tsunami in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Pondicherry.

The bulk of the assistance has been provided to Tamil Nadu at Rs. 2,262.65 crores, followed by Rs. 245.94 crores to Kerala, Rs. 153.46 crores for Pondicherry and Rs. 68.99 crores for Andhra Pradesh.

The Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, and the Agriculture Minister, Sharad Pawar, said this was only the first phase of assistance. It covered the immediate needs in terms of providing food and other assistance to those affected; helping the fishermen get back to work; and construction of houses. Another package will be cleared in the next few days, covering the reconstruction of infrastructure and address the problem of salinity of farmlands inundated by seawater.

A separate package will be announced for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands soon. Mr. Pawar will visit the islands for three days from tomorrow and hold discussions with the authorities on the relief package.

Under the package announced today, Rs. 1,093 crores has been allocated to help fishermen return to work by providing them with boats, nets and other equipment; Rs. 861.82 crores for the provision of food-grains and other materials; Rs. 752.3 crores for construction of houses; and Rs. 23.21 crores

First phase package
for tsunami relief:
Rs. 2,731 crores

The share (Rs. crores)

Tamil Nadu.....	2,262.65
Kerala.....	245.94
Pondicherry.....	153.46
Andhra Pradesh.....	68.99

- Rs. 1,093 crores for boats, nets and other equipment.
- Rs. 861.82 crores for food supply
- Rs. 752.3 crores for construction of houses.
- Rs. 23.21 crores for repair and restoration of fish landing places.

■ Rs. 454.47 crores to be provided as subsidy, Rs. 639 crores to be given as loans to fishermen.

■ Loans will carry an interest of 7%.

for repair of fishing harbours and fish landing places.

Of the amount allocated for the fishermen, Rs. 454.47 crores would be provided as subsidy and Rs. 639 crores as loans. The loans carry an interest rate of seven per cent. An interest subsidy of two per cent will be provided in case of prompt repayment. The loans would have a moratorium period of one and a half years and repayment will be spread over seven years.

See also Page 11

Centre clears Rs 2731 crore for tsunami-hit states

New Delhi: The Union cabinet on Wednesday cleared relief and rehabilitation package of Rs 2731.04 crore for tsunami-hit Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Union territory of Pondicherry.

A separate package would be worked out for the worst-hit Andaman and Nicobar Islands after a visit to the area by agriculture minister Sharad Pawar on Thursday.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting of the cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, finance minister P Chidambaram said this was the first phase of relief package and the second phase, to be announced shortly, would cover areas like agriculture and infrastructure.

Of the total package, Rs 861.82 crore would be given for immediate relief and temporary rehabilitation assistance in the affected states. Agencies

Beyond tsunami: an agenda for action

RELIEF IS in full swing in all the tsunami-hit areas of India. Medium- and long-term rehabilitation demands three things all along the coast. First, strengthening the ecological foundations of sustainable human security. Secondly, rehabilitating livelihoods and fostering sustainable livelihood security. Thirdly, putting in place a network of rural knowledge centres. M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman of the National Commission on Farmers, proposes a systematic 'beyond-the-tsunami' agenda for action.

Every calamity, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has emphasised, presents an opportunity to equip ourselves to face with greater confidence and competence similar challenges in the future. The Government of India has announced that a Tsunami Early Warning System as well as a National Disaster Management Authority will be set up soon. Relief measures are in progress on an unprecedented scale. Three weeks after the titanic tsunami hit our coast and islands, we are in a position to begin rehabilitation efforts in three time dimensions:

The Immediate (January-March 2005): Water, shelter, sanitation, health, and revival of livelihoods; psychological rehabilitation; repair of catamarans; and achieving convergence and synergy among all ongoing programmes with similar objectives.

The Medium Term (2005-07): Ecological rehabilitation; agronomic rehabilitation; economic rehabilitation; and disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management.

The Long Term (2005-10): Strengthening environmental defence systems; enlarging opportunities for sustainable livelihoods based on a pro-nature, pro-poor, pro-women orientation to technology development and dissemination; and improving the productivity, profitability and sustainability of agriculture and fisheries.

In the immediate term, psychological rehabilitation must be taken up as a priority. Teams must be set up of men and women psychiatrists and trauma counsellors. They must cover the severely affected areas during the next few weeks to help the bereaved. Fishermen need to be assisted in overcoming fear of the sea. Farmers also need technical help and moral support. Destitute women should be rehabilitated in their own community and should not be herded in destitute homes, either old or new.

Another priority is livelihood rehabilitation. A Special Food for Livelihood Revival and Eco-Protection Programme should be initiated in all the affected areas. Such an open-ended food for work programme, which can be sanctioned for a year for now, should aim at creating assets for the tsunami-ravaged families. The precise priorities can be developed for each village in consultation with local panchayats and affected families. About 300,000 tonnes of food grains should be allotted immediately for this special programme.

The medium- and long-term programmes should cover all families along the coast — both fisher and farming families, including the families of those who have no assets like land, livestock, or fishpond. These programmes will fall under three broad groups. The first is strengthening the ecological foundations of sustainable human security. The second is rehabilitating livelihoods and fostering sustainable livelihood security. The third is putting in place a network of rural knowledge centres.

The ecological programme demands the following:

a) **Initiate a coastal bio-shield movement along coastal areas:** This involves the raising of mangrove forests, plantations of casuarina, salicornia, laucaena, atriplex, palms, bamboo and other tree species, and halophytes that can grow near the sea. These will serve as speed-breakers under conditions of coastal storms, cyclones, and tsunami. In addition, they will serve as carbon sinks, since they will help enhance carbon sequestration and thus contribute to reducing the growing imbalance between carbon emissions and absorption. Mangroves are very efficient in carbon sequestration. They also promote sustainable fisheries by releasing nutrients in the water. Further, they will provide additional income and make coastal communities eligible for carbon credit. The coastal bio-shield can al-

so involve agro-forestry programmes like the intercropping of casuarina with hybrid pigeon pea (*cajanus cajan*) or red gram, to be undertaken by farming families. Thus the bio-shield movement will confer multiple benefits to local communities as well as to the country as a whole.

b) **Promote peoples' participation in the conservation and enhancement of mangrove and other coastal wetlands, as well as coral reefs and coastal and marine biodiversity:** A participatory mangrove forest management programme based on the guidelines already developed by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) should be introduced. Joint mangrove forest management is based on the successful model of joint forest management that is in progress in most parts of India. The super cyclone havoc in Orissa and the current tsunami calamity have created widespread awareness among the people on the role mangrove forests play in reducing the fury of cyclonic storms and tidal waves.

c) **Promote the organisation of community nurseries of mangrove and other appropriate tree species chosen under the coastal bio-shield and agro-forestry programmes:** Techniques for raising such nurseries have been standardised by the MSSRF. Community nurseries can be raised under the auspices of both forest departments and panchayats. Where appropriate, such nurseries can be raised on the basis of a buy-back arrangement. Farm families can raise nurseries and produce seeds of crops chosen for the agro-forestry programme.

d) **Regenerate fisheries and foster a sustainable fisheries programme:** The new fishing vessels and nets should be designed so that they do not disrupt the fish life cycle by catching young ones, and also do not destroy sea grass beds that serve as habitats for dugongs. The tsunami calamity provides an opportunity for achieving a paradigm shift from unsustainable to sustainable fisheries.

e) **Raise artificial coral reefs:** The work done in the Gulf of Mannar area indicates that artificial reefs can stimulate fish breeding and revival. These can be laid and managed by fisher self-help groups. NABARD can develop a special programme to promote the growth of such groups.

f) **Managing marine biosphere reserves in a trusteeship mode:** A trusteeship pattern of management of coastal bio-resources should be fostered. This will help local communities and government departments manage unique biological resources in a trusteeship mode. A beginning has been made in the Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve, but this system needs to get institutionalised all along the coast as well as in the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep group of islands.

g) **Provide landward housing sites for fisher families:** The new houses should respect the 500-metre restriction and should be ecologically designed. Had all fisherfolk been given housing sites on the landward side of coastal roads, the death toll from the tsunami would have been much lower. Anticipatory action against sea level rise also demands a human security driven design of coastal habitations. A group of architects should be assembled for this purpose immediately.

h) **Construct sea walls and dykes:** The construction of permanent sea walls can be taken up in places where there is sea erosion owing to heavy anthropogenic pressures. The locations for such non-living barriers should be determined on the basis of a carefully conducted erosion vulnerability analysis.

i) **Undertake agronomic rehabilitation — reclamation of salinised soils:** Seawater ingress has led to soil salinisation in some areas. A scientific team consisting of representatives of agricultural universities, the

Central Soil Salinity Research Institute, and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research may be set up to survey the areas, study the nature and severity of the problem, and suggest remedial measures. This should be done within the next two months, so that farmers are able to resume normal farm operations without losing a crop season.

j) **Develop a code of conduct for coastal ecological security:** The serious loss of life and property inflicted by the tsunami highlights the vision and wisdom of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Nearly 24 years ago, she took steps to ensure that no permanent construction should be permitted within 500 metres of the high tide. We should not only strengthen this national resolve but also develop a code of conduct for construction beyond 500 metres. Such a code can consist of a package of rewards for initiatives in the areas of sunward oriented buildings, energy efficient construction, use of wind, tidal and solar energy, rainwater harvesting, use of local construction material, effluent treatment, and use of biodegradable material. The coastal ecological security literacy programme should bring to the attention of builders the opportunities now available for mainstreaming ecology in building design and construction.

k) **Do vulnerability mapping:** Based on an analysis of 100-year data, the areas prone to cyclones and other natural disasters can be mapped. Priority may be given to such areas in erecting bio-shields and in undertaking eco-restoration and erosion prevention measures. Agricultural vulnerability to potential changes in sea level should also be mapped. This task should be taken up immediately by a consortium of R & D institutions and IMD to be set up by the Government of India's Departments of Ocean Development and Science and Technology.

l) **Promote sustainable management of coastal land and water resources:** There must be scientific land and water use planning to prevent salinisation of ground water. Land and water use patterns based on principles of ecology, economics, and social and gender equity must be prepared by panchayats with the help of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning, the farm universities concerned, and the forest, fisheries and agriculture departments of State Governments.

The livelihood programme has several components. A sustainable livelihood security strategy should be based on the principles of social inclusion and gender equity. It must cover fisher- and land-based farming communities as well as landless labour families. The following steps need to be taken under the livelihood programme:

a) **Aquarian Reform:** This is essential to foster harmony in the use of living aquatic resources by artesanal fishermen operating catamarans, and commercial families operating mechanised fishing boats and trawlers. The major aim of aquarian policy must be conservation of living aquatic resources; sustainable use; equitable sharing of benefits; and harmony between artesanal and mechanised fishing.

b) **Integrated capture and culture fisheries — sea water farming:** Fisher families, particularly women, can take up the rearing of prawns and suitable salt-tolerant fish species in canals along the sea coast, using low external input sustainable aquaculture (LEISA) techniques. Agro-aqua farms involving the concurrent cultivation of tree species and rearing of fish and prawns can be promoted to enhance income and employment opportunities. The tsunami tragedy can lead to the emergence of new sea farming communities well versed in production and post-harvest technologies, quality management, and value addition.

c) **Coastal bio villages:** The economy of coastal villages can be strengthened through the biovillage model of rural development. This involves the sustainable use of natural resources and the introduction of market-driven non-farm enterprises as well as value addition to primary products. It also involves a paradigm shift from unskilled to skilled work, resulting in the addition of economic value to time and labour. The coastal bio-village movement, to be fostered

by panchayati raj institutions, should be based on a pro-nature, pro-poor, and pro-women orientation to enterprise development and adoption. An important component of coastal bio-villages is the establishment of aquaculture estates that can help confer the power of scale to fisher families in the production, processing, and marketing of fish.

d) **A coastal grid of farm schools and demonstration centres:** Farm and fisher families practising the use of natural resources based on the principles of ecological economics can be chosen for establishing farm schools. Lateral learning among farmers and fisher families will be more effective than formal institutional learning, and they can go together. Demonstrations of environmentally sound sea farming techniques should be organised.

The third medium- and long-term programme is establishing a network of rural knowledge centres. The crucial importance of timely information in averting loss of life during natural calamities is now widely recognised. A network of rural knowledge centres must be established all along the coast as soon as possible. Such centres will use in an integrated way the internet, community (FM) radio, cable TV, and the Indian language press. They will provide language as well as dynamic information, and help disseminate locale-specific and demand driven information. They will also serve as an integral part of the National Early Warning System.

For launching a rural knowledge revolution, four requirements need concurrent attention:

a) **Connectivity:** BSNL and other appropriate institutions can help establish broadband connectivity. Both wired and wireless technologies can be used.

b) **Content:** A consortium of content providers and data generators must establish a digital gateway for coastal ecological and livelihood security.

c) **Capacity Building:** This can be taken up under the overall umbrella of the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity and the National Alliance for Mission 2007: Every Village a Knowledge Centre. At least one woman and one man will need to be trained in every village as Master Trainers. They will be elected Fellows of the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy. Training should be imparted in disaster preparedness and management, as well as in trade and quality literacy. Food safety issues and *codex alimentarius* standards should be highlighted in the training programmes.

The policy support needed for this programme has been spelt out in the report of the National Commission on Farmers titled "Serving Farmers and Saving Farming" submitted to the Government of India in December 2004. Even if there is an efficient early warning system, the information will have to reach the unreached, particularly fishermen at sea. A network of community radio (FM) centres must become an integral part of the coastal area knowledge connectivity.

d) **Care and management:** The rural knowledge centre must be located in a public space like a school or panchayat building so that there is equity in access. The centre can be managed by an information and communication technology (ICT) self-help group with support from NABARD.

A network of capacity building centres must be developed along the coast.

A resource centre for mangrove forest conservation, rehabilitation, and expansion is urgently needed. Further, training modules must be prepared in local languages on a wide range of topics relating to both ecological and livelihood security.

In sum, the tsunami disaster has provided a unique opportunity for launching through public-private sector partnership an integrated psychological, ecological, agronomic, and livelihood rehabilitation programme. To succeed, such programmes need to be people centred and managed by local communities with appropriate guidance and support from government and panchayati raj institutions. Government agencies, academia, and local communities should jointly develop integrated coastal zone management plans that will help transform sustainable development from a desirable objective into a practical reality.

Jakarta extends troop deadline

The Jakarta Post/ANN

JAKARTA, Jan. 16. — Foreign forces including a huge US navy tsunami relief mission will be able to stay in Indonesia longer than a three month limit provided they scale back their presence, the Indonesian government said today.

Defence minister Mr Juwono Sudarsono said a statement by Vice-President Mr Yusuf Kalla for overseas troops to quit "the sooner the better" was "not a deadline for involvement of foreign military personnel".

Mr Juwono, speaking after talks with US deputy defence secretary Mr Paul Wolfowitz and the commander for US forces in the Pacific, Admiral Thomas Fargo, said Mr Kalla's timetable was aimed at scaling up Indonesian involvement rather than rejecting assistance.

"It is a benchmark for the Indonesian government to improve and accelerate its relief efforts so that by 26 March the large part of the burden of the relief efforts will be carried by the Indonesian government and authorities on the ground," he told reporters.

"Foreign military assistance, operations providing relief and rehabilitation will be allowed to continue, albeit on a reduced scale," he said.

Navy warships and helicopters have been able to deliver supplies to survivors on devastated coastlines isolated by rugged mountains and demolished roads in badly-hit Aceh.

Although Mr Wolfowitz said Washington was keen to quickly hand over its aid role, Mr Kalla's earlier comments caused alarm among aid agencies struggling to bring help to thousands of people.

THE STATESMAN

17 JAN 2005

"LTTE recruiting tsunami-affected children"

NEW YORK, JAN. 15. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka are recruiting children affected by the tsunami for use as soldiers, Human Rights Watch said on Friday.

It said the Tamil Tigers, who were already recruiting large numbers of child soldiers, now may seek to replace forces lost in the tsunami with child recruits. The United Na-

tions Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported on Thursday three cases of children recruited from camps for tsunami survivors in Batticaloa and Ampara.

Human Rights Watch has received additional information on LTTE recruitment of children in Trincomalee and Jaffna. "The Tamil Tigers are preying on the most vulnerable by taking advantage of

children who have been orphaned or displaced by the tsunami," said Jo Becker, children's rights advocacy director of Human Rights Watch. "Every effort must be made to stop this unconscionable recruiting from families who have already suffered so much."

At a relief camp in Trincomalee, a 16-year old boy, who had been recruited prior to

the tsunami and later escaped, told credible sources that he witnessed the LTTE recruit three girls from the camp. In Jaffna, independent human rights monitors documented LTTE recruitment of two 13-year old boys on January 3.

Human Rights Watch has found that the LTTE often used threats, intimidation and even abduction to bring children into its ranks.

THE HINDU

16 JAN 2005

Central panel to meet on relief measures

Srinjoy Chowdhury in New Delhi

Jan. 14. — Following Dr Manmohan Singh's guidelines regarding tsunami-related relief operations, a high-powered committee will meet tomorrow to finalise short and long-term measures for affected people.

The short-term measures include providing immediate shelter to people who have no homes and help to fishermen who have lost their boats and fishing nets. Financial assistance norms are being finalised and then, state governments will provide shelter to the homeless and assistance to the fishermen. The Centre will release the funds and the work is likely to be completed by next week.

A number of long-term measures are also being considered. This includes the repair of harbours and jetties, mostly affected in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Fortunately, most of the ports along the east coast of the mainland have suffered little damage. There is also a plan to ensure houses are more resistant to disaster whatever they may be. Also, the possibility of building disaster shelters that people can move into during calamities or even, before calamities strike, are

being looked at. Clearly, disaster warning systems will have to be established and the body will be looking at how best to have that.

Keeping in mind the terrible suffering of people living along the coasts, the committee will look at providing a better quality of life for the fishermen. This could not only mean better houses, but also, more income (if they are given better nets and boats), allowing them to take fewer risks.

The meeting is likely to be chaired by the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia. The Commission is setting up a core group to coordinate the relief measures to the state governments and plan for the coastal zones. Once the plans are ready, there can be talk of financial aid from foreign agencies.

The committee is also looking at the possibility of NGOs providing help in the long term. They can either provide funds or work to complete rehabilitation projects.

The committee comprises a dozen secretaries to the government of India, including those of home, defence, ocean and rural development, science and technology, urban development and agriculture.

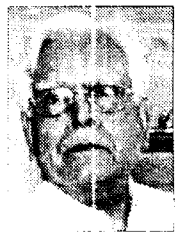
Natwar delinks aid refusal and UNSC seat

NEW DELHI, Jan. 14.

— India's refusal of foreign assistance for the tsunami relief efforts and its claim to a permanent seat in an enlarged UN Security Council could not be linked, foreign minister M. K. Natwar Singh has said.

"I don't think the two issues should be coupled. That would be somewhat cynical. The merits of our case for a permanent seat in the UNSC are well known," he told a news magazine. He said India's position on accepting foreign assistance for relief activities was not "dogmatic" and that it would get in touch with foreign countries in case of any future requirements, according to the magazine.

Explaining why India refused foreign assistance, he said: "As of now, we feel that we have enough resources and capabilities at hand to be able to deal with this disaster." — PTI



Stress disorders likely among tsunami-hit

By Siddhartha D. Kashyap/TNN

Pune: A city-based psychiatrist has warned of secondary psychic problems like alcoholism, drug abuse or other family problems among tsunami-affected people if effective interventions are not applied.

"The prolonged stress in the aftermath, pre-occupation with painful memories or losses, disruption of home, family and community life, and work, could lead to family conflicts and even violence, apart from other social problems," said Sanjay Phadke, neuro-psychiatrist with Jehangir hospital. Phadke, who has been instrumental in setting up an Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR)-assisted centre for advanced research to study the long-term psychological consequences of the Latur quake, will visit Chennai on an invitation from a UK-based NGO to impart training to local counsellors.

"It is normally seen that during the first four weeks or so after a disaster, a large number of affected people continue to live in a fear psychosis (acute stress reaction in medical terminology), thinking about the possibility of another disaster," Phadke pointed out. According to him, although the situation stabilises gradually, a consid-



HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN: Women draw rangoli outside their home in a Nagapattinam village on Pongal, the harvest festival, on Friday

erable size of the affected population continues to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) and depression.

"It's like having nightmares too often," he said, recalling instances where victims of the Latur or Bhuj quake, or the Orissa cyclone, continued to be haunted by the fear of another disaster. He opined that spe-

cial psychological care should be given to the disaster-affected after assessing the situation.

"Various dimensions which indicate the severity of exposure to the disaster—like extent of losses in terms of life and property, injuries, experiences of handling bodies and erosion of social network—will have to be taken into account along with the psychiatric assessment of the emotional reactions and the phase of grief of the survivors," he said, maintaining that it would be a herculean task. Phadke pointed out that prior to the Latur quake, there was a tendency to look into only the basic needs—shelter, food, sanitation and immunisation against epidemics.

Meanwhile, it has been found that a large number of people, mostly young, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). ARDS is a severe injury to most part or both the lungs where patients experience severe shortness of breath and often require mechanical ventilation (life support) because of respiratory failure. It is not a specific disease, but a type of severe, acute lung dysfunction associated with a variety of diseases like pneumonia, shock, sepsis (a severe infection in the body) and trauma.

Jakarta moves to take over foreign relief efforts

JANE PERLEZ

Banda Aceh (Indonesia), Jan. 12: Indonesia today stepped up its effort to assert control over international relief operations here, saying all foreign troops have to leave the country by March 26, and that its own forces would take over.

Two more battalions of Indonesian forces will be sent to aid the relief effort, Indonesia's vice-president, Jusuf Kalla said. The US ambassador to Indonesia, B. Lynn Pascoe, said: "We will stay as long as needed."

The move comes after the Indonesian military yesterday ordered restrictions on foreign aid workers, limiting their free operation to the two main cities hit by the tsunami in an effort to assert control over international relief operations here.

Outside those cities, Banda Aceh and neighbouring Meulaboh, aid workers will need special permission to go into more remote areas where hundreds of thousands of people were uprooted by the disaster, Indonesia's military commander, General Endriartono Sutarto, said.

"For the time being I would like the foreign presence only in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh," General Endriartono said. "Outside those areas they must be accompanied by the Indonesian military." The UN estimates that about 400,000 people in the province of Aceh were uprooted by the tsunami and says many of those victims are being sheltered in small towns and villages.

The new restrictions will enable the military to increase its presence in the countryside, where the rebels are

strongest and where civilians fear Indonesian soldiers the most.

The general asserted that the new measures were needed to protect foreign aid workers from the separatist rebels that Indonesia has been fighting for 30 years. But rebels from the Free Aceh Movement, known by its acronym GAM, released a statement yesterday guaranteeing "the safety and free access to all parts of Aceh for international aid workers."

So far, there have been no incidents in Aceh involving the rebels and the trucks of the United Nations World Food Programme, said Ian Clarke, the head of its office here. About 40 food-laden trucks a day have wound their way up the road from the city of Medan to Banda Aceh without trouble, he said.

Aid workers have ex-

pressed concern in recent days that the Indonesian military, worried about losing control or forfeiting what it sees as hard-won gains of recent years, would use the civil conflict as a pretext for clamping down on their activities.

There was considerable scepticism yesterday among relief groups about whether and how the new restrictions would be enforced.

Many foreign aid agencies, including the World Food Programme, are generally reluctant to work with military escorts because they fear that accepting the protection of soldiers from one side could drag them into the conflict. Only in "very rare circumstances" does the World Food Programme accept military escorts, said Bettina Luescher, the spokeswoman for the programme. She pointed to Darfur in Sudan, where a civil

conflict rages but where the programme's trucks are never accompanied by military personnel.

Médecins du Monde, a French agency that specialises in the delivery of medical supplies, also has a policy of refusing military escorts, and will continue to apply it in Aceh, said Pierre Foldes, the director of the programme. "Anytime the Indonesian military protects you, they want to be involved in your programme," Foldes said.

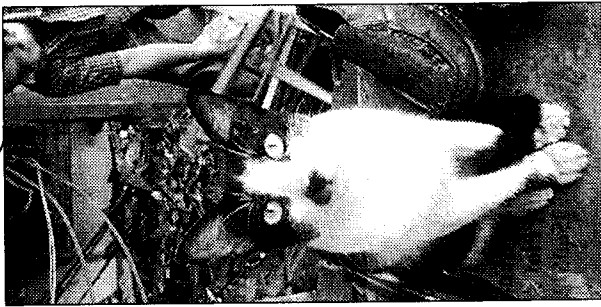
Before the tsunami, Aceh was virtually sealed off to foreigners. Martial law was declared in May 2003 and relaxed to a state of "civil emergency" the following year, as the estimated 30,000 to 40,000 troops severely weakened the rebels. Human Rights Watch and other organisations have consistently accused the Indonesian military of severe abuses

of civilians.

The US terminated military aid to Indonesia a decade ago, citing credible accounts of human rights abuses against civilians in East Timor. The general made his comments during a morning news conference and elaborated on them later in a brief interview. He came to the provincial capital to address foreign military personnel.

"A foreign medical team has to be working with a team from the Indonesian department of health," the general said, explaining the policy, "and together they will be accompanied by the Indonesian military on everything outside Banda Aceh and Meulaboh." The general said foreign military equipment and assistance would "be under operational control" of the Indonesian military.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE



A cat sits amongst the debris in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. (AFP)

ব্রাহ্মের রাজনীতি

সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত মানুষের ব্রাহ্মে আন্তর্জাতিক ব্রাহ্মসাহায্যের অভিযান একটি নির্ণায়ক বিন্দুতে পৌঁছাইয়াছে। জাকার্তায় দাতা ও গ্রহীতা দেশগুলির সম্মেলন হইতে চারশো কোটি ডলারেও বেশি ব্রাহ্মের প্রতিশ্রুতি মিলিয়াছে। দাতাদের মধ্যে সবচেয়ে শক্তিশ্রম ও ধনী রাষ্ট্র মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের অবদান সকলের চেয়ে বেশি নয়, এমনকী জাপানের তুলনায়ও অনেকটাই কম, যদিও প্রাথমিক প্রতিশ্রুতির হাস্যকর কার্পণের তুলনায় তাহার পরিবর্তিত ব্রাহ্মের প্রতিশ্রুতি অপেক্ষাকৃত সম্মানজনক। তবু মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রই যে এই বিপুল ব্রাহ্মযজ্ঞের প্রধান পুরোহিত হইয়া ওঠার চেষ্টা করিবে, তাহার লক্ষণগুলি স্পষ্ট। আর এখানেই দুর্গতব্রাহ্ম প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয়ে নিছক মানবিক হস্তক্ষেপে সীমায়িত থাকে না, হইয়া ওঠে রাজনীতির খেলা। প্রভাব বিস্তারের রাজনীতি। ভাবমূর্তি উন্নত করার রাজনীতি। তৃতীয় বিশ্বের দরিদ্র, উন্নয়নশীল বা অনুন্নত দেশগুলির কাছে পশ্চিমের ধনী ও শক্তিশ্রমদের ভাবমূর্তি উজ্জ্বল করার প্রক্রিয়াটি এক নিরবচ্ছিন্ন তাগিদ। বিগত শতকের উপনিবেশবাদের প্রায়শ্চিত্তপ্রবণতা ছাড়াও ইহার মধ্যে অধুনা সংঘটিত নানা অপকর্মের দায়মুক্ত হওয়ার প্ররোচনা থাকে। তবে ব্রাহ্মের মাধ্যমে ভাবমূর্তি উজ্জ্বল করা তথা প্রাধান্য প্রতিষ্ঠার পটভূমি রচনা করায় কেবল পশ্চিমের ধনীরাই অগ্রগণ্য নয়, এশিয়ার উচ্চাকাঙ্ক্ষীরাও সেখানে প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী।

যেমন জাপান। যেমন চীন। পশ্চিমের মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, জার্মানি, অস্ট্রেলিয়া বা ব্রিটেনের মতো পূর্বের দুই দেশই সুনামি-ব্রাহ্মে দ্রুত সাহায্যের হাত প্রসারিত করিয়াছে। উভয়ের কাছেই দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ার দুর্গত অঞ্চলটিতে ব্রাহ্মের মাধ্যমে সমগ্র এশিয়ায় আপন ভাবমূর্তি উজ্জ্বল করা জরুরি। তাই প্রাথমিক কার্পণ পরিহার করিয়া চীনও সাহায্যের অঙ্ক অনেকটা বাড়িয়া দিয়াছে। ভারতও মোটেই পিছাইয়া নাই। নিজে সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত হইয়াও নয়াদিল্লি যে ভাবে আন্তর্জাতিক ব্রাহ্ম গ্রহণের প্রস্তাব প্রত্যাখ্যান করিয়াছে এবং যুদ্ধকালীন তৎপরতায় শ্রীলঙ্কা ও ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় ব্রাহ্ম পাঠাইয়াছে, তাহা এশিয়া তো বটেই, পশ্চিম দুনিয়া এবং রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জেরও নজর এড়ায় নাই। এ জন্যই সাহায্যকারী রাষ্ট্রগুলির 'কোর গ্রুপ'-এ ভারত অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়। জাকার্তায় দাতা দেশগুলির সম্মেলনেও ভারতীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ ভারতের ভূমিকা ও ওজন ভাল ভাবেই বুঝাইয়া দিয়াছেন। ভারত মহাসাগরীয় অঞ্চল যে প্রথমত ভারতেরই প্রভাবাধীন এলাকা এবং ভারতীয় নৌবহরই যে এই বিস্তীর্ণ অঞ্চলের ভূ-রাজনৈতিক নিয়ামক, শ্রীলঙ্কা ও ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় পত্রপাঠ চিকিৎসা ও ব্রাহ্মের জাহাজ পাঠাইয়া নয়াদিল্লি তাহা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে বুঝাইতে চাহিয়াছে। নিকট প্রতিবেশীদের দেশে ব্রাহ্মের রাজনীতিতে অতএব নয়াদিল্লিও তাহার পশ্চিম বা পূর্বের প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বীদের চেয়ে পিছাইয়া থাকিতে প্রস্তুত নয়।

ব্রাহ্মসাহায্যের অঙ্ক ঘোষণায় অবশ্য সমস্যার শেষ নয়, শুরু মাত্র। কেননা গালভরা প্রতিশ্রুতি ও তাহার বাস্তব রূপায়ণের মধ্যে আকাশ-পাতাল ব্যবধান থাকিয়া যায়। অতীতের প্রতিটি প্রাকৃতিক বা মনুষ্যসৃষ্ট বিপর্যয়ের বেলায় দেখা গিয়াছে এ ঘটনা। আর তাই রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের মহাসচিব কোফি আন্নান পর্যন্ত এই মর্মে দাতা রাষ্ট্রগুলিকে সতর্ক করিয়া দিয়াছেন। মুশকিল হইল, কোনও দেশ তাহার প্রতিশ্রুতি রক্ষা না করিলে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের কিছু করার নাই। অথচ আন্তর্জাতিক নজরদারি ও নিয়ামক সংস্থা হিসাবে তাহার বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা ইহাতে ক্ষুণ্ণ হয়। এ ব্যাপারে ভারত অবশ্য পশ্চিমের ধনী দেশগুলির চালাকি বা কলাকৌশল শিখিতে পারে নাই। লোকদেখানো বা হাততালি-কুড়ানো কোনও ভঙ্গিসর্বস্বতা আন্তর্জাতিক মঞ্চে এখনও তাহার অনায়ত্ত। দুর্গতব্রাহ্মের মতো মানবিক শুভকর্মপথে এ ধরনের তঞ্চকতা অনুশীলনের অভিরুচিও তাহার নাই। ব্রাহ্মের ক্ষেত্রে যেমন, সুনামির পূর্বাভাস তথা সতর্কীকরণ পদ্ধতি ও পরিকাঠামো নির্মাণের ক্ষেত্রেও তেমনই আন্তর্জাতিক সহযোগিতা প্রয়োজন। সেই মর্মেও সম্মেলনে কিছু প্রাথমিক আশ্বাস ও ঘোষণা শোনা গিয়াছে। উন্নত দেশগুলি তাহাদের বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি লইয়া আগাইয়া আসার কথা বলিয়াছে। এখানেও অবশ্য প্রচুর অর্থের দরকার এবং সে অর্থ দরিদ্র এশিয়ার সাধ্যের বাহিরে। বিপুলসংখ্যক মানুষের প্রাণনাশ রোধে এই অর্থব্যয় যে জরুরি, আন্নান তাহা বারংবার আবেগকম্প কণ্ঠে বলিয়াছেন। তবে দাতা দেশগুলি যদি তাহাদের ঘোষিত দানের হাত গুটাইয়া লয় কিংবা হিসাবের গোলকধাঁধায় সব অঙ্ক ঘুলাইয়া দিয়া দানের অর্ধেক অন্য খাতে খরচ করিয়া গ্রহীতার খাতায় তুলিয়া দেয়, তখন এশিয়াকে নিজের সুনামি সতর্কীকরণ পরিকাঠামো স্বতন্ত্রভাবেই তৈয়ার করিতে হইবে। এ জন্য ভূতাত্ত্বিক ও সমুদ্রবিজ্ঞানীদের মিলিত ভাবে সচেষ্ট হওয়ার সময় আসিয়াছে।

8 JAN 2005

Core group vows to put in place warning mechanism

Jaishree Balasubramanian

UN secretary general Kofi Annan said the task of providing relief to the tsunami victims was "a race against time." On Thursday, he appealed for nearly a billion dollars in cash for urgent use as India and several other nations pledged to set up an Indian Ocean early warning system to save lives if such a calamity were to strike again.

"The disaster was so brutal, so quick and so far reaching that we are still struggling to comprehend it," Mr Annan said while addressing a day-long summit of tsunami-hit countries and key aid donors here. External affairs minister K. Natwar Singh represented India at the meet.

Urging nations to channel \$1.7 billion of the funds to the United Nations for relief, including \$977 million for emergency aid, Mr Annan stressed on the need for donor "pledges to be converted into cash quickly." Mr Annan is in charge of coordinating the global response to the disaster.

He added that the number killed across Asia and Africa in the tragedy exceeded 1,50,000, but the exact figure would never be known. "Whole communities have disappeared," he pointed out. American secretary of state Colin Powell, who also attended the meet, said the US-led core group of countries, including India, that organised initial relief operations will turn its work over to the UN.

A joint declaration issued at the end of the meeting of the leaders of 26 nations and international organisations acknowledged the role of the UN in assisting the affected countries' coordination of international assistance. The leaders pledged to set up a warning system similar to that in the Pacific Ocean to ensure that coastal residents have time to flee to higher grounds if such a disaster strikes again.

Mr Singh emphasised the need for having long-term warning systems for natural calamities and suggested putting in place an effective relief distribution mechanism which is "transparent and sustained." He said India can deal with challenges affecting it with its own resources. He added that it would be "appropriate" if international relief is directed to where it is most urgently required. In case India required any specialised needs it would be in touch with "our friends," he said. Mr Singh said India whole-heartedly supported the efforts of the UN and the "presence of the UN secretary general here is a testimony to the UN's important role in coordinating international relief operations. —PTI



Leaders welcome debt relief for tide-hit nations

Jakarta
6 JANUARY

WORLD leaders welcomed debt relief for countries hit by the December 26 tsunami disaster and supported the creation of an early warning system in a declaration at the end of a one-day crisis summit on Thursday. The magnitude 9 Indian Ocean earthquake and ensuing tsunami killed nearly 150,000 people throughout the region, and left more than 1.5 million homeless.

The declaration by delegates of the 26 nations and groups attending the Jakarta summit also requests the United Nations to mobilise the international community and calls for stronger coordination and cooperation of relief efforts.

The group asked the UN "to convene an international pledging conference for the sustainability of humanitarian relief efforts" and explore establishing a standby arrangement "for immediate humanitarian relief efforts."

More than \$4 billion have so far been pledged to help tsunami victims and rebuild the stricken Asian region, with Japan, Britain, United States, Germany and France also calling for a freeze on debt repayments by tsunami-hit nations. The declaration states that the delegates "welcome the initiative of several countries on the moratorium of payments of the external debt burden of the affected countries."

It says resources should be urgently mobilised to meet the emergency relief needs of victims and the affected countries and emphasises the importance of national rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes. Experts say a warning system could have saved many lives. The Pacific Ocean already has a tsunami warning centre. —Reuters

WHAT LIES AHEAD



Centre puts financial damage at Rs 5,322 cr

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 6 JANUARY

THE government has put the total financial losses due to tsunami disaster at a whopping Rs 5,322.05 crore. The figure, incidentally, is only for the mainland and does not include the hardest-hit Andaman & Nicobar. According to preliminary estimates put out by the Union home ministry on Thursday, Tamil Nadu was the worst-affected not only in terms of human toll but also economic losses which stood at Rs 2,730.70 crore. Kerala came second with loss to property estimated at Rs 1,358.62 crore. The tsunami left Andhra Pradesh poorer by Rs 720.73 crore and Pondicherry by Rs 512 crore.

With the survey yet to be completed in Andaman and Nicobar, where the tidal waves engulfed the entire settlement on some of the islands, it may take some time before the financial damage caused by the tsunami disaster to the Union territory is worked out. Agency reports from Port Blair, however, projected cumulated losses up to Rs 2,500 crore based on preliminary assessment by individual government departments and the industry.

Incidentally, the final take on financial losses in the tsunami-ravaged states may come only in the report of the central team that wrapped up its three-day visit to Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh on Thursday to assess the damage and pinpoint the central aid to be extended for relief and rehabilitation of tsunami victims.

Though a department/ministry-wise break-up of the overall loss in the mainland was not provided by the MHA, it is believed to be mainly on account of the infrastructure having been washed away by the tsunami waves as well as losses to fishermen, farmers, shipping industry and tourism. According to the Union home ministry, 376 villages were affected in Tamil Nadu, 301 in Andhra Pradesh, 187 in Kerala and 33 in Pondicherry.

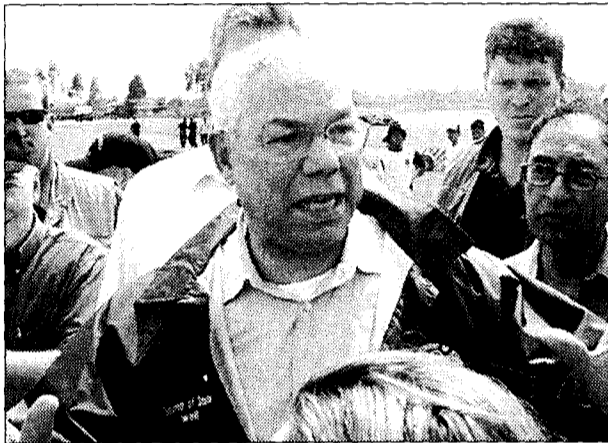
Honour aid pledge, Annan tells leaders

Jakarta, Jan. 5 (Reuters): UN secretary-general Kofi Annan called on world leaders to honour their pledge of \$3.0 billion to help tsunami victims and rebuild the stricken Asian region.

Speaking ahead of a tsunami crisis conference today in Jakarta, Annan said: "I hope all the money will be delivered." Leaders from 26 nations and humanitarian groups will discuss ways to coordinate donations and relief operations and also ways of limiting damage from future natural disaster. The sheer number of aid groups flooding into Asia, big and small, has caused coordination problems and created bottlenecks.

Aid promised for the biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II, in which 150,000 people have been killed and millions left homeless, must be "fresh and additional money, not robbing Peter to pay Paul, pulling it from other crises", Annan said in a CNN television interview.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard pledged A\$1.0 billion (\$765 million) over five years for Indonesian reconstruction and development. "It is the single largest aid contribution ever made by Australia," said Howard after meeting Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono ahead of the one-day aid con-



US secretary of state Colin Powell (centre) at the airport in Banda Aceh. After witnessing the unimaginable destruction of Asia's tsunami horror, Powell said: "I have been in war and I have been through a number of relief operations, but I have never seen anything like this." (Reuters)

ference. Indonesia is the worst-hit nation with almost two-thirds of the dead from the December 26 tsunami, which swept across six Asian nations, and has 500,000 people homeless.

The EU warned against nations trying to outbid each other in a "beauty contest", without being sure the money would be well spent.

EU would link aid to needs and "it's not really important to make competition to know who will promise the highest level," said European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Assistance

Louis Michel. International aid groups echoed Annan's call and his concern of aid being shift from other areas to cover the Asian tsunami.

"We must ensure we don't repeat mistakes of previous humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Liberia, and elsewhere where donors have either failed to deliver the aid quickly enough, or at all, or delivered aid at the expense of other disasters," said Barbara Stocking, director of Oxfam.

As aid workers struggled to cope with survivors, the Jakarta conference will try to coordinate the relief effort.

Rescue team on forgotten island

M.R. VENKATESH

Cuddalore, Jan. 5: Battered and forgotten, an island in the backwaters of the Bay of Bengal received the first ray of hope 10 days after the deadly tsunami struck.

A team of personnel from the army, police and the fire services department reached Pillamedu today to look for 56 missing people, Cuddalore district collector Gagandeep Singh Bedi said.

Largely inhabited by tribals and fishermen, the island has been virtually "washed away".

A central team visiting tsunami-affected areas in Tamil Nadu could not reach Pillamedu, nearly 50 km from here.

The team was stunned to see the devastation across the state, the worst-hit on the country. Around 806 bodies have been recovered from Cuddalore district alone.

However, the damage to the livelihood of the fishermen is incalculable. Up to 15,000 tonnes of fish used to be exported annually. "There is no fish available in Cuddalore today and is being brought here from far away Mumbai and other places," Bedi said.

The central team has split into three — one has gone to Nagapattinam, the most battered district in the state, one is surveying Cuddalore district and nearby Pondicherry and third is in Kanyakumari.

It was mostly women and children who bore the brunt of the killer waves, Bedi said, adding that 312 women and 170 children have died in this district.

The team to Cuddalore is being led by Vijaya Srivastava, the executive director of the Delhi-based Central Social Welfare Board. Srivastava said her team members have not seen such a natural calamity in their lives, it is even bigger than the earthquake that shook Gujarat in 2000.

Bedi stressed on the damage done to fishery and agriculture, the latter due to sea water intrusion in several places. He said two other islets — MGR Thittu and Chinna Vaikal in the backwaters near Kille, close to Chidambaram — have also taken a lot of the tsunami's fury.

Most fishermen's boats are "beyond repair", Bedi said. Country boats — known as *kattumaram* — fitted with outboard engines and nets could cost up to Rs 1 lakh each, while the price of the bigger motorised fibre-glass boats could go up to Rs 25 lakh, Bedi explained to the central team.

It would take considerable amount of money to rehabilitate the coastal belt, he said, urging for generous central assistance.

Removing the big boats pose a huge logistical problem as well as cranes cannot be taken to certain places, the district collector said, adding that a 50-tonne crane had to be carried all the way from Chennai port to lift some of the larger boats stuck in the debris.

C.K. Gariyali, one of the relief commissioners of the state government, told the team about a "small outbreak of measles" in the district. The Centre should arrange for large quantities of anti-measles and anti-typhoid vaccines besides tablets to prevent cholera, Gariyali added.

Home ravaged, hunger looms on Onges

Cloud on Stone Age survivors

Port Blair, Jan. 5 (Reuters): One of the world's last remaining Stone Age hunter-gatherer tribes survived the tsunami but the damage caused to their habitat may eventually wipe them out, experts said.

The Onge tribe on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands could run out of food — mostly marine species — as their inland estuaries have been flooded by sea water and coastal mangroves destroyed, they said.

Although authorities say that the most primitive tribal groups on the islands are safe after the tsunami struck 10 days ago, there has been no word on the fate of nearly 25 Onges, a quarter of the tribe's total population.

"While a majority of the tribes are physically safe, we believe a tribe like the Onge is in grave danger as their habitat may have been badly affected," said Samir Acharya, secretary of the Society for Andaman and Nicobar Ecology.

"These tribals live a need-based life where destruction to a particular natural resource could make all the difference between survival and extinction," he said.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a remote cluster of more than 550 islands of

which only about three dozen are inhabited, are home to about six tribes of Mongoloid and Negrito origin who have lived there for thousands of years.

Many of these tribal people are hunter-gatherers who arm themselves with spears, bows and arrows, dress in tree bark or leaves and shun links with the outside world.

Experts had feared that some of these tribes could have been wiped out after the killer waves smashed into the remote archipelago.

The December 26 tsunami, triggered by an undersea earthquake off Indonesia, has killed about 150,000 people across south and southeast Asia.

While the largest tribe, the Nicobarese, has a population of more than 20,000, more primitive groups like the Sentinelese, Shom Pen and Jarawa number only a few dozen or a few hundred.

The Onges are a Negrito tribe whose numbers have dwindled to about 100 people from an estimated 600 in 1901.

At least 5,000 people are feared to have died on the tropical Andaman and Nicobar islands. Most of the victims were Nicobarese living in villages along the coastline.



A Coast Guard picture of a Sentinelese man

Tribes	Habitation	Current status	Population*
Andamanese	Strait Island in Andaman.	Safe. Brought to Port Blair	43 (24 males, 19 females)
Jarawas	Middle and South Andaman	Not affected	240 (125 males, 115 females)
Onges	Dugong Creek and South Bay in Little Andaman	Reported safe	96 (57 males, 39 females)
Sentinelese	North Sentinel Islands	Sighted safe	39 (21 males, 18 females)
Shom Pens	Campbell Bay in Great Nicobar	Reported sighted safe. Not yet reached	398 (254 males, 144 females)
Nicobarese	Car Nicobar group of islands	Affected. Loss being estimated. About 3000 reported missing	28,653 (14,646 males, 14,007 females)

Source: Home ministry, *2001 Census

Many tribal people fled deep into the jungles after the tsunami and have been too scared to emerge since, authorities said, adding that they were believed to be surviving on coconuts, bananas and wild berries.

Authorities have so far provided little relief to the most

primitive tribal groups, partly because of concerns about intruding into their highly protected existence.

"We still do not have any information whatsoever about 20-25 Onges who had settled on South Bay in Little Andaman, which is roughly a fourth of their total population," said

a senior anthropologist.

"And the rest who had been evacuated from their Dugong Creek settlement to higher ground have been living among settlers for a week now, which is very worrying as they have reportedly begun getting used to alcohol and tobacco."

Delhi clears air on tribes

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Jan. 5: The government today released 2001 Census figures for rare Andaman and Nicobar tribes along with a preliminary assessment of the situation in the islands to clear the confusion over the fate of the tribals.

Although initial fears that the killer waves may have wiped out many of these primitive tribes have proved wrong, the authorities do not yet have a clear picture of the exact extent of the devastation. Many of these tribals have fled to the thick tropical jungles in the remote archipelago and the Centre is in no position to say how many have been killed.

There are six main tribes living in the islands. Of these, five — Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese and Shom Pens — are primitive. The sixth, Nicobarese, are numerically the largest.

According to the 2001 Census, the Andamanese numbered 43, Jarawas around 240, Onges 96, Sentinelese 39, Shom Pens 398 and the Nicobarese 28,653.

The Andamanese, most of

whom lived in Strait Island, are safe, though their dwellings have been damaged.

The Jarawas, who like the Andamanese have a Negrito origin, are all safe, according to the authorities. Among the most primitive tribes, they live in six villages in Andaman.

Latest reports say the Onges — who live in two villages in Port Blair — are safe and have taken shelter in the hill and forest areas.

So far, no contact has been established with the Sentinelese, who shun links with the outside world. However, they have been sighted during aerial surveys over the North Sentinel island. The Centre assumes the Sentinelese are safe.

The Shom Pens, who live in the southernmost part of Nicobar island, are scattered over 17 villages. All bridges in this area are damaged and efforts are on to reach the Shom Pens by foot. Although they were feared to have been the worst affected, aerial surveys have shown they are more or less safe as they had fled to the forests.

The Nicobarese are the most affected. At least 3,000 of them are missing.



A bird's-eye view of the eroded shoreline at Katchal, part of the Andaman and Nicobar Island chain. (Reuters)

Fish drops off dinner tables

G.S. RADHAKRISHNA AND BAPPAMAJUMDAR

Hyderabad/Port Blair, Jan. 5: The tsunami has made fish an untouchable commodity in markets.

There are no takers for the tonnes of sea and tank fish in Hyderabad where stocks have been piling with wholesale vendors since January 1.

"Keeping sentiments in view (after the tsunami disaster), we abstained from selling sea fish for almost a week. But even after new year, sales have remained low," said Abdus Khader, a fish merchant.

Kaki Padmavati, a 22-year-old fisherwoman, echoed him. Her husband and brother have not gone out fishing for three

days as there are no takers. "After the tsunami, the shoreline has been flooded with dead fish. We even saw some huge turtles and varieties of crabs on our beach," she said.

"A majority of the coastal population has rejected sea fish under the impression that these fish might have consumed dead human flesh," says Narasimha Rao, an assistant director in the fisheries department in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. The department has already warned that dead fish are not suitable for consumption.

In Port Blair, 13,000 fishermen are jobless. "They are afraid to go fishing and people are also not eating fish, but we have not issued any warning

about this," said V. Krishnamurthy, the fisheries director.

The authorities are busy convincing fishermen to return to work, but near the coast. "They want us to issue a statement saying people can consume fish, but we never asked people to either eat or not eat fish," Krishnamurthy said.

The undeclared ban on fish consumption has raised prices of chicken and red meat in Hyderabad. The price of chicken has skyrocketed to Rs 120 a kg while meat is selling at Rs 250 a kg.

A government notification issued yesterday, however, said fish of the sea and tank varieties were good enough to be eaten, but keeping public sentiment in mind, it was advised

that people keep off seafood for a few more days.

Fish sent from Andhra has also been rejected in other parts of the country. Three consignments to Bangalore and parts of Sholapur have not been accepted, fish merchants said.

In Port Blair, wildlife authorities are yet to make an assessment of the marine life around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. "We are busy with relief work. There has not been any time to make an assessment, which can only start in a month's time," said S.R. Mehta, the principal chief conservator of forests. "But the feedback received from our men stationed at various points show that marine life has not been affected."

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2005

Ad-10
4/1/05
THE U.N. MUST LEAD *Government*

THE SCALE OF the tsunami catastrophe in Indonesia and Sri Lanka has just emerged. Estimates of the death toll in Indonesia are fast approaching the 100,000 mark while Sri Lanka has confirmed at least 40,000 deaths. Many parts of South East Asia have been hit by the killer waves, although Indonesia stands out as the worst affected since the epicentre of the gigantic undersea earthquake was in the Sumatra region. The authorities have not been able to complete the assessment of the devastation as yet. Parts of Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar have also been hit although not on the scale of Indonesia — the region's giant. It has taken a week for the administration in the archipelago to put a figure to the natural calamity, and it was also a week before any substantial aid could reach the heart-breakingly devastated Aceh province. It is in this scenario that Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, mooted an Association of South East Asian (ASEAN) initiative for an international summit in Jakarta to discuss relief and rehabilitation measures for the affected countries. This meeting, scheduled for January 6, has graduated into an international donors' conference.

At a time when the concentration must be on helping people rebuild their lives by canalising all the assistance and solidarity that can be mobilised, it is presumptuous on the part of the United States to envisage a "core group" of four countries (apart from itself, Australia, Japan, and India) for coordinating the relief effort in areas hit by the tsunami. Such a responsibility can devolve only on the United Nations, which has already initiated the process of aid collection. A sum of \$2 billion has already been raised and the Jakarta conference must ensure that this is multiplied and distributed among the worst affected countries and areas so that the homeless families can first get shelter and then think of a livelihood.

The European Union (E.U.) has sponsored an international donors' conference in Geneva on January 11, and this will be under U.N. auspices. The E.U. wants to host a follow-up donors' meet to take up rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the devastated parts of Asia and even East Africa. To start with, the donor countries and aid agencies must look at Indonesia and Sri Lanka, which lack the infrastructure to undertake the stupendous task on their own.

The fact that U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan will be participating in the Jakarta conference along with senior representatives of all major countries lends weight to the meeting. India, which has taken a staggering hit from the tsunami, has done the right thing by making it a matter of principle to organise its relief and rehabilitation efforts on its own, without foreign aid — and also announcing a substantial contribution to the international fund in addition to assisting Sri Lanka and the Maldives. It is reassuring that a senior Cabinet member, External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh, will be representing the Government in Jakarta but Prime Minister Manmohan Singh must rethink his decision to skip the conference. He needs clearly to assign higher priority to this than to the third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (January 7-9), and in any case he can return in time from Jakarta to attend the Mumbai meet. With India moving determinedly to enhance its partnership with ASEAN and also pushing for permanent membership of the U.N. Security Council, the Prime Minister's participation in a collective effort to ensure that the U.N. leads the international relief and rehabilitation drive for tsunami victims assumes special importance. India and China have a great responsibility to the region and ASEAN and the world will expect them to be wholeheartedly involved in the reconstruction programme to follow.

Tsunami relief

Rescue effort needs international coordination

The tsunami disaster has been global in scope. Not only did its waves travel three times round the world as the Japanese scientists say, but selected countries across South and East Asia, and nationals from many more countries, have made their reverberations felt right across the globe. It is only appropriate that the rescue and relief effort should also be global, and politics should be put aside for the occasion. In India the death toll is 10,000, and a million people are said to be displaced. The bureaucracy does a poor job of coping with much smaller calamities than this. Why then the refusal of foreign aid, especially when India has joined a core group comprising the USA, Australia and Japan to coordinate international relief to tsunami victims in other countries? It is inexplicable unless one factors in the old shibboleths of national self-reliance, which one thought was left behind when India accepted aid for the rehabilitation of earthquake victims in Gujarat in 2001. In general, national self-reliance stunted the economy's growth before 1991, and it seems especially silly in times of crisis like these, when the most urgent necessity is to get food, shelter, medical aid to victims as well as to repair the ravaged infrastructure. When assistance on these scores could mean the difference between life and death, it doesn't really matter from what source help comes.

Manmohan Singh says we can cope with the situation on our own resources, and adds that an earthquake cess is not necessary "as of now". Which is not really reassuring, it is implicit the position may change at any time and further burdens may be imposed on the economy. The follies of national self-reliance crop up in another area as well. It transpires that India will not join the international tsunami warning system but set up its own at a cost of Rs 125 crore. Reinventing the wheel is always expensive; besides, given the dismal track record of government science, we don't even know whether there will be a wheel at the end of it. Even presuming the system works, and we get two hours' warning, do we have the infrastructure to get the warning out quickly. These are hard questions that must be asked, as also the question that if the Indian taxpayer can pay for resources to aid tsunami victims in, say, Thailand or Indonesia, why can't international resources be made available for Indian victims.

THE STATESMAN

3 JAN 2005

Central Team Seeks Rs 4,800 Cr & 54,000 Tonnes Of Grain For Victims

Special package for tsunami-hit

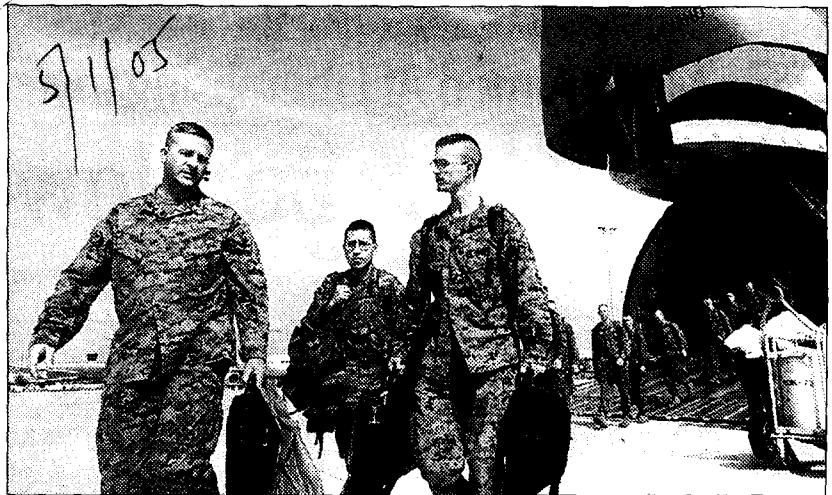
Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 JANUARY

THE Central team visiting the tsunami-hit parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh to assess the extent and nature of damage on Tuesday endorsed the states' view favouring a special package, beyond the norms of the Calamity Relief Fund, to deal with the disaster. "We (the team) feel the need to consider a special package for dealing with immediate relief and rehabilitation of affected persons," secretary (disaster management) in the Union home ministry A.K. Rastogi, told newsmen in Chennai.

Mr Rastogi's statement came shortly after the central team called on Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalitha in Chennai. She is reported to have sought Rs 4,800 crore and 54,000 tonnes of grain as relief for the tsunami victims in her state. In separate letters to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union home minister Shivraj Patil, Ms Jayalalitha pointed out how the Tsunami was an "unprecedented" disaster and that normal norms for calamity relief would not apply.

A special package should be developed, she requested, recalling her conversation with the Prime Minister during his visit to Tamil Nadu last week in which she claimed he had endorsed the need for such a measure.

Mr Rastogi, who today assured Mr Jayalalitha that the Centre would work closely with the state administration towards supplementing relief operations and evolving long-term plans for rehabilitation of affected persons, qualified the team's willingness to recommend a special package with the rider that the team was not the final authority to take a decision. "The team would make its recommendation to the higher authorities," he told a press conference following a meeting with senior state government officials.



MARINE DRIVE: US Marines walk out of a cargo plane that brought support troops at the Bandaranayake International Airport in Katunayake, north of Colombo on Tuesday. — AP

US, India work in tandem

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 JANUARY

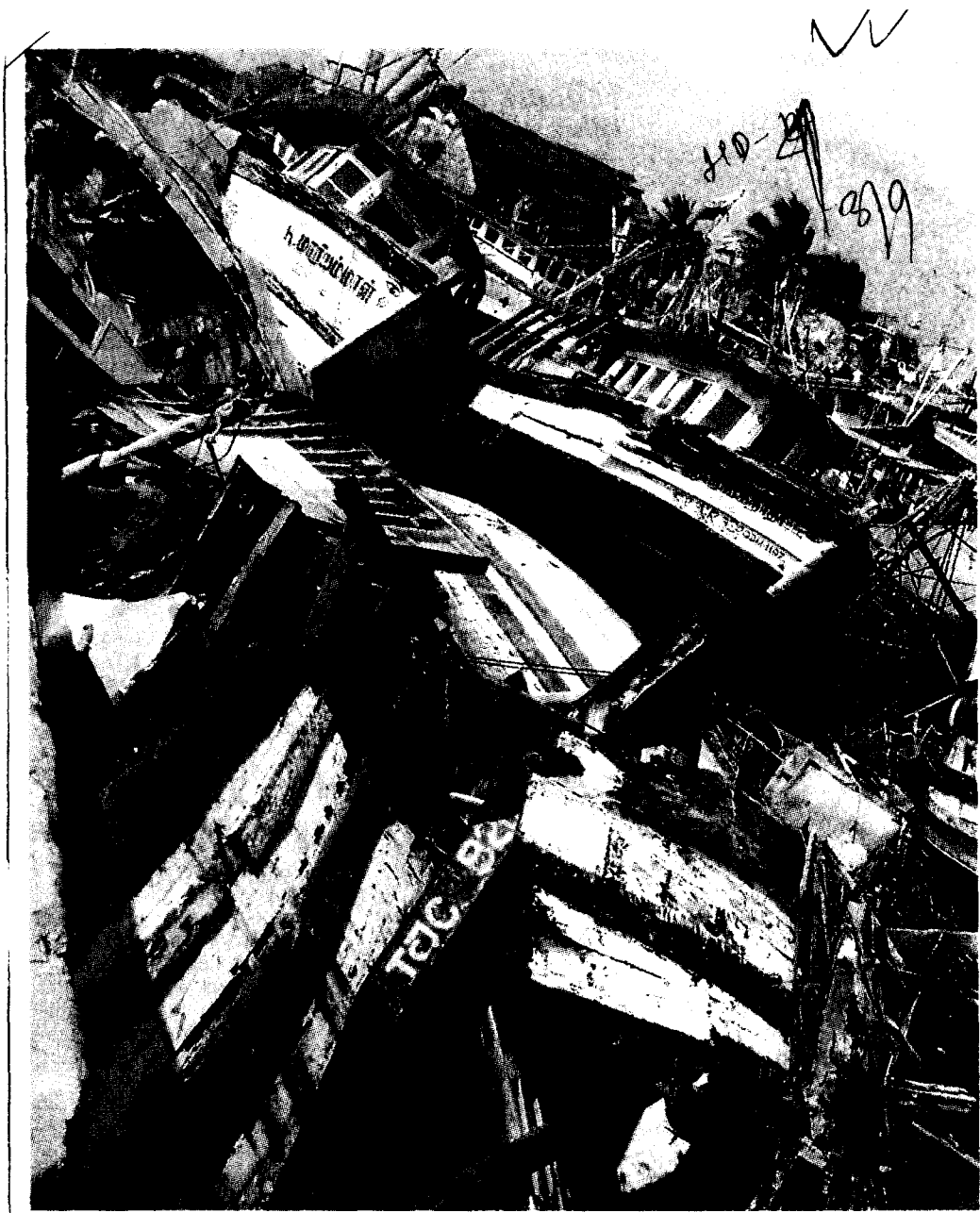
AS it earmarked another \$1.6 million aid for India, the US, on Tuesday, said relief work by American troops for the tsunami-hit in the immediate neighbourhood including Sri Lanka was being done in close coordination with New Delhi.

Lauding India's efforts to provide humanitarian relief quickly to countries affected by the tragedy, US ambassador David Mulford said it had provided an occasion for the armed forces of the two countries to operationalise disaster management programmes undertaken during joint exercises. Official sources in the MEA affirmed that New Delhi was kept

fully in the know and the operations were being done in coordination with Indian government. Mr Mulford revealed that he had suggested deploying military forces for relief operations to national security advisor J.N. Dixit, who died on Monday, the day after the tsunami struck.

Dixit not only received the idea favourably, but went ahead and intimated the Indian Navy whose officials promptly got in touch with counterparts in the US Embassy.

At least 1,500 US marines are now expected to be deployed in Sri Lanka, some of whom have already landed there. Mr Mulford also confirmed the presence of aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln off the coast of Sri Lanka.



Boats that were washed ashore by tsunami last Sunday at Akkaraipettai in Nagapattinam district. — Photo: R.Shivaji Rao

THE HINDU

3 JAN 2005

US ships on horizon, India & China wake up to new reality

C RAJA MOHAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 2

BESIDES drawing legions of armed forces and triggering high-profile global diplomacy, the tsunami strike in the Indian Ocean has reinforced political and military pragmatism in New Delhi and Beijing.

New Delhi and Beijing have traditionally been suspicious of each other as well as of the American military presence in their neighbourhood.

Demonstrating a new realism, India and China are easing their own military tensions and simultaneously working with the reality of American naval primacy in

the Indian Ocean.

In normal circumstances, China would have been wary of India's move to join the relief coalition involving the US and its major Asian allies, Japan and Australia. Instead, as the core group on tsunami relief was being announced in the US, Beijing was expanding the list of military confidence building measures with Army chief Gen N C Vij, who was visiting China at the same time.

Without a murmur of protest against the core group, which has now expanded to include the Netherlands and Canada and might also draw in the European Union, China has decided to contribute vigor-

ously to the relief effort.

Besides considerable aid, Beijing has decided to send a team of 220 search and rescue workers that includes a contingent of Chinese military engineers to Indonesia. Some of this pragmatism has also rubbed off on Pakistan, which is sending two naval ships to join the relief effort in Sri Lanka and flying a few sorties of C-130 transport aircraft to Indonesia.

China has long given up the demand for American troop withdrawal from Asia. Beijing knows that if the US troops pull out, Japan will inevitably rearm itself. The logic is not very different in New Delhi. India, too, has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

US aid focus on logistics

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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 perished.

"The disaster around the Indian Ocean continues to grow both in size and scope," President Bush said yesterday in announcing that the USA would provide 10 times its earli-

er \$35million offering — an amount criticised as miserly for such a rich nation. More than 20 patrol and cargo aircraft have been dispatched to carry disaster supplies, Mr Bush said. The aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln*, the Maritime Pre-Positioning Squadron from Guam and an amphibious ship carrying a Marine team soon will be in position to generate clean water and support other relief efforts.

A US military cargo jet yesterday brought blankets, medicine and the first of 80,000 body bags to

Banda Aceh, the devastated Indonesian city near the quake epicentre. Nine US military C-130 transports took off yesterday from Utapao in Thailand to ferry supplies to southern parts of Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

UN race against time

The UN said it was in a "race against time" to get aid to the tsunami victims and the death toll may near 150,000. Mr Kofi Annan said he was worried that not all those who needed help would get it.

2 JAN 2005